

# Uranium alliance formed

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RAPID CITY - Uranium exploration is proceeding in certain areas of South Dakota, Wyoming and Colorado, and four different environmental groups have formed an alliance to educate residents of the above states about the dangers of uranium exploration and mining.

Defenders of the Black Hills and ACTION for the Environment of South Dakota, Wyoming's Powder River Basin Resource Council and Coloradoans Against Resource Destruction met in Rapid City for a news conference Nov. 10 to draw attention to what is happening in these three states.

"In all three of these states, the common denominator in all this is Powertech Uranium, a Canadian company," said Charmaine White Face of Defenders of the Black Hills. Powertech has permits for exploration in South Dakota and Wyoming and has proposed mining near Ft. Collins, Colo.

One of the biggest problems for the group, alliance members explained, is the disturbance of soils that contain uranium, which they say then seeps into the water table and affects landowners near uranium deposits.

"Here in Wyoming, there's uranium that's leached 500 feet, and it's running down that far, and as everyone else has said, you're disturbing the natural environment and where it's stood in place, it's relatively safe, but when you disturb the area, it will have consequences," said Powder River Basin Resource Council's Shannon Anderson.

The four groups issued this statement Saturday.

"We want the uranium industry to know that we stand together on this issue. Whether in a rural setting or a populated area, uranium mining causes radioactive contamination. Past uranium sites continue to contaminate the air, land and water. Any bonds designed to pay for the cleanup of former mining areas have not been sufficient and taxpayers have been forced to pay the bill. We call on the public and all elected officials to do everything possible to protect the water, land and local economies from proposed uranium activities."

White Face commented the group was planning to meet again that afternoon to formulate a plan to deal with this issue on the legislative level. Dr. Lilia Jones Jarding says things are a little different in Colorado. "In Colorado, all our elected officials for the most part, are against this proposed mining. Our member of Congress, one of our senators, our state representatives, city officials and some county officials are coming on board, and people are against it," she said.

White Face added that some European countries are taking steps to wean themselves off nuclear power, which is being touted as clean energy. "While it can produce efficient energy, what do you have as a result? Radioactive steam and water and toxic waste. How can that be good?" she asked. She went on to say that the U.S. needs to do the same and reduce its need for nuclear power, even if fossil fuels are also bad. "Why can't we do more with wind? South Dakota has been tagged as the Saudi Arabia of wind. Let's get wind and solar power to the masses," she said.

The conference concluded with the participants saying they will proceed with legal

means against Powertech Uranium in the courts, and will see where these actions take them.