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Contact: Justin Whitesides

Environmental Director

Yering Paiute Tribe

environmentaldirector@ypt-nsn.gov

775-463-7866

**Water and air quality for residents and farming in Mason Valley
Are the target of new Environmental Ordinances**

High levels of uranium and arsenic prompts the Yerington Paiute Tribe to develop environmental standards for water and air protection

Yerington, NV – December 20, 2011 –The Yerington Paiute Tribal Council (YPTC) announced today that it is developing Tribal Environmental Ordinances (TEOs) designed to protect both air and water quality on the Yerington Paiute Tribal Reservation and Colony. Section 518 of the Federal Clean Water Act grants Native American tribal councils such as the YPTC the authority to regulate water resources. Several tribes across the country have already taken advantage of this amendment and their ordinances are credited with improved water and air quality well beyond their tribal boundaries. Similarly, it is the goal of the YPTC that the new Environmental Ordinances will benefit not only the property of the Yerington Paiute Tribe, but the greater Mason Valley as well. The Tribe is also moving toward building on tribal air and water quality standards to potentially develop the authority to put the Anaconda Mine on the National Priorities list.

Concerns regarding water quality on tribal property and the surrounding area prompted the YPTC to initiate the new ordinances. The nearby abandoned Anaconda Mine CERCLA site is responsible for extensive groundwater contamination that has forced hundreds of nearby residents to depend on bottled water. Additionally, elevated levels of uranium and arsenic have been identified in irrigation water that is used on alfalfa and onions. The use of irrigation water containing higher levels of uranium and arsenic not only creates issues for agricultural products, but can affect the existing plume of contaminated groundwater putting more of the area wells at risk.

Databases and reports that are part of the site record list the contact for at least one of the effected irrigation wells as the Desert Pearl Farms. This particular well was known to have been used in 2009 but may be one of several in the area that can potentially result in lower water quality and become subject to the ordinances. Although not regulated in irrigation water by the State of Nevada, recent reports provided by BP to EPA show uranium concentrations more than three times those allowed in drinking water for an irrigation well located near the site. The same well has arsenic concentrations more than double drinking water standards. The Tribe is concerned that runoff from fields using contaminated irrigation water can damage their water resources.

U.S. EPA has conducted a very small and limited analysis of uranium in onions from Mason Valley which did reveal detectable concentrations. The YPT Environmental Office is expected to formalize previous requests to the EPA for long term monitoring of irrigation water, soil and agricultural products including onions grown near the Anaconda Mine.

According to the Environmental Director for the Tribe, Justin Whitesides, “The Tribal Environmental Ordinances will be developed to protect the Tribal members and their resources. This is also an effective method to regulate off-reservation polluters who contaminate air and water coming onto Tribal property.”

The Tribe will initiate a review of the available water quality data from its long running monitoring program funded by EPA and then use the data to develop standards that are protective of the Tribes resources and public health. The standards will be presented as clean-up standards for the Anaconda Mine site to the EPA and BP (the responsible party for the site). The regulations also allow the Tribe to take actions to stop pollution sources occurring beyond the reservation.

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