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VIRTUAL EVENT

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SOCIAL IMPACT DUE TO THE PRESENCE OF NORM IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF A MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY, CÓRDOBA, ARGENTINA.

In 2018, the Government of the Córdoba Province (Argentina) presented a evaluation report about a proposal for a new mountain road design which would cross the touristic area of Punilla in this province. This project aimed to reduce the car traffic in that region especially during holiday time.

Social conflict began when the contractor company called “Camino de las Sierras” made public the environmental impact assessment report. In this report the presence of the Rodolfo uranium deposit was not mentioned.

It must be highlighted that that deposit was studied between 50s and 70s by the CNEA and was declared to the township of Cosquín local village. At that moment, the CNEA evaluated about 3 000 tU as reasonably assured resources (RAA) with an average ore grade of 0. 05% of U.

The social conflict was aggravated when the local people knew that the highway would cross a portion of native forest which is protected as reserve zone in red grade by the provincial law N° 9.814. However this law allow to build roadworks as long as that kind of constructions improve the common benefit.

Those reasons led environmental groups to carry out several demonstrations to stop the construction of the roadwork.

From this conflict the main stakeholders such as the Highway System Department and Secretary of Environment of Córdoba province, townships affected and the Public Utilities and Infrastructure Research Institute of the National University of Córdoba were in charge of the environmental impact report. In this context, the CNEA was convened to upgrade both the geological data and the radiometric records of the site. As historical fact, this was the first time that the CNEA take part as a consultant about a NORM site in Argentina, other than specific uranium production cycle activities.

From old and new radiometric record processing it was able to make a new report which shows that some parts of trace road cross zones with radiometric anomalies and uranium mineralization in sight. Those results were shown during the public hearing which took place in 2018 at Santa María town during more than nine days and with the presence of some 400 speakers

Once the public hearing was over, both the environmental groups and the locals maintained the same position of opposition to the execution of the work. Since then, the entities responsible for the construction of the route, evaluate the possibility of changing the design of the trace, to avoid the uncovering and remobilization of the uranium mineralized soils and the clearing of the native forest.

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