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**NEW MEXICO  
HEALTH EQUITY PARTNERSHIP**



## Health Impact Assessment Release Report

### Southwest Region

**The Newly Released HIA Report Recommends Increased Resources to Address Infrastructure Needs Among Rural and Frontier Food Pantries in New Mexico**

*Study Also Questions Formula for Distribution of Food to Impoverished New Mexicans and the Nutritional Content of Food and Effects on Health*

The National Center for Frontier Communities and the Southwest New Mexico Food Policy Council are pleased to announce the release of the first Health Impact Assessment (HIA) in New Mexico to study barriers to quantity, quality and access to food pantry food among low-income persons in rural and frontier communities. This ambitious HIA also evaluated alternatives to the state's formula for determining how much of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's "emergency" food allocated to New Mexico is distributed to each county, and details how food insecurity impacts health outcomes, specifically obesity, chronic heart disease, diabetes, asthma and depression.

This extensive, 10-month study incorporated a variety of methods, including an exhaustive literature review and data collection process, surveys and interviews of food pantry customers and pantry coordinators, and the first-ever nutrition study of food distributed through the food pantry system in Catron, Grant, Hidalgo and Luna counties.

Members of the Southwest New Mexico Food Policy Council expressed concerns that the quantity of food distributed through the USDA's "emergency" food program – TEFAP – has decreased. They also voiced that the nutritional value of pantry food is questionable, in part because food distribution is based on pounds of food rather than meals and that the donated food received via food banks are not held to any nutritional standards. Council members, several of whom are also food pantry coordinators, describe a system in "crisis," straining under increased demand, a frayed social safety net, an aging population with chronic health problems and a high percentage of people with disabilities.

For more information, please see the [executive summary](#) and [full HIA report](#)

*Submitted by Susan Wilger, HIA Project Coordinator*



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## **McKinley County**

### **Looking Within: A Health Impact Assessment on Uranium Mining**

The Church Rock mining area of New Mexico crosses the boundaries of McKinley County and the Navajo Reservation. This small area has been dealing with the aftermath of a long legacy of uranium mining, including in the later 1970s the infamous "Church Rock Tailings Spill" - the second largest accident releasing radioactive materials in the United States history. The combined proximity to residences, toxicity of the sites, pathways of exposure to workers and residents and lack of or slow clean up of these facilities has been a concern for residents since learning of the potential toxicity of uranium and the by-products of its mining and milling. As a result, McKinley Community PLACE MATTERS has conducted a Health Impact Assessment to explore the potential health impacts of uranium mining and milling in McKinley County. Specifically focusing its analysis on environmental exposures/contamination, displacement and relocation, and cultural relevance of the land and community efficacy. With our partners, we hope to advocate for additional time to analyze for additional time to analyze the potential health effects of the existing facilities as well as require extensive cleanup of existing contaminated areas and homes within McKinley County prior to permitting future mining in the area.

The McKinley Community PLACE MATTERS HIA can be [viewed here](#)

*Submitted by Jordon Johnson, McKinley Community PLACE MATTERS  
Executive Director*



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