



Acid/Pueblo Canyon, New Mexico, Site

A FUSRAP site

This fact sheet provides information about the **Acid/Pueblo Canyon site**. Long-term stewardship responsibilities for this site are managed by the **U.S. Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management** under the **Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program**.

Site Information and History

The Acid/Pueblo Canyon, New Mexico, Site is located within Los Alamos, New Mexico, approximately 25 miles northwest of Santa Fe. This Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program (FUSRAP) site is accessible from Canyon Road, which runs just southeast of the location of a former waste treatment plant. The Acid/Pueblo canyon system starts with a small branch of Pueblo Canyon known as Acid Canyon and is among numerous canyons that cut into the Pajarito Plateau in north-central New Mexico.

From 1943 to 1964, nuclear weapons research activities at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) produced liquid effluent wastes from general laboratory, chemistry, and radiochemistry operations. By 1951, a treatment plant was constructed on the south rim of Acid Canyon to remove plutonium and other radionuclides from the waste streams originating from the original main laboratory technical area (TA-1). The treated and untreated wastes were discharged from the main acid sewer line, which terminated at the head of the south fork of Acid Canyon. These effluents contained a variety of radioactive materials, including tritium and isotopes of strontium, cesium, uranium, plutonium, and americium.

In 1953, a new plutonium research laboratory complex began piping additional radioactive liquid wastes to the treatment plant. If treatment was not necessary to meet release criteria in effect at the time, the raw waste was discharged directly to Acid Canyon. In 1958, liquid wastes from a new radiochemistry

facility were added to the treatment plant's load. Wastes were finally redirected to a new central waste treatment plant in 1963, and the last releases to Acid Canyon occurred in June 1964.

The U.S. Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), a predecessor agency to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), began decontamination and decommissioning (D&D) of the treatment plant in late 1966. Both the plant and its associated vehicle decontamination facility (TA-45) were demolished.

The contaminated building materials, sewer pipe, and soil were disposed of at the LANL radioactive waste disposal areas. Decontamination of portions of Acid Canyon included removal of contaminated rock from the cliff face where the effluent had flowed and removal of contaminated rock, soil, and sediment from the canyon floor. Decontamination work in Acid Canyon continued into June 1967, when the site was deemed sufficiently free of contamination to be released from AEC control without restriction. The property was then transferred to Los Alamos County.

Surveys were performed in 1976 and 1980 as part of FUSRAP. These surveys identified two areas where contamination exceeded criteria for radionuclide concentrations in soil — the former untreated waste effluent outfall and the former vehicle decontamination facility. A total of 390 cubic yards of contaminated soil and rock were excavated from these two areas and the waste was disposed of at the LANL Radioactive Waste Disposal Area G.

Issued in 1984, the *Final Report on the Remedial Action at the Acid/Pueblo Canyon Site*, stated that the radiological condition of the Acid/Pueblo Canyon FUSRAP site was in compliance with applicable DOE standards and guidelines for cleanup and that radiological conditions were protective of human health and the environment. Therefore, DOE released the FUSRAP site for unrestricted use.

Regulatory Setting

AEC established FUSRAP in March 1974 to evaluate radioactive contamination at sites where work helped develop the nation's nuclear weapons and atomic energy programs. DOE has the legislative authority under the Atomic Energy Act (AEA) of 1954, as amended, to perform radiological surveys, monitoring, and maintenance at sites used to support the nuclear activities of DOE's predecessor agencies. DOE also has legislative authority under AEA to remediate FUSRAP sites identified as requiring some form of response action. In 1997, Congress transferred responsibility for FUSRAP site characterization and remediation from DOE to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The DOE Office of Legacy Management (LM) retains responsibility for long-term care of remediated FUSRAP sites. For more information about the program, please see the [FUSRAP fact sheet](#).

The Acid/Pueblo Canyon FUSRAP site was remediated to criteria in Interim Soil Limits for D&D Projects, LA-UR-79-1865-Rev (pre-FUSRAP standards). A notice of cleanup certification for the FUSRAP site was published in the *Federal Register* on October 29, 1984.

In fiscal year 2004, DOE transferred responsibility for the Acid/Pueblo Canyon FUSRAP site from the DOE Office of Environmental Management to LM.

Current Site Conditions

The Acid/Pueblo Canyon FUSRAP site is near the location of the Los Alamos Nature Center/Pajarito Environmental Education Center, which opened in 2015. The open areas of the site are used by the public for recreational purposes.

Legacy Management Activities

No monitoring, maintenance, or site inspections are required for the Acid/Pueblo Canyon FUSRAP site. LM's responsibilities consist of managing site records and responding to stakeholder inquiries. The site is currently managed by Los Alamos National Laboratory under an Order of Consent.



Acid Canyon cliff face, 2017.



CONTACT INFORMATION

**IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY AT THE SITE,
CONTACT 911**

**LM TOLL-FREE EMERGENCY HOTLINE:
(877) 695-5322**

Site-specific documents related to the **Acid/Pueblo Canyon, New Mexico, Site** are available on the LM website at www.energy.gov/lm/acidpueblo-canyon-new-mexico-site

For more information on FUSRAP site history or current long-term stewardship activities, contact:

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