



Bronco, Colorado | Site

A PLOWSHARE SITE

This fact sheet provides information about the **Bronco, Colorado, Site**. Long-term stewardship responsibilities for this site are managed by the **U.S. Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management** under the **Plowshare/Vela Uniform/Weapons Related Program**.



Site Information and History

The Bronco, Colorado, Site is in the Piceance Basin of northwestern Colorado, about 24 miles west of Meeker and 66 miles north of Grand Junction. The Piceance Basin is a geologic structure that contains significant hydrocarbon reserves. The site is on land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in SWSW, Section 14, T1N, R98W 6th PM, in Rio Blanco County.

The U.S. Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), a predecessor agency to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), conducted activities at the site as part of the Plowshare Program. The Plowshare Program was established in 1957 to explore the technical and economic feasibility of using nuclear explosives for peaceful purposes. Project Bronco was a joint operation between AEC, the U.S. Bureau of Mines (USBM); and CER Geonuclear Corporation (CER), which represented 18 oil companies. The plan involved the detonation of a 50-kiloton nuclear explosive to extract oil and oil shale.

AEC and USBM drilled three exploratory core holes: Colorado Core Hole No. 1 (CCH1), Colorado Core Hole No. 2 (CCH2), and Colorado Core Hole No. 3 (CCH3), to test the hydrology and geology of the Project Bronco site. Testing was never conducted, and the site became inactive in 1970. The three core holes remained in place and were capped to prevent intrusion to the subsurface.

Surface Reclamation

Surface reclamation at the CCH2 and CCH3 sites began in 2020. At the request of BLM, CCH1 was not included in reclamation activities and left open for water access. The reclamation project for Project Bronco included the closure and abandonment of wells CCH2 in 2021 and CCH3 in 2020. The project area included the CCH2 and CCH3 well sites, the 1-mile dirt access road for CCH3, and the well structures.

Work began with site preparation, including minor road repairs for equipment access and the installation of erosion controls. The wells were permanently sealed by placing cement plugs deep underground, cutting and removing the exposed casing, and covering the site with soil. The well head was cut off 4 feet below grade and a plaque was installed with well closure information. Surface reclamation and well abandonment activities were conducted in accordance with *BLM Onshore Order No. 2, Drilling Operations (Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations part 3160)*.

Once the wells were abandoned, the land surface was restored by reshaping it to match the natural contours, reseeding disturbed areas with native grasses and plants, and placing downed wood and boulders to stabilize the soil and discourage vehicle access. A weed management plan controlled invasive plants, and surveys were conducted to identify and protect threatened plant species in the area. In



Project Bronco U.S. Bureau of Mines/U.S.
Atomic Energy Commission Core Hole No. 2.



Marker Placed at U.S. Bureau of Mines/U.S.
Atomic Energy Commission Core Hole No. 3.

February 2026, BLM notified LM that reclamation efforts at the Bronco site have successfully been met and the site no longer needs DOE management.

Site Vegetation 🌲

Between 2020 and 2025, the site had been monitored to ensure successful vegetation growth and soil stability. As native plant species returned to cover the bare ground, and as invasive weeds died off, the site gradually returned to its natural state. Since BLM has determined that these conditions are met, no further maintenance or monitoring is required. Through these efforts, the Bronco site has been safely closed and the land successfully restored to closely match its natural, undisturbed state

Land Use 🏠

Currently, BLM uses the Project Bronco site primarily for cattle grazing. The area is open to the public, but receives limited public visitation.

Regulatory Setting 📜

Surface conditions at the Bronco site fulfill the requirements of the White River Field Office Surface Reclamation Plan, so the site is closed and no further vegetation monitoring or site maintenance will take place.

Legacy Management Activities 🧑🔧

No monitoring, maintenance, or site inspections are required for the Bronco, CO site. LM's responsibilities consist of managing site records and responding to stakeholder inquiries.

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 **Bronco, Colorado, Site** are available on the LM website at www.energy.gov/lm/bronco-colorado-site.

For more information about LM activities at the **Bronco, Colorado, Site**, contact:

U.S. Department of Energy
Office of Legacy Management
2597 Legacy Way
Grand Junction, CO 81503

Email:
public.affairs@lm.doe.gov

DOE Office of Legacy Management
(970) 248-6070

 www.energy.gov/lm/bronco-colorado-site

 www.energy.gov/lm

 www.facebook.com/OfficeofLegacyManagement

 www.linkedin.com/showcase/office-of-legacy-management