



Utah, Utah | Site

A PLOWSHARE SITE

This fact sheet provides information about the **Utah, Utah, 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 Utah, Utah, Site is in the Uinta Basin of northeastern Utah, about 30 miles south of Vernal, Utah. The Uinta Basin is a geologic structure that contains significant hydrocarbon reserves. The site is on state owned land with an existing lease that allows for the exploration and production of oil and gas reserves.

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 proposed plan for Project Utah was to detonate a nuclear device underground to create fractures in the oil shale formation beneath the site. The idea was that this would improve the permeability of the formation to allow oil extraction via underground "retorting," a process of heating shale in place to release the oil from the formation. In 1969, the AEC drilled an exploration well (WOSCO EX-1) to determine if the site was suitable for the proposed nuclear test. Data obtained from the drilling indicated that the site was acceptable, but the project was canceled soon after the completion of drilling in 1969. As a result, an underground nuclear test was never conducted at the site.

The site was decommissioned in 1969 without abandoning the WOSCO EX-1 well, removing drilling debris, or reclaiming the mud pit used to contain drilling fluids. The site remained inactive until 2019 when it was transferred from the DOE Office of Environmental Management to the DOE Office of Legacy Management (LM).

Surface Conditions

In 2019, LM assessed the site and initiated discussions with the Utah Division of Oil, Gas, and Mining (OGM), the agency responsible for oversight for well abandonments in Utah. In preparations for the abandonment of the WOSCO EX-1 well, soil samples were collected from the former mud pit to determine the presence or absence of petroleum hydrocarbons. Sample results indicated that hydrocarbon concentrations were below the Utah OGM cleanup criteria, and no further action was required for the former mud pits. LM abandoned the WOSCO EX-1 well according to Utah state regulations in September 2019. The former mud pit, which is now a shallow basin, was left in place at the request of Utah OGM regulators to provide a water catch basin for wildlife in the area. There are no additional features at the site and there are no future activities planned at the site. The surface conditions remain typical of the surrounding terrain.

Land Use

The site is on land owned by the State of Utah, and the land is currently accessible to the public. The land use remains consistent with the surrounding area, which includes oil and gas exploration and development. There are several oil and gas facilities near the site and some recreational opportunities in the vicinity.

Regulatory Setting

Responsibility for the Utah site transitioned from AEC to DOE after the dissolution in 1974 and in 2019 the site was transitioned from the DOE Office of Environmental Management to LM. The site is now part of the LM program, which ensures that the closed project sites remain protective of human health and the environment.

Environmental oversight follows federal and state requirements and National Environmental Policy Act frameworks. The Utah site involved no radioactive materials and is classified as a no-further-action site, under DOE stewardship. Regulatory frameworks for environmental protection — state and federal — still apply for any exploratory work, drilling, and potential impacts to water, land, and ecosystems.



Former mud pit reclaimed to allow water collection for wildlife in the area.

Legacy Management Activities

No monitoring, maintenance, or site inspections are required for the Utah, UT 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 **Utah, Utah, Site** are available on the LM website at **www.energy.gov/lm/utah-utah-site**.

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

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