

U.S. Department of Energy

PROGRAM UPDATE



January-March 2023



Many Devils Wash Cleanup Project
in New Mexico Completed

**LM's Partnerships
with Underserved
and Underrepresented
Communities**

Peter O'Konski Retires After
35 Years of Exceptional Service

DIRECTOR'S CORNER



LM committed to assisting underrepresented, underserved communities

In his first 100 days in office following his January 2021 inauguration, President Joe Biden established a clear set of priorities. The objectives naturally covered a wide range of topics, and he sent a direct message with his very first executive order.

Executive Order 13985 — "Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government" — was signed on Jan. 20, 2021, signaling a directive to all federal agencies to address inequities facing many Americans.

The order identifies impacted groups as "Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality."

I'm proud of the role the Office of Legacy Management played in the U.S. Department of Energy's obligations to meet the order. LM helped develop DOE's equity assessment, after which DOE completed an [Equity Action Plan](#) to outline how the agency will accomplish the objectives of President Biden's order.

DOE's Equity Action Plan includes five key priorities:

- **Action 1:** Address broad gaps in data collection to facilitate data-informed decision making.
- **Action 2:** Increase opportunities for new entrants in DOE acquisition (e.g., procurement and financial assistance).
- **Action 3:** Increase participation by individuals and institutions underrepresented in DOE research and development and other programs supported through financial assistance.
- **Action 4:** Expand strategic tribal and stakeholder engagement in all DOE business areas.
- **Action 5:** Improve access and equity in DOE's [Weatherization Assistance Program](#).

LM has long worked with tribal partners and other stakeholders on many issues related to protecting human health and the environment. This edition of *Program Update* features descriptions of some of that work, including new planning tools development,

innovative educational outreach initiatives, and our efforts to make LM more accessible on the Navajo Nation, including a new Community Outreach Network office in Window Rock, Arizona. This edition also highlights LM's participation in the annual Alaska Forum on the Environment, our ongoing environmental justice leadership, and the work performed by our Defense Related Uranium Mines team and its partners to safeguard abandoned mines.

We value these relationships and will continue to strive — with the guidance of President Biden's order — to find ways to level the playing field for underrepresented and underserved communities. We aim to improve environmental impacts, business opportunities, workforce development, equal access, and more.

Executive Order 13985 begins with a basic premise and clearly establishes the expectation that every American deserves an equal opportunity to achieve the American dream. It states:

"Equal opportunity is the bedrock of American democracy, and our diversity is one of our country's greatest strengths. But for too many, the American Dream remains out of reach. Entrenched disparities in our laws and public policies, and in our public and private institutions, have often denied that equal opportunity to individuals and communities. Our country faces converging economic, health, and climate crises that have exposed and exacerbated inequities, while a historic movement for justice has highlighted the unbearable human costs of systemic racism. Our Nation deserves an ambitious whole-of-government equity agenda that matches the scale of the opportunities and challenges that we face."

Creating equity for all Americans is a noble task. Government certainly can't do it alone, but it sure is a good place to start.

LM will continue to proactively identify areas where underrepresented and underserved communities not only have a seat at the table, but are welcomed at the table, heard at the table, and invited back to the table, time and again.

Warm Regards,

Carmelo

Carmelo Melendez

LM Goals



Goal 1
Protect human health and the environment.



Goal 2
Preserve, protect, and share records and information.



Goal 3
Safeguard former contractor workers' retirement benefits.



Goal 4
Sustainably manage and optimize the use of land and assets.



Goal 5
Sustain management excellence.



Goal 6
Engage the public, governments, and interested parties.

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Representatives from LM and other DOE offices provided information and answered questions about internship and STEM opportunities within DOE at a college and career fair in October 2022.

LM’s Strong Relationships Support Underserved Communities



It takes ongoing communication and two-way education to build strong and successful relationships that support engagement and opportunities for all stakeholders

The U.S. Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management builds those relationships by clearly explaining what LM does and learning what is important to the communities near legacy sites. LM has engaged with these communities since the office was created in 2003.

When President Biden signed Executive Order 13985, *Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government* in January 2021, federal agencies had to take a hard look at their relationships with stakeholders in underserved communities.

The order requires each federal agency to:

- Examine its internal processes and programs to ensure that the agency eliminates access barriers.
- Transform programs and policies to open even broader pathways for underrepresented groups to access resources.
- Create new programs to better serve communities.

LM is doing its part to increase stakeholder outreach and support in underserved and tribal communities by engaging with these communities in one of two ways: 1) LM-site-based technical activities and outreach, and 2) “STEM with

LM” educational outreach, which promotes science, technology, engineering, and mathematics at LM’s three interpretive centers and at local schools and organizations.

“We work with our neighboring communities to conduct our mission managing DOE’s legacy nuclear weapon production sites,” said David Von Behren, LM Education, Communication, History, and Outreach team supervisor. “We’ve learned the importance of educating each other from our community partners.”

Much of LM’s increased interaction with underserved communities occurs on tribal lands. Outreach with the Navajo Nation comprises the greatest part of LM’s outreach efforts because LM manages four former uranium processing and disposal sites on the Navajo Nation, one of which also borders Hopi lands.



LM hosted a booth at the first-ever Cherokee Nation STEM Fest in January 2023 in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. Middle and high school students from 14 counties across the Cherokee Nation participated in a heavy-metals lesson and learned about STEM education and careers. LM scientists Ken Kreie and Angelita Denny spoke with students at LM’s information booth.

“We’re learning about the culture, traditions, and concerns of our partners,” Von Behren said, “and they want to learn about the technology and resources we use on our sites.”

LM and LM Strategic Partner contractor staff regularly interact with their Navajo and Hopi counterparts while conducting long-term stewardship activities at LM sites on the Navajo Nation. They conduct working meetings and give site-status presentations to Navajo government and public organizations.



Executive Order 13985

On his first day in office, Jan. 20, 2021, President Joe Biden signed Executive Order 13985, “Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government.”

In doing so, President Biden called for a total transformation of the government to focus on the concerns of “Black; Latino; and Indigenous and Native American persons; Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders; other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.”

At the U.S. Department of Energy, this transformation meant identifying barriers for underserved communities. These efforts include access to DOE programs, benefits, services, or procurement opportunities, all of which expand the Biden Administration’s whole-of-government advance equity approach.

To achieve the equity agenda, DOE evaluated its activities, comprehensively assessing these areas: procurement, financial assistance, research and development, demonstration and deployment, and stakeholder engagement. Senior leaders from across the Department and more than 150 personnel, including representatives of the Office of Legacy Management, lead and support these five areas.

In April 2022, after planning for more than 10 months, the Department published its first-ever plan to advance equity and diversity. For more information, please review DOE’s [Equity Action Plan](#).

In addition, LM periodically hosts technical exchanges between Navajo, Hopi, and DOE representatives about the four former uranium processing and disposal sites, outreach, and Defense-Related Uranium Mines program work. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission are also invited to the meetings that are held in various communities.

LM is a Navajo Nation Community Outreach Network charter member. Congress established this group in 2007. Navajo Nation, the Hopi Tribe, and representatives from five participating federal agencies make up the network. Congress requested that the five federal agencies coordinate with the tribes to address uranium-related issues on the Navajo Nation.

To better reach out to the Navajo community and answer questions, LM moved to a new and expanded Navajo Nation Outreach office in Window Rock, Arizona, in June 2022. Three full-time LMSP Navajo-speaking outreach staff work at the office, where community members can learn about LM's work on the four former uranium processing sites and view and print EPA Region 9 documents about Navajo Nation abandoned mines on an EPA computer.

LM's STEM with LM program provides opportunities to communities and kids who often don't have much access to science education and career opportunities.

"Our STEM programs are an effort to provide education and resources that aren't available elsewhere," said Shawn Montgomery, public participation specialist for the Navajo Nation outreach team. "We try to provide STEM programs that are useful at many levels, from school children to tribal leaders."

LM staff have participated in 12 Navajo Nation STEM events over the past two years, which attracted between 2,500 and 3,000 students. This year, LM staff hosted information booths at Navajo fairs in Window Rock and Shiprock, New Mexico, to share STEM and project work information.

"We partner with tribal groups and organizations to jointly build out our STEM programs," Montgomery said. "Our partners' feedback during program development is crucial in creating successful education events."

LM is also expanding its educational outreach to Oklahoma and Alaska tribes.

In January, LM representatives attended STEM Fest 2023 at the Chota Conference Center in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, on the Cherokee Nation. Middle and high school Cherokee Nation students from 14 counties participated in the one-day festival that featured STEM informational stations and STEM education and career-focused activities.

In February, LM participated in the 25th annual Alaska Forum on the Environment, in Anchorage. It is the largest annual statewide gathering of environmental professionals. The event provides an opportunity for businesses, government agencies, and organizations to share information about their environmental efforts. LM shared information on its Amchitka and Chariot sites.

Each year in the fall, a group of LM and LMSP representatives travel to the American Indian Science and Engineering Society conference and participate in a STEM event and career fair. Conference attendees include young adults, tribal representatives, and other organizations looking to recruit for their workforce.

LM is also developing new tools to manage tribal interactions and outreach events. A team of LM staff is developing a Tribal Dashboard database of all LM interactions and contact with their tribal partners. The dashboard began as a simple spreadsheet in which staff entered information about their interactions with LM's tribal partners. But the spreadsheet did not provide a method to easily find information on LM's tribal engagement.

"The dashboard is a first-of-its-kind effort across DOE to seamlessly track our interactions with the tribes," said Tiffany Drake, LM site manager and dashboard development team member. "It helps us keep on top of what's been communicated with the tribes, helps identify what activities are meeting our environmental justice goals, and that we are interacting efficiently."

Drake said the greatest benefit may be the ability to carry on the institutional knowledge LM's site managers have accumulated over the years and make it available to other managers.

"It will show us what we've done, what has worked, what hasn't, and point to what we need to do in the future," she said. "When new site managers come on board, they will have a resource to learn how we have engaged with the different tribes and what work still needs to be done."



TO KEEP KID OFF DRUGS

ENERGY Legacy Management
BLAST OFF!
NEWTON'S THREE LAWS OF MOTION
WHAT IS MOTION?

2
3
NEWTON'S THIRD LAW
 $a = \frac{\Delta v}{\Delta t}$
MAKE IT GO DOWN

BALLOON POWERED ROCKET

ENERGY
COMMITMENT TO STEWARDSHIP
STEM WITH LM

ENERGY
COVID NOTICE
CONSENT AND RELEASE

LMSP Navajo Nation outreach team member Shine Salt demonstrates Newton's laws of motion using balloon power for students at the Diné People Are the Future STEM Fair at Leupp Elementary School in Leupp, Arizona, in February 2023.



Former Senior Advisor and Communications Liaison Denise Freeman represented LM at the DOE-sponsored STEM Expo at John Burroughs Elementary School in Washington, D.C., in early June 2022.

LM is also expanding its outreach to underserved communities that aren't affiliated with a tribe. During the COVID-19 pandemic, LM had to close its three interpretive centers to the public. Although LM continued to offer STEM programs and other interactive events virtually, fewer stakeholders were able to take advantage of these activities.

Before the pandemic, about 40,000 visitors a year attended programs and events at the Atomic Legacy Cabin in Grand Junction, Colorado, the Fernald Preserve Visitors Center in Ohio, and the Weldon Spring Interpretive Center in Missouri.

In the past two years LM was able to interact with about 38,000 stakeholders virtually and, recently, in person. As people begin to get out and about again, attendance is expected to continue to grow and exceed previous years.

In addition to on-site events, last summer the Fernald Preserve, Ohio, Site hosted seven Green Team field trips that were sponsored by Groundwork Ohio River Valley. Green Teams help high school students prepare for jobs in green industries with training in soft skills, natural resource management, energy efficiency, composting, recreation skills, urban agriculture, and green infrastructure.

LM is also the home office for DOE's Environmental Justice Program. EJ staff participate in public events and distribute department grants to underserved communities and individuals.

The EJ program hosted the annual National Environmental Justice Conference and Training Program, co-sponsored by DOE, March 7-9, in Washington, D.C. The annual training conference brings together leaders from various sectors for three days to exchange ideas and approaches to achieving environmental justice. The conference includes a wide range of interactive workshop trainings. Technical assistance, certification documents, and hands-on training

opportunities are an integral part of the overall conference training agenda.

EJ Program Manager Melinda Downing presented alongside DOE grantees and partners at this year's 25th Annual Alaska Forum on the Environment conference at the Dena'ina Center in Anchorage, Alaska. The DOE Alaska Natives Environmental Justice Community Outreach Engagement workshop is a great opportunity to introduce DOE's EJ grantees and key community outreach and community capacity-building examples. Workshop presenters and participants discussed plans for developing an EJ program for the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands and lower Alaska Peninsula.

The EJ program also administers several DOE capacity-building grants at several locations near DOE offices and sites.

The Mentorship for Environmental Scholars Internship Program is a collaborative effort between Pre-College University and DOE to increase minority awareness and participation in environmental sciences disciplines. Intern recruits are trained and assigned to assist at DOE laboratories and LM offices across the United States. Annually, 15 traditionally underrepresented students are hired from historically Black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, and tribal colleges and universities to do paid research and support work for 10 weeks during the summer at a participating DOE office or national laboratory.

At the Medical University of South Carolina, Community Leaders Institutes help leaders learn how to access and obtain information necessary for making good decisions and communicating that information to the citizens. Technical Assistance Workshops are classroom sessions focused on teaching grant-writing terms and techniques, proposal and budget development, and grant-funding agency locations.

The Allen University Environmental Justice Institute is a community-sustainable resource center for rural and economically challenged minorities and low-income populations around the Savannah River Site in Aiken and other South Carolina communities. Institute staff work to promote youth development, attract and mentor students toward STEM disciplines, and build a sustainable pipeline for training, education, and employment.

Savannah State University, in partnership with the Savannah River Site, offers two Teaching Radiation, Energy, and Technology, or TREAT, workshops annually through the Environmental Justice, Community Education, and Advisory Project. The workshops educate kindergarten through 12th grade teachers, students, and community members. Experts from DOE, SRS, EPA, and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources gathered to educate, answer questions, and discuss engineering and nuclear career opportunities. TREAT workshops are held twice yearly.

The Community Capacity Building Through Technology partnership at Tennessee State University provides excess and surplus computers, training, and technical assistance to numerous communities near DOE facilities and other communities around LM, DOE Office of Environmental Management, and National Nuclear Security Administration sites. Undergraduate and graduate students are afforded hands-on research experience within DOE research facilities and provided skills necessary for permanent employment opportunities within the agency.

As LM continues to expand its outreach and interaction with underserved communities, the foundations for strong relationships will continue to be built on ongoing communication and two-way education, supporting engagement and opportunities for all stakeholders. ❖



LM and LMSP staff attended the Alaska Forum on the Environment in early February. From left, Amchitka Site Lead Mary Holder; Tribal Specialist Shine Salt; Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act and Nevada Offsites Team Lead Paul Kerl; Site Manager Jalena Dayvault; Site Manager Stephen Pitton; and Program Communications Specialist Shawn Montgomery.

Legacy Management Attends Annual Alaska Forum on the Environment

GOALS 1, 4, & 6



LM Site Manager Stephen Pitton presents the work being performed at remote site in Aleutian Islands

The U.S. Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management was a proud participant at the 25th annual Alaska Forum on the Environment conference at the Dena'ina Center in Anchorage, Alaska. The event was billed as the largest environmental conference in Alaska. Attendees included environmental professionals, government agencies, conservationists, biologists, and nonprofit and for-profit businesses.

The early-February conference featured speakers from various governmental entities, community leaders, tribal elders, and Alaska youth, and attendees and exhibitors participated in-person and virtually. LM hosted an exhibit, and Amchitka, Alaska, Site Manager Stephen Pitton presented about long-term stewardship activities at the site.

During his presentation, Pitton told attendees LM has two Amchitka site objectives. "One is to make sure there is no test-related contamination in the marine environment," he said, "and, two, is to determine if the subsistence and commercial catch food resources are safe."

Amchitka



In the 1960s and 1970s the U.S. Department of Defense and the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission used the Amchitka site, which is near the western end of the Aleutian Island chain, to conduct underground nuclear tests. Then, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service took over managing the island after the site was decommissioned in 1993. Now, LM manages Amchitka site long-term surveillance and maintenance, including maintaining site records, marine and terrestrial environmental monitoring, and monitoring and maintaining seven mud pit caps.

Because reaching the remote, uninhabited island is difficult, Pitton said the LM team completed as much work as possible. “We had a great team that went out there and coordinated all these logistics,” he said. “It’s something we’re not used to in the lower 48. You can’t just go down to the local hardware store if you forget something.”

Pitton also presented on:

- LM history.
- The environmental sampling program.
- Current and past Amchitka site activities and work.
- The 2022 Amchitka repair and investigation effort.

The exhibit ended with a discussion about upcoming work. “Our responsibility now under LM is to continue monitoring and inspections approximately every five years and perform any maintenance needed,” Pitton said.

LM members also took advantage of this very effective platform to engage with many key and essential stakeholders in the region, forge stronger relations, and help set the stage for and refine our engagement going forward.

For more information on the Alaska forum please visit: <https://akforum.org/>.

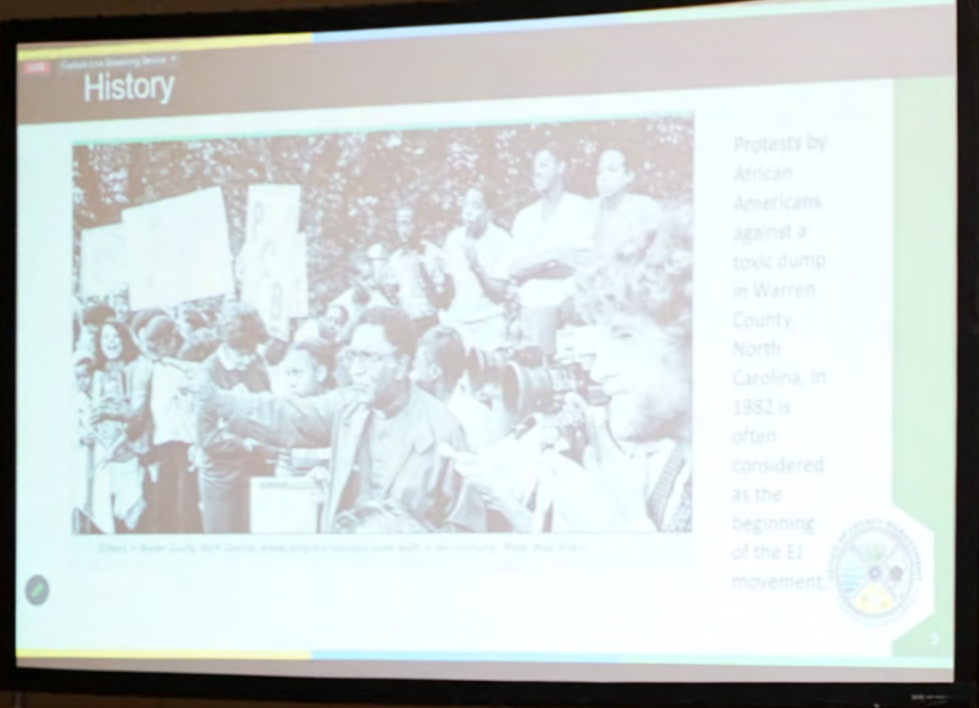
Watch a video of LM’s maintenance and repair work at Amchitka Island in May 2022: [youtube.com/watch?v=YVSCINJeGRA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YVSCINJeGRA). ❖



Amchitka, Alaska, Site Manager Stephen Pitton discusses LM’s ongoing surveillance and maintenance work at the remote location in the western Aleutian Island chain during the Alaska Forum on the Environment in Anchorage on Feb. 8.

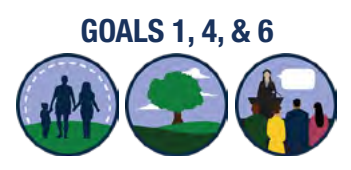


The LM Amchitka team did maintenance and repair work at the site in spring 2022. The team flew in and out from Adak, Alaska, and set up camp at the end of Fox Runway.



Melinda Downing presenting at the 25th Alaska Forum on the Environment.

DOE Environmental Justice Workshop Part of 2023 Alaska Forum on the Environment



Environmental Justice Program partners and honorees attend presentation highlighting program benefits

The Alaska Forum on the Environment celebrated 25 years as the largest environmental conference in Alaska by hosting the 2023 hybrid event with in-person and virtual sessions and exhibits. AFE 2023 took place Feb. 6-10 at the Dena'ina Center in Anchorage, Alaska, and online in AFE's Virtual Attendee Hub. The hybrid options for attendees and exhibitors made it possible to host an abundant number of conference goers. Attendees watched live sessions in-person or virtually, caught up on recorded sessions they missed in the Virtual Attendee Hub, and visited exhibits in-person or virtually.

On Wednesday, Feb. 8, U.S. Department of Energy Environmental Justice Program Manager Melinda Downing and Arctic Energy Office Senior Advisor Givey Kochanowski presented a two-part DOE Alaska Natives Environmental Justice Community Outreach Engagement workshop. The workshop's goal was to provide an environmental justice overview, highlight DOE's EJ program, and introduce DOE's EJ grantees and partners: Dr. Latecia Abraham-Hilaire, director, Public Information and Community Outreach, Medical University of South Carolina; Dr. Ariyo Oluwole, director and principal investigator, Allen University Environmental Justice Institute; and Lloyd Moore, executive director and conference coordinator, National Environmental

Justice Conference Inc. Each grantee and partner presented about community outreach and community capacity building.

The following presentations highlighted DOE EJ initiatives that are currently underway:

- Community Leaders Institute — Community leaders learn how to access and obtain the information necessary to make good decisions and communicate that information to the citizenry.
- Technical Assistance Workshops — Classroom sessions teach participants grant-writing terms and techniques, proposal and budget development, and where to locate grant-funding agencies.
- Environmental Justice Institute — A community-sustainable resource center available for rural and economically challenged minorities and low-income populations. The institute includes youth development and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics disciplines to build a sustainable pipeline for training, education, and employment.
- National Environmental Justice Conference and Training Program — Leaders from various sectors come together for three days to exchange ideas and approaches for achieving EJ.

Following the presentation, workshop participants expressed their interest in holding a Native American Community Leaders Institute in the Anchorage, Alaska, area. Participants had an opportunity to express some needs and interests related to such an initiative.

The EJ workshop provided a platform to discuss plans for developing an EJ program and EJ initiatives of interest to Alaska's affected communities. This workshop supported the shared interests in environmental and energy justice across the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands and lower Alaska Peninsula.

The workshop provided an opportunity to expand DOE's current EJ program by using an existing model. The goal is that community leaders and representatives work together to spotlight the relationship between environmental justice, environmental protection, human health, and economic development as being necessary for community resilience and sustainability. ❖

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Before and after photos of the Many Devils Wash cleanup and equipment removal.

Many Devils Wash Cleanup Project in New Mexico Completed



LM collaborates with Navajo Nation government and businesses to remove equipment and waste from the disposal site near Shiprock, New Mexico

The U.S. Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management completed a project to remove equipment and obsolete groundwater-remediation infrastructure that is no longer needed from the Many Devils Wash area at the Shiprock, New Mexico, Disposal Site.

A Navajo subcontractor performed the work, which began in October 2023, to remove material from the former uranium processing site. LM worked closely with Shiprock Chapter House leadership prior to beginning the work to gather input and explain project goals. At leadership’s request, part of the fence in the work area was left to curtail illegal dumping.

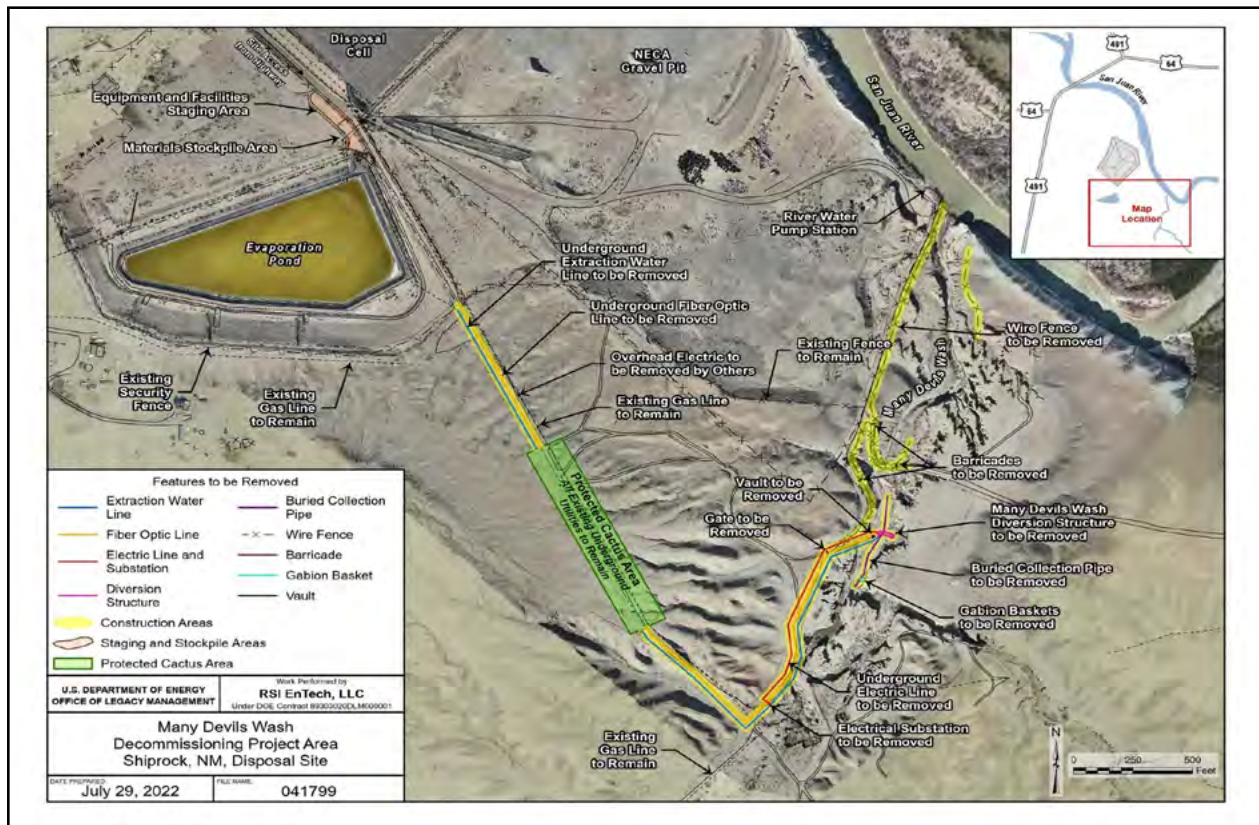
The team completed cleanup in six weeks, instead of the 12 weeks originally scheduled in the project plan. Early on, workers discovered Mesa Verde cactus in the removal area, which they quickly deemed a protected area. Therefore, removal

activities at Many Devils Wash ceased, shortening the project timeline. The Endangered Species Act identifies Mesa Verde cactus as a “threatened” species, and the Navajo Nation identifies it as “endangered.”

The project reduced DOE’s footprint in the area and returned Many Devils Wash to its natural state.

Waste removed during the project:

- About 1,900 linear feet of fence.
- A concrete diversion structure in the channel and associated sump and vault.
- About 1,100 linear feet of underground water, electrical, and fiber optic lines.
- An electrical substation.



“Because LM’s focus is to protect the environment, it’s rewarding to leave a place in better condition than when we started,” said LM Site Manager Mark Kautsky.

LM worked closely with Navajo Tribal Utility Authority to remove above- and below-ground utility poles and conductor cable in the project area. Subcontractors followed a project-specific waste management plan to identify solid waste and proper disposal methods as they removed project area waste and debris. The plan included waste minimization, pollution prevention, and waste diversion practices recommendations. LM diverted as much waste as possible from the landfill through local recycling and reuse.

Subcontractors regraded and revegetated cleanup-disturbed areas. LM will continue to monitor revegetation and work closely with Shiprock Chapter House officials to finalize fencing now that the Shiprock community is responsible for Many Devils Wash land stewardship.

“A highlight of this project was working closely with leadership of the Shiprock Chapter House and Navajo Nation businesses,” Kautsky said. “Working together allowed us to provide the best outcome for the community members of Shiprock.” ❖



Navajo Tribal Utility Authority workers remove power poles.



DRUM team members conduct abandoned mine verification and validation work during the 2022 field season.

Multiple Partnerships Make 2022 DRUM Field Season Successful Across Tribal, Public Lands

GOALS 2 & 4



Defense-Related Uranium Mines team members safeguard hundreds of mines across tribal and public lands

The U.S. Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management Defense-Related Uranium Mines program had a busy 2022, conducting 332 mine inventories, submitting 215 verification and validation reports, and facilitating 276 projects to safeguard mine sites.

During the March-December field season, DRUM teams conducted work on the Navajo Nation, at the Pueblo of Laguna in New Mexico, and the Spokane Indian Reservation in eastern Washington, as well as on U.S. Bureau of Land Management; U.S. National Park Service; and Colorado, South Dakota, and Utah state lands.

The DRUM program is a partnership between DOE, federal land management agencies, state abandoned mine lands programs, and tribal governments. This program's purpose is to verify and validate the condition of mines that provided uranium ore to the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission for Cold War defense-related activities.

"We could not have successfully completed the 2022 field work without the superb cooperation and collaboration of our partner agencies, over the many months of preparation prior to the field teams' mobilization in March and throughout the 2022 field season," said Uranium Mine Team Supervisor Gordon Clark. "Another major factor in the success DRUM enjoyed over the 2022 field season is the professionalism, 'can do' attitude, and enthusiasm of our LMS partner and specifically the DRUM field teams."

DRUM teams kicked off fieldwork on tribal lands in 2022, collaborating with the Navajo Nation Abandoned Mine Lands department and the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency to conduct verification and validation activities at 13 Navajo Nation mines. At the Pueblo of Laguna, the DRUM team worked closely with the Environment and Natural Resources Division and the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer to complete V&V activities at three mines. On the Spokane Indian Reservation, the DRUM team coordinated with the Tribe to assess two sites.



In 2022, LM and its partners verified and validated more than 330 mines on the Navajo Nation; the Spokane Indian Reservation in eastern Washington; at the Pueblo of Laguna in New Mexico; and on U.S. Bureau of Land Management; U.S. National Park Service; and Colorado, South Dakota, and Utah state lands. Pictured are LM and LMSP DRUM team members.

Most abandoned DRUM sites are on public lands. In 2022, DRUM completed V&V on 332 sites across eight states, on BLM land, U.S. Forest Service land, state lands, NPS units, and tribal nations. Over the course of the year, the DRUM team partnered with:

- 18 BLM field offices in four states.
- 12 national forests in five states.
- 1 national park.
- 1 national monument.
- 2 tribal nations.

In Utah, DOE, the Utah Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program, and the BLM Moab Field Office joined forces to close 77 Kane Creek area mines and 24 Yellow Cat area mines. The safeguarding work in Colorado included DOE partnering with the Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining, and Safety; BLM Uncompahgre Field Office; BLM Tres Rios Field Office; and Freeport-McMoRan to complete 170 closures in western and southwestern Colorado. In addition, partnering work between DOE, DRMS, U.S. Forest Service, and private property owners resulted in five more closures on Colorado’s Front Range.

Clark said, DRUM field teams will take the next few months to rest, reconstitute, and get ready for the next field season. This is an important part of the process as each field season presents unique opportunities and challenges. When they are not working in the field, DRUM teams work with LM partners to identify obstacles, make plans to address those challenges, and maximize opportunities.

“Looking ahead, in the 2023 field season, the DRUM teams will start to work their magic in more geographically separated sites, across six additional states, all the while continuing to methodically execute the work on the Navajo Nation and wrapping up the final few — and hardest to access — sites in Colorado and Utah,” Clark said. “It will be a challenging season, but I’m confident that with the outstanding support of our partners, the DRUM team will continue to set the standard for field verification and reporting of abandoned mines across the federal government,” he said.

To learn more about DRUM verification and validation work, visit www.energy.gov/lm/defense-related-uranium-mines-program. ❖



LM Uranium Mine Projects Keep People and Wildlife Safe

Defense-Related Uranium Mines teams install grates that prevent human entry, but allow bats to come and go

In fall 2022, the Defense-Related Uranium Mines program and their strategic partners safeguarded 80 abandoned uranium mine features in eastern Utah.

From mid-November to mid-December, U.S. Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management DRUM partners, Utah Abandoned Mine Lands Reclamation Program, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, and Moab Field Office in Utah, closed hazardous openings at the mines to protect the public. The mines pose a safety risk to people, but can be ideal habitat for bats.

DRUM team member Mary Young said biological surveys were performed to determine whether bats were using the mines or if they would provide suitable habitat. Wherever biologists found evidence of bats, grates were installed at the adits that keep people out but allow bats to come and go freely, Young said.

“If it’s an opening that doesn’t provide any significant habitat for bats, that’s when they’ll close them off completely,” she said.

GOAL 1



Young was with the team members while they sealed mine openings in the lower Kane Creek area near Moab. Staff from the BLM and Utah AMRP accompanied Young.

Young took photos of the work at 13 of the mines features in the Buster, Atomic King, and Canary groups. The photos on the left side of the screen show the adits in their original state. The photos on the right show the same adits after DRUM teams completed their work.

DRUM is a partnership between DOE, federal land management agencies, state abandoned mine lands programs, and tribal governments to inventory and safeguard uranium mines that provided ore for the nation’s nuclear weapons production complex. ❖

BEFORE



AFTER



DOE Office of Legacy Management Director Awarded Highest Honor for Career Civil Servants



Carmelo Melendez wins Presidential Rank Award for Meritorious Service

President Joe Biden named U.S. Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management Director Carmelo Melendez a Presidential Rank Award of Meritorious Service winner, which is considered the highest honor career civil servants can receive.

The award recognizes Melendez's sustained accomplishments within LM, leading to future public health and environmental benefits, vital connection to underserved communities, and cost savings in the tens of millions of dollars.

Melendez was one of 233 winners of the 2022 Senior Executive Service awards, representing 33 federal agencies. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management announced the awards in November 2022.

“This is both a tremendous honor and an incredibly humbling tribute, because it belongs to many influential people in my life — family, friends, colleagues, and mentors — who believed in me and taught me that anything is possible with determination and teamwork,” Melendez said.

Prior to leading LM for the past six years, Melendez was an officer in the U.S. Navy before assuming his role as a senior executive in federal government. His achievements with LM include:

- Validating public health challenges at more than 4,000 abandoned defense-related uranium mines, including hundreds in tribal nations.
- Expanding nationally recognized interpretive centers to engage the public.
- Reusing environmentally remediated lands.
- Advocating for \$300 million in funding to address contaminants in residential areas.
- Protecting the pensions of more than 7,000 former government workers, resulting in reduced future liabilities by \$200 million and \$47 million in funds returned to the U.S. Treasury.



Melendez champions environmental justice ideals by opening communication and building trust with underserved communities. Under his leadership, the U.S. Department of Energy has managed long-term surveillance and maintenance at 101 sites spanning Alaska to Puerto Rico. That number will reach 128 by 2030.

Melendez's collaborations include formal partnerships with the U.S. Department of the Interior, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 35 states, and 25 sovereign tribal nations, all to ensure the success of LM's mission to protect public health and the environment now and in the future.

In the past 10 years, Melendez has served as LM's Senior Real Property Officer and Program Office Director. He led several initiatives to transform LM's assessment, planning, and strategic approach to DOE infrastructure from 2013 to 2016. One initiative established an integrated plan to conduct a first-ever, enterprise-wide infrastructure assessment across all agency locations. The project earned the Secretary of Energy's Honor Award and included reallocating more than \$250 million to agency locations nationwide to address mission needs.

He was a critical contributor to a working group that addressed 1,600 contaminated facilities and recommended spending \$500 million for deactivating and demolishing nuclear reactor sites. He also led the initiative to eliminate more than 2.2 million square feet of excess facilities through demolition or repurposing, thereby saving millions of dollars in occupancy, leasing, and construction costs.

The Presidential Rank Awards Program was established in 1978 to recognize select Senior Executive Service career members for exceptional performance over an extended period. Later, the Rank Award statute was amended to extend eligibility to senior career employees with a sustained record of exceptional professional, technical, and or scientific achievement recognized on a national or international level.

There are two award categories in the program. Just 1 percent of Senior Executive Service members earn a Distinguished Rank Award in any given year, while 5 percent of senior federal leaders are eligible for a Meritorious Rank Award. As in previous years, the winners for 2022 came from a wide range of agencies and mission areas.

“Each and every day, our federal employees are working to address the nation’s most pressing issues, developing technologies to improve millions of lives, and ultimately, achieving the seemingly unachievable on behalf of the American public,” said OPM Director Kiran Ahuja.

“This year’s Presidential Rank Awards reflect the Biden-Harris Administration’s support for hardworking civil servants who exemplify strength, integrity, industry, and a relentless commitment to public service through their exceptional leadership, contributions, and accomplishments.”

The full [2022 Presidential Rank Awards winners](#) list is available on the U.S. Office of Personnel Management website. ❖



ADDITIONAL DOE HONOREES INCLUDE:

Distinguished Executive Winners

- Ingrid Ann Christner.
- Karen O. Henneberger.
- Harriet Kung.
- Catherine R. Mendelsohn.
- Sunita Satyapal.
- William I. White.

Meritorious Executive Winners

- Michael Berube.
- Stephen E. Fisher.
- Juston Fontaine.
- Douglas E. Fremont.
- Robin R. Furrer.
- Christopher S. Johns.
- Rebecca E. Jones-Albertus.
- Katherine L. Konieczny.
- John A. Mullis.
- Teresa M. Robbins.
- Edward F. Watkins.

LM DRUM Program Team Members Win Secretarial Honor Award

GOAL 5



Individuals from the DOE Office of Legacy Management Defense-Related Uranium Mines program were awarded the 2022 Secretary of Energy Achievement Award

The U.S. Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management Defense-Related Uranium Mines team received the 2022 Secretary of Energy Achievement Award, earning the honor for their outstanding achievements and demonstrating cooperation and teamwork in attaining their goals. They located and assessed more than 1,500 mines, working with federal and state agency partners to safeguard nearly 400 mines that posed a risk to human health and the environment.

“This is amazing recognition for an awesome, well deserving team,” said Gordon Clark, LM uranium mine team supervisor, who oversees the DRUM program and the Uranium Leasing Program. “DRUM is every bit a team effort, so for the team to earn this level of recognition speaks to their dedication and professionalism.”

The Energy Secretary grants this award to individuals who make substantial achievements outside their normal duties. LM nominated 18 individuals, including LM DRUM team and support staff, who have shown exceptional determination and commitment to upholding the DRUM program mission to protect communities across the United States.

The DRUM program is a partnership among DOE, federal land management agencies, state abandoned mine lands programs, and tribal governments. These groups evaluate the condition of abandoned uranium mines that provided uranium ore to the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission for defense-related activities. Once these mines were no longer needed, they were abandoned, some with structures intact and equipment left behind. Unfortunately, no complete mine inventory existed, including their physical features or location.

DRUM program staff conduct verification and validation activities to assess any risks the mines might pose, and staff share the assessment data with state and tribal governments. Together, they plan how to address the abandoned mines.



LM DRUM team members prepare for a site visit in summer 2022.

DRUM team members searched historic records, reviewed old manifests, and interviewed community and tribal leaders to find, document, and assess these mines. They have made steady progress assessing uranium mines on public lands, with only 264 of 2,632 mines left to complete. The team achieved a major milestone in March 2022, completing more than 500 mine V&Vs ahead of schedule.

“The DRUM team does incredible work every day, so you could be forgiven if you took that ‘DRUM team magic’ for granted,” Clark said. “That’s why it’s good to take a moment and look back to appreciate the team’s accomplishments.”

Looking ahead, the team is working hard to finish assessing the remaining public mines to meet DRUM’s Campaign 1 goal (phase 1 work). DRUM Campaign 2 kicked off with work on the Pueblo of Laguna and the Navajo Nation (phase 2 work). DRUM Campaign 3 involves assessing DRUM sites on private property and will begin in late 2023 (phase 3 work).” ❖

Legacy Management Operations Center Receives ENERGY STAR Award



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency lauds LM office in Westminster, Colorado, for meeting energy-efficient design criteria

Each year, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ENERGY STAR program honors a group of businesses and organizations that have made outstanding contributions to protecting the environment through superior energy achievements. This year, the U.S. Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management Operations Center in Westminster, Colorado, has been recognized for meeting EPA's energy-efficient design criteria, earning the EPA ENERGY STAR Tenant Space designation for sustainability efforts in a leased office space. This recognition is awarded to a select few applicants from a network of thousands of ENERGY STAR partners that effectively manage and reduce energy consumption.

The Westminster LMOC team began the application process in 2019 and, over the course of several months, focused on these five key actions to improve energy efficiency:

- Estimating energy use.
- Installing efficient lighting.
- Purchasing energy-efficient equipment.
- Benchmarking energy usage shared with the landlord.
- Metering energy use.

The LMOC met square footage and leased-building criteria to qualify for the EPA award. Office staff inventoried all lighting and office equipment and confirmed electricity and gas meters were within the +/- 2% range required for accuracy. Connecting them to EPA's tracking portal allowed ENERGY STAR representatives to measure all energy-saving data over time to determine energy saving efforts.

“The Office of Legacy Management is excited to receive this recognition from the EPA for our efforts to be a leader in energy-efficient office design,” said LM Asset Management Team Supervisor Bud Sokolovich.

Being new to the multi-tenant building, LM was able to make energy-efficiency decisions early in the building design and construction phases, installing energy-saving light fixtures, controls, and office equipment throughout the building. LMOC staff also benchmark the building's energy-use and follow a



DOE Legacy Management Operations Center in Westminster, Colorado, earned the EPA ENERGY STAR Tenant Space designation.

green procurement policy to support LM's on-going commitment to sustainability.

In December 2022, EPA presented a certificate of achievement, along with an ENERGY STAR Tenant Space decal to display in the building's entryway identifying its energy achievements.

The significance of receiving the ENERGY STAR award aligns with LM's values to meet energy-efficient standards, reduce greenhouse gases, and promote a healthier environment overall.

“The LM office is continuously seeking to be a leader in good design. This includes doing our part to reduce greenhouse gases and the impact of our operations in all the communities in which we operate,” Sokolovich said. ❖

DOE's Partnership With University Prepares Students for Careers in Science and Engineering

GOAL 6



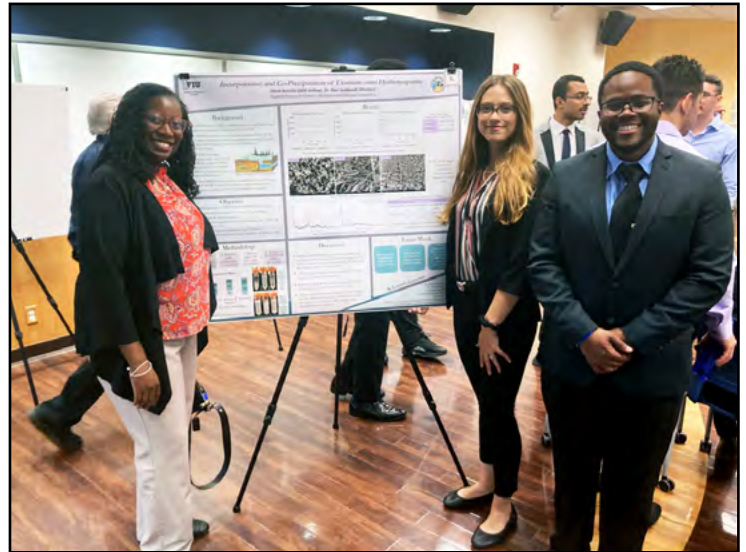
Florida International University's induction ceremony is an exciting time for students and for LM and its partners

Florida International University's induction ceremony that takes place every November is an exciting time for the U.S. Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management, its partners, and, most importantly, for students.

This year, LM Site Managers Darina Castillo and Jalena Dayvault attended the induction ceremony to speak on behalf of DOE's Fellows program, which has been in place for more than 10 years. In partnership with the DOE Office of Environmental Management, LM sponsors current and future fellows, and the program overall. "EM and LM representatives attend every year. It's encouraging to see the complex projects students are working on and meet the new inductees," Dayvault said. "FIU wants it to be known how important this program is, as well as the valuable partnership the program fosters."

The poster-section contest is a highlight of the multiday event. "It was impressive to see the solutions to mission critical problems that the students expertly tackled," Castillo said. "The caliber of students and the valuable hands-on training they're getting through FIU is extraordinary, and DOE set them up to compete for technical positions within DOE or with DOE contractors."

DOE's Fellows program is STEM-focused, and sponsored students study applied engineering and science, which is compatible with LM's mission. FIU's DOE Fellows program is highly coveted and presents the opportunity for students to complete their education in their focused areas of study and pursue STEM careers with DOE, Department contractors, and private industry once they've graduated. ❖



LM Site Manager Darina Castillo (left) attends the November 2022 Florida International University induction ceremony with this year's U.S. Department of Energy Fellows program students, Olivia Bustillo and Shawn Cameron.



U.S. Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management Site Manager Jalena Dayvault speaks on LM's behalf at a Florida International University induction ceremony in November 2022.

LM Implements New Digital Data Collection Methods

GOAL 2



Environmental and Spatial Data Management team uses new technology to improve field-data collection

The LM Environmental and Spatial Data Management team is improving its methods for collecting data in the field by adding ArcGIS tools on Apple iOS phones and tablets to existing field-data collection technology.

The ongoing project to develop tools for additional types of data collection complies with the “21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act,” which was signed into law in December 2018. The project minimizes the need for hard copy spatial data records for site inspections and other purposes. Digital data collection improves efficiency and enhances data quality.

ESDM’s mission is to ensure the integrity, quality, and accessibility of environmental and spatial data for LM’s various programs, sites, and operations. The ESDM team includes technical analysts and scientists who collect, manage, and curate data that is important for long-term site surveillance, maintenance, and environmental stewardship. Historically, LM has documented a lot of geospatial data — including site inspection, environmental sampling, and site operation information — and photographs on paper forms and marked-up paper maps.

Using the new data collection method, LM will be able to collect non-survey grade geospatial data faster and share it with other teams more easily and with greater confidence in its quality.

“LM saw a need to reduce human error and the time spent processing general field data by manual data handling. Since we just built an enterprise geospatial database, now it is possible to make this data accessible in handheld devices instead of using paper and separate files everywhere,” said LM IT Specialist Annette Moore. “Moving to a current technology, we can collect real time discrete data in the field, and send it directly to its authoritative source database, speeding up data access for end users from several days to just hours.”

Beginning in 2019, the ESDM team tackled the project in phases (and are currently in phase 3).

Phase 1: The team examined their current data collection and processes across many sites, how those processes could be improved, and the type of technology needed to make improvements.

Phase 2: The team determined which applications would work best within LM’s infrastructure.

Phase 3: The team applied phases 1 and 2 lessons to develop new workflows, conduct tests and pilot studies, and build training processes to improve data collection capabilities and enable the flow of data into the database.



A field team member tests the new ArcGIS technology on Apple iOS phones and tablets at Fernald Preserve, Ohio, Site’s former production area in January.

“With the field maps and other tools now in use, the team can configure an application for iPhones and iPad tablets to accommodate whatever data needs to be collected,” Moore said. “Field teams can take the tablet to the field and use it to field-check issues identified and to answer questions asked in the office. Finally, we can see where we are and find what features we need using a digital map just like people do on their cell phones every day.” She continued, “Handling and managing paper maps and their potential for loss and damage are becoming an unnecessary risk for fieldwork. Field teams can click on anything in the interactive map, get more information about the feature, log it, and even upload photos.”

Although the ArcGIS integration is in its early stages, LM staff are pleased with preliminary results.

“We are already seeing rapid turnaround of updated maps and photo features,” Moore said. “Since it only takes a few minutes to upload and sync the device, it can streamline a lot of the workload for us. We are looking forward to continuing to evolve this technology and keep improving the geospatial program.” ❖

FUSRAP Site in Upstate New York Sold at Auction

GOAL 4



Former National Lead Company property in Colonie, New York, transferred to private ownership

After nearly four decades under federal ownership, the U.S. Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management Colonie, New York, Site is back in private hands, as of Jan. 5, 2023.

“This represents a huge milestone for the site,” said LM Site Manager Shawn Eichelberger. “Getting our sites back into beneficial reuse is always one of LM’s primary goals.” He continued, “Back in the 1920s, a toy manufacturer operated at the site ... The site has had a fascinating past, and I’m looking forward to seeing its exciting future.”

Before being federally owned, the site on Central Avenue belonged to National Lead Company, which began operating a foundry at the site in 1937. In 1958, the company began manufacturing uranium and thorium for the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission. After AEC’s contract ended in 1968, the plant fabricated shielding components, aircraft counterweights, and artillery projectiles from depleted uranium. (In 1971, National Lead Company changed its name to NL Industries Inc.)



The former NL Industries Inc. plant in 1983.



The former NL Industries Inc. plant after remediation.

STEWARDSHIP



The former NL Industries Inc. plant during remediation.

In 1984, the New York State Supreme Court shut down the NL Industries Inc. plant because of airborne-uranium releases. Subsequently, Congress assigned cleanup responsibility to DOE, and the federal government acquired the property. Then, under the Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program, DOE investigated soil and groundwater for contamination, removed onsite buildings, and cleaned up most of the properties in the vicinity.

When Congress transferred FUSRAP cleanup to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1997, USACE began site remediation, including excavating and disposing 135,000 cubic yards of soil. After the site was deemed suitable for commercial and restricted residential use, USACE transferred the site to LM for long-term stewardship on Sept. 30, 2019.

“Once the site became our responsibility, we immediately began exploring how to make it available for redevelopment to benefit the community,” said LM FUSRAP Program Manager Darina Castillo.

The private ownership transfer was completed in January 2023 through a U.S. General Services Administration auction. However, LM continues its long-term site stewardship responsibilities include monitoring groundwater, managing site records, and coordinating with the new owner and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to conduct long-term periodic reviews.

“It took a lot of work and collaboration to get where we are today,” Castillo said. “Getting the property back into private ownership is a tribute to USACE’s dedication to cleanup and to GSA’s commitment to disposition.” ❖



The former NL Industries Inc. plant after remediation.

Peter O’Konski Retires After 35 Years of Exceptional Service

GOAL 5



DOE Office of Legacy Management deputy director received the Secretary’s Exceptional Service award for his long-tenured federal service

After 35 years of dedicated federal service, U.S. Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management Deputy Director Peter O’Konski has wrapped a diverse federal career.

At an in-person and virtual ceremony in Washington, D.C., on Dec. 6, 2022, friends and colleagues spoke kind words and offered best wishes to O’Konski. They gave him gifts and awards, and thanked him for his years of service and commitment to LM’s mission to protect human health and the environment.

During the ceremony, O’Konski received the Secretary’s Exceptional Service award for his long-tenured federal service and dedication to DOE and the nation. Secretary Jennifer Granholm signed the certificate and award presented to O’Konski by DOE Chief Sustainability Officer Ingrid Kolb.

“It is my honor to present to Peter O’Konski, our esteemed colleague, the Secretary’s Exceptional Service Award,” said Kolb, presenting him with the award certificate, which she read aloud: “In recognition of over 35 years of federal service at the U.S. Department of Energy and the Department of Defense, Mr. Peter J. O’Konski has spent the last four years at the Office of Legacy Management as deputy director. He has garnered numerous awards and accolades for his work ethic, and the quality of service he consistently delivered to customers throughout his career.”

Kolb spoke about O’Konski’s many achievements and improvements during his time with DOE as LM deputy director and throughout his 35-year federal career. “He has been instrumental in improving long-term sustainability of environmental remedies, utilizing his expert knowledge and his willingness to address complex and often controversial issues, and his ability to put forth amiable collaborative solutions,” she said.



Kolb presented a silver clock to O’Konski while the room laughed and joked about setting a very early alarm for the day after his retirement.

After Kolb spoke, LM Director Carmelo Melendez presented him a triangular glass frame with a blue flag adorned with a white eagle emblem that represents DOE.

“I’m very honored and humbled. I really am. I’m happy to be surrounded by friends and colleagues,” O’Konski said as he addressed in-person and virtual attendees. “I am very proud to be a part of the DOE, and my tenure began with Secretary Abraham.

“That’s not Abraham Lincoln, by the way,” O’Konski joked. “It’s hard to believe it’s been seven secretaries since then. It has been a privilege to serve the Department. I always try to remind everyone that public service is more than a job, but a much bigger effort. Our goal is to make a positive difference, and I really appreciate my time at LM. LM has a very clear, defined mission, and when you understand what the mission is then you can continue to improve.”

After earning a mechanical engineering bachelor’s degree from the Catholic University of America, a fire-protection engineering master’s degree from the University of Maryland, and a business MBA from George Mason University, O’Konski had several civilian positions within the U.S. military. O’Konski served as the Naval District regional planning and programming director in Washington, D.C., until 2000, where he led capital improvement and repair projects program planning and budgeting. He also served as the Department’s liaison to the Major Claimant.

O’Konski then served as the U.S. Navy Public Works Center utilities director for two years, successfully leading his department through a commercial activities study before becoming chief engineer. In that post, O’Konski was responsible for all design and engineering services for Washington, D.C., Navy facilities.

In April 2004, he began working at DOE as the director of facility policy and professional development, then as director of the Office of Administration in 2011. He was promoted to LM deputy director in 2018, which is the role he served until he retired in December 2022.



Denise Freeman , Melinda Downing (second from left), Peter O’Konski (second from right), and Ingrid Colbert at an environmental justice conference.

As LM deputy director, O’Konski provided leadership to DOE by fulfilling LM site post-closure responsibilities that protect human health and the environment.

O’Konski thanked his DOE and LM colleagues and friends who supported him along the way.

“Director Melendez sets a great tone for the organization, and that trickles down to others. I equate it to how a director of a jazz band operates,” O’Konski said. “He sets the tempo and brings together the musicians, but also allows us the freedom to interpret our work; supports the bandmates; and allows them to improve when they may miss a couple notes.”

“I’m very pleased to leave this organization with a lot of great musicians or cats, as they call them. There are a lot of great cats at LM who are talented, committed, and valued members of the band, and I know when the curtain goes up, they will make a great sound,” O’Konski said. “The show will go on. Thank you all for everything you do for the band.” ❖

Navy Veteran Spends Her Career Pursuing the Unexpected

GOAL 5



DOE Office of Legacy Management's new ECHO team member has had a long and winding career path

Some people pursue their calling in life, leading them straight to the destination they always imagined. Christine Jost isn't one of those people. In every stage of her life, Jost pursued the unexpected. She joined the U.S. Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management Education, Communication, History, and Outreach team a few months ago, with a story chock-full of twists and turns.

Jost's first pivot was after high school when the University of Missouri awarded her a partial athletic scholarship. "I just was so excited that I got a scholarship that I didn't really think it through. So here I go from this small high school to this huge university. I was completely overwhelmed," she said.

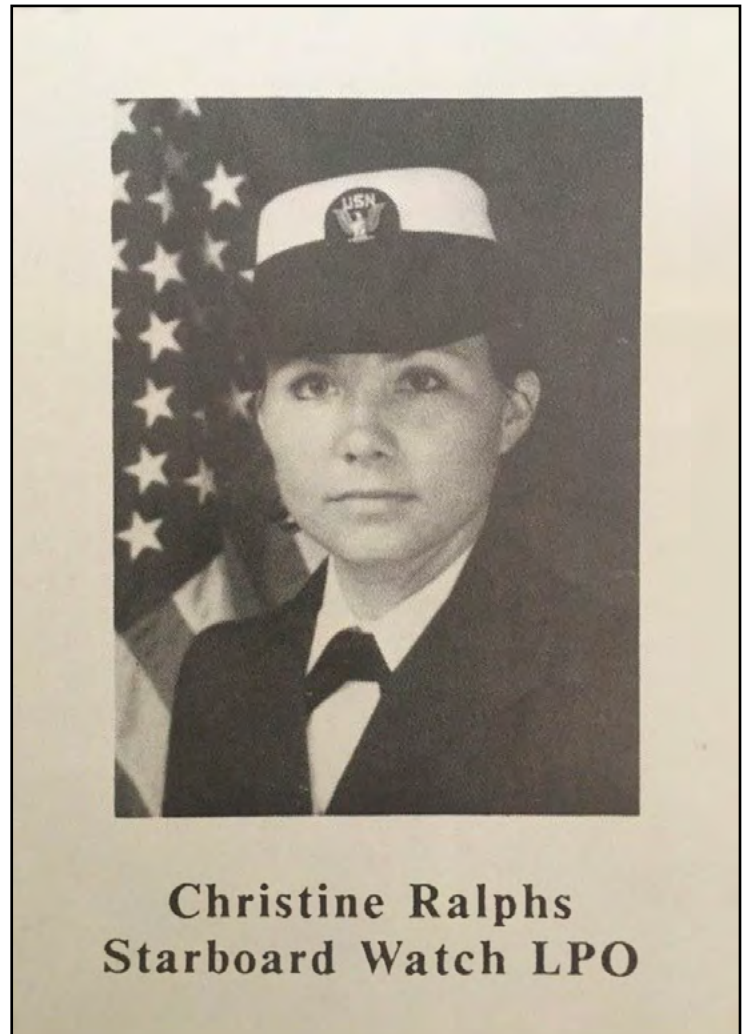
In fact, one semester, she left college, decided not to return, and joined the military instead. She chose the Navy, thinking she might have a better chance of locating near the beach.

Boot camp offered an unexpected opportunity. "At boot camp, they said females could be part of what's called EOD. That stands for Explosive Ordnance Disposal," Jost said. "So basically, it's the bomb squad for the military."

Explosive Ordnance Disposal demands were tough, but Jost had a couple of advantages. "I had just finished the 1989 Miss Massachusetts bodybuilding competition, so the physical fitness part of it was, and I don't mean this in a conceited way, but it was pretty darn easy," she said.

Even in the sweltering Georgia summer heat, she thrived at Jump School, a U.S. Army paratrooper airborne training program. "I had a blast. I mean, it was just a great time," she said.

Encouraged by the Army-Navy rivalry, "I was the first out of the door for all five qualifying jumps, and I loved it. It's like going on a roller coaster ride that, at first, you're nervous and thinking, 'I don't know if I want to do this.' And then you do it, and you want to get back in line and get right back on and do it again."



U.S. Navy Leading Petty Officer Christine Jost in June 1989. "I was Starboard Watch, which means I was 'in charge' of half the recruit company," Jost said. The company had 40 female recruits.

"I was the seventh female in the United States military to qualify as an EOD Tech," Jost said. With EOD comes requirements, called ratings. Jost's rating was maintaining nuclear weapons. It was here, as a Weapons Technician, she discovered a purpose amidst nuclear weapons and radioactivity, picking up knowledge that would help her excel when she started working with LM years later.



Jost at Jump School in July 1991 with the commanding officer of the Fort Benning command, a U.S. Army post in Georgia. “Being Navy and female, there was a bit of a spotlight on me,” Jost said. “Quickly, it became a friendly rivalry.”



Jost at EOD graduation in February 1993 in Indian Head, Maryland. She was the only woman in her class.



Jost's daughters followed her example and joined the Navy. Jo Ann (left) enlisted after graduating from high school, and Victoria (right) graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy as a SEABEE officer. The two are pictured at Jo Ann's boot camp graduation at Great Lakes Recruiting Command near Chicago.

After her military service, Jost searched for a good fit for her newly acquired skills in leadership, management, and discipline. After running a bed and breakfast in Alaska, she stumbled across Mary Kay. Yes, that Mary Kay. "As corny as it may sound, a lot of the things that I've learned about leadership and management and discipline beyond the Navy was through Mary Kay. Everybody sells something. It all comes down to being a good communicator," she said. She quickly rose through the ranks of the home beauty juggernaut, earning the iconic pink Cadillac — a testament to her success in one of the most underrated, real-life business management opportunities for women.

In 2008, Jost accepted a position in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to recruit workers for jobs that can be difficult to fill. "I produced radio and TV ads and all sorts of things to recruit those hard-to-fill positions, which was extremely rewarding but also very challenging," Jost said. As the supervisor for patient advocates, she moved on from disarming bombs to supporting veterans.

Then, she experienced another pivot, one that she never imagined. "I was on the USAJOBS website and saw a post for an LM position. I didn't even know what LM was," Jost said.

Deciding to take another leap of faith, she landed one of her most rewarding positions to date. All the skills she learned throughout her career made her a perfect fit for LM. Being a leader, an organized manager, and a good communicator helped Jost get where she is today. "I want to make sure that as a communications expert, I'm helping LM get the information we need and promote more positive experiences," she said.

Among all the twists and turns of her career, Jost was determined to follow her passions and set an example for her two daughters, Victoria and Jo Ann. Both were inspired to follow in their mom's footsteps. Victoria graduated as a Seabee (construction battalion) Engineering Officer from the U.S. Naval Academy. Jo Ann went the enlisted route, completing one enlistment as an Airdale, a sailor who works in the Navy's aviation community.

"I'm very proud of my daughters. Not just because they went Navy, but because they aren't afraid of hard work, and they go after their goals," she said.

As Jost repeatedly pursued the unexpected, she hopes to continually make a positive impact on LM and inspire those around her. ❖



New Legacy Management Deputy Director Scott Whiteford Reflects on a Long and Storied Career



Skills he learned working for the U.S. Navy have served him well in his new role

Scott Whiteford admits he was following his wife's lead when he moved to Maryland more than 30 years ago. "She was going to Colorado State [University], getting her Ph.D., and when it was time for her to get a real job, we moved to Maryland and I've been here since," said U.S. Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management Deputy Director Scott Whiteford.

Whiteford's first job in the "real world" was in U.S. Navy real estate. As a base closure officer, he oversaw property transfers from the Navy to the U.S. General Services Administration for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

"When I was with the Navy, as part of the base closure process, they had what they called 'local reuse authority.' So, it's similar to community reuse organizations in the Department of Energy," Whiteford said.

As he reflects on his career path, he says each job serendipitously prepared him for the next. "You'd work directly with stakeholders, including local community groups, state and local governments, and politicians, to deal with the issues associated with environmental remediation and beneficial reuse."

He didn't know it at the time, but these skills would prepare him for his future position with DOE Community Reuse Organizations.



"After I worked for the Navy, I worked for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as the Director of Real Estate for the Army," said Whiteford. In that role, he led 850 team members in 40 locations worldwide. In 2014, Whiteford joined DOE Office of Asset Management, where he oversaw policy oversight and guidance in real estate, facilities and infrastructure, personal property, and sustainability.

Whiteford experienced a major career highlight during his time with OAM. He was part of the team that wrote the memorandum of agreement with the National Park Service for the Manhattan Project National Historical Park. In fact, he managed planning for the signing ceremony with the Secretary of Energy and the Secretary of the Interior in November 2015.

"I tell people that's one of the neatest things I've done," Whiteford said. "I've done base closures before, but actually getting to start something up? That was unique."

Fast forward to January 2023 when Whiteford began his new position as LM deputy director. His first several weeks were filled with travel and touring sites around the United States. Whiteford said the sites' diversity is poised to create another career highlight.

"The view of the world changes depending upon the seat you're sitting in. The fact that we have boots on the ground at these sites and influence what happens in the communities is a big deal." ❖

K-25 SITE FACILITY OPERATIONS MISSION

The mission of the K-25 Site Facility Operations (SFO) organization is to conduct for the Department of Energy (DOE) those activities necessary to:

- manage and control the utilization of shut-down K-25 facilities, including the performance of surveillance and maintenance;
- dispose of noncontaminated surplus materials and components removed from the shut-down facilities; and
- manage a K-25 Site program to decontaminate facilities and equipment.

These activities are to be performed in a manner that complies with applicable regulations and requirements and that demonstrates sensitivity to:

- the environmental, safety, and health implications of the SFO program;
- effective utilization of DOE and Energy Systems resources; and
- technical innovation and competence.



(From left) Rob Seifert, Josh Silverman, and Eric Boyle at the Specialty Chemicals display at the K-25 History Museum where evidence of PFAS use was “hiding in plain sight,” according to Silverman.

LM Historian on a Mission to Uncover Secrets From the Past

GOAL 5



Eric Boyle recognized in Secretary of Energy Achievement Award

When U.S. Department of Energy Historian Eric Boyle transferred to the Office of Legacy Management nearly three years ago, he said the Department's origin story was his favorite part of the agency's history.

“The Manhattan Project itself is such a fascinating story and time, with all sorts of amazing characters and monumental challenges faced, discoveries made, and things built.”

Back then Boyle could be found poking around the 6,000 cubic feet of archives and research materials at a DOE archives facility in Germantown, Maryland. He never imagined then that he'd be tapped to help unravel one of the most consequential mysteries from that era.

“It's a very complex issue and a very difficult task to complete because you're dealing with chemicals people didn't think were dangerous for decades,” he said.

Boyle is referring to a massive federal effort to address the impacts of man-made, highly persistent chemicals that don't occur in nature called the “forever chemicals;” per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS. The work that Boyle performed as part of those efforts earned him a Secretary of Energy Achievement Award.

“The Department of Energy has a unique historic relationship to PFAS, which were first produced on an industrial scale for use in the Manhattan Project,” said Josh Silverman, chairman of the PFAS Coordinating Committee at DOE. “A national focus on PFAS led to an array of federal and state-level regulatory approaches and policy initiatives, creating confusion across the DOE complex.”

Silverman, who leads the environmental division of the Office of Environment, Health, Safety and Security, reached out to Boyle at the beginning of a coordinated effort to identify sites where there were more than trace amounts of PFAS so a roadmap on how to address the problem could be created for DOE teams. Boyle had scant information to start with and dozens of questions.

“Where were they made, what processes were used for their development,” Boyle remembered thinking. “Even though the chemicals themselves weren’t classified, the details on how they were used remained classified. My first job was to figure out what was going on here.”

When his research using exhaustive search terms turned up nothing, Boyle remembered something Silverman had mentioned.

“I know they were used in Oak Ridge,” Boyle recalls Silverman saying.

Oak Ridge, Tennessee, is a small town that played a big role in World War II history. The entire city took shape around an enormous 44-acre uranium enrichment complex built for the Manhattan Project. Once shrouded in secrecy, the gaseous diffusion plant known as K-25 has since been demolished and replaced by a corporate and industrial park known as the East Tennessee Technology Center as well as DOE offices containing thousands of still-classified documents.

Nearby is the K-25 History Center where historic objects and exhibits about the men and women who worked on the development of the first atomic bombs are open to the public. Among them is a sign that says, “What you see here, what you do here, what you hear here, when you leave here, let it stay here.”

Boyle had his work cut out for him.

After digging through dozens of boxes with countless documents, Boyle hit pay dirt. He had found the needle in the haystack — a classified report that was written in 1946 after the K-25 building had been constructed.

“After it was redacted, there was one paragraph that identified a specific PFAS that had been used as a coolant at the K25 site — gaseous diffusion site,” said Boyle.

“As they were trying to construct the first gaseous diffusion plants (to separate and enrich the uranium isotopes), they discovered uranium hexafluoride gas was a corrosive substance and had to find a way to protect the equipment,” Boyle said. He pulled on that thread and began to unravel the mystery.

“The report identified the use of 150,000 gallons of a particular PFAS, but instead of being used as a protective barrier in the equipment, as we had suspected, it was being used as a coolant,” Boyle explained.

While published sources had traced the origins of Teflon (the name DuPont gave to a family of chemicals used to create nonstick surfaces) to work done in Oak Ridge during the Manhattan Project, this was the first concrete evidence of this particular use.

“DOE Historian Eric Boyle first identified the documents that established the large-scale use of PFAS at the Oak Ridge K-25 plant, then played a key role in developing the protocols for DOE sites and programs to use in assessing the historic uses of PFAS at their locations,” Silverman said. “He also scoured historic records held at DOE headquarters and at the National Archives facility in College Park, Maryland, to identify how and where PFAS were used in the 1940s, ’50s, and ’60s.”

For his intrepid research, Silverman included Boyle in his nomination for the Secretary of Energy Achievement Award that reads, in part, “Your participation has enabled the Department of Energy to gather information about current and past uses of PFAS, identifying previously unknown uses and releases; to develop policies, guidance documents, and educational materials to support more effective efforts to manage PFAS-related liabilities.”

Boyle says the accolade came as a big surprise, especially since the PFAS Policy Development Team is an interdisciplinary group of experts working across the DOE complex.

“I was very surprised and honored,” said Boyle.

For Boyle, a journey that started as a passion for preserving history has led to the discovery of a treasure map to unlock future mysteries. He says the thrill of that pursuit is reward enough. ❖



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