

# Charter for the Abandoned Uranium Mines Working Group

## 1.0 Purpose

This interagency charter establishes the purpose, goals, and objectives of the Abandoned Uranium Mines Working Group (AUMWG). AUMWG members (defined below) will collaborate to identify technical, programmatic, financial, legal, and other issues regarding the human health and environmental risks posed by abandoned uranium mines (AUMs). AUMWG will serve as the umbrella organization for the communication of federal government-wide AUM technical, policy, and practical application issues; lessons learned; and best practices.

This charter will foster effective AUMWG communication and facilitate coordination between working group members in a way consistent with the provisions set forth below.

## 2.0 Participating Members

AUMWG comprises representatives from the following federal agencies:

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture, including:
  - U.S. Forest Service (USFS).
- The U.S. Department of the Interior, including:
  - The U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM).
  - The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.
  - The U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs.
  - The U.S. Geological Survey.
  - The National Park Service.
  - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Legacy Management, including:
  - The Defense-Related Uranium Mines (DRUM) Program.
  - The Uranium Leasing Program.
- The U.S. Department of Defense
- The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Attachment 1 lists the points of contact for each AUMWG member agency and for other relevant federal agencies.

## **3.0 Background**

The August 2014 DRUM Report to Congress prepared by DOE identified 4225 mines that operated before 1970 from which the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) purchased uranium ore. Because AEC was the sole purchaser of uranium ore from 1947 to 1966 in the United States and continued to purchase ore to the end of 1970, the Report to Congress focused on defense-related AUMs from that time period (i.e., 1947–1970). However, defense-related AUMs represent only a fraction of the AUMs on lands under the stewardship of the federal government.

Using the Report to Congress' list of 4225 uranium mines, which was collected and compiled from available records, as a starting point, mine reconciliation efforts correlated each mine with a specific geographic location and production size. Subsequent evaluation resulted in a reduction of the total number of reconciled mines to 3472. This reduction was based on many factors but was primarily due to the resolution of duplicate mine records. The Application of additional evaluation criteria resulted in a further reduction of the total number of mines identified for field verification and validation visits to 3098. The 3098 reconciled DRUM Program sites identified for field evaluation are on federal, state, and tribal land and private property.

The Report to Congress indicates that more than 90% of DRUM sites are in the five states of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming, with some additional prominent sites in other states. Most sites (over 65%) are small or small/medium mines, each having produced 1000 tons or less of ore. Nearly 60% of all the mines are on federal public lands managed by BLM and USFS. BLM estimates that 50% of mines on public land will likely require site inspections to identify and evaluate threats to human health and the environment, as well as to determine if response actions are warranted.

The Report to Congress concluded that 11% of DRUM sites are on tribal lands and that the majority of these are on the Navajo Nation. Because the radiological risks are not immediately evident at many AUMs, mine waste material has been used in the construction of some homes, and in other cases, homes have been built directly on top of mine waste. To date, 34 homes on the Navajo Nation have been remediated or replaced due to radiological contamination. On the Pueblo of Laguna, five residential structures have had contaminated soil removed, 24 residential structures have had radon abatement systems installed, and one residential structure was replaced. On the Pueblo of Acoma, two residential structures have had contaminated soil removed, five residential structures have required replacement of structural materials, and one residential structure has had a radon abatement system installed. On nontribal land in New Mexico's Grants Mineral Belt region, 68 homes have had contaminated soil removed, two homes have had structural materials replaced, and 29 homes have had radon abatement systems installed.

## **4.0 Problem Statement**

Communities in and around uranium producing and processing areas related to the legacy of past U.S. government defense operations disproportionately experience human health, environmental, and physical safety impacts from nearby legacy uranium mining and processing sites. AUMWG was formed to work within each agency's jurisdictional authority to address these challenges,

which include assessing risks to the public and environment, identifying potential risk mitigation strategies and emerging technologies, prioritizing the direction of resources for physical safeguarding and reclamation, and, when warranted, cleanup actions under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) (Title 42 *United States Code* Section 9601 et seq.).

The Report to Congress discussed several potential risks to human health and the environment based on a conceptual site model developed from EPA risk evaluation components. Potential risks to human health and the environment were grouped into two primary categories: (1) immediate risks due to physical hazards posed by mine-related features and (2) risks associated with long-term exposure to mining-related chemical and radiological waste and residue. Both risk categories apply to human health and ecological health.

## **5.0 Work Products**

AUMWG work products will include:

- Shared DRUM Program site and AUM mine site data (these data will be shared whenever possible).
- Briefings on or demonstrations of new technologies.
- Shared lessons learned covering all aspects of AUM management, including assessments, data collection and management, risk and risk mitigation, legislation and appropriations, long-term surveillance and maintenance, and reporting.
- Coordination of schedules, priorities, and resources on actions of interest to two or more AUMWG members.
- Coordinated minutes from all meetings, which will serve as records of issues identified, specify the proponent(s) of each action, document the approach to issue resolution, track issue status, and collect any lessons learned.
- Briefing documents for states, tribes, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, and Congress, as necessary or prudent.
- Annual AUMWG Stakeholder Reports and communications strategy documents.

## **6.0 Period of Performance**

The period of performance for AUMWG is projected to be the period ending September 30, 2030, which is 2 years after the “no later than” date of September 30, 2028, for the completion of DOE’s DRUM Program field verification and validation work. This period could be extended if an identified need arises and is agreed to in writing by those AUMWG members who wish to extend their participation.

AUMWG will meet quarterly with the goal of at least one in-person meeting per fiscal year. Members may meet more frequently to work on specific products or tasks, as needed. Members will update the AUMWG subcommittee on areas of interest or concern, new technologies,

lessons learned, risk mitigation approaches, and progress on specific tasks during the quarterly meetings.



Note 1

*AUMWG is intended to facilitate communication within the federal government and is not intended, and cannot be relied upon, to create any rights enforceable by any party, person, or entity against the United States. Any AUMWG member agency may terminate its participation at any time. Each individual agency also reserves its rights consistent with each agency's statutory and regulatory authority. This charter may be modified or amended only upon the written agreement of the federal member agencies.*



Note 2

*This charter does not constitute final agency action on any issue, and any actions contemplated by this charter will be carried out through an appropriate administrative process by the action agency in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations.*

**Attachment 1**

**List of Federal Contacts**

FEDERAL CONTACTS						
Name	Agency	Office/Program	Title	Email	Phone Number	Location
<b>U.S. Environmental Protection Agency</b>						
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