U.S. DEPARTMENT of ENERGY | Legacy Management

PROGRAM UPDATE

JANUARY-MARCH 2025

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LM ***STRATEGIC PLANNING***

Director's Corner

Long-Term Planning an Essential Aspect of LM's Growing Mission

Abraham Lincoln once stated that if he had six hours to chop down a tree, he'd spend the first four sharpening the axe.

His exaggerated colloquialism makes a succinct point that success cannot be attained without understanding the objective and an approach for how to get there. In our long-term stewardship world at the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Legacy Management (LM), we put it another way.

"Plan the work and work the plan."

That was our intent when we developed the *LM Fiscal Year 2025-2035 Strategic Plan*, a document that outlines our strategy over the next 10 years to perform our mission-driven work. In this edition of *Program Update*, there is information about that plan, how it aligns with our core functions, and how we are accommodating growth that will expand our portfolio during that span by more than 25%.

LM's site management responsibilities are broad and diverse. We are protecting human health and the environment at 103 sites in more than 30 states and territories. We manage commitments to more than 7,000 retired contractor workers, more than 110,000 cubic feet of physical records, 31 terabytes of electronic data and information, and 57,000 acres of land.

Although site transitions are occasionally delayed because of external factors, we expect up to 30 additional sites to be transferred to LM by 2035. As a result, we need to be prepared and positioned by strategically acquiring and allocating our resources to achieve our mission and meet our goals and objectives.

This includes early and frequent engagement and communication with organizations transferring sites, as well as associated regulatory agencies and stakeholders, to better understand site remedies and operating costs and tailor our resource requirements to the complexity of sites being transferred. Our resource strategy is best described in three broad areas: people and organizations, technology and processes, and funding and acquisition.

DOE remains committed to managing responsibilities associated with the legacy of World War II and the Cold War. This legacy includes radioactive and chemical waste, environmental contamination, and hazardous materials at sites across the United States and the territory of Puerto Rico from nuclear weapons production that contributed to the defense of the nation.

DOE has taken significant steps toward fulfilling its commitments to clean up this environmental legacy, and we are protecting those investments with long-term stewardship. Since 2003, LM has been protecting human health and the environment within the communities that made sacrifices for the nation during one of the most critical periods in our country's history.

Although we have made significant contributions through our commitment to long-term stewardship, we also recognize that the successful execution of our mission depends on connecting and effectively communicating with the public, other government organizations, and Tribal partners. Accordingly, public outreach, intergovernmental collaboration, and effective dialogue with Tribal partners will remain central to all our work.

LM looks forward to the continued involvement of all our stakeholders and Tribal partners as LM implements cost-effective solutions to address the challenges that lie ahead. We will continue to sharpen our axe with the understanding that collaborations with our partners make it a lot sharper.

Sincerely,

Carmelo

Carmelo Melendez

U.S. DEPARTMENT of ENERGY | Legacy Management

Welcome to the January-March 2025 issue of the U.S. Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management ***Program Update***. This publication is designed to provide a status of activities within LM. Please direct all comments and inquiries to LM-ProgramUpdate@lm.doe.gov.

GOAL **ONE**
Protect human health and the environment.

GOAL **TWO**
Preserve, protect, and share records and information.

GOAL **THREE**
Safeguard former contractor workers' retirement benefits.

GOAL **FOUR**
Sustainably manage and optimize the use of land and assets.

GOAL **FIVE**
Sustain management excellence.

GOAL **SIX**
Engage the public, governments, and interested parties.

Inside This Update:

Wright Sworn in as 17th Energy Secretary

U.S. Secretary of Energy Chris Wright released the following statement after being sworn in Feb. 3 as the 17th Secretary of Energy:

"Thank you to President Trump and the United States Senate for entrusting me with the great responsibility of leading the United States Department of Energy," Secretary Wright said. "The President has outlined a bold and ambitious agenda for restoring American energy dominance. A key component of this vision is the United States leading the world in energy development and innovation. Our department is critical in accomplishing these goals by cutting red tape, prioritizing common-sense solutions, and fostering American ingenuity.

"I am honored and humbled by the responsibility and immense opportunity to help meet the American people's growing energy needs. Our next chapter will strengthen our nation's energy leadership by developing our enviable resources, bolstering global partnerships, and advancing new technologies.

"When American energy is unleashed, human lives are bettered. I look forward to serving."

The swearing-in occurred at the Department of Energy Headquarters. A formal swearing-in and welcoming took place later in the week.

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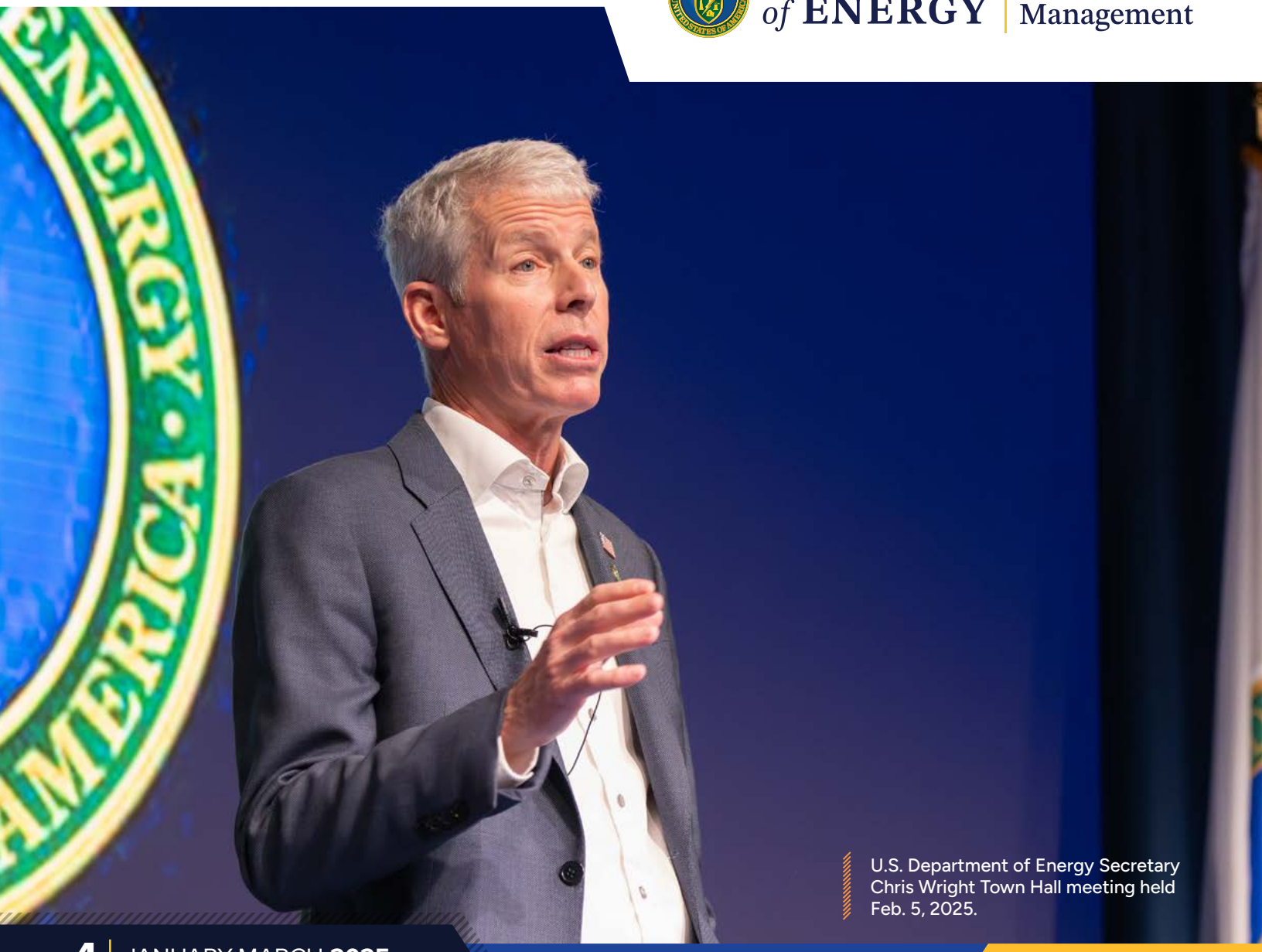


U.S. Department of Energy Secretary Chris Wright Town Hall meeting held Feb. 5, 2025.

LM's Strategic Plan Helps Pave Way for Successful Mission

Plan defines goals, vision, and principles to guide future work

Every 10 years, the Office of Legacy Management (LM) publishes a strategic plan for the upcoming 10 fiscal years. Recently, LM released its strategic plan for fiscal years 2025-2035.

The plan outlines each of LM's six goals, its programs, and the strategies that LM will use to complete its mission to protect human health and the environment over the years to come. LM uses this document as a tool to critically look over past projects and better align goals for the future.

"We do a 10-year plan because it allows LM to sustain success," said LM Director Carmelo Melendez. "We can focus on the long-term vision, and it provides LM with a roadmap toward achieving big goals in segments."

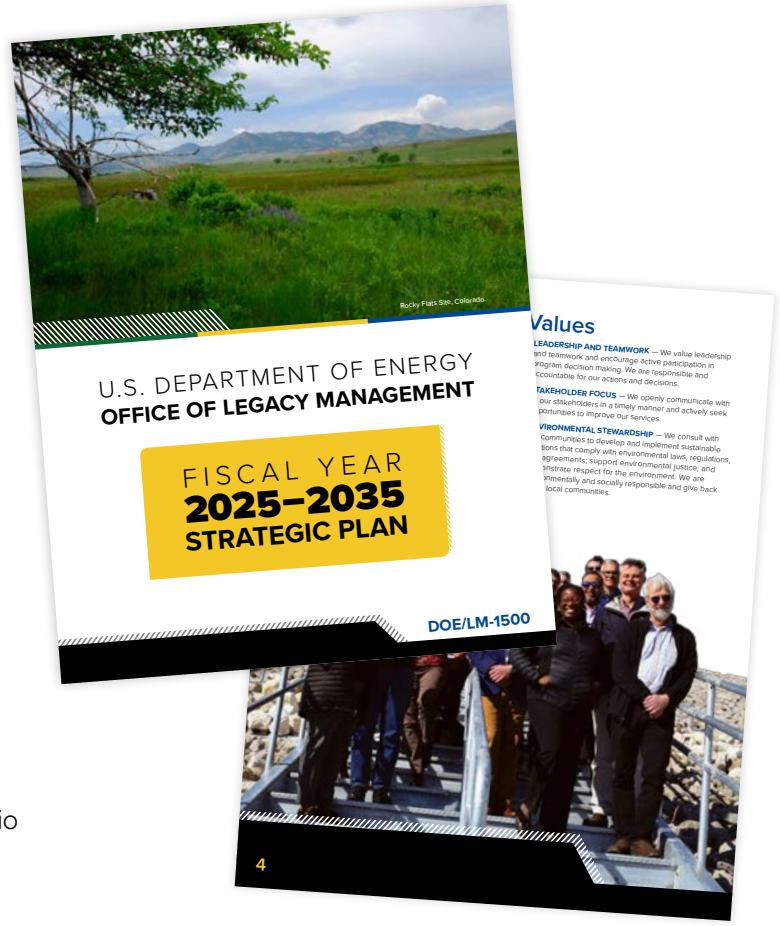
Although the new plan follows the same format as the 2016-2025 strategic plan, it has evolved to better accomplish LM's mission and goals and identify areas where LM can become more efficient and effective.

"Since the last edition, things at LM have changed significantly," said Melendez. "We're seeing increasing frequency and intensity of severe weather events, the presence of emerging contaminants of concern, market conditions and supply chain issues, and a growing portfolio of aging infrastructure and facilities."

Through the development of each plan, LM takes into consideration feedback from its partners, the public, and stakeholders, making sure to address any concerns from the past and devising the best plan for future projects going forward.

"The point is not to maintain the status quo, but rather to put our efforts, and taxpayer dollars, where they can have the greatest impact on accomplishing our mission and goals," Melendez added. "The successful execution of our mission depends on connecting and effectively communicating with the public, other government organizations, and Tribal partners. Accordingly, public outreach, intergovernmental collaboration, and effective dialogue with Tribal partners will remain central to all our work."

The most important aspects of the plan that LM will focus on are modernizing its record-keeping system to be more efficient and moving to a more digital workplace. LM plans to integrate more electronic systems to become more mobile during fieldwork and implement more remote environmental data systems, which will strengthen long-term surveillance and maintenance activities. With a more digital environment, LM's vulnerability to cyber threats will increase, so there will be a critical focus on cybersecurity.



LM will continue to manage its sites across the United States and Puerto Rico, and it expects to gain another 30 sites by 2035. Melendez expressed that these new sites will be more complex and challenging and emphasized the importance of remaining focused on growth and LM's long-term stewardship.

"It's important that we can continue to identify and adopt new information and innovation to address climate impacts and make site resilience a cornerstone of our operations," Melendez said. "We need to remain prepared and positioned to carry out responsibilities and meet our goal and objectives. This plan allows us to put our best foot forward."

Strategic Plan Provides LM Opportunity for Course Corrections, Capitalizing on Past Mission Successes

LM leaders: Document not one-time event, but result of decade of lessons learned

Since 2003, the U.S. Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management (LM) has been protecting human health and the environment within communities that made sacrifices for the nation during one of the most critical periods in the country's history.

LM continues to conduct long-term surveillance and maintenance at sites where nuclear waste has been disposed, where residual contamination remains, and where passive or active treatment of groundwater contaminated by radionuclides or other contaminants of concern is being done.

Periodically, LM assesses its capabilities and strategic context and develops a document that charts a course for the next five to 10 years of operations. The Office's *2025-2035 Strategic Plan* communicates the intended direction of the organization, according to LM Office of Site Operations (OSO) Director Jay Glascock. Its audience is not only LM staff, but its stakeholders and partners.

"It helps the OSO prioritize its efforts, allocate its resources, and align its goals with that of the greater organization. Some view strategy as a one-time event, but that's not how it works," Glascock said. "Practically, we refer to it often to ensure we are on the right track."

Each strategic plan builds upon operational experiences and lessons learned, Glascock said, helping LM shape a more effective strategy.

> *It's not only important to celebrate what went right over time and understand why, but also equally important to understand what didn't go so well. In essence, we are translating lessons learned into actionable steps we can strategically take to better accomplish our goals.*
>
> —Jay Glascock

"It's not only important to celebrate what went right over time and understand why, but also equally important to understand what didn't go so well," Glascock said. "In essence, we are translating lessons learned into actionable steps we can strategically take to better accomplish our goals."

Over time, LM has learned that changing conditions have impacted how it conducts its operations and manages its sites. As severe weather events become more common, previously unknown contaminants are identified, market conditions change, and infrastructure ages, LM must adapt.

The strategic plan also includes situational analysis for each of LM's six organizational goals, which helps LM prepare for and look into the future. With the expected addition of up to 30 sites under its management by 2035, an accurate analysis is critically important, Glascock said.

"As organizations complete cleanup, the largest and most severely contaminated challenges remain and represent some of the most complex sites for LM to manage," he said. "Knowing this, we must posture our organization for success in carrying out the mission in the future."

LM Office of Business Operations (OBO) Director Doc Parks agrees that each strategic plan is an opportunity to identify and correct practices that haven't worked as well as intended. It's also an opportunity to leverage and capitalize on LM's previous successes.

To be effective, Parks said, OBO needs to revisit its strategic landscape periodically to ensure the team isn't missing something that could derail its long-term efforts and success. This critical information helps each functional area of OBO guide its decision making, ensuring OBO's alignment with other teams and programs across LM.

One clear example of the value of such policy reviews is in the area of data management, Parks said.

"At the beginning of the last strategic planning cycle, we had just moved this function from Site Operations to the Archives and Information Management team to more seamlessly integrate the technology, cybersecurity, and information assets under one functional team," he said. "Since then, we have not only matured our data management processes and organization, but we have also

Physical records at the Legacy Management Business Center in Morgantown, West Virginia.

begun to use this programmatic approach in other areas of the LM program, such as planning site transitions and project management."

The main driver flowing from the previous strategic plan is the ever-increasing number and complexity of incoming sites, Parks said. For OBO, this is placing more emphasis and need for information technology and cybersecurity expertise, real estate specialists, and long-term financial management capabilities.

"A second driver is the aging infrastructure and facilities, driving us toward a programmatic approach to project management," he said. "These two drivers will impact every function in OBO, such as more focused training, recruitment, and employee development to support LM's complex mission."

During the planning phase of each project, Parks said he often thinks of Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, who as Supreme Commander of Allied forces in Europe during World War II understood that the value of a plan derives not necessarily from the plan itself, but from the process of creating it.

"While our 10-year plan does provide a clear vision, the real value to OBO is what was learned during the planning process — the detailed analysis of our strategic landscape, coupled with our current operational capabilities," he said. "Eisenhower said it best: 'In preparing for battle, I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable.' This absolutely is the case for a strategic plan."

Preparing for Growth: LM's Strategic Plan to Manage Site Transitions

Tiffany Drake to lead development of new transition program

The U.S. Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management's (LM) site portfolio is preparing for a substantial growth spurt, with the addition of approximately 30 sites over the next 10 years — the most since LM started in 2003. With this growth comes increased responsibilities, meaning LM needs an organized, strategic transition program to ensure each site transitions smoothly and resources are effectively designated and managed.

LM Site Manager Tiffany Drake was recently appointed as site transition program manager to oversee this substantial growth. Her experience and support for clear and consistent communication with regulatory agencies, stakeholders, site-transferring organizations, and local communities are major factors in developing a robust site transition plan.

"Until now, most of the sites transferred to LM have been Category 1 sites and generally required responses to stakeholder inquiries and records management. However, some of the new sites set to transfer are a bit more complex and have different regulatory drivers, meaning they'll require a higher level of attention and effort," Drake said. "Another part of the plan is making sure there are sufficient resources available to transfer these sites, while still focusing on LM's primary mission of protecting human health and the environment."

LM is revising the current framework checklist used for site transitions to make sure it's up to date for emerging issues. The checklist focuses on the original 10 key requirements that apply to all transitions, including managing records and data, understanding long-term stewardship responsibilities, and gauging how much interest and involvement there will be from the community and others affected by the site.

"I want to make sure the checklist remains in alignment with the transition requirements and asks the right, up-to-date questions, so each functional support area involved with the transition has the knowledge and help they need for a smooth site transition," Drake said.

Site transitions have a three-phase structure: pre-transition, active transition, and post-transition. Drake recognizes the merit of strategically involving federal agencies, site-transferring organizations, stakeholders, and communities early in the process to fully understand what's needed, from site remedies to resources.

Tiffany Drake, standing, accompanies a Canadian delegation on a visit to Las Colonias Park in Grand Junction, Colorado, in September 2024.

Left to right: LM Site Managers Tiffany Drake and Bill Frazier and LM Support Partner Site Lead Cecylia Wentz visit the Grants Mining Museum in New Mexico in February 2025.

"The pre-transition phase can start several years before active transition activities happen. This allows LM and LMSP [LM Support Partner] staff time to become familiar with the site and the individuals who are currently completing activities on-site," Drake said.

Which LM and LMSP staff are needed for the transition is determined during the pre-transition phase. This is done using the internal transfer charter. LM team leads designate subject matter experts in their areas of responsibility.

Subject matter experts cover areas outlined in the site transition procedure. This strategy makes sure the right subject matter experts guide site transitions to build a strong foundation in the pre-transition phase.

Previous site transitions have given Drake a good foundation to go on while developing the new site-transition plan.

"We're fortunate that many past transitions included lessons-learned documents," she said. "We've incorporated these lessons learned where possible, and we're also developing a searchable database for specific topics to see what lessons were identified for certain areas. The person searching it can access the original source document to read about the details."

This database and other current technology is key for the work LM has ahead. Drake understands that future site transitions should keep past knowledge and experience in mind but use forward thinking and current technology in their approach. She also reinforces how important outreach is and how involving local communities, stakeholders, and agencies early on is crucial.

Drake's approach to standing up the new LM's site transition program in preparation for the Office's significant growth demonstrates a commitment to strategic planning, resource allocation, collaboration, and continuous improvement. Using lessons learned and the latest technology provides LM with effective measures to meet the more technical needs of incoming sites.

Drake said she is committed to making sure technology, resources, and subject matter experts are placed correctly so each site transition is successful. These skills and leadership are fundamental to making sure LM is strategically prepared to manage the next decade.

DRUM Campaign Nearly Complete, But There's Still Work to Do

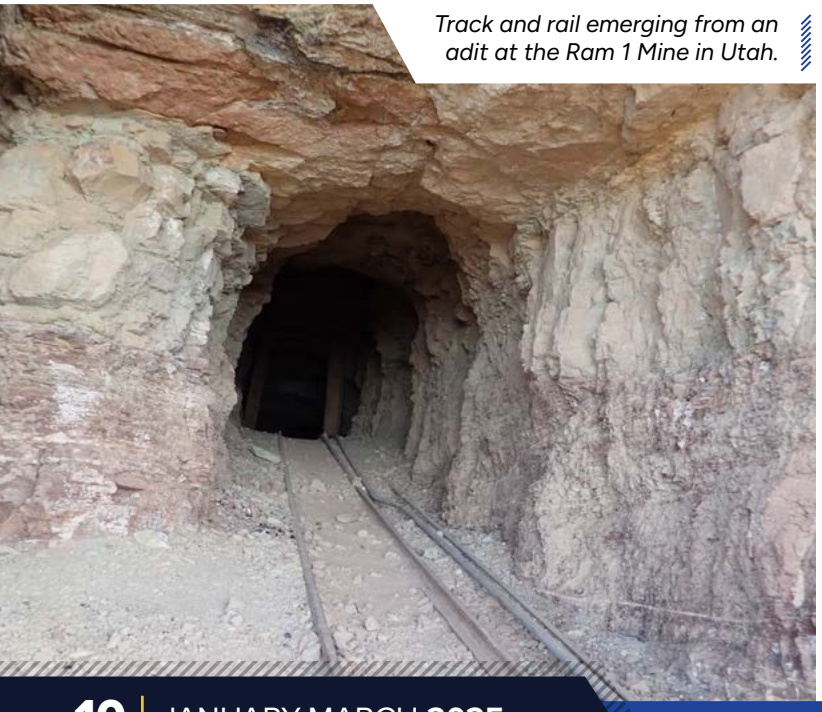
Uranium-mines team ready to declare victory as Campaign 1 verification and validation activities near completion

When a project is 99.9% complete, it's easy to want to plant the victory flag. Deservedly so for the Office of Legacy Management (LM) Defense-Related Uranium Mines (DRUM) team, which has nearly completed the first of three campaigns to verify and validate the condition of abandoned uranium mines.

In Campaign 1, team members verified and validated the condition of more than 2,300 legacy mines on public land that provided uranium to the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission from 1947-1970.

On top of accomplishing this tremendous amount of fieldwork, LM DRUM Technical Lead William Burns said the DRUM team itself is worth celebrating. "I am most proud of our team and their accomplishments. DRUM is highly regarded in the abandoned mine lands professional community for its precision and efficiency. Their dedication and professionalism did not go unnoticed."

Success in Campaign 1 did not come to the team without challenges, though. Without previous projects or organizations to model, the DRUM team developed verification and validation (V&V) processes and activities from scratch. LM Support Partners (LMSP) Uranium-Related Programs Manager Joel Doebele and LMSP Uranium-Related Programs Technical Manager Treyton Nusbaum-Davis both agree it was a steep learning curve.



Track and rail emerging from an adit at the Ram 1 Mine in Utah.

Ore chute at the Sunset Mine in Colorado.

According to Doebele, the DRUM team performed assessments much more detailed than any previously undertaken for abandoned uranium mines, so there were many novel tasks that guided V&V procedure development, including:

- Establishing information exchange between federal, state, and local government agencies, Tribal partners, and private landowners.
- Creating a field inventory process to document current mine conditions.
- Finding durable, portable equipment to record high-quality data in rugged country and bad weather.
- Developing procedures for gamma radiation surveys, soil and water sampling, and risk scoring.
- Documenting outcomes and findings for each mine, including inventory results, physical hazard evaluations, and chemical and radiological risk screening to protect human health and the environment.

Another challenge for the team was coordinating with multiple land management agencies across the country.

"It was a daunting task from the beginning," Burns said.

"We had to coordinate with partners at the federal, state, local, and Tribal levels. Although this was a significant lift in the early stages of the program, it was highly successful and has fostered great relationships throughout the abandoned mine lands professional community."

DRUM team members next to a mine rock pile at the Hansen Mine in Utah.

The team accomplished these tasks while maintaining a high safety standard. "I am so proud of the DRUM team's success," Nusbaum-Davis said. "DRUM established itself as the gold star, and other agencies are adopting DRUM's approach to inventorying and sampling mines. Our safety culture is second to none," he said. "Every day, teams work in the back country and do so safely because field teams are prepared for whatever comes their way — and they're committed to taking care of each other."

This foundation of knowledge and experience made the inception of work for Campaign 2 and Campaign 3 — on Tribal and private lands, respectively — much easier, according to Doebele. "The entire program is the result of constantly identifying opportunities for improvement and implementing lessons learned because we developed DRUM documentation and methodologies from the ground up."

Even though the team has essentially completed Campaign 1, Doebele said "there will always be a need to coordinate with and maintain relationships with the land management agencies. Our V&V work characterizes what the mine is like on the day we visit — like a snapshot in time. Conditions at mine sites change over time. New hazards arise and those mine features that were closed will need maintenance eventually."

The partner and stakeholder relationships established during Campaign 1 will also help during Campaign 2, which started in August 2022, and Campaign 3, which started in March 2024.

"They are key to successfully meeting our mission to protect human health and the environment," Burns said. "Without them, our mission would be increasingly more difficult."

The DRUM team regularly gains new faces and sends members to other positions, but Nusbaum-Davis finds the rotations to be a good thing. "The DRUM program has great success preparing staff to work in different capacities on the LM contract and is well-practiced in quickly training new staff to current standards," he said.

Doebele agreed: "The DRUM team has been able to hire new people, train them, and get them into the field while maintaining its safety culture and continuing to collect high quality data."

Turnover may be seen as a warning sign in other professional roles, but here, it's a measure of team members' expertise — field team members are frequently promoted internally to roles with more responsibility.

"Many current DRUM senior staff started as field team staff," Burns said. "They are now in leadership positions not only on DRUM, but across the contract and LM."

DRUM team member sampling water at the Bullrush Group Mine in Wyoming.

Not only does this experience and knowledge make training new people and fieldwork on the next two campaigns easier for the DRUM team, but it also benefits LM's international partners. Burns said as he's shared DRUM's process with similar agencies in other nations, he's found it "eye opening to see these problems being addressed across the world and on different scales. The DRUM team has a very prescribed approach that's helped our domestic partners build their databases and given our international partners ideas to consider moving forward."

LM and the Global Effort to Save Migratory Birds

Ecologists and environmental compliance staff work with project managers to minimize possible impacts on habitat

Bald eagle photographed at the Fernald Preserve, Ohio, Site. Photo by Patrick Bell.

Most native bird species in the United States are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) of 1918. The Act is one of the oldest wildlife protection laws in the country, passed in response to a global decline of migratory birds.

"The Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management supports the MBTA and promotes the protection and conservation of migratory birds at our sites across the nation. Our Ecology team works with project managers to avoid or minimize potential adverse actions on migratory birds," said Joyce Chavez, LM Environmental Program manager.

Prior to the implementation of the Act, millions of birds were killed for food, market hunting, scientific collection, and feathers for fashion. In the early 20th century, hats adorned with feathers were the symbol of high society in women's fashion. One hat could take the feathers of four egrets to produce. While the female fashion industry was heavily blamed for the decline in bird species, birds hunted in the state of Florida alone far exceeded the numbers of birds being killed annually for fashion. Regardless, it was apparent that something needed to be done to stop the disappearance of migratory birds.

A pair of osprey built their nest on a power pole at the Legacy Management Field Support Center in Grand Junction, Colorado.

In the U.S., individual states started to create their own laws, but the effort was not preventing the decline, and the need for federal law was recognized. Since the Act was passed, litigation and conservation initiatives to protect migratory birds have grown, including treaties with Canada, Mexico, Japan, Russia, and other countries to protect bird species across their migratory range. Related acts that encourage bird conservation across federal agencies include the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, and the Endangered Species Act.

For nearly two decades, the U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have cooperated to conserve migratory birds through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU was signed in 2006 in response to Executive Order 13186, ***Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds***. The purpose is to strengthen migratory bird conservation through enhanced collaboration between the agencies, including coordination with state, Tribal, and local governments.

The MOU aims to lessen adverse effects on migratory birds whenever appropriate and feasible. LM implements migratory bird protections and conservation efforts throughout its sites and programs. All planned work at LM sites is reviewed for potential environmental impacts. Site teams assess potential impacts to migratory birds and identify measures that can be taken to prevent harming

Short-eared owl at the Fernald Preserve, Ohio, Site. Photo by Jerry Tillery.

bird species. These measures can include taking prework nest surveys, changing timelines for work to be performed outside of breeding and nesting seasons, educating field staff, and implementing best management practices during work activities to avoid impacts. Conservation efforts are also incorporated in everyday activities.

Personnel at the Rocky Flats Site in Colorado follow a compliance and best-management-practice procedure that reduces and minimizes impacts on nesting birds and includes requirements for training site personnel.

Karin McShea, an ecologist at the Rocky Flats Site, said ecologists have worked closely with project personnel for decades to avoid impacts to birds protected by the MBTA.

"During site cleanup, ecologists conducted frequent surveys of buildings to make sure that removal activities would not impact nesting birds like barn swallows that loved to build their nests under entryway awnings," McShea said. "Today, even though only a few structures are present and the majority of the site has been restored to a grassland, ecologists still work hard to protect and conserve migratory birds."

The Fernald Preserve Site staff actively manage forest, prairie, and wetland habitats, creating a diverse bird community and a popular birding spot in southwest Ohio. Bird-banding events are conducted at the preserve as part of a public education program. The data collected during these events is shared with the Bird Band Lab, the U.S. Geological Survey, and the U.S. Department of the Interior.

"Personnel at the Fernald Preserve work to improve migratory bird habitat through restoration and conservation efforts," said Lisa McHenry, Ecological Services manager at Fernald. "Site personnel are required to avoid impacting birds and nests and to report incidental damage as a result of field activities."

At the western sites, hazards to birds are assessed during site visits, and maintenance activities remove any identified hazards. Many LM sites are managed to control invasive species and promote vegetation that supports native bird habitat.

Ecologists are heavily involved in these continued efforts. They work closely with site management and environmental compliance staff to protect bird species and identify new and inventive ways to promote migratory bird habitat at LM sites.

However, it is up to all LM staff to help the effort of conserving migratory birds. Nesting birds have been observed at LM sites on power poles, in the vegetation on top of disposal cells, open mine portals, and even in parked government-owned utility task vehicles.

Those LM staff members who made these observations did the right thing in contacting environmental compliance and site ecologists to assist in the appropriate action before disturbing the active nests. Through observation, communication, and collaboration, LM will continue to work to protect and promote migratory bird species across its sites and programs.

Song Sparrow at the Fernald Preserve, Ohio, Site.

LM Participates in DOE Annual Intergovernmental Meeting

LM attends forum in Las Vegas to discuss remediation strategies for production sites

The Office of Legacy Management (LM) participated in the Department of Energy's (DOE) annual Intergovernmental Meeting in Las Vegas, Nevada, Dec. 3-5. The meeting included DOE's Office of Environmental Management (EM) and five partner groups: the Energy Communities Alliance, the Environmental Council of the States, the National Association of Attorneys General, the National Governors Association, and the State and Tribal Government Working Group.

The meeting is an opportunity for state, local, Tribal, and federal officials to discuss priorities and strategies for managing and storing defense-related nuclear waste and for remediating production sites.

LM Director Carmelo Melendez and LM Site Operations Director Jay Glascock presented at a few of the panels during the meeting.

STGWG

State and Tribal Government Working Group

During an executive leadership panel talking about the coordination and collaboration necessary between the key federal agencies responsible for cleanup of sites with different or changing landlords, regulatory responsibilities, and post-cleanup ownership, Melendez emphasized the importance of regular and consistent communication between federal, state, and Tribal governments and community groups.

"The time we take to pause and listen to the community's concerns is so important. We listen to gain understanding, we strive to clearly communicate, and we do so in a way that is forward thinking," Melendez said.

Glascock participated in a panel that discussed the integration of long-term stewardship in cleanup processes, how performance issues are addressed, and planning for the next site transition. Glascock also touched on records management, partnerships with other DOE entities, groundwater remediation, and striving for LM's "ultimate goal."

"These types of informational settings are a great opportunity to share what we have learned with other groups and how we continue to work to protect human health and the environment," Glascock said.

"When a site is transferred to LM's care from EM, one part of the remediation process has ended, and stewardship has begun. We continue working with community organizations, redevelopment corporations, states, and Tribes to achieve the desired end state vision," Glascock said.

The end state vision for LM is giving the land back to communities where possible, such as at the Fernald Preserve Site in Ohio.

> *The time we take to pause and listen to the community's concerns is so important. We listen to gain understanding, we strive to clearly communicate, and we do so in a way that is forward thinking.*
>
> – Carmelo Melendez

"Sites are often returned to the community to be reused as playgrounds, dog parks, wildlife refuges, and other outdoor recreational spaces enjoyed by residents, local groups, and tourists," Glascock said. "This is the 'ultimate goal' — to return a site to the community. As an example, Fernald has been transformed from a production center into a nature preserve with open spaces boasting hundreds of species in multiple habitats. We want to do this for as many sites in LM's portfolio as we can."

In addition to this panel, Glascock participated on a panel discussing disaster response planning, capabilities, and the benefits of leveraging federal agency, state, Tribal, and local community resources to effectively address extreme events.

"We are always happy to learn and be able to present what we know and recognize our partnerships across DOE," Glascock said.

The Elk Guzzler of Bluewater: A Conservation Success Story

Custom-built trough for wildlife working even better than expected

In the heart of the arid West lies the U.S. Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management's (LM) Bluewater Disposal Site, a former uranium milling site spanning 3,300 acres in northern New Mexico. Nestled between Mount Taylor to the east and the Zuni Mountains to the south, this unique location has become a refuge for wildlife that is protected from public access, livestock grazing, and hunting.

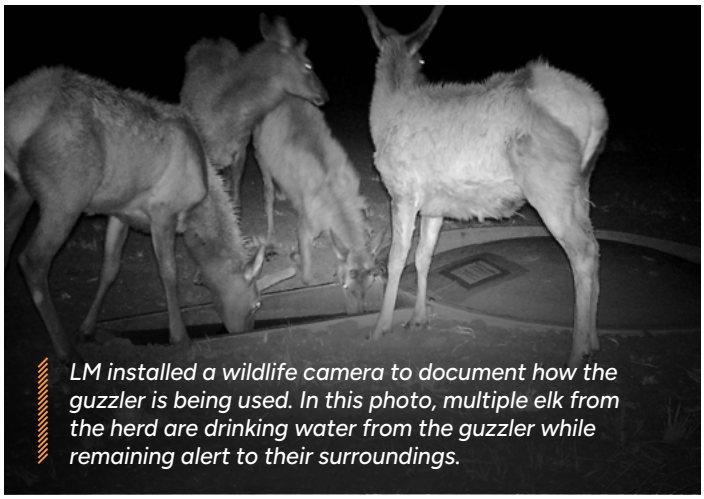
Recent efforts to support this environment include installing a customized wildlife water drinking system, or "guzzler," designed specifically to accommodate elk's antlers. This pilot project is the first time such a system is being used on one of LM's sites. Blending innovation, collaboration, and ecological stewardship, the elk guzzler has already proven to be a successful example of conservation in action.

From Concept to Creation

The Bluewater site's diverse flora, supported by basalt lava outcroppings that capture wind-blown sediment, offers ideal forage for grazers. With more than 300 acres of milkweed that attract monarch butterflies and located in a major migratory pathway, Bluewater is an ecologically important site.

"A migratory herd of elk, moving between Mount Taylor and the Zuni Mountains, found Bluewater so hospitable that some chose to settle permanently," said Emily Gaasche, Bluewater site ecologist. Now, a resident herd of about 30 elk call the site home.

The LM team decided to install a guzzler to support the growing elk population. They reached out to the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish and local experts to carefully evaluate potential locations for the guzzler at the Bluewater site. This collaborative effort enabled the team to select the optimal placement for the system, taking into account factors such as elk's perceived predation risk, obstructions that could pose a threat to wildlife, effective rainwater capture and storage, and protection of any cultural resources.



LM installed a wildlife camera to document how the guzzler is being used. In this photo, multiple elk from the herd are drinking water from the guzzler while remaining alert to their surroundings.

The guzzler was custom built for the elk living at the Bluewater site. Its self-sustaining design captures rainwater and deposits it in the tank, filling the trough with water for elk and other wildlife, including rabbits, quail, and monarch butterflies.

The guzzler was custom built with the specific needs of the site's wildlife in mind. Rainwater is captured by an oversized roof, funneled into a gutter, and stored in an 840-gallon tank buried underground.

The design ensures that even the largest bull elk can drink comfortably when the water level is low, thanks to a widened trough that accommodates their antlers. Smaller animals such as quail and rabbits can also access water safely via escape ramps built into the trough.

The guzzler has exceeded expectations, remaining full even during the hot summer months despite daily use by the elk herd and other wildlife. "Our wildlife cameras captured everything from monarch butterflies to coyotes," Gaasche said. "The word spread fast among the animals that there's a new water source."

In addition, strategic placement of the guzzler minimizes elk's potential conflicts with predators, power lines, and other hazards, ensuring the system's long-term success. The herd has even grown, with new calves born on-site — a sign that the habitat is thriving.

A Model for Conservation

The Bluewater guzzler project exemplifies how thoughtful design and collaboration can support wildlife and sustain ecosystems. It's a reminder that conservation doesn't have to be complicated to be effective. As Gaasche puts it, "This is a beautiful example of stewardship — you do the work, then walk away and watch nature flourish."

The success of this pilot water drinking system has inspired plans to employ the system at other LM sites. LM Site Manager Nicole Olin said that "the guzzler project really highlights the benefit of LM's Beneficial Reuse Program, which focuses on sustainable management and optimization of the use of land and assets within LM's portfolio of sites."

Mound Business Park Finds Success with New Collaborative Space

Mound Development Corporation opens new space for teleworkers, students, and businesses in Miamisburg, Ohio

The Mound Development Corporation, or MDC, recently opened a new office space at the Mound Business Park in Miamisburg, Ohio, called Mound Collaborative. The new space provides a work area for teleworkers and graduate students as well as an office space for businesses to have meetings.

Much of the former U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Mound Plant site transferred to the city of Miamisburg from the DOE Office of Legacy Management (LM) by 2001. Since that time, the site has welcomed private businesses and tenants to the area. The last remaining parcel is scheduled to be transferred from DOE to the city in 2025.

The new space opened in October and was immediately popular in the community, quickly selling out of available offices.

"We are excited that the public has found this to be a useful tool," Mound Development Site Manager April Hauser said. "We definitely weren't expecting it to sell out so quickly."

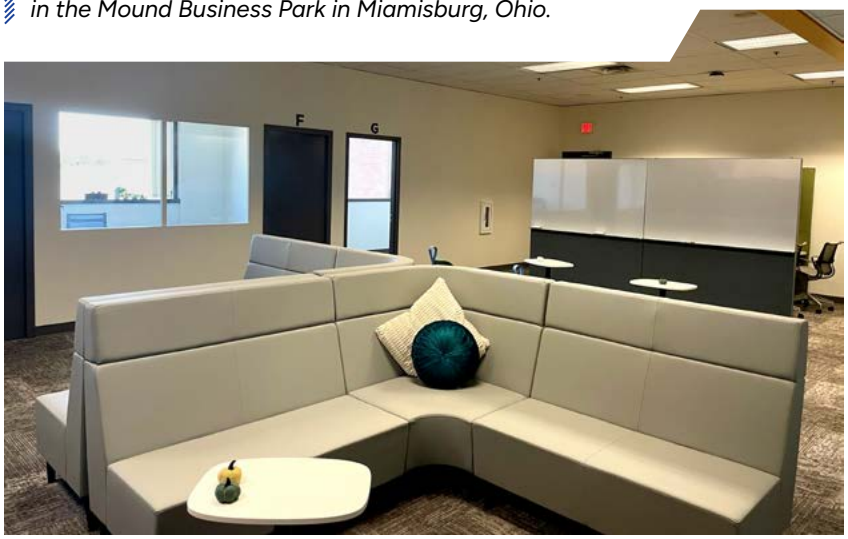
The Mound site sits about 10 miles southwest of Dayton, Ohio, with farmland, residential areas, and a school surrounding it. The park currently has 28 businesses in total, while the new collaborative space has welcomed six businesses. Businesses are mostly tech based, along with a printing company and a museum called the Mound Cold War Discovery Center.

"Some of the people who previously worked at the site have started their own businesses and are coming back to work at the site," Hauser said. "It's really great to see people wanting to return and take full advantage of the park and the new area."

Mound Collaborative, the new telework and small business space, is one of the businesses on LM's beneficially reused Mound Site in Miamisburg, Ohio.

The Mound Business Park in Miamisburg, Ohio, transitioned to the city of Miamisburg from the U.S. Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management beginning in the early 2000s and is on the former DOE Mound Plant site. The park now has 28 businesses.

The new telework space, called Mound Collaborative, in the Mound Business Park in Miamisburg, Ohio.



Mound Development Corporation's office in the Mound Business Park in Miamisburg, Ohio.

Since her hiring, Hauser has worked hard to attract new businesses to the area.

"We have over 100 acres available for redevelopment and are consistently coming up with ideas and opportunities we can use to make this area even better," Hauser said.

Hauser added, "For the first time, we actually have a private developer wanting to come in and purchase acreage to create new development, so that is very exciting."

While the site belongs to the city of Miamisburg and MDC owns the park, DOE and LM in particular have been instrumental to the site's reuse efforts. LM continues long-term surveillance and maintenance of the area to make sure site conditions continue to keep human health and the environment protected.

"The business park is a great example of LM's work in transitioning former sites over to commercial reuse," LM Site Manager Tiffany Drake said. "We want to be able to give these sites back to the community and watch them grow and transform into something that benefits everyone."

Hauser is thrilled the site is being put to use for the greater good of the community.

"It's a success story for LM, for sure, and is an example of what DOE is able to do — and it's really cool to see it come together," Hauser said. "I'm excited to see the development we will have over the next 20 years."

Along with expanding the park, Hauser and MDC have plenty on their plates. Not only is the final Mound site DOE parcel scheduled to transfer to MDC soon, but Hauser is also looking at more available spaces for Mound Collaborative.

Hauser added, "We've had such great success with the office space that we are looking to expand it so we can continue to open our doors to more and more businesses."

To learn more about the Mound Business Park, visit https://mound.com/.

Birds of a Feather Flock to Fernald Preserve for the First Winter Bird Fest

First festival offers birdwatchers a view of more than 80 species of birds

Migratory birds and people who love watching them flocked together Feb. 1-8 to kick off the first Fernald Preserve Winter Bird Fest near Hamilton, Ohio. The weeklong event featured nearly 100 species of migratory birds and raptors and a menu of events geared for bird lovers of all ages, such as a Family Day, nature walks, birdwatching activities, hands-on educational opportunities, special guest performances and presentations, and even bird identification and banding.

Festivities kicked off Saturday and Sunday at the Office of Legacy Management's (LM) Fernald Preserve with activities that included a duck hike with the Audubon Society and raptor ID and ornithology workshops. More than 700 visitors participated in the weekend activities and more than 1,400 visitors were on-site throughout the week to take advantage of the owl pellet dissection demonstrations, bird banding, and birdwatching activities, all starring Fernald Preserve's feathered visitors and inhabitants.

More than 250 species of birds make the Fernald Preserve a part of their habitat and more than 100 of those species nest at the preserve. Among the feathered special guests on display for bird lovers were waterfowl and ducks, shorebirds, and several species of raptors — birds of prey such as owls, hawks, falcons, and eagles. Visitors logged sightings of more than 80 species throughout the week.

Katie Borreson and her 10-year-old son Liam attended several of the workshops. "This is Liam's first visit, but this isn't my first time," Borreson laughed. "I come for the birds! I'm planning to bring my husband and three other kids tomorrow."

Liam laughed when asked about his favorite part of the Raptor ID workshop. "I liked the video of the falcon knocking the pigeon out of the air like a big feathery bowling ball."

Jack Stenger, a biologist with expertise in natural areas management, conducted the raptor ID sessions and highlighted the importance of the Fernald Preserve to the community and the area bird populations.

"This resource is the only place of its kind in Ohio. There's no other place where you can see so many species of birds."

Liam Borreson follows along during the Raptor ID workshop.

Kids enjoy the art and craft opportunities, which included everything from making paper birds and drawing ducks to creating homemade duck calls.

Visitors enjoy the federal and junior duck stamp art displayed by special arrangement. The display showcased more than 60 entries, including the winning stamp art.

Biologist Jack Stenger discusses raptor wing structure and body shape during the Raptor ID workshop.

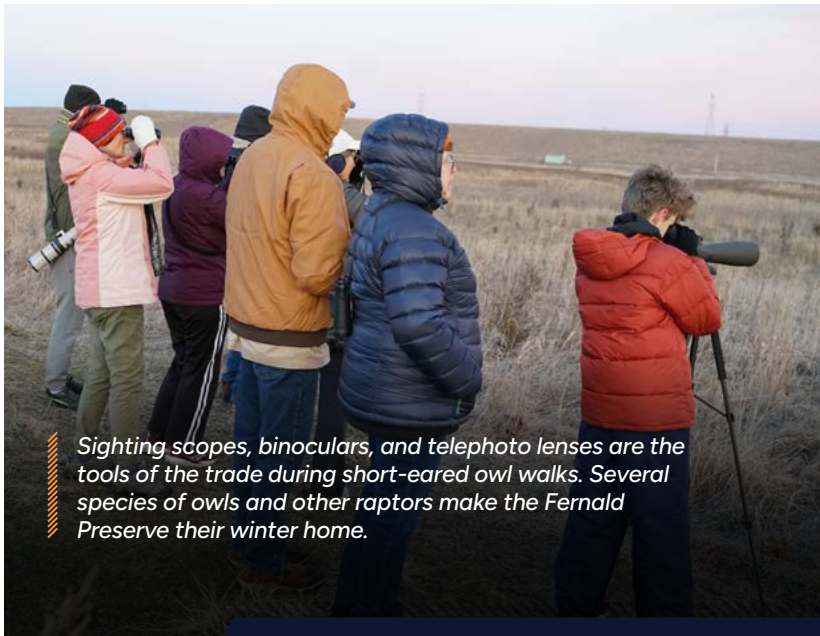
Stenger also noted the hundreds of birds who migrate through this environmental corridor of Ohio. "These wetlands are greatly significant to the (bird) populations."

A highlight of the week's activities was Chris Rowlands' art workshop and musical puppet show, which gave children an opportunity to try their hands at drawing ducks and learn about beavers, vultures, frogs, and other animals.

"I've worked with the Fernald team before, and these guys are great," Rowlands said. "And the kids always have a great time here."

The Fernald Preserve is a shining example of beneficial reuse, said LM Site Manager Brian Zimmerman.

"By transforming a former uranium processing facility into more than 1,000 acres of prime wetland, forest, open water, and prairie, we've helped create and maintain a truly remarkable resource for wildlife and the surrounding communities," he said.



Sighting scopes, binoculars, and telephoto lenses are the tools of the trade during short-eared owl walks. Several species of owls and other raptors make the Fernald Preserve their winter home.

From 1951 to 1989, the site produced high-purity uranium metal products in support of the nation's Cold War campaign. In 1991, efforts at the site changed to cleanup work thanks to the site's inclusion under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, also known as Superfund.

Restoration and remediation at the site were completed in 2006 after one of the largest environmental cleanup efforts in the country — one that included comprehensive ecological restoration. The result was one of the largest manufactured wetlands in Ohio, featuring a 7-mile network of trails and walking paths and showcasing rich wildlife diversity, forests, restored prairie, open water, and a system of streams and ponds.

The Fernald Preserve Visitors Center was completed in 2008 and was awarded Platinum certification for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, a nationwide benchmark for green design, construction, and operation. LM manages the Fernald Preserve, including ongoing groundwater remediation and monitoring and an on-site disposal facility.

The visitors center draws more than 15,000 people annually, and more than 50,000 take advantage of the outdoor amenities at Fernald, according to trail data.

Artist and performer Chris Rowlands entertains visitors of all ages with his groundhog puppet and animal songs. Rowlands, a renowned wildlife artist, also led a children's art workshop.

New Uranium Mine Team Supervisor Excited for New Challenges

Former DRUM Technical Lead William Burns reflects on his newest task as supervisor of environmental team

The Office of Legacy Management's (LM) William Burns was recently promoted to supervisor for LM-23 Environmental Team 3. With this new role, Burns is responsible for the Defense-Related Uranium Mines (DRUM) program, Uranium Leasing Program (ULP), and Groundwater program.

Burns, who previously served as the DRUM technical lead, is excited to take on the new role, which opened when LM's Gordie Clark retired at the end of January.

"I'm really happy that leadership gave me this opportunity, and I'm excited to see where this new role leads me," Burns said.

Clark has nothing but full confidence in Burns as he takes the reins.

"I joined the LM-23 team in January 2022, and the past three years have been an amazing final chapter to a 41+-year military and federal career. I don't know what the future holds for the LM-20/LM-23 team, but I can guarantee that Wil is ready to stand in the gap and the entire LM-23 team is 100% mission-ready, whatever the mission requirements are," Clark said. "I'm excited for what the future holds for Wil and the entire team."

After working as a geologist for many years, Burns got his start on the LM Support Partners side in 2018 as the DRUM technical manager. The DRUM program is a partnership among the U.S. Department of Energy, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), state abandoned mine lands programs, and Tribal governments to verify and validate conditions at a unique set of abandoned uranium mines. These historic mines provided uranium ore to the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission for defense-related activities throughout the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s.

"My passion for environmental health led me to this career and has continued to drive me in this career field with LM," Burns added. "I've really enjoyed the work and making a difference in the communities that contributed to the nation's defense."

Since the DRUM program began in 2017, Burns' hard work and dedication has helped the program succeed.

William Burns

In 2020, the DRUM program reached a major milestone by finishing the 1,000th verification and validation in a field visit to the Mineral Channel 3 Mine on Outlaw Mesa, which is supervised by BLM's field office in Grand Junction, Colorado. Later that same year, LM published its 1,000th mine-specific report, aptly named for the Blue Ribbon 3 Mine in the Gateway Mining District in western Colorado, on land also managed by BLM's Grand Junction field office.

After four years as an LM Support Partner, Burns joined the federal staff at LM as the DRUM technical lead and the ULP manager in 2022.

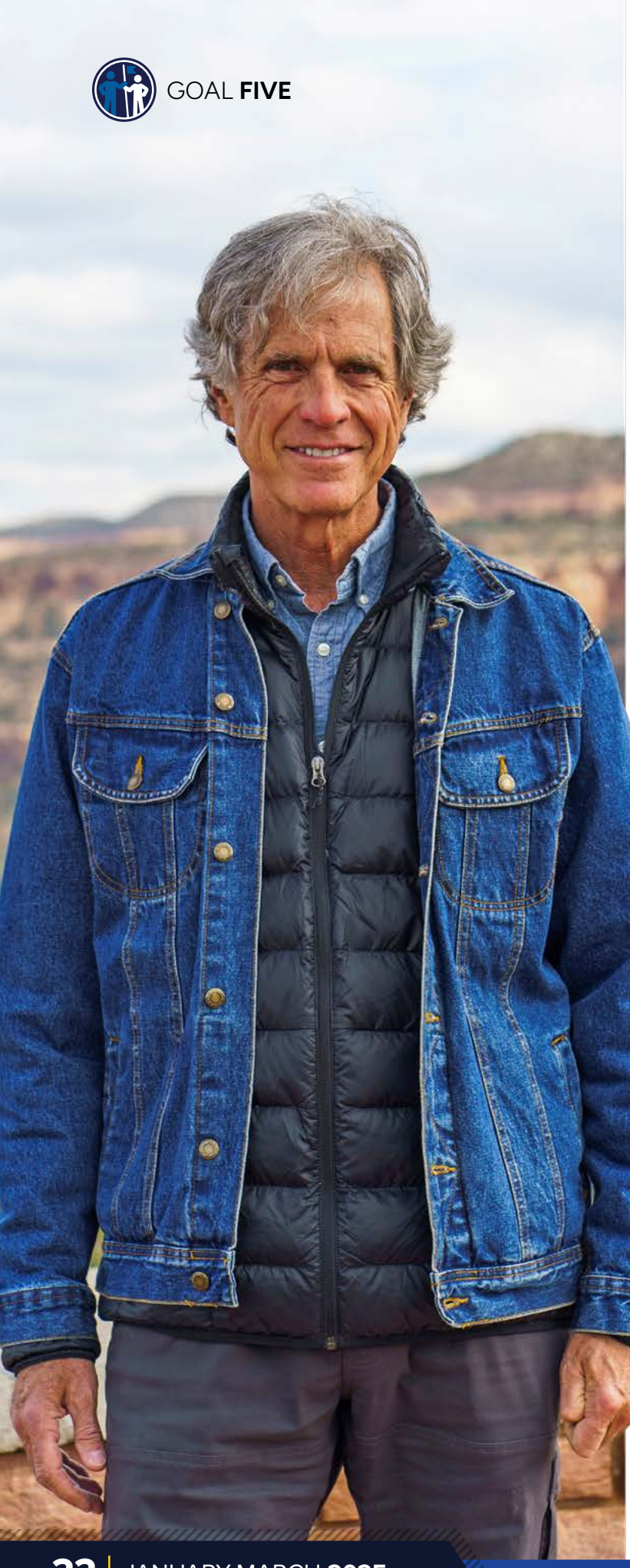
In 2023, the DRUM program received the Secretary of Energy Achievement Award for its outstanding efforts in locating and assessing more than 1,500 mines and working with federal and state partners to safeguard nearly 400 mines that posed a risk to human health and the environment.

"We are so close to completing one of three parts of the DRUM campaign — 2,351 of 2,354 complete. I'd like to think I helped contribute to that goal and ultimately safeguarded the hazards at some of these mines," Burns said.

In his new role, Burns has several new responsibilities, including:

- Advising LM Director Carmelo Melendez and Office of Site Operations Director Jay Glascock of site activities.
- Supervising LM-23 Environmental Team 3 (DRUM, ULP, and Groundwater programs).
- Managing resources and planning for long-range staffing needs.

"I'm looking forward to settling into my new role, continuing LM's mission, and helping the DRUM, ULP, and Groundwater programs continue to succeed," Burns said.



LM Program Manager Retires After 17-Year Career with DOE

Kautsky, who directed projects under Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act, retired Dec. 31

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Legacy Management (LM) Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act (UMTRCA) Program Manager Mark Kautsky retired Dec. 31 after 17 years with the Office.

Before his retirement, Kautsky reflected on his journey throughout LM and what he looks forward to in the future.

"It's been an incredible ride and a lot of really exciting things have happened during my time in Grand Junction," Kautsky said. "It's bittersweet being at the end of your career. There are so many memories, and it's such a big part of your life."

After finishing his master's in hydrology and hydrogeology from the University of Nevada-Reno in 1984, Kautsky and his wife moved to Grand Junction, Colorado, for a job with a contractor for DOE.

Kautsky worked at the Monticello Site in Utah, characterizing groundwater and estimating floodplains. "It was a great and exciting time to be involved in this work because it was so new and emergent. UMTRCA was still in its infancy and computers had just started making their way into environmental work. We were still doing a lot of longhand reporting."

During that time, Kautsky also contracted with the U.S. Air Force around the country, working on projects in states such as Ohio and Colorado before being assigned to the Moab Site in Utah. After three years in Moab, Kautsky joined LM in 2007.

"When I first started at LM, I was involved in the Nevada Offsites program, working on sites like Amchitka and Chariot in Alaska and Shoal in Nevada," Kautsky said. "Then the opportunity arose to be the UMTRCA program manager, and I've been involved ever since."

Kautsky's love of hydrology and hydrogeology started after he finished his bachelor of science at Sonoma State University in California.

"I worked for a company doing environmental geology. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency had just gotten started, and I had a lot of projects in the California region and did a series of basinwide studies. A lot of communities relied on groundwater and had no sewer systems," Kautsky said. "The mentors

that I had in my time there were heavily involved in this line of work, and they became large influences."

Soon after, Kautsky decided to pursue his master's degree, focusing on groundwater and taking a fellowship at the Desert Research Institute in Nevada.

"Desert Research had contracts through DOE and worked on Nevada Offsites. So then, when I moved over to DOE, it was great that I had that in my background," Kautsky said. "It's so interesting because the job my thesis advisor did essentially became my own job down the road. It just shows that if you keep working away, things will keep taking amazing turns throughout your career, and you may end up doing what did when you first started, but maybe with a new angle or perspective."

Since becoming UMTRCA program manager, Kautsky's days are filled with budgeting, site planning, and developing several different reports to keep tabs on some of LM's higher-risk sites. Kautsky is also involved in fieldwork, including inspections and construction.

When not actively working on a project or report, Kautsky spends a lot of time talking and consulting with partners through LM's international work, presenting at conferences, and participating in workshops.

Three years ago, Kautsky also was tasked with working on the Applied Studies and Technology program after the retirement of a colleague.

"Basically, if I'm not reviewing something or making plans for the coming year, I'm preparing to speak at a conference or symposium," Kautsky said. "We definitely have a lot to keep us busy."

Over the course of his career, Kautsky had several accomplishments to be proud of.

Grand Junction Office Manager Paul Kerl, right, presents Kautsky with a certificate of appreciation and a flag that flew over the U.S. Capitol in Kautsky's honor.

Kautsky's wife, Lisa, tells the group gathered for Kautsky's retirement party in Grand Junction that her husband was an inspiration to her in her own career with DOE.

"There have been so many things that have been really amazing accomplishments. One of my most memorable was probably when we had a closure of the Central Nevada Test Area on Shoal," Kautsky said. "We were able to work closely with our partners and develop solutions to our underground test sites. It was awesome to work on those type of site management solutions that resulted in closure of the site and getting it ready for long-term maintenance and surveillance."

When asked what he most appreciated about LM, Kautsky was quick to respond.

"The people have been fantastic. I work with some exceptional people, from leadership to site managers to contractors," Kautsky said. "It's been so hugely influential to work with such a strong and dynamic organization with talented and incredibly smart individuals."

As for his departure from LM, Kautsky is most looking forward to taking the time to reflect on his career and catching up on hobbies and projects.

"I love piano and studying music. I also am a cyclist on a somewhat competitive level," Kautsky said. "I'm a bit of a homebody, so I'm going to spend some time reading and just doing things I haven't had much time for."

Kautsky is also planning on getting back to his studies by enrolling in a local university and continuing to learn.

"I love to learn. I believe you have a lifelong opportunity to learn, so that's the plan," Kautsky said. "I almost think of my retirement as graduating high school again for me. I wasn't sure what I was going to do, and it sorted itself out. I'm going to allow this time to process and then move on the next adventure."

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