This fact sheet provides information about the Defense-Related Uranium Mines program.

Program Overview

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Defense-Related Uranium Mines program (Program) is a partnership between DOE, federal land management agencies, and state abandoned mine lands (AML) programs to verify and validate the condition of 2,500 defense-related uranium mine (DRUM) sites across the nation by 2022. These DRUM sites provided uranium ore to the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) for defense-related activities that occurred between 1947 and 1970. Most DRUM sites are located on public lands and are abandoned. DOE Office of Legacy Management (LM) implements the Program by conducting verification and validation activities, which include:

- Exchanging information with other federal agencies and state governments to improve the quality of mine-specific data
- Performing field inventories to document mining-related facilities at each DRUM site
- Conducting environmental sampling to evaluate safety and health risks
- Producing reports that document physical safety hazards at DRUM sites, as well as potential risks to human health and the environment

Report to Congress

DOE obtained its authority for the Program under Section 3151 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013. The Act mandated that the Secretary of Energy conduct a review of, and prepare a report on, abandoned uranium mines that provided ore for defense-related activities of the United States. DOE consulted with other federal agencies, affected states and tribes, and the public to develop the report, as mandated by the U.S. Congress. DOE finalized the report in August 2014, which documented:

- 4,225 DRUM sites across the nation provided uranium ore to AEC
- Over 90 percent of DRUM sites are located in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming
- The status of reclamation and remediation could only be confirmed at 15 percent of DRUM sites
- Field visits at a small subset of mines demonstrated location data obtained by DOE had a number of inaccuracies

The Report to Congress documented that many data gaps still exist about DRUM sites. DOE determined that further review of DRUM sites was needed to fully meet the Act’s mandate. For more information, please visit the Report to Congress web page at https://energy.gov/lm/defense-related-uranium-mines-report-congress.
Abandoned Uranium Mines Working Group

DOE maintained its dialogue with other federal agencies after the Report to Congress was submitted in an effort to continue to engage, coordinate, and leverage resources to address abandoned uranium mines across the nation. DOE, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Department of the Interior, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs formalized a working group in 2015. The group developed a strategy and five-year action plan to comprehensively determine the scope of the problem posed by abandoned uranium mines and to address those posing the greatest risks to human health and the environment.

Federal and State Partnerships

Concurrently, DOE developed the Program and established partnerships with BLM and USFS to further its review of DRUM sites on BLM- and USFS-administered public land. In 2016 and 2017, DOE entered into a memorandum of understanding with BLM and USFS offices in Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming to inventory and sample DRUM sites. DOE will continue to expand its partnerships until all DRUM sites on federal public lands are verified and validated.

DOE also formed partnerships with state AML programs. Agreements are established with AML programs in Colorado and Utah to obtain inventories of DRUM sites located primarily on private, mixed-ownership, and state lands. DOE will continue to work with state AML programs, which offer expertise in regards to the status and physical safety hazards presented by DRUM sites.

Field Operations

LM uses a technical support contractor to implement field projects that verify and validate DRUM sites. Projects are often grouped by mining district. Technical specialists perform tasks such as:

- Confirming accurate locations of DRUM sites through records reconciliation efforts
- Determining the status of mine reclamation or remediation
- Inventorying DRUM sites by collecting data on features such as adits, shafts, and waste-rock piles
- Performing radiological (gamma) walkover surveys
- Conducting soil and water sampling
- Developing reports that provide rankings of physical safety hazards at DRUM sites, as well as screenings of potential risks to human health and the environment

Field crews implement the work administered by DOE and are the backbone of the Program. Their efforts will support DOE in achieving its goal of addressing 2,500 DRUM sites by 2022.

Contacts

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