

**U.S. Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management  
National Environmental Policy Act Environmental Checklist for**

**Project/Activity: Transfer Salmon Property to the Forestry Commission, State of Mississippi**

**A. Brief Project/Activity Description**

As authorized by Public Law (PL) 104-201, Part IV, Section 2851, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), Office of Legacy Management (LM) proposes to quitclaim the surface rights of the Salmon, Mississippi, Site to the State of Mississippi, retain certain surface rights related to the protection of human health and the environment, and retain all subsurface rights. The Salmon Site encompasses 1,470 acres and was formerly known as the Tatum Salt Dome Test Site. It is located near the town of Purvis in Lamar County, MS.

PL 104-201 states that DOE may convey the above-described property to the State of Mississippi (State) subject to the condition that the State would use the property as a wildlife refuge and working demonstration forest. In addition, PL 104-201 states that the Secretary of Energy may convey the property without compensation.

The Salmon Site was previously owned by the Tatum Family, who managed the property for longleaf pine timber production. In 1964, the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, predecessor to DOE, leased the property from the Tatum Timber Company for purposes of underground testing. As a result of an initial underground nuclear test, an underground cavity 2,710 feet below ground surface was created; three other tests were subsequently conducted within the cavity. The site was remediated in the late 1990's and was brought under LM for long-term maintenance in 2006.

LM wishes to transfer the Salmon property to the State of Mississippi Forestry Commission and is authorized to do so under PL 104-201, as stated above. LM would benefit from this action by reducing management costs associated with long-term management obligations and also associated with management of a property remote to LM offices. As a result of proposed site vegetation management practices, existing wildlife habitat and species diversity would be improved and enhanced. Testing and sampling have been conducted throughout the site over many years, and the surface has been found to be uncontaminated (*Post-Closure Inspection, Sampling, and Maintenance Report for the Salmon, Mississippi Site*, dated March 2009). DOE and the State would continue to monitor groundwater wells on the site. In preparation for the property transfer, DOE sampled five trees through use of tree borings; no detects of contamination were found. Based on the lack of surface contamination and the deed restrictions imposed on all subsurface activities, there would be no potential for any exposure of workers or the public.

**B. Environmental Concerns**

Evaluate the following elements and indicate by checking "yes" or "no" if any phase of the project/activity would result in a change or impact that is subject to regulatory permits, controls, or plans or that would require additional evaluation. If the "yes" column is checked, provide a brief explanation below and attach sheets with additional detail as necessary or appropriate.

Element	Yes	No	Element	Yes	No
Air emissions/air quality	X		Exposure/impacts to public or workers		X
Noise	X		Need for public awareness/involvement		X
Solid waste generation	X		Transportation/traffic control required		X
Mixed waste management		X	Access to/use of DOE property		X
Chemical storage on site		X	Visual resources impacted		X
Pesticide/herbicide use	X		Cultural/archaeological resources present	X	
Toxic substances management		X	Wetland/floodplain impacted	X	
Regulated quantities of petroleum used or stored on site		X	Protected species present: federal, state, or tribe listed		X
Radioactive materials/soils		X	Migratory birds breeding or nesting	X	
Surface (ground) disturbance	X		Wild/scenic rivers impacted		X
Surface water use/contamination		X	Prime/unique farmlands present		X
Surface water quality		X	Groundwater use/contamination		X
Groundwater quality affected		X	Other considerations		X

### C. Explanation and Qualification of All "Yes" Responses

Air emissions/air quality: Logging and controlled burns would be necessary to restore a productive forest and wildlife habitat on the site; however, during the time these activities were being conducted there would be short-term degradation of air quality.

Noise: Temporary elevated noise levels are expected to occur during active forestry activities. There are no adjacent residences.

Solid waste generation: Solid vegetation waste is associated with vegetation management. The end use of such waste would be determined by the State of Mississippi.

Pesticide/herbicide use: It is anticipated that understory vegetation would be managed through a combination of herbicide use and controlled burns using backpack propane units. Herbicides have been used annually for several years by LM to control an invasive weed. Control of understory vegetation would provide increased diversity of wildlife habitat and use opportunities.

Surface ground disturbance: It is anticipated that areas would be cleared for fire breaks and interior dirt roads. Clearings provide important edge habitat for wildlife.

Cultural/archaeological resources present. The Salmon Site was surveyed for cultural resources in 1992, and cultural resources were identified that are potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The State of Mississippi Forestry Commission would need to comply with state cultural resource requirements.

Wetlands/floodplains impacted: The site contains a central wetland and three creeks that may be improved by site actions. The State of Mississippi Forestry Commission would need to evaluate whether their proposed ground-disturbing activities would affect jurisdictional wetlands or protected floodplains. Wetlands provide a rich habitat for many birds and other wildlife species.

Migratory birds breeding or nesting: The State of Mississippi would have oversight related to work in areas inhabited by migratory birds during breeding or nesting season; habitat improvements would positively attract migratory birds.

**D. Eligibility/Conditions**

The proposed action fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix A or B to Subpart D of Title 10 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 1021 (10 CFR 1021); DOE has determined that these classes of actions do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment (see 10 CFR 1021.410). There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposed action, and the proposed action is not "connected" to other actions with potentially significant impacts. Finally, the action is not related to other proposed actions with cumulatively significant impacts and is not precluded by 40 CFR 1506.1 or 10 CFR 1021.211.

**E. Recommendation**

The proposed action to transfer the Salmon Site to the State of Mississippi Forestry Commission, would be considered categorically excluded from further environmental evaluation under 10 CFR 1021, Appendix B to Subpart D, B1.25, *Transfer, lease, disposition, or acquisition of interests in uncontaminated land for habitat preservation or wildlife management, and only associated buildings that support these purposes.*

 Meets Criteria

 Does Not Meet Criteria

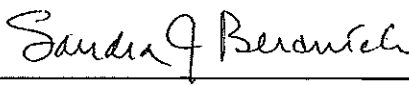



 Unsure
**F. NEPA Determination**

The scope of actions proposed under Section A of this Environmental Checklist, and the information relevant to the potential for environmental impacts in Section B have been reviewed, and the following has been determined:

- The proposed actions meet the criteria for categorical exclusion.
- The proposed actions do not meet the criteria for categorical exclusion; therefore, I recommend that the LM NEPA Planning Board be convened based on my recommendation (see attached rationale) to complete:
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> an Interim Action                 | <input type="checkbox"/> an Environmental Assessment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> an Environmental Impact Statement | <input type="checkbox"/> a Supplemental Analysis     |

## Concurrences

**Project/Activity:** Transfer Salmon Property to the Forestry Commission, State of Mississippi

<b>LM Site Name</b> Salmon, MS, Site	<b>LM Site Program</b> ODA Other Sites (Nevada Off-Sites)	
<b>Contractor</b> NEPA Coordinator Sandra Beranich	<b>Signature</b> 	<b>Date</b> 2-25-2010
<b>Contractor Site Lead</b>  Jack Duray	<b>Signature</b>  Rick Hutton 2010.03.01 14:20:17 -07'00'	<b>Date</b>
<b>LM Site Manager</b>  Jack Craig	<b>Signature</b>  Jack Craig 2010.03.02 08:10:57 -05'00'	<b>Date</b>
<b>LM NEPA Compliance Officer</b> Richard Bush	<b>Signature</b> 	<b>Date</b> 3/2/10

**Distribution upon signature:**

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