

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



Briefing to U.S. House Energy and Commerce Committee Staff

**U.S. Department of Energy
(DOE) Update on Activities
Related to Uranium
Contamination on the
Navajo Nation**

August 2010



DOE is implementing the actions outlined in the Navajo Nation Five-Year Plan

- ◆ DOE continues to monitor and maintain the disposal cells and operate groundwater treatment systems.
- ◆ DOE continues to fund the Navajo Nation (funds have been directed to the Department of Natural Resources per existing cooperative agreement terms) to support Nation participation in all site activities under our Cooperative Agreement.
- ◆ DOE continues to provide technical expertise to the Indian Health Service and Bureau of Indian Affairs as requested.
- ◆ The Navajo Nation has formally joined the El Paso Natural Gas lawsuit against DOE and other federal agencies, which raises Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) and UMTRCA claims.
- ◆ DOE continues to work closely with the Navajo Nation in characterizing and remediating the Highway 160 site.

DOE continues its technical coordination with the Navajo Nation

- ◆ DOE coordinates with the Navajo Nation through several avenues:
 - ❖ Holding regular quarterly meetings since 1998 with Navajo UMTRCA program and Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) staff to discuss groundwater remedies;
 - ❖ Providing groundwater monitoring data, annual treatment system performance reports, and annual site inspection reports, along with a number of special study reports to evaluate alternative treatment technologies;
 - ❖ Maintaining continuous involvement of Navajo UMTRCA staff through the Cooperative Agreement in site management and surveillance and maintenance; and
 - ❖ Recently sponsoring a Navajo Nation federal intern at DOE's Office of Legacy Management.

DOE continues its technical coordination with the Navajo Nation (continued)

- ◆ DOE has provided funding through the Cooperative Agreement with Navajo EPA to install and monitor new wells near Tuba City to address concerns about groundwater contamination they suspect originates at the DOE UMTRCA site near Tuba City.
 - ❖ Navajo Nation awarded subcontract.
 - ❖ Monitoring wells are expected to be installed in August 2010.
- ◆ Cultural awareness training was presented by Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribe in June 2010 to DOE and contractor staff.
 - ❖ Excellent discourse among attendees.
- ◆ A public meeting regarding the Tuba City site is planned in conjunction with the next quarterly meeting to be held in Tuba City, Arizona, in September 2010.

DOE continues its technical coordination with the Navajo Nation (continued)

- ◆ Monument Valley
 - ❖ Levels of uranium above background were found in a small area at the former mill site. DOE took proper precautions to isolate the area. Levels of uranium do not pose a risk to human health or the environment.
- ◆ Shiprock
 - ❖ Investigating extent of groundwater contamination in Many Devils Wash.
- ◆ Tuba City
 - ❖ Conducting pilot study to review other long-term treatment options.

Navajo Nation and DOE continue progress on characterization and remediation of the Highway 160 site

- ◆ Highway 160 site has been fenced off and a soil fixative applied by El Paso Natural Gas.
- ◆ The 2009 Omnibus Bill gave DOE authority to perform surface characterization and remediation of the Highway 160 site. DOE has transferred funding to Navajo Nation through an existing cooperative agreement.
- ◆ Navajo Nation will manage characterization, design, and remediation.
- ◆ DOE worked with the Navajo Nation to develop a detailed scope of work.
- ◆ Characterization work is planned to start in September 2010 after access agreements are obtained, work plans are completed, and a public meeting is held.