

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

Project/Activity Title Uranium Leasing Sites Program	Program Office Grand Junction LM-50	NEPA ID Number LM 05 - 05
		Date June 21, 2005
Contractor NEPA Coordinator R. Bleil	Signature <i>R. Bleil</i>	
Contractor Task Order Manager E. Cotter	Signature <i>E. Cotter</i>	
DOE Project Manager M. Tucker	Signature <i>Michael H. Tucker</i>	

A. PROJECT/ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

Project Scope

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is proposing to either continue the current uranium leasing program, or to discontinue the program. A recent increase in demand for uranium and vanadium has prompted DOE to consider extending the program, and increasing the number of leases to 38 for exploration and production. If the program were continued, DOE is considering two alternatives: continuation of only the existing 13 leases, or continuation of the existing 13 leases and expansion of the program to included up to 25 additional lease tracts. Although ore is primarily mined below-ground, the potential for limited surface mines also exists. Mined ore would be transported to one of two locations for processing; Canon City, Colorado, or Blanding, Utah's White Mesa Mill.

Background Information

In 1974, the Uranium Leasing Sites Program was initiated under the Domestic Uranium Program (10 CFR 760.1) to maintain and preserve the nation's supply of domestic uranium and vanadium ores. In July 1995, DOE completed the *Final Environmental Assessment for the Uranium Lease Management Program*, which resulted in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). In the FONSI, DOE decided that lands withdrawn from public domain would be retained and the program would be continued for a ten-year period for up to 22 lease tracts. The current leases are scheduled to be expire in March 2006 and January 2007.

B. ENVIRONMENTAL AND HUMAN HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS

If the proposed actions could result in potential sources of impacts, or could result in affecting environmental and human health considerations listed in Table 1 below, the "Y" (Yes) column is checked and an explanation is provided as to the physical, chemical and radiological sources or impacts (qualified or quantified when possible). An item checked "Y" does not necessarily mean that an adverse impact would occur. However, it does indicate that DOE believes an explanation is warranted, including actions DOE would implement to minimize or eliminate the potential impact, and actions to comply with Federal, state, and tribal regulations.

Table 1. Potential Sources of Impacts, and Environmental and Human Health Considerations

POTENTIAL SOURCES OF IMPACTS			
Source	Y	N	Explanation
AIR EMISSIONS (Dust, Hazardous Pollutants, etc.)	X		Air emissions in the form of fugitive dust would likely be generated during site construction and on-going mining operations.
CHEMICAL STORAGE/USE (SARA Title III Chemicals, etc.)		X	No regulated chemicals are, or would be stored, during construction and operation of the lease tracts.
EXPLOSIVES USE/MANAGEMENT (Including those with explosive potential)		X	Explosives would be used in the mining operations.
GROUND WATER USE/CONTAMINATION (Existing/Future)	X		Limited ground water could be used for drilling underground.
MIXED WASTE MANAGEMENT (Radiological/hazardous)		X	No mixed waste is anticipated to be generated, managed, or stored at the facility.
NOISE (In Excess of Background)	X		Background noise could exceed ambient levels during operations.
PESTICIDE/HERBICIDE USE (General and Regulated Quantities)		X	It is unlikely that pesticides and herbicides would be used during mining activities. However, they may be used in restoration and grounds restoration activities.
PETROLEUM STORAGE/USE (Regulated quantities)	X		Petroleum would be used for heavy equipment during operations and it may be necessary to store regulated quantities for refueling at the site.
RADIOACTIVE MATERIALS/SOILS (Management)	X		Radioactive materials in the form of ore and waste piles would be mined and stockpiled at the site.
SOLID WASTE GENERATION (Non-hazardous/Recyclable Material)	X		Solid waste would be generated during construction and operation of the facility. Non-hazardous solid waste that cannot be recycled will be disposed of in an approved municipal landfill.
SURFACE (GROUND) DISTURBANCE (Soils/Vegetation-Clearing/Excavation)	X		Excavation and clearing activities would occur for exploration activities, and construction and operations of the lease tracts.
SURFACE WATER USE/CONTAMINATION (Water Rights/Effluent Discharge/Storm water/Dredge and Fill)	X		Surface water is not anticipated to be affected by mining activities. However, storm water permits, if required, would have to be obtained for construction and operation. Sanitary and bathroom waste would be discharged in accordance with state regulations.
TOXIC SUBSTANCES MANAGEMENT (Asbestos/PCBs)		X	No asbestos or PCBs would be generated, managed, or stored at the facility.
TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC (Regulated Materials/Waste or Traffic Increase)	X		Traffic would likely increase in the vicinity of the lease tract sites during operations. The areas however are considered remote. Transportation of the ore to processing facilities would increase traffic slightly on rural roads.
UTILITY SYSTEMS (Installing/Maintaining/Disturbance)	X		Utilities, including electrical, water and sewer lines would be likely be required.
ENVIRONMENTAL AND HUMAN HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS			
Consideration	Y	N	Explanation
AIR QUALITY		X	Fugitive dust would not result in a violation of air quality standards, as suppression would be applied as needed.
ACCESS TO/USE OF NON-DOE PROPERTY	X		Access easements, or rights-of-way would be obtained prior to starting operations.
ACCIDENTS—PUBLIC/WORKERS	X		The potential exists for construction and traffic-related accidents during operations. Site safety briefings should be conducted with construction personnel on a regular basis.
ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION SITE		X	Not applicable.
EXPOSURE—PUBLIC/WORKERS	X		The public could be exposed to stockpiled ore and waste piles.
GROUND WATER QUALITY		X	Ground water quality would not be affected.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT/AWARENESS	X		Public involvement would likely be expected based on the location of ore processing, transportation issues, and the intended uses for the processed ores.
SURFACE WATER QUALITY		X	Not applicable.
VISUAL RESOURCES	X		Mining operations could affect visual resources on BLM lands located in close proximity to the lease tracts.
SENSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES			
Archeological/Cultural Resources	X		The potential to affect cultural resources exists for processing sites and access roads.
Floodplains/Wetlands	X		The sites or access roads could affect floodplains and wetlands, if present.
Migratory Birds		X	Would not be adversely affected.
National and State Monument/Parks		X	Not located in close proximity to the site.
Prime and Unique Farmlands		X	Not located in close proximity to the site.
Scenic Byways	X		Scenic byways (Highways 62 and 141) could be used to transport the ore to processing sites.
Threatened/Endangered Species—Federal	X		There is the potential for T&E species to be present in the vicinity of the lease tracts and access roads.
Threatened/Endangered Species—State/Tribal	X		There is the potential for T&E species to be present in the vicinity of the lease tracts and access roads.
Wild and Scenic Rivers		X	Not present in the vicinity of the site.
Wilderness		X	Not present in the vicinity of the site.

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION ELIGIBILITY/CONDITIONS

Does the proposal meet the following criteria for application of Categorical Exclusion?

- The proposal fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix A or B of subpart D, 10 CFR Part 1021.
- There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposal that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal.
- The proposal is not "connected" to other actions with potentially significant impacts, or related to other proposed actions with cumulatively significant impacts, and is not precluded by 40 CFR 1506.1 or 10 CFR Part 1021.211.

To qualify for categorical exclusion, proposed action must not:

- Violate applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, including requirements of DOE and Executive Orders.
- Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators and facilities for treating wastewater, surface water, and ground water).
- Disturb hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or CERCLA-excluded petroleum and natural gas products that preexist in the environment such that there would be uncontrolled or unpermitted releases.
- Adversely affect environmentally and culturally sensitive resources. An action may be categorically excluded if, although sensitive resources are present on a site, the action would not adversely affect those resources.

D. RECOMMENDATION

Continuation of the uranium leasing sites program, including proposed activities for exploration and operations of the lease tracts does not appear to meet the criteria for categorical exclusions listed in Subpart D, Appendices A and B, 10 CFR 1021. In addition, 10 CFR 1021.321 requires DOE to prepare an EA for a proposed action that is not described in the classes of actions listed in Appendices C and D. 10 CFR 1021.300(b) also allows DOE to prepare a NEPA document for any action to further the purposes of NEPA. On the basis of the information presented in this checklist, it is recommended that an EA be completed as the appropriate level of NEPA documentation. Based on comments and discussion with LM personnel and the Acting Director, LM-50, the possibility, although slight, exists to support an EIS should a FONSI be sufficient.

E. NEPA DETERMINATION

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

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 (NPB) be convened based on my recommendation (see attached rationale) to complete:

an Interim Action an Environmental Assessment an Environmental Impact Statement

a Supplemental Analysis

R. Bush
LM NEPA Compliance Officer

6/27/05
Date

Distribution upon signature:

R. Bush, LM NEPA Compliance Officer

M. Tucker, DOE Project Manager

R. Bleil, Stoller NEPA Coordinator-Grand Junction

E. Cotter, Stoller Project Manager

Record File: LM-50 West Sites