# Finding of No Significant Impact
# Ground Water Compliance at the Durango, Colorado, UMTRA Project Site

**AGENCY:** U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

**ACTION:** FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

**SUMMARY:** The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) plans to implement a ground water compliance strategy for the Uranium Mill Tailings Remedial Action (UMTRA) Project site near Durango, Colorado. The purpose of the strategy is to comply with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) ground water standards defined in Title 40 *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR) Part 192, and in so doing, protect human health and the environment. Ground water at the Durango site is contaminated with residual radioactive material from historical activities associated with the processing of uranium ore. The planned action (formerly, the proposed action) and a no-action alternative are described in detail in the *Environmental Assessment of Ground Water Compliance at the Durango, Colorado, UMTRA Project Site* (see attached DOE/EA-1452). The planned action consists of the following remediation strategies for the two distinct hydrogeologic areas of the site:

*Mill Tailings Area*—Natural flushing will reduce ground water contaminant concentrations, and DOE will implement institutional controls and ground water and surface water monitoring programs. Ground water modeling results and trend analysis predict that site-related concentrations of uranium, molybdenum, and cadmium in the alluvial aquifer will naturally decrease (through flushing) to levels below the contaminants' respective EPA maximum concentration limits within the 100-year time frame allowed by law. Also, modeling results predict that concentrations of selenium in the alluvial aquifer will decrease to levels below an alternate concentration limit of 0.05 milligram per liter (versus the maximum concentration limit of 0.01 milligram per liter) within 100 years. During the 100-year natural flushing period, institutional controls will be maintained to ensure that ground water beneath the mill tailings area is not used. DOE also will implement ground water and surface water monitoring programs. For the first 5 years (10 years for cadmium sampling), monitoring will be conducted annually. After 5 years, the monitoring strategy will be reevaluated and adjusted as appropriate on the basis of analytical results.

*Raffinate Ponds Area*—DOE will conduct no further remediation and will (1) apply supplemental standards, (2) implement institutional controls, and (3) as a best management practice, continue monitoring ground water and surface water. Bedrock ground water at the raffinate ponds area qualifies for supplemental standards on the basis of its limited use due to widespread, elevated concentrations of selenium. The elevated selenium concentrations are not mill related and are derived from natural geologic sources. Institutional controls have already been implemented at the site to ensure that ground water will not be used. DOE also will monitor uranium and selenium concentrations in ground water and nearby surface water as a best management practice. For the first 5 years, monitoring will be conducted annually. After 5 years, the monitoring strategy will be reevaluated and adjusted as appropriate on the basis of analytical results.

DOE will ensure that the selected compliance strategy continues to be protective of human health and the environment. The mill tailings area and raffinate ponds area will become part of the Long-Term Surveillance and Maintenance (LTSM) Program administered by the DOE Grand Junction Office in Grand Junction, Colorado. The LTSM Program will manage these areas according to a long-term surveillance plan to be prepared specifically for the Durango site. DOE will maintain authority and responsibility for long-term monitoring.

The Environmental Assessment analyzes the relevant environmental effects of DOE's planned action and a no-action alternative on ground water, surface water, land and water use, human health, ecological risk, floodplains, wetlands, threatened or endangered species, and socioeconomics. It also describes environmental justice considerations and analyzes the cumulative effects of the two alternatives. The planned action will not:

1. Compromise public health or safety;
2. Affect unique cultural, biological, or ecologically critical areas;
3. Result in controversial impacts to the human environment;
4. Result in impacts that would be uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks;
5. By its implementation, establish a precedent for future actions having possible significant effects;
6. Be associated with other actions that may have individually insignificant but cumulatively significant effects;
7. Affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places;
8. Cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources;
9. Affect threatened or endangered species or their habitat;
10. Result in a violation of federal, state, or local laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

**PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND FONSI:** Copies of the Environmental Assessment and FONSI are available for review at local libraries and on DOE's website:

www.gjo.doe.gov\ugw\sites\co\durango\durango.htm

Copies of the documents may be obtained from:

Donald Metzler, Program Manager
U.S. Department of Energy Grand Junction Office
2597 B ¾ Road
Grand Junction, CO 81502-2567
Telephone (970) 248-7612 or (800) 399-5618

**FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA) PROCESS:** For further information about the NEPA process, contact:

Roger Twitchell, NEPA Compliance Officer
U.S. Department of Energy Idaho Operations Office
Mail Stop 1216
850 Energy Drive
Idaho Falls, ID 83401
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**DETERMINATION:** On the basis of the Environmental Assessment, which analyzes relevant environmental issues and addresses the concerns of stakeholders, DOE finds that no significant impact will result from implementing the planned action at the Durango site. This FONSI is documented pursuant to NEPA, the Council on Environmental Quality's "Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA" codified at 40 CFR 1500, and DOE's "NEPA Implementing Procedures" codified at 10 CFR 1021. The planned action does not constitute a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the environment within the mandate of NEPA. Therefore, implementation of the planned action does not require the preparation of an environmental impact statement.

Signed in Grand Junction, Colorado, this 13 day of November, 2002.

Donna Bergman-Tabbert

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