

News Release

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U.S. Department of Energy Office of Legacy Management Assumes Long-Term Custody of L-Bar Disposal Site, Near Seboyeta, New Mexico

GRAND JUNCTION, CO — On October 21, 2004, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) accepted the Long-Term Surveillance Plan (LTSP) prepared by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Legacy Management for the L-Bar, New Mexico, Disposal Site.

NRC acceptance of this LTSP establishes DOE as the long-term custodian for the site. NRC issues a general license for the custody and long-term care, including monitoring, maintenance, and emergency measures necessary to ensure that uranium and thorium mill tailings disposal sites will protect the public health, safety, and the environment after closure (completion of reclamation activities). SOHIO Western Mining Company (SOHIO) was the licensee responsible for conducting reclamation activities to bring the former uranium-processing site into compliance with applicable NRC regulations. NRC has terminated SOHIO's license, and the site is now included under NRC's general license for long-term custody.

The L-Bar Site is located in Cibola County approximately 47 miles west of Albuquerque, New Mexico, and 10 miles north of Laguna Pueblo. The disposal site occupies part of the former L-Bar Ranch and is approximately 4 miles east-southeast of the village of Seboyeta. DOE owns the 740-acre L-Bar Disposal Site property, which includes the 100-acre tailings impoundment. L-Bar is a Title II site regulated under the Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act of 1978 (UMTRCA). Title II of UMTRCA addresses reclamation of uranium mill tailings and tailings-contaminated material at commercial facilities that were in operation when the act was enacted.

DOE, as the long-term steward, prepared a site-specific LTSP. The LTSP states that program personnel will inspect the site annually and visually check to confirm the integrity of features at the site, to identify changes or new conditions that may affect site integrity, and to determine the need for maintenance and follow-up inspections. Limited ground water monitoring will be conducted annually to verify continued satisfactory disposal cell performance. DOE will prepare an annual compliance report to document results of the site inspection and analyses of ground water samples.
