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# Moab Project

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## Public Participation Plan

Fiscal Year 2004



Prepared for U.S. Department of Energy  
under DOE Contract Number DE-AC13-02GJ79491.  
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GJO-2003-460-TAC  
GJO-MOA 1.4-2

# **Moab Project Public Participation Plan**

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Prepared for  
U.S. Department of Energy  
Grand Junction, Colorado

Work Performed Under DOE  
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## Introduction

This Public Participation Plan provides information on the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) public participation policy and the Moab Project and identifies methods of communicating with the public to enhance public participation in the Moab Project decision-making process. This plan will be updated annually.

DOE regulations and policy mandate public involvement in decision making. Public participation provides DOE with the opportunity to gather opinions, perspectives, and values from the public and enables it to make better, more informed decisions. DOE must also comply with additional guidance on public participation provided in the National Environmental Policy Act, in the Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act, and in other federal and state agency requirements as they pertain to such items as permits and notifications.

Certain core values are associated with the DOE public participation policy. These include:

- Accessibility—DOE employees who are available, approachable, and open to the public.
- Fairness—objectivity and freedom from bias toward any side.
- Innovation—introducing new ideas, methods, and approaches associated with communication methods or remediation technologies.
- Peer review—examination of key issues and decisions by internal and external peers.
- Credibility—commitment to pursue sound and dependable science and technology.
- Timeliness—allowing sufficient time for stakeholders to participate in DOE decision-making processes, timely responses to stakeholder comments and requests, and timely DOE decision-making processes supported by public participation.

## Site Description

The Moab Project Site (formerly known as the Atlas millsite) is a former uranium-ore processing facility located about 3 miles northwest of the city of Moab in Grand County, Utah (Figures 1 and 2), and lies on the west bank of the Colorado River at the confluence with Moab Wash.

The site is irregularly shaped and encompasses approximately 400 acres; a 130-acre uranium mill tailings pile occupies much of the western portion of the site. Steep sandstone cliffs border the site on the north and southwest. The Colorado River forms the southeastern boundary of the site. U.S. Highway 191 parallels the northern site boundary, and State Highway 279 crosses the western portion of the site. The entrance to Arches National Park is located less than 1 mile northwest of the site across U.S. Highway 191; Canyonlands National Park is about 12 miles to the southwest. The Union Pacific Railroad traverses a small section of the site just west of State Highway 279, then enters a tunnel and emerges several miles to the southwest. Moab Wash runs northwest to southeast through the center of the site and joins with the Colorado River. The wash is an intermittent stream that flows only after significant precipitation or snowmelt. The Moab Project Site lies directly across the Colorado River from the Scott M. Matheson Wetlands Preserve, also known as Moab Marsh. This area consists of marsh and riparian habitat, including dense growth of tamarisk. The Preserve is jointly owned and managed by the Nature

Conservancy and the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources. The area has improvements such as walking paths, wildlife viewing areas, and educational kiosks.

## **Background**

The Moab Project Site was a Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act Title II site licensed by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission. With the enactment of the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001, Congress designated the site as a Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act Title I site. On October 25, 2001, DOE assumed ownership of the Moab Project Site. The DOE office in Grand Junction, Colorado, is responsible for reclamation and stewardship of the site.

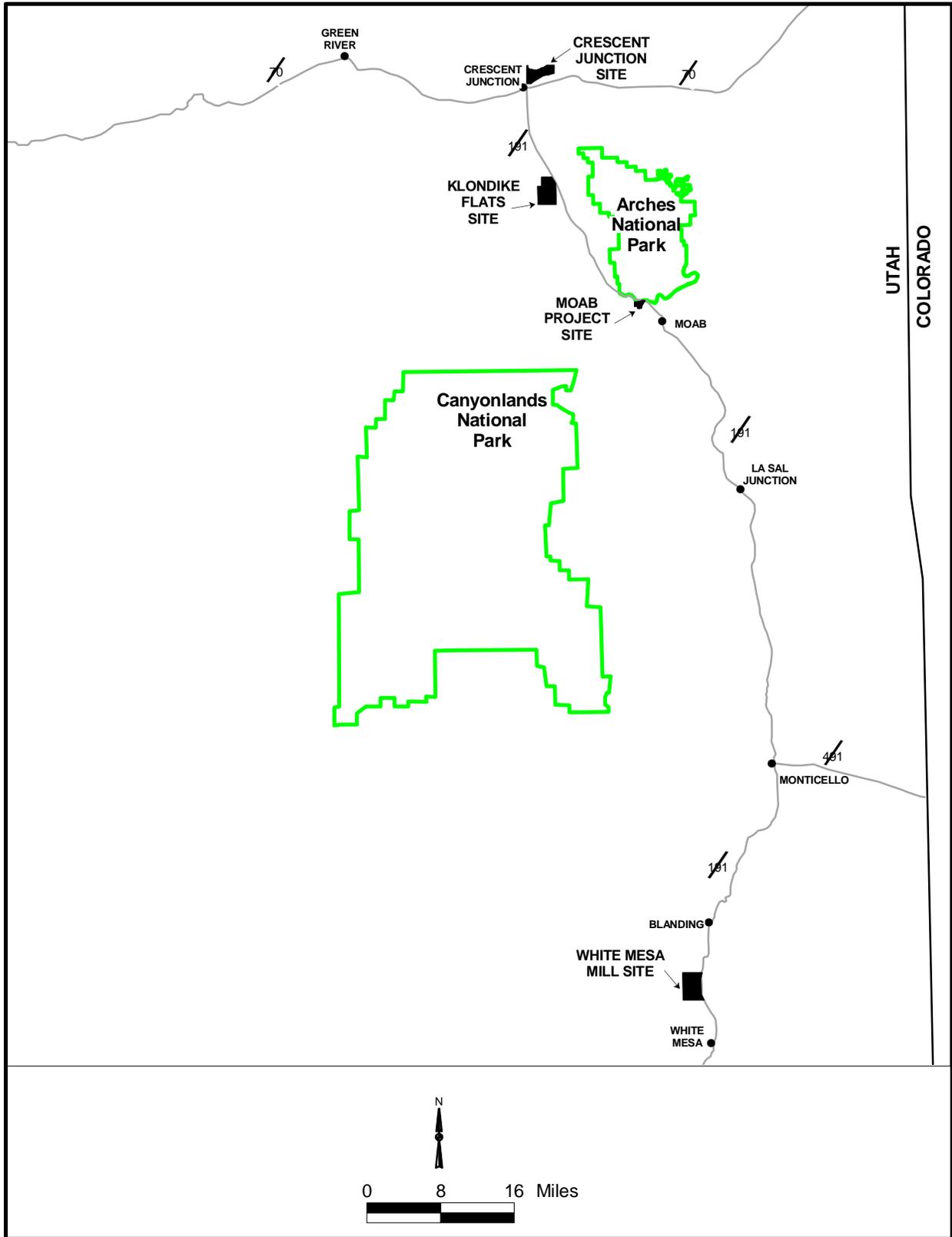
The DOE Moab Project team is currently preparing a draft Environmental Impact Statement that will present a detailed evaluation of proposed on-site and off-site alternatives for permanent disposal of the uranium mill tailings pile at the Moab Project Site. The proposed alternatives will also include cleanup and reclamation of the millsite property. The three off-site alternatives being evaluated are the Crescent Junction site immediately northeast of the town of Crescent Junction, Utah, and 28 miles northwest of Moab; the Klondike Flats site, 17 miles north of Moab; and the existing White Mesa Mill site near White Mesa and Blanding, Utah, and about 85 miles south of Moab.

Figure 1 shows the general location of the site relative to Moab, other geographical locations, and the off-site disposal alternative locations. The map in Figure 2 was completed in 1983; the majority of on-site buildings have since been demolished, and the on-site tailings were consolidated. However, contamination is still present in many areas of the site. Figure 3 provides a 2001 aerial view of the site.

The following information about the Moab community, Grand County, and San Juan County was compiled from the *Grand County General Plan Update*, prepared by Four Corners Planning; the *Community Profile for Moab and Grand County, Utah*, created by the Moab Area Economic Development in cooperation with the State of Utah, Department of Economic Development; and a relocation packet from San Juan County, Utah, Community Development. Additional information was gathered from the county profiles on the State of Utah website, the U.S. Census Bureau 2000 census website, and the San Juan County Economic Development website.

## **Community Profiles**

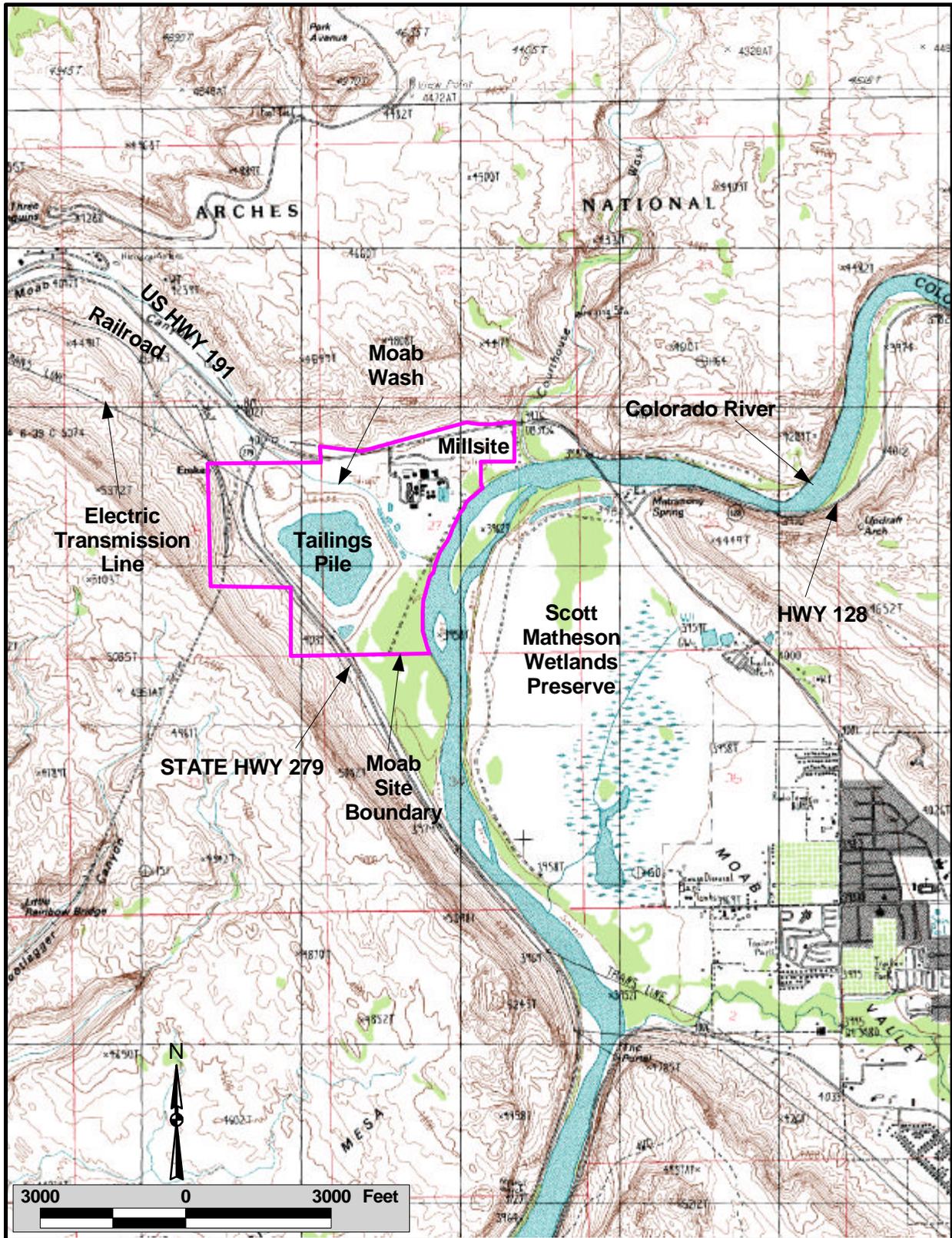
Moab is the Grand County seat and the principal city of southeastern Utah. Southeastern Utah has the nation's largest concentration of national and state parks, monuments, and recreation areas. Within a 100-mile radius of Moab are four national parks, four state parks, and numerous national monuments and national historic sites.



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Figure 1. Site Location



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Figure 2. Moab Project Detailed Site Boundaries (c.1983)



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Figure 3. 2001 Aerial View of the Moab Project Site

Small farms and orchards, livestock ranching, and potash mining were the major economic activities during much of the area's history. The uranium boom in the 1950s brought the first real population expansion to the area. In the past 5 years, Moab has become noted for mountain biking and also for whitewater rafting in the Colorado River. Tourism has become the major economic base. In the 2000 census, the population of Moab was 4,779.

## **Grand County**

In addition to Moab, Crescent Junction, which is also in Grand County, could be potentially affected if the uranium mill tailings pile in Moab is relocated to that site. Annually, more than 1 million people visit Grand County for recreation. The county government is working to diversify its economy by targeting outdoor gear manufacturers, small high-tech and telecommunications-related firms, television and motion picture production, and agriculture, and by developing natural resources.

In the 2000 census, the population of Grand County was 8,545. The county per capita income in 2001 was \$20,710, which is below the state average per capita income of \$24,033. Grand County's 2002 civilian labor force was 5,469, and the unemployment rate was 7.4 percent.

Tourism accounts for at least 45 percent of Grand County's employment, and government accounts for 19 percent. Grand County School District is the largest employer in the county. The local grocery store chain, county government, and National Park Service are also among the major employers.

Media in the area consist of one private and one public radio station, one weekly newspaper, and a local television station that presents local, national, and world news. Regional, national, and international newspapers are readily available.

## **San Juan County**

If the Moab uranium mill tailings pile is relocated to the White Mesa Mill, the communities of White Mesa, Blanding, Bluff, and Monticello, and the Ute Mountain Ute Reservation could be potentially affected by the relocation. These communities are all within San Juan County, which is on the Colorado Plateau in the southeastern corner of Utah. It is the largest county in the state and encompasses 8,103 square miles of high desert, sandstone canyons, and timbered mountains.

In the 2000 census, the population of San Juan County was 14,413. Just over half the population is Navajo with a smaller number of Ute people. The county per capita income in 2001 was \$13,108, which is well below the state average per capita income of \$24,033. San Juan County's 2002 civilian labor force was 4,692, and the unemployment rate was 9.3 percent.

San Juan School District is the largest employer in the county. The county, state, and federal governments, the Navajo Nation, and oil field services are also among the major employers.

Media in the area consist of two weekly newspapers. Radio and television broadcast stations are received via translator systems.

## Stakeholders

DOE recognizes that stakeholders may be any affected or interested party, including

- Citizens of Grand County and San Juan County, Utah.
- Native American Tribes.
- Local media.
- Local elementary and secondary schools.
- Local city and county governments.
- State governmental agencies.
- Congressional delegations.
- Elected State of Utah officials.
- Federal agencies.
- Environmental organizations.
- Business owners.
- Service organizations.
- General public using U.S. Highway 191 traveling into and through Moab.
- Other interested individuals.

## Issues and Concerns

Local citizens, environmental groups and agencies, and downstream users of water from the Colorado River have expressed concern over the effects of contamination from the site on the river. In 1999, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission issued its *Final Environmental Impact Statement Related to Reclamation of the Uranium Mill Tailings at the Atlas Site, Moab, Utah* and received numerous comments both in favor of and opposed to the proposed action of capping the uranium mill tailings pile in place.

Other expressed concerns include dust control, contamination from the site in the Colorado River, potential health effects, future land use, and general aesthetics associated with the pile being observable from U.S. Highway 191 that leads from Interstate 70 into Moab and also from the main Arches National Park access road.

During the public scoping process for the DOE Environmental Impact Statement, citizens commented on the potential impacts to nearby communities by the disposal site alternatives and the transportation haul and pipelines routes that are being considered.

## Project Decision-Making Process

The Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act specified that DOE prepare a plan for remediation. The DOE Moab Project team prepared a *Preliminary Plan for Remediation*, and on October 30, 2001, the DOE Assistant Secretary of Environmental Management transmitted the document to the National Academy of Sciences for its review. The intent of the Academy's review was not to make a recommendation of the final disposition of the tailings, but rather to

provide recommendations on the DOE plan. The Academy completed its review of the plan in June 2002 and provided recommendations to the Secretary of Energy on additional information that should be included in the document. In July 2002, the DOE Moab Project team issued a response to the Academy's comments and transmitted the response to DOE Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

To fulfill the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirement of considering the full range of reasonable alternatives and associated environmental effects of significant federal actions, DOE has initiated the NEPA process for the Moab Project with development of the Environmental Impact Statement. The Environmental Impact Statement will assess the potential environmental impacts of actions that would remediate contaminated materials and ground water at the Moab Project Site and at vicinity properties that may have been contaminated with uranium mill tailings. The Environmental Impact Statement will incorporate some of the information from the 1999 U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Final Environmental Impact Statement. The recommendations made by the National Academy of Sciences will be addressed either in the Environmental Impact Statement or in supporting documentation, as appropriate.

Under NEPA, DOE encourages and facilitates public participation in its decisions that affect the quality of human health and the environment. In January 2003, DOE hosted six public scoping meetings in towns near alternative disposal site locations to solicit public comments on cleanup alternatives for the remediation of the Moab Project Site and vicinity properties. DOE invited numerous federal, state, local, and tribal agencies to become cooperating agencies in the preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement for the Moab Project. These agencies can assist DOE in identifying all reasonable alternatives and significant environmental, social, or economic impacts associated with the proposed action. Twelve agencies have agreed to be cooperating agencies. DOE has established a schedule of cooperating agency interactions and will hold separate meetings with cooperating agencies. DOE also contacted Native American Tribes for assistance in identifying traditional cultural properties within or near the proposed disposal site locations or the proposed haul and pipeline routes.

DOE anticipates release of the draft Environmental Impact Statement in May 2004, followed by a minimum 45-day public comment period. DOE will again host public meetings during the comment period to accept formal comments on the draft document.

DOE will provide other selected project documents to the Moab Millsite Stakeholder Group and project subcommittees for their information. DOE considers comments and incorporate changes as appropriate. Major project documents will also be available in the Moab Project Public Reading Rooms; locations are listed in the Public Participation Activities section. Final documents will be sent to identified key contacts, made available in the Reading Rooms, and posted on the DOE Moab Project website ([www.gjo.doe.gov/moab/moab.html](http://www.gjo.doe.gov/moab/moab.html)).

## **Public Participation Activities**

Public participation is an important part of the NEPA process. Formal provisions for participation by all interested parties are detailed in Title 40 *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR)

Parts 1500–1508, the Council on Environmental Quality's implementing procedures for NEPA; and in 10 CFR 1021, DOE's implementing procedures for NEPA. The following public participation activities will be conducted in support of the DOE goal of actively informing the public about the Moab Project and the preparation of NEPA documentation to provide opportunities for communication between DOE and the public.

## **Public Meetings**

Public meetings will be held at least annually or as circumstances dictate to address issues of importance to stakeholders. These meetings will provide information about the Moab Project and will seek comments from attendees. DOE will also host public meetings during the comment period for the draft Environmental Impact Statement. DOE will provide sufficient advance notice of the date, time, and location of meetings so that interested stakeholders can plan to attend.

## **Public Availability Sessions**

Public availability sessions are opportunities for interested stakeholders to meet with project personnel in an informal setting. These sessions are held to identify and answer stakeholder concerns and may be held in lieu of public meetings to allow for more informal discussions about the project.

## **Small Group Meetings**

Stakeholders may request DOE staff to meet with small groups. These meetings provide opportunities to address specific concerns or issues. The Moab Millsite Stakeholder Group is a committee separate from DOE; DOE attends this committee's meetings by invitation only.

## **Dialogues with Cooperating Agencies and Tribal Contacts**

DOE will hold separate cooperating agency participation meetings to discuss the status of the Environmental Impact Statement and cooperating agency deliverables. DOE will communicate with tribal contacts to ensure potential cultural resources are identified and adverse impacts are considered.

## **Briefings for Local Officials**

DOE Moab Project staff will meet with Grand County Council and City of Moab officials as issues arise. These meetings are intended to provide status updates of the Moab Project.

## **Fact Sheets, Information Updates, and Technical Summaries**

DOE will prepare short formal documents for public distribution to provide a project status update and to describe technical and informational components of the Moab Project.

## News Releases

DOE will issue news releases to announce public meetings, provide information on project activities, and for other newsworthy events. News releases will be distributed to identified news media and other stakeholders.

## Display Ads/Articles

Display ads will be prepared, as needed, and placed in local print media to announce public meetings and comment periods. Periodically, an article to update the project status may be submitted to the local print media.

## Internet Website

Documents, fact sheets, information updates, technical summaries, selected project documents, meeting announcements, and news releases will be posted to the DOE Moab Project website. The Moab Project website address is [www.gjo.doe.gov/moab/moab.html](http://www.gjo.doe.gov/moab/moab.html).

## E-mail Address

DOE has established an e-mail address to receive comments on the Moab Project. The address is [moabcomments@gjo.doe.gov](mailto:moabcomments@gjo.doe.gov). The DOE Moab Project team will respond to e-mail messages received at this site.

## Toll-Free Hotline

A toll-free Environmental Impact Statement hotline has been established for the convenience of stakeholders. The number is 1-800-637-4575.

## Public Reading Rooms

DOE has established three Public Reading Rooms, which contain documents and information related to the Moab Project.

The Reading Rooms are located at:

Grand County Library  
25 South 100 East  
Moab, Utah  
(435) 259-5421

Library hours:  
9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Monday through Friday  
10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Saturday  
Closed Sunday

Blanding Branch Library  
25 West 300 South  
Blanding, Utah  
(435) 678-2335

Library hours:  
Noon to 7:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday  
2:00 to 6:00 p.m. Friday  
10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Saturday  
Closed Sunday

White Mesa Ute  
Administrative Building  
(off Highway 191)  
White Mesa, Utah  
(435) 678-3397

Library hours:  
8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday  
Closed weekends

The official project record is located at the DOE office in Grand Junction, 2597 B  $\frac{3}{4}$  Road, Grand Junction, Colorado.

## **Educational Programs and Outreach Activities**

DOE has a commitment to support educational initiatives designed to improve curriculum in schools and will coordinate educational partnerships with local schools as appropriate. In addition, the DOE Moab Project team will support and participate in educational outreach activities, such as environmental fairs, science fairs, and career days.

## **Speakers Bureau**

A cadre of speakers with varying levels and areas of expertise are employed at the DOE office in Grand Junction. Speakers will be available to participate in community and educational activities. Arrangements for speakers are made by contacting Wendee Ryan, contractor Public Affairs Manager, at 970-248-6765.

## **Local Office**

The local Moab Project Site office telephone number is 435-259-5131; contact: Irwin Stewart, contractor Site Manager.

## **Information Contacts**

The DOE Moab Project Manager is the primary information contact for public inquiries regarding site activities:

Don Metzler, Project Manager  
U.S. Department of Energy  
2597 B  $\frac{3}{4}$  Road  
Grand Junction, CO 81503  
970-248-7612  
970-248-6023 (fax)

E-mail: [moabcomments@gjo.doe.gov](mailto:moabcomments@gjo.doe.gov)  
Toll-free hotline: 1-800-637-4575

## History and Highlights

- 1956 Moab Minerals Company mill begins operating under the Uranium Reduction Company regulated by the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission as directed by the Atomic Energy Act of 1954.
- 1962 Atlas Minerals Corporation acquires the site.
- 1974 Process circuits are modified to reduce the amount of water used for milling.
- 1978 The Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act amends the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 and mandates cleanup of potentially hazardous uranium mill tailings to provide stricter controls on future handling and disposal of wastes from the processing of uranium ore.
- 1979 Atlas' license is renewed with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission.
- 1984 Moab mill ceases operation under License SUA-917.
- 1988 Decommissioning begins, significant Reclamation Plan revisions include a ground water detection monitoring program and dewatering of the mill tailings.
- 1989 Construction of an interim cover over the tailings pile begins.
- 1992 Revised Atlas Reclamation Plan indicates that mill decommissioning will be initiated to remove structures.
- 1993 Environmental Assessment for the Moab Project Site published in the *Federal Register* proposes selected revisions to the Atlas Reclamation Plan. Extensive adverse public comment is received; U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission decides to reevaluate the entire plan.
- 1994 U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission elects to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement to evaluate the Reclamation Plan (*Federal Register* notice 3/30/94).
- 1995 Interim cover over the tailings pile is completed.
- 1995 U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission consults with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and submits an initial Biological Assessment.
- 1996 Decommissioning of mill structures is completed.
- 1996 U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission releases Draft Environmental Impact Statement.
- 1996 U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission holds a public meeting for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Technical Evaluation Report on February 28 in Moab.
- 1997 U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission submits supplement to initial Biological Assessment to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- 1997 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issues first Draft Biological Opinion; identifies moving pile as "a reasonable and prudent alternative."
- 1998 Atlas Minerals Corporation files for bankruptcy. Proposed reclamation activities as a Title II site are administered by a U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission appointed trustee, PriceWaterhouseCoopers.
- 1998 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issues a revised Draft and a Final Biological Opinion stating that the Ground Water Compliance Action Plan must be revisited and expedited.
- 1999 U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission completes the Final Environmental Impact Statement on the decision to stabilize mill tailings in place.
- 2000 Moab Project Site is designated as a Title I site under the Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act with the passage of the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act.
- 2001 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service withdraws its Final Biological Opinion.

- 2001 PriceWaterhouseCoopers issues report (prepared by Shepherd Miller, Inc.) on Moab Project Site hydrogeology and geochemistry.
- 2001 DOE assumes ownership of the site on October 1; U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission license is terminated, and the DOE office in Grand Junction, Colorado, is assigned responsibility for reclamation and stewardship of the site.
- 2001 DOE Moab Project team develops the *Preliminary Plan for Remediation*, which is transmitted by the Assistant Secretary of Environmental Management to the National Academy of Sciences for review.
- 2001 DOE hosts a public meeting in Moab on December 11 to provide a status update on activities at the site.
- 2002 National Academy of Sciences hosts a public meeting in Moab on January 14 and 15.
- 2002 National Academy of Sciences provides comments on the *Preliminary Plan for Remediation* to the Secretary of Energy and hosts a public meeting in June to summarize its comments.
- 2002 DOE initiates NEPA process with publication in the *Federal Register* of the Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.
- 2003 DOE conducts six public scoping meetings in January to solicit public comment on the cleanup alternatives for remediation of the Moab Project Site and vicinity properties.
- 2003 Public scoping comment period ends on February 14.
- 2003 DOE conducts three public information meetings in June to provide a status of the Environmental Impact Statement.