

**Public Involvement Plan for the Environmental
Assessment of Ground Water Compliance Activities at
the Riverton, Wyoming, Uranium Mill Tailings Site**

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Prepared by
U.S. Department of Energy
Albuquerque Operations Office
Grand Junction Office

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Public Involvement Plan for the Environmental Assessment of Ground Water Compliance at the Riverton, Uranium Mill Tailings Site

This public involvement plan is tiered to the Uranium Mill Tailings Remedial Action (UMTRA) Ground Water Project Public Participation Plan dated October 1997. This public involvement plan is specific to the Riverton, Wyoming site and details the activities that have been or will be carried out to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and the Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act of 1978, as amended.

This plan provides a brief summary of the history of the UMTRA Surface and Ground Water Projects, an explanation of roles and responsibilities filled by the contractor and the U. S. Department of Energy (DOE), and information specific to the Riverton site.

The objectives of this plan are to promote stakeholder awareness, understanding, and participation in the project decision-making processes and to establish stakeholder involvement and information exchange to promote communication between the DOE's Grand Junction Office (DOESGJO) and affected stakeholders.

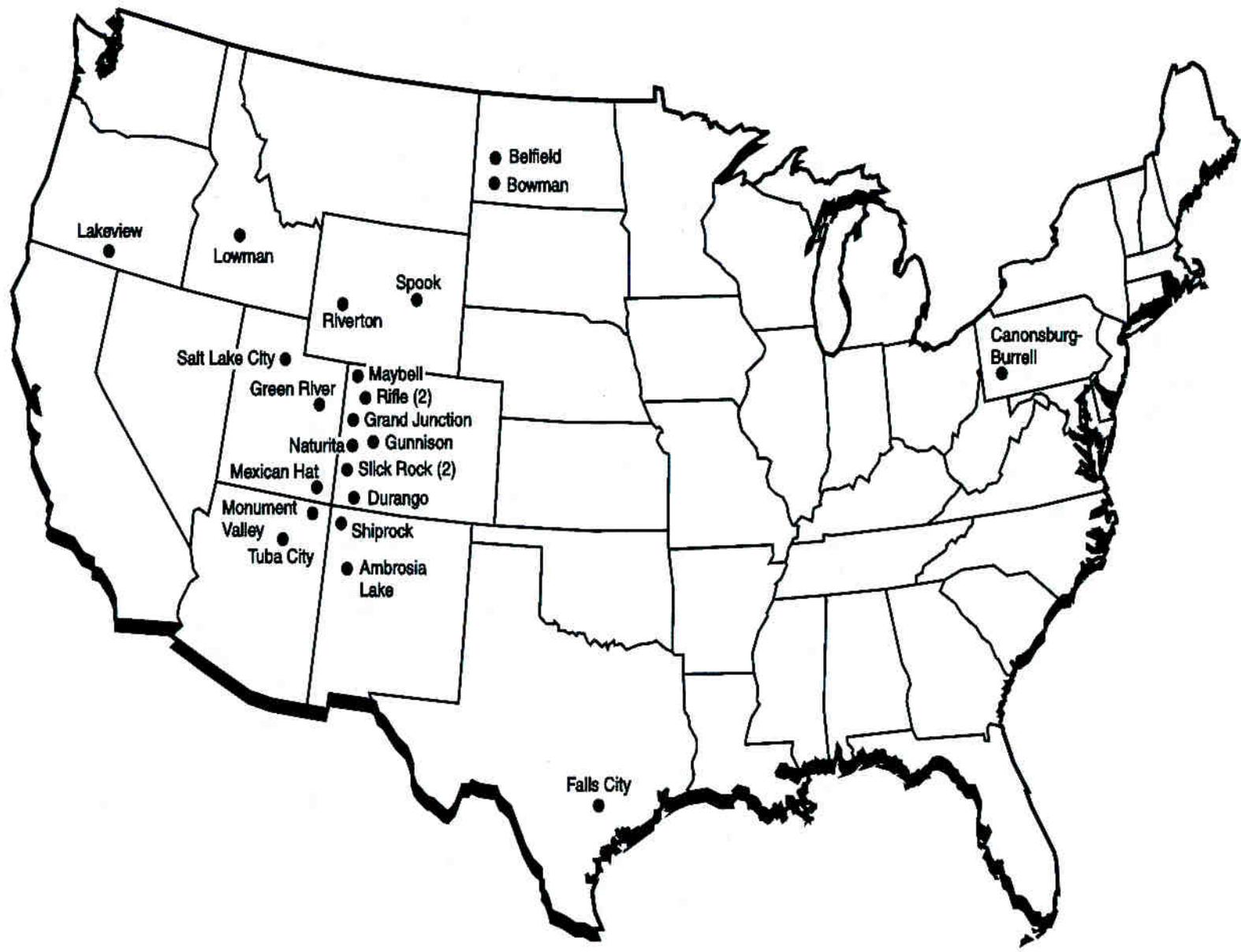
History

In 1978, public concern about potential human-health and environmental effects of uranium mill tailings led Congress to pass the Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act (42 USC 7901 *et seq.*). In the Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act, Congress acknowledged the potentially harmful health effects associated with uranium mill tailings and designated 24 inactive uranium-ore processing sites for cleanup (see Figure 1). These sites are located in 10 states; 23 of the sites are in states west of the Mississippi River. Of those, four sites are on or very near Native American owned lands.

In 1983, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) developed standards to protect the public and the environment from potential radiological and nonradiological hazards associated with processing uranium ore. These standards included exposure limits for surface contamination and proposed compliance options for ground-water contamination. The ground-water standards were made final in 1995. DOE is responsible for bringing surface and ground-water contaminant levels at the 24 sites into compliance with EPA standards. DOE is accomplishing this through the UMTRA Surface Project and the UMTRA Ground Water Project.

Under the UMTRA Surface Project, DOE has been cleaning up surface contamination since 1983. The second phase of the UMTRA Project is to meet ground-water standards at the 24 millsites; thus, the UMTRA Ground Water Project was established in 1991. Project management for the UMTRA Ground Water Project was transferred to DOE-GJO in 1996.

Figure 1. Locations of the Former Uranium-Ore Processing Sites



In 1992, DOE initiated preparation of a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for the UMTRA Ground Water Project. The PEIS presents analyses of the potential impacts of four alternatives for implementing the UMTRA Ground Water Project: the proposed action, no action, active remediation to background levels, and passive remediation. Nineteen public scoping meetings were conducted between November 1992 and April 1993. Nine public hearings and a 120-day public comment period followed the issuance of the draft PEIS in April 1995. The final was distributed to the public in December 1996.

The Record of Decision issued in April 1997 identified the preferred alternative that will become the programmatic foundation for conducting the UMTRA Ground Water Project at all sites. Under the proposed-action alternative, three ground-water compliance strategies are presented to meet the EPA standards and may be selected for a given site: no remediation, passive remediation with natural flushing and monitoring activities, and active remediation. The DOE may select one strategy or a combination of strategies to meet the EPA standards for a site.

Roles and Responsibilities

In keeping with the objectives of this plan, it is the responsibility of the UMTRA Ground Water Project Manager, the GJO Technical Assistance and Remediation (TAR) contractor's Public Affairs Specialist, and the NEPA document manager to identify the need for, and propose the scope and content of, public informational materials and activities that meet the public participation requirements of NEPA. These individuals are also responsible for developing appropriate plans to establish and maintain communication, identify and resolve issues of concern to stakeholders, support DOESGJO in the implementation of these plans, and evaluate the success of the communication programs.

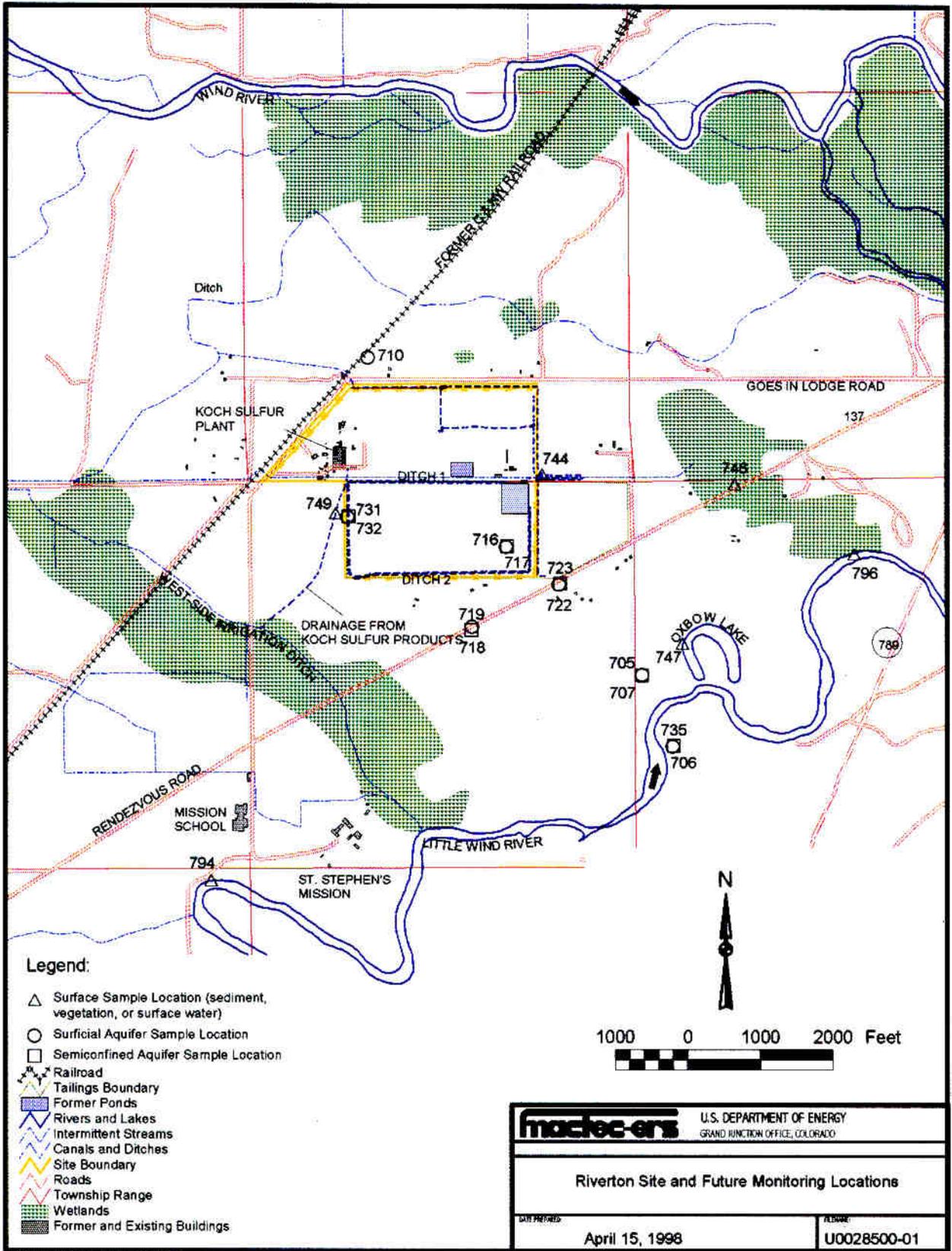
Site-Specific Information

The Riverton site (see [Figure 2](#)) is in a rural setting 2 miles southwest of the city of Riverton, Wyoming, in Fremont County. The site is on State land within the boundary of the Wind River Indian Reservation (Northern Arapaho and Shoshone Indian tribes).

Contaminated material totaling almost 2 million cubic yards was located on 140 acres of land at the processing site and at off-site vicinity properties. All the contaminated material was transported 45 miles to the Gas Hills uranium district where it was consolidated with other uranium mill tailings and placed in a disposal cell. Surface remediation at the site was completed in November 1989.

The Baseline Risk Assessment, completed in September 1995, was used to determine if contaminated ground water at the Riverton site poses a risk to human health and the environment. The Site Observational Work Plan for Riverton, which was completed in February 1998, characterized the site ground-water conditions and documented how DOE will demonstrate compliance with EPA ground-water standards. To comply with requirements of NEPA, an

Figure 2. Riverton Site Map



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Environmental Assessment was prepared and identified the proposed ground-water compliance strategy.

This site is targeted for passive remediation—natural flushing with institutional controls and monitoring. Data collected during the last 15 years indicate that contaminant concentrations are decreasing over time. Ground-water modeling results predict that contaminant levels will be less than maximum concentration limits within 100 years.

Through an interagency agreement with the Indian Health Services, DOE provided funding for an alternate water supply for residents who live near the site and may be affected by contaminated ground water. This alternate water supply will serve as an institutional control to eliminate use of the contaminated ground water during the natural flushing process. Existing domestic wells will be disconnected, and water will be provided continually from an engineered municipal water source operated by the tribes.

Public Participation Activities

Various public participation activities were organized in relation to the Riverton site. Public comments from the 19 public scoping meetings held in 1992 and 1993 with interested stakeholders were included in the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement. In September 1996, an UMTRA Ground Water workshop was held that was attended by a representative from the Wind River Environmental Quality Commission. On January 27, 1998, a public meeting was held at the St. Stephen's Indian School to discuss the ground-water project and the proposed ground-water compliance strategy.

[Table 1](#) provides detailed information on the upcoming public participation activities for the Environmental Assessment at the Riverton site.

Information Contacts

Requests for information should be directed to the DOE UMTRA Ground Water Project Manager listed below. A toll-free hotline, 1-800-399-5618, has been established to provide information and to take public comments. In addition, the DOESGJO Home Page has information relevant to the UMTRA Ground Water Project. The home page address is <http://www.doegjpo.com>.

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Table 1. Scheduled Public Participation Activities for the Environmental Assessment (EA) of Ground Water Compliance Activities at the Riverton, Wyoming, Uranium Mill Tailings Site

Activities	Timing
DOE approval	May 20, 1998
Transmit final draft to tribes and State of Wyoming	June 19, 1998
Notification of EA availability to stakeholders via <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News release • Federal Register notice (not required) 	July 10, 1998
Transmit final draft EA to interested stakeholders, other agencies, public (upon request)	July 10, 1998
Place copies of EA in public locations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mesa County Library • Fremont County Library • Riverton Public Library • Wyoming State Library • University of Wyoming Library • DOESGJO Reading Room • Other 	July 10–July 24, 1998
Hold Public Meetings	As needed
Comments received from stakeholders	August 7, 1998
Comments addressed	August 10–12, 1998
News release of Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) approval	September 11, 1998
Final EA and FONSI issued to the public, stakeholders, and agencies	September 11, 1998
Place copies of EA in public locations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mesa County Library • Fremont County Library • Riverton Public Library • Wyoming State Library • University of Wyoming Library • DOESGJO Reading Room • Other 	September 11, 1998