

# NPL Partial Site Deletion Narrative

## Monticello Mill Tailings (USDOE) Monticello, Utah

On October 14, 2003, EPA deleted a portion of the Monticello Mill Tailings (USDOE) site (the site) from the National Priorities List (NPL). The site, located in and adjacent to the city of Monticello, in San Juan County, is divided into three Operable Units (OUs) consisting of 36 private and public properties covering approximately two square miles.

The partial deletion area, designated as the OU II Non-Surface and Ground-Water Impacted Peripheral Properties, covers approximately one square mile and contains 22 of the 34 properties within OU II. The 22 properties that are to be deleted are primarily vacant land, with portions of some properties being used for agricultural purposes.

The Monticello Millsite, located within OU I, was constructed with government funding in 1942 by the Vanadium Corporation of America (VCA) to provide vanadium, a steel hardener, during World War II. The VCA operated the Millsite until early 1944 and again from 1945 to 1946, producing vanadium as well as a uranium-vanadium sludge. The U.S. Atomic Energy Commission purchased the Millsite in 1948 and performed vanadium milling operations from 1949 to 1955 and uranium milling operations from 1949 until 1960 when the Millsite was permanently closed. Four piles of tailings, with significant radioactivity, were left at the Millsite after operations ceased.

Windblown tailings from the four piles contaminated properties in and around Monticello. Additional contamination resulted from the use of tailings as backfill and construction material. The tailings were also transported by Montezuma Creek resulting in contamination of downstream sediments. In 1961, the four tailings piles were stabilized and the Millsite buildings and equipment were dismantled.

Two separate NPL sites were established in the Monticello area. In December 1988, EPA, the Utah Department of Environmental Quality (UDEQ), and the Department of Energy entered into a Federal Facility Agreement, to facilitate remediation of the site. The EPA placed the Monticello Mill Tailings (USDOE) site on the NPL on November 21, 1989.

The Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS) for the site was completed in January 1990. The RI determined the Millsite operations had resulted in the spread of tailings-related contamination to the soil, surface water, ground water, and air. Soils contaminated with tailings and ore were identified on at least 200 acres of the peripheral properties (OU II) located adjacent to the Millsite. Tailings-contaminated sediments (OU II) were found approximately three miles downgradient from the Millsite boundary. The remedial alternatives considered for OUs I and II ranged from no action to removal of tailings contamination to a licensed off-site facility.

A Record of Decision (ROD) for the site was signed by UDEQ and EPA on August 21 and 22, 1990, respectively. The ROD identified the selected remedy for remediation of OUs I and II, including the OU II Non-Surface and Ground-Water Impacted Peripheral Properties, which was to remove radioactive materials to meet specific cleanup standards, modify existing structures to isolate radon sources from inhabitants, and restore with clean materials. Cleanup activities required excavation, and in some cases,

demolition of structures and other property improvements. The selected remedy also allowed for the implementation of supplemental standards and institutional controls.

Removal of tailings-related contamination in accordance with project cleanup standards was completed at the last of the OU II Non-Surface and Ground-Water Impacted Peripheral Properties in January 2000. Deletion of the OU II Non-Surface and Ground-Water Impacted Peripheral Properties from the NPL was deemed appropriate because radioactive materials in soils and sediment had been removed to levels protective of human health and the environment and because no radiological or nonradiological contamination was present in surface water or ground water located on these properties.

The EPA, with concurrence of the state of Utah, has determined that all appropriate responses under CERCLA have been completed, and that no further response actions under CERCLA, other than operation and maintenance and five-year reviews, are necessary. Therefore, EPA is deleting the OU II Non-Surface and Ground-Water Impacted Peripheral Properties portion of the site from the NPL.