

# DOE NEWS

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## DOE TO CONDUCT DRILLING PROGRAM AT RIFLE, COLORADO

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) will conduct a drilling program at three sites near Rifle, Colorado, which are being considered for disposal of over three million tons of uranium mill tailings and related material. The tailings are currently located in two separate piles on the Colorado River floodplain in Rifle.

Two 4-inch wells will be drilled to 30 and 70 foot depths at each of the alternate disposal sites. Samples will then be collected to obtain geohydrological and geotechnical data for preliminary evaluation of the soil and ground water characteristics at the sites. The DOE hopes to be able to identify one of the sites as the preferred disposal location for the uranium mill tailings.

Once a preferred site is chosen, final evaluation of the subsurface characteristics will begin. This evaluation will consist of up to 40 additional borings to obtain further water and soil samples.

Himes Drillings Company of Cedar Edge, Colorado, will be performing the drilling work for DOE. Geophysical logging of the holes will be done under a separate contract by Colog, Inc., Denver, Colorado.

The DOE will also be drilling approximately 23 geohydrological wells in the vicinity of the existing tailings piles, to characterize the ground water system underneath the tailings. Samples will be taken from the wells and analyzed to determine the extent of contamination, if any, which has leaked from the piles during the past 40 years.

Information from the drilling programs will be utilized in environmental documentation the DOE is currently preparing on the Rifle uranium mill tailings piles. All activities are being managed by DOE through their Technical Assistance Contractor, Jacobs Engineering Group Inc.

The Rifle uranium mill tailings are two out of 24 sites nationwide which will be cleaned up as part of the DOE's Uranium Mill Tailings Remedial Action (UMTRA) Project.

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