EM Recovery NEWS FLASH

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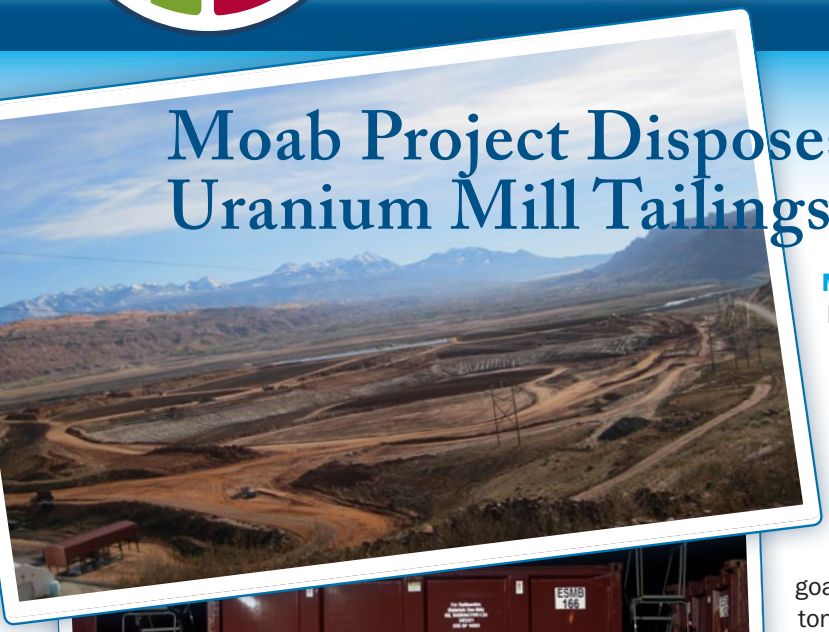
Moab Project Disposes 2 Million Tons of Uranium Mill Tailings with Recovery Act Funds



Top: The uranium mill tailings pile excavation is being partially funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Middle: Recovery Act workers on the night shift Wednesday loaded the container carrying the 2 millionth ton of tailings to be shipped to the Crescent Junction disposal site.

Bottom: Rock for the final cover layer is placed on the Crescent Junction disposal cell for uranium mill tailings.

MOAB, Utah – The Moab Uranium Mill Tailings Remedial Action Project reached its primary American Recovery and Reinvestment Act milestone ahead of schedule on Wednesday with the disposal of 2 million tons of uranium mill tailings.

The project had originally planned to ship 2 million tons of tailings with Recovery Act funds. Now, Recovery Act workers are surpassing that goal.

"Although shipping 2 million tons was the original Recovery Act goal, we are planning to exceed this goal by shipping about 300,000 tons more using savings resulting from efficiencies we've gained in our first 2 years of moving tailings," Moab Federal Project Director Donald Metzler said.

The project is using $108 million from the Recovery Act to move the tailings from the banks of the Colorado River by rail to a permanent disposal cell constructed by DOE near Crescent Junction, Utah. As of early 2011, the project had spent $83 million, or about 77 percent, of its Recovery Act funds.

The Recovery Act funding has supplemented base funding, more than doubling the rate of tailings shipments. Once the Recovery Act funding is depleted, the project will continue shipping tailings using base funding.

Remaining Recovery Act-funded activities planned through September 2011 include excavation of the second portion of the disposal cell and placement of the final cover material on the compacted tailings in the cell. Almost 145,000 cubic yards of cover material has been placed on the portion of the disposal cell that has met the final grade for tailings material.

At the Moab site, a 1,700-foot-long, 35-foot-wide stretch of tamarisk trees was removed along the Colorado River bank adjacent to the groundwater well field. Those trees are invasive and nonnative. This 1.4-acre area will be revegetated with native plant species to improve aesthetics and encourage wildlife.

The tailings are remains from processing uranium ore for national defense programs.