

**Executive Summary of Critical Issues**  
**Topic – Moab Tailings Pile**

Last Updated  
August 1, 2007

CAP Position

CAP supports the determination to move the Moab tailings to protect the integrity and quality of the Colorado River water supply.

Summary of Issue:

Approximately 130 acres of uranium tailings are piled less than 1000 feet from the bank of the Colorado River near Moab, Utah and is a source of toxic seepage into groundwater and into the river. The Colorado River is the main source of drinking water for about 25 million downstream residents in Arizona and California. The tailings are the byproduct of processing uranium ores from many small mines in the area between 1956 and 1984, when its then-owner Atlas Corp., shut down the mill.

Responsibility for cleanup was passed to the Department of Energy after Atlas Corp., went bankrupt. In January 2000, the Department of Energy (DOE) came up with a plan to relocate the pile. DOE has successfully relocated a number of smaller uranium mill tailings piles in the past.

In September 2005, the Secretary of Energy announced that the radioactive uranium tailings will be moved, predominantly by rail, to a proposed holding site at Crescent Junction, Utah, about 30 miles from the Colorado River. At the storage facility in Crescent Junction, the waste will be covered and buried in a hole, lined with a protective layer to keep the material from seeping into the groundwater. Cleaning up and moving the pile has been estimated to cost \$472 million. Active groundwater remediation will also be performed to eliminate the potential impacts to aquatic species in the Colorado River resulting from contaminated groundwater discharges.

Status as of August 1, 2007

The Department of Energy has begun characterizing the Moab and Crescent Junction sites, developing the Remedial Action Plan and other supporting documents, building necessary infrastructure, coordinating transportation logistics, hiring appropriate personnel, and awarding contracts to perform the work. DOE is also conducting ongoing site operations and maintenance activities, consisting of maintaining site access controls, conducting radiological assessments and environmental monitoring, dewatering and stabilizing the uranium mill tailings pile, and implementing an interim action

to clean up the ground water to address elevated concentrations of ammonia and other contaminants.

After DOE announced that the removal would not be completed until at least 2028, significant pressure was brought to bear, and the current version of the Defense Authorization bill mandates completion by 2017. DOE has entered into a contract for removal, but funding in the pending FY2008 Energy and Water Appropriations bill does not appear sufficient to do much more than advance the planning and pre-construction processes.

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