



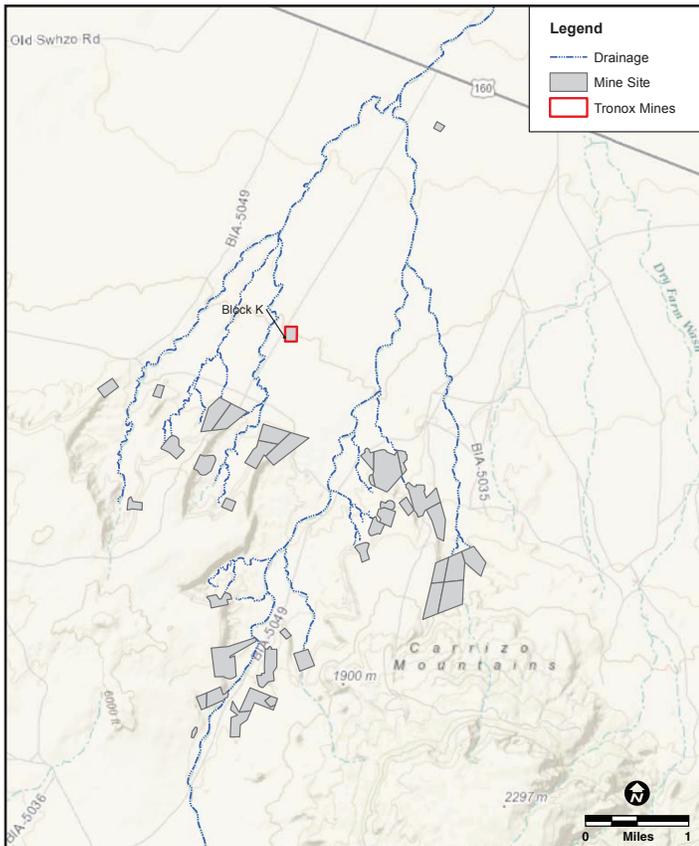
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Pacific Southwest Region 9

# Tronox Abandoned Uranium Mines

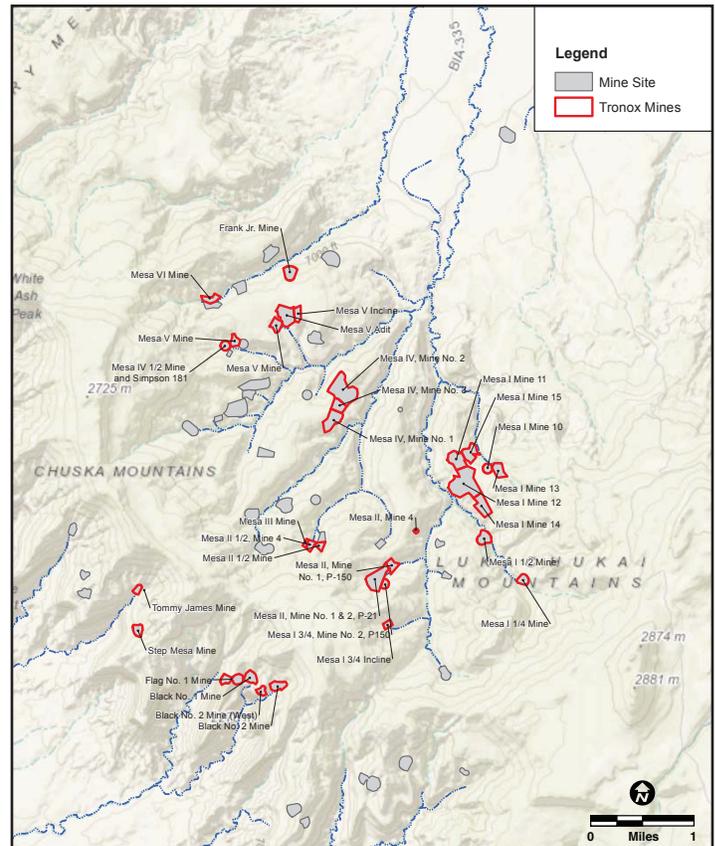
75 Hawthorne Street, San Francisco, CA 94105 | April 2015

## Tronox Settlement Funds for Uranium Mines in the Lukachukai and Carrizo Mountains

In 2014, the United States entered into a historic legal settlement that will provide almost \$1 billion to investigate and clean up approximately 50 uranium mines on or near the Navajo Nation that were operated by Kerr-McGee Corporation. Approximately 26 of these mines are in the Cove/Lukachukai area.



Tronox Mines in the Carrizo Mountains



Tronox Mines in the Lukachukai Mountains

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## 2015–2016 Activities

In 2015–2016, USEPA will begin to address the Cove area mines by using these funds to:

- Inform and involve the community
- Use a low-flying plane to measure the radiation levels in the Lukachukai and Carrizo Mountains, and Tse Tah
- Sample water and soil in Cove Wash
- Conduct detailed radiation scans of the mines
- Evaluate the amount of contamination at the mines and cleanup approaches
- Select areas for additional study

There are approximately 30 additional abandoned uranium mines in the Lukachukai and Carrizo Mountains that are not covered by the settlement because they were not operated by Kerr-McGee. USEPA is working to identify additional responsible parties to pay for cleanup of these mines.

## Tronox Settlement Background

The 2014 Tronox settlement provides a total of \$5.15 billion, including over \$4.4 billion to clean up many environmental contamination sites across the U.S. This includes almost \$1 billion to clean up more than 50 Navajo area uranium mines operated by Kerr-McGee. It is known as the Tronox settlement because the case arose from the Tronox Bankruptcy. In the bankruptcy, the United States, the Navajo Nation and other parties sued to recover funds from Kerr-McGee and Anadarko Petroleum companies for environmental and other liabilities that Tronox could not pay. It is the largest environmental cleanup settlement in U.S. history.

From the late 1940s to the 1980s, Kerr-McGee Corporation mined more than seven million tons of uranium ore on or near the Navajo Nation. About 26 of these mines are located in the Cove and Lukachukai Chapters. Other mines are located in the Teec Nos Pos, Coyote Canyon, Casamero Lake, and Baca/Prewitt Chapters. The Tronox settlement allocated approximately \$89 million for the Quivira mines in the Coyote Canyon Chapter. No specific settlement amount has been allocated to the mines in Cove or any other area. The settlement also provides approximately \$44 million to the Navajo Nation in connection with the Shiprock uranium mill site.

In a related 2011 Tronox bankruptcy settlement, USEPA received approximately \$13.2 million to investigate and clean up Navajo abandoned uranium mines operated by Kerr-McGee Corporation. USEPA used these funds to clean up the Cove Transfer Stations, study the Cove Mesa I Mines No. 10-15, and conduct aerial radiation surveys in the Lukachukai and Carrizo Mountains, Tse Tah, and areas in between. USEPA also used these funds to conduct clean up actions at the Quivira mines in the Coyote Canyon Chapter, Section 32 mine in Casamero Lake Chapter, and Section 33 mine in Baca/Prewitt Chapter.

U.S. Tronox funds can be used to assess and cleanup the mines and contamination caused by the mines. Examples include:

- Inform and involve the community
- Hire qualified community members to help do the work
- Investigate radiation levels in water, soil, sediment, and air
- Put up fences and signs to warn people about dangerous areas
- Protect cultural and biological resources in the mine areas
- Construct access roads to the mines
- Close mine openings and fix other physical hazards
- Cleanup mine waste
- Help plants grow on mine cleanup areas
- Operate and maintain mine waste disposal areas

U.S. Tronox funds *cannot* be used for these activities:

- Pay people who worked at the mines or lived nearby (some compensation for mine workers is available through the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act of 1990)
- Construct projects not related to mine cleanup or mine impacts

USEPA has placed the Tronox settlement funds it received in a special account that will be managed according to standard accounting practices.

The Navajo Nation will manage the approximate \$44 million Tronox settlement funds it received.

