



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

OFFICE OF
INSPECTOR GENERAL

November 16, 2017

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Project Notification:
Abandoned Uranium Mines in the Navajo Nation
Project No. OPE-FY17-0023

FROM: Christina Lovingood, Director /s/
Land Cleanup and Waste Management Evaluations
Office of Program Evaluation

TO: *See Below*

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) plans to begin preliminary research to examine aspects of the EPA's management of abandoned uranium mine sites in the Navajo Nation. The OIG characterized needed improvement of the EPA's oversight of states, territories and tribes to accomplish environmental goals as a challenge in its 2017 Key Management Challenges report. This project is included in the OIG fiscal year 2018 annual plan.

The evaluation objectives are to determine whether the EPA has a method for prioritizing cleanup of the 50 abandoned uranium mine sites in the Navajo Nation covered under a \$990 million special account from 2015; and whether the EPA has a resource allocation methodology for the special account funds that accounts for estimated cleanup costs, timeframe for cleanup, and scope of cleanup for the 50 sites. The objective questions are preliminary and subject to change if the OIG moves into the fieldwork phase of the evaluation. The OIG plans to conduct work at EPA headquarters and Regions 6 and 9. We will interview relevant EPA managers and staff and others as necessary. Applicable generally accepted government auditing standards will be used in conducting our evaluation. The anticipated benefit of this project is the improved operational efficiency of Superfund resources, and improved environmental health by determining whether abandoned uranium mine sites that present the greatest threats to human health and the environment are prioritized.

We will contact you to arrange a mutually agreeable time to discuss our objectives and the purpose of the preliminary research phase of our project. We would also be particularly interested in any areas of concern that you may have. We will answer any of your questions about the project process, reporting procedures, methods used to gather and analyze data, and what we should expect of each other during the course of the project. Throughout the project, we will provide updates on a regular basis to agreed-upon contacts from your office on the status of our evaluation.

To help ensure the success and timely completion of this project, we request that you provide any internal EPA policies, procedures or guidance for management of uranium mine sites in the Navajo Nation at or before the kickoff meeting.

We respectfully note that the OIG is authorized by the Inspector General Act of 1978 to have timely access to personnel and all materials necessary to complete its objectives. We will request your resolution if an agency employee or contractor refuses to provide requested records to the OIG, or otherwise fails to cooperate with the OIG. We may report unresolved access matters to the Administrator and include the incident in the Semiannual Report to Congress.

The project will be supervised by me and the Project Manager will be Patrick Milligan. Any information related to the project should be addressed to me at (202) 566-2906 or lovingood.tina@epa.gov, or Patrick Milligan at (215) 814-2326 or patrick.milligan@epa.gov.

Addressees:

Barry Breen, Acting Assistant Administrator for Land and Emergency Management
Lawrence Starfield, Acting Assistant Administrator for Enforcement and Compliance Assurance
Samuel Coleman, Acting Regional Administrator, Region 6
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cc: Ryan Jackson, Chief of Staff
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