

What Has Been Done?

- The Claim 28 Water Study field work is complete. The process and methods were presented to the Tachee-Blue Gap community on April 23, 2025. The water study included biological and cultural surveys, geologic mapping, geophysical surveys and efforts to quantify impacts from mining that affect surface water and groundwater. Results have not been finalized, and the final report is being reviewed by both USEPA and NNEPA.
- In summer 2018, Trustee Sadie Hoskie completed the Claim 28 investigation, which included biological and cultural surveys, radiation scanning, aerial photography, and soil and water sampling. This removal site evaluation report was shared with Tachee-Blue Gap community in October 2018.
- In 2015, Phase 1 Trustee, Sadie Hoskie and contractors, began assessment work at Claim 28 mine. Claim 28 was selected as a priority site because of its proximity to homes and for potential water contamination.
- In the 1990s, the Navajo Nation Abandoned Mine Lands Reclamation Program reclaimed mines by addressing physical hazards at seven of the nineteen BMMD mines.

What is Happening Now?

- In May 2025, the Trustee’s contractors began sampling at Background Study Areas (BSAs) to help complete the regional background dataset for evaluations of Abandoned Uranium Mines in the Central Region.

- August 2025, Removal Site Evaluation field work began at 13 sites in the Black Mesa Mining District. Screening levels for surveys were derived from sampling that occurred in May 2025.
- Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis (EECA) began at Claim 28 with Addendum 4 funding in 2023.
- Data gap field investigations and being reviewed for Addendum 4 sites, which includes Claim 28 as part of the EE/CA.
- Stage 1 investigations on 19 Addendum 2 AUMs and begin Saytah George Simpson water study in Tse Tah area.
- Road improvement was conducted on old haul roads in support of BMMD RSEs investigations.

What Happens Next?

- USEPA and NNEPA approved work plans to assess remaining 13 BMMD AUMs.
- Conduct risk assessment for cleanup process at the Claim 28 mine combined with results from the Phase 2 Trust assessment.
- Stage 2 Activities for the 13 BMMD sites include subsurface surveys to estimate volumes of waste found on site. This stage will be conducted after initial surveys are completed from August 2025.



Black Mesa Mining District Abandoned Uranium Mines

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency • Region 9 • San Francisco, CA • September 2025

Black Mesa Mining District is in the Central Abandoned Uranium Mine (AUM) Region and includes the following Chapters: Black Mesa, Chinle, Tachee-Blue Gap, and Tselani-Cottonwood

Background

Uranium was mined in the Black Mesa Mining District in northeastern Arizona from 1950s to 1960s. Most mines were surface mines, but two also had underground workings (Claim 7-Claim 10, and Etsitty No. 1). Beginning in the 1990s, the Navajo Abandoned Mine Lands Reclamation Program addressed physical hazards at these mines. The largest producing mine in the district was Claim 7-Claim 10, producing 9,937 tons of ore between 1964 and 1967.

A total of 19 mine sites are in the Black Mesa Mining District (see map for locations). In 2018, Claim 28 assessment was completed under Phase 1 Trust Agreement. In February 2020, the U.S.DOF approved funds to assess the remaining 18 AUMs under Addendum 2 (five sites are combined making it 13 sites). Funds are now available to clean up Claim 28 under Addendum 4. These funds are provided by two legal settlements between Navajo Nation and the United States: The Phase 1 Settlement in 2015 and the Phase 2 Settlement in 2016.

Settlement Trusts Cleanup Work

Both Phase 1 and Phase 2 Settlements provide funds to assess, conduct a water study at, and cleanup Claim 28 mine in the Tachee-Blue Gap chapter. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), in consultation with the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency (NNEPA), named Claim 28 one of 46 “priority” mines for cleanup on the Navajo Nation. Concerns over Claim 28’s possible effect on water quality and its close location to homes made it a priority for cleanup.* A trustee for Phase 1, Sadie Hoskie, was selected to conduct detailed assessments under the Phase 1 Trust. The results of the Phase 1 assessments were included in the Removal Site Evaluations (RSEs) reports. The Claim 28 RSE results were presented to the Tachee-Blue Gap community in 2018.

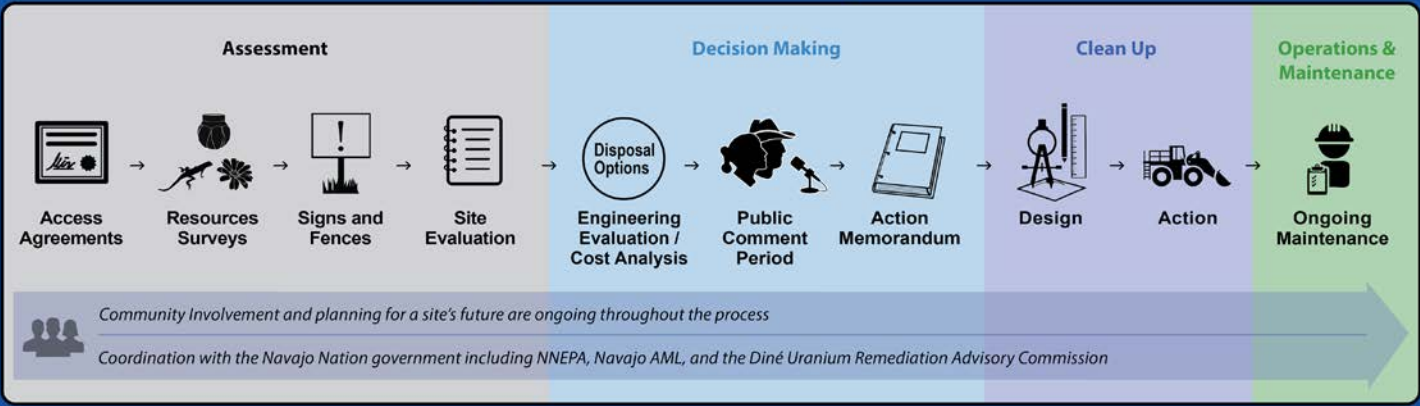
The Phase 2 Settlement also provides funds to assess all the remaining mines in the Black Mesa Mining District and conduct a water study at Claim 28. Derrith Watchman-Moore was selected as the Trustee for Phase 2 assessment and cleanup work. The Trustee Watchman-Moore and Team are also investigating an additional 11 mines in Western Navajo, six mines in Tse Tah area, and a water study at the Saytah/George Simpson 1 Incline mine in Tse Tah area.



USEPA, Navajo EPA, and contractors hiking down old haul road from Claim 6/7/10 and Claim 3/4 mine sites during December 2024 repository tour.

*USEPA and NNEPA prioritized 46 (called priority mines) out of the 528 on the Navajo Nation based on gamma radiation levels and proximity to homes, or potential for water contamination identified in the preliminary assessments. The Trust Settlements are responsible for all 46 of these 46 priority mines.

Superfund Process on the Navajo Nation



For More Information

Jeremy Bekis
Remedial Project Manager
NNEPA Superfund
(831) 498-8934
jeremybekis@navajo-nsn.gov

Elsa Johnson
Community Involvement Coordinator
USEPA Region 9
(415) 947-3552
johnson.elsa@epa.gov

Stephen Etsitty
NNEPA Director
(928) 871-7325
s.etsitty@navajo-nsn.gov

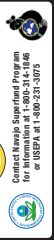
USEPA Navajo Abandoned Uranium Mine webpage: www.epa.gov/navajo-nation-uranium-cleanup



Reduce Your Contact with Uranium and Radiation



KEEP OUT
Ba ha'í'áá - Doo Kó'ne'ha'áá'á'á'
NO AT MINES



- Steps to keep yourself safe:**
- Stay away from abandoned mines and mills
 - Find out if your home is a contaminated structure
 - Use regulated water for human needs
 - Never use unregulated water for human needs—even if it looks ok
- Use good water hauling practices to keep your water clean
- Get regular cancer screenings, like pap tests, mammograms, colonoscopies, and other cancer screenings

