

# Update on the continuing functions of the former US Bureau of Mines

In fiscal 1996, the US Congress directed that the US Bureau of Mines (USBM) be closed. Certain functions were reassigned to other agencies. The remaining employees were separated and the unoccupied sites were decommissioned. As a result, 12 locations were closed and about 1,200 employees were terminated in March 1996. About 600 employees at five locations were reassigned to other federal agencies. This article provides a summary of the continuing functions, the agencies involved and the points of contact for each continuing function. The functions that were discontinued are also identified.

The functions that have been maintained and transferred to other agencies are:

- Portions of USBM's Mineral Information and Analysis program formerly conducted in Washington, DC and Denver, CO were assigned to the US Geological Survey (USGS).
- The Mineral Land Assessment program in Alaska (Anchorage and Juneau) was transferred to the US Bureau of Land Management (BLM).
- The Health and Safety Research program in Pittsburgh, PA and Spokane, WA was reassigned on an interim basis to the US Department of Energy (DOE). In fiscal year 1997, it was permanently assigned to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). NIOSH is part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention within the US Department of Health and Human Services.
- Environmental Research at Pittsburgh, PA was assigned to DOE.
- Materials Research at Albany, OR was assigned to DOE.
- The helium program was assigned to BLM, where it will be managed pending privatization.
- Coal and noncoal mine maps were transferred to the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE).

The following locations were closed:

- Research centers in Denver, CO; Minneapolis, MN; Reno, NV; Rolla, MO; Salt Lake City, UT and Tuscaloosa, AL.
- Field operations centers in Denver, CO and Spokane, WA.
- Washington, DC headquarters office.

To provide a concise picture of all of the affected functions, the following is a synopsis of the USBM program functions and facilities immediately before the clo-

sure. There were two principal programs: information and analysis, and research.

## Information and analysis

- Alaska Field Operations Center, Anchorage and Juneau — continuing program, assigned to BLM.
- Intermountain Field Operations Center, Denver — closed.
- Western Field Operations Center, Spokane — closed.
- Division of International Minerals (including branch of Africa and Middle East, branch of Asia and the Pacific, branch of Europe and Central Eurasia and branch of Latin America and Canada), Washington, DC — continuing program, assigned to USGS. Operates as the Mineral Information Team.
- Minerals Availability Field Office, including Office of Special Projects, Denver — continuing program, assigned to USGS. Operates as the Mineral Information Team.
- Division of Mineral Commodities, including Branch of Metals and Branch of Industrial Minerals, Washington, DC — continuing program, assigned to USGS. Operates as the Mineral Information Team.
- Division of Statistics and Information, including Branch of Data Administration, Branch of Minerals Information Systems, Branch of Data Collection and Coordination, Branch of Publications Services, Branch of Statistics and Methods Development, Washington, DC — continuing program, assigned to USGS. Operates as the Mineral Information Team.
- Division of Regulatory and Policy, including Branch of Economic Analysis, Branch of Issue Analysis and Branch of Technical Analysis, Washington — closed.
- Division of Resource Evaluation, including Branch of Minerals Availability and Branch of Mineral Land Assessment, Washington, DC — closed.

## Research

- Office of Mineral Institutes, Washington, DC — closed.
- Office of Process Evaluation,

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- Washington, DC — closed.
- Office of Technology Transfer — closed.
- Division of Environmental Technology — closed.
- Division of Health, Safety and Mining Technology, Branch of Health and Safety Technology, Branch of Mining Technology — closed.
- Division of Minerals and Materials Science — closed.
- Albany Research Center — continuing program at reduced level, assigned to DOE.
- Denver Research Center — closed.
- Pittsburgh Research Center — continuing program, health and safety only — assigned to NIOSH, environmental research reduced in scope and assigned to DOE.
- Reno Research Center — closed.
- Rolla Research Center — closed.
- Salt Lake City Research Center — closed.
- Spokane Research Center — continuing program, health and safety only, assigned to NIOSH.
- Tuscaloosa Research Center — closed.
- Twin Cities Research Center — closed.

### Helium operations

The helium operations consisted of production and engineering, Amarillo, TX; Maintenance Division, Satanta, KS; Excel Refinery; Masterson, TX and Crude Reserve, Cliffside, TX.

The helium operations are now assigned to BLM; in accordance with the Helium Privatization Act of 1996. The helium refinery will cease production by April 1998. BLM will continue to manage and operate the pipeline, which extends from the Cliffside gas field in Texas to Santanta, KS. Market sales of crude helium from the reserve at Cliffside will commence no later than 2005 and continue through 2015 to a level of 600,000 scf.

### Continuing program synopsis

**Minerals Information Team (USGS).** Typical products and their application include monthly and quarterly mineral industry surveys; annual mineral commodity summaries; annual country, county and state mineral industry surveys; comment on proposed legislation; coordination with national security agencies on mineral stockpiling, Defense Production Act programs; and special commodity studies.

**Mineral land assessment Alaska (BLM).** This function performs resource assessments in Alaska. The program will continue. Current projects include studying the Kuyukuk, Dupreanot and Petersburg mining districts. Airborne geophysics will be performed in selected areas. Special studies of resource areas or (and management units), including an industrial minerals survey of the Chugach National Forest. Mineral investigations will be performed for land exchanges

**Health and safety (NIOSH).** The mining health and safety program is implemented principally by the NIOSH laboratories in Pittsburgh and Spokane with assistance from the other parts of the institute as appropriate. The program will devote more effort to health-related issues, although mine safety remains a priority area.

Focus areas include silica dust control, noise, diesel

emissions, haulage, ground control, health and safety issues associated with automation, human factors and disaster prevention.

**Environmental research (DOE).** USBM personnel in Pittsburgh who were conducting research in the area of water quality were assigned to DOE. The level of effort in mining-related work has been reduced but some work continues, focusing on the prediction and control of acid-mine drainage (AMD). The passive-water-treatment research has been shut down. However, research continues on the treatment of metal-mine drainage using biogenic hydrogen sulfide, the effect of coal combustion residues on acid generation at mine sites and densification/stabilization of AMD sludge.

**Materials research (DOE).** The Materials Conservation and Substitution program (formerly the US Bureau of Mines Materials Program) at the Albany Research Center (ALRC) is to provide stewardship for the nation's mineral resources by conserving, through several technologies, those materials produced from minerals. The center addresses all materials, from cost-effective production and processing to their disposal and recycling.

The center seeks to determine the factors that limit the service life of materials in industrial, structural or engineering applications and to provide solutions to service-life problems through new materials and conservation technologies.

Within this broad mission, the center must also coordinate its efforts to contribute to fossil energy's collaborative goals in energy efficiency and renewable energy, energy research and environmental management. The center also seeks to establish mutually beneficial partnerships with industry and other agencies to share the costs, tasks and national benefits of its research program.

**Helium program (BLM).** The helium program involves the production and storage of helium. Under the program, helium is sold to other federal agencies.

In 1996, Congress passed legislation that proposes to privatize the federal helium operations. The legislation requires a study by the National Academy of Sciences to assess the implications of depleting the federal helium reserve. Specifically, the academy is to investigate the long-term national implications expressed by the scientific community on the loss of that helium storage currently owned and managed by the government. The estimated completion time for the study is 18 months.

The helium refinery is targeted to close in April 1998. About 140 employees will be separated, including engineers and scientists. Any interests in these individuals should be directed to BLM.

**Mine maps (OSMRE).** Mine map repository facilities were established in USBM to collect and archive mine maps. These functions were transferred to the OSMRE in 1983. Supplemental materials were transferred when USBM closed.

The mine map repository in Pittsburgh, PA maintains more than 100,000 mine maps on microfiche. The maps include underground and surface coal mines, as well as surface and underground metal and nonmetal mines throughout the world.

Requests for map-related information and data from the repository may be made in writing, by telephone or by appointment.

### **Contacts for the continuing programs**

Minerals information — US Geological Survey Minerals Information Team, chief scientist — John DeYoung (acting), 920 National Center, Reston, VA 20192, phone 703-648-6057, fax 703-648-4995, Internet [jdeyoung@usgs.gov](mailto:jdeyoung@usgs.gov).

Publications — Keith Harris, publications services (including mailing list changes), 984 National Center, Reston, VA 20192, phone 703-648-4750, fax 703-648-7792.

Data — Minerals yearbook chapters, mineral industry surveys, mineral commodity summary chapters, personnel directories, via Internet <http://minerals.er.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs>. Mines Faxback 703-648-4999.

### **Mineral land assessment, Alaska**

Roger Baer, Bureau of Land Management, Juneau Office, P.O. Box 20550, Juneau, AK 99802-0550, phone 907-364-2111, fax 907-364-3622, Internet [rbaer@ak.blm.gov](mailto:rbaer@ak.blm.gov). Or Donald W. Baggs, Bureau of Land Management, Anchorage Office, 222 West 7th Avenue, Anchorage, AK 995-13-5076, phone 907-271-2454, fax 907-271-3933, Internet [dbaggs@ak.blm.gov](mailto:dbaggs@ak.blm.gov).

### **Health and safety research**

Program — Gregory Wagner, MD, acting associate director for mining, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, 1095 Willowdale Road, Morgantown, WV 26505, phone 304-285-6162, fax 304-285-5861, Internet [grw3@cdc.gov](mailto:grw3@cdc.gov). Or Richard W. Metzler, acting research director, Pittsburgh Research Center-NIOSH, Cochran Mill Rd., PO Box 18070, Pittsburgh, PA 15236-0070, phone 412-892-6601, fax 412-892-6614, Internet [rwm0@cdc.gov](mailto:rwm0@cdc.gov). Or John R.M. (Ros) Hill, acting research director, Spokane Research Center-NIOSH,

315 East Montgomery Ave., Spokane, WA 99207, phone 509-484-1610, fax 509-354-8099, Internet [gzh0@cdc.gov](mailto:gzh0@cdc.gov).

Publications — Research publications from the former USBM and the continuing health and safety are available as follows:

- Bibliographic search and selected publications are at: Common Information Service System (CISS) <http://speedy.usbm.gov:8000/>.
- Copies of all research publications can be ordered through National Technical Information Service (NTIS), 5285 Port Royal Rd., Springfield, VA 22161, phone 703-487-4650, fax 703-321-8547, Internet <http://ntis.fedworld.gov>.

### **Mining environmental research**

Program and publications — Robert L. P. Kleinmann, director, environmental science and technology division, Federal Energy Technology Center-Pittsburgh Site, PO Box 10940, Pittsburgh, PA 15236, phone 412-892-6555, fax 412-892-4067, Internet [kleinman@fetc.doe.gov](mailto:kleinman@fetc.doe.gov)

Materials research, program and publications — George J. Dooley III, research director, US Department of Energy, Albany Research Center, 1450 Queen Ave. SW, Albany, OR 97321-2198, phone 541-967-5892, fax 541-967-5936, Internet [dooley@alrc.doe.gov](mailto:dooley@alrc.doe.gov), World Wide Web [www.alrc.doe.gov](http://www.alrc.doe.gov). Or William D. Riley, chief, technology transfer, Albany Research Center, 1450 Queen Ave. SW, Albany, Oregon 97321-2198, phone 541-967-5851, fax 541-967-5991, Internet [riley@alrc.doe.gov](mailto:riley@alrc.doe.gov), World Wide Web [www.alrc.doe.gov](http://www.alrc.doe.gov).

Helium program — Robert E. Doyle Jr., manager, helium office, Bureau of Land Management, 18th and C Streets, NW, Washington, DC 20240, phone 202-501-9340, fax 202-501-3740, Internet [bdoyle@sc0126wp.sc.blm.gov](mailto:bdoyle@sc0126wp.sc.blm.gov).

Mine maps — Greig J. Robertson, mine map repository, Office of Surface Mining, 3 Greentree Parkway, Greentree, PA 15220, phone 412-937-3001, fax 412-937-2888, Internet [groberts@osmre.gov](mailto:groberts@osmre.gov). ■