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September 13, 1993

Mr. Jerry Bellows, Manager
Los Alamos Area Office
U.S. Department of Energy
Los Alamos, New Mexico 87544

Re: June 30, 1993 letter regarding LANL ¹³⁷Cs analytical capabilities; J.L. Bellows to K.M. Sisneros

Dear Mr. Bellows:

In response to the subject letter, I appreciate the efforts of your office to ensure that LANL has the technical capability to adequately assess the actual levels of ¹³⁷Cs in environmental samples.

For your information, NMED's AIP staff have sampled the wells in question and submitted these samples to NMED's contract lab. The data show no ¹³⁷Cs above detection limits (about 3.5 pCi/L); therefore, NMED's immediate concerns--environmental health and public safety-- appear to have been addressed; however, it remains for LANL to demonstrate its ability to quantify the presence of ¹³⁷Cs at sufficiently low concentrations with sufficiently high precision or to obtain the services of a laboratory with such capabilities.

Finally, this series of events has brought to light a more general problem: LANL's environmental surveillance program apparently does not include procedures to confirm the presence of measured contaminants at a prescribed action level once an initial sample has indicated the existence of such contamination.

Review of LANL's Draft "Environmental Monitoring Plan" failed to identify any procedures for the ground water surveillance program which would trigger confirmation and initiate appropriate follow-up actions in the event of analytical results that exceed the DOE derived concentration guides or EPA drinking water standards. The AIP program is currently evaluating environmental monitoring programs at LANL and will issue a report detailing their findings which will include a reference to this particular deficiency.



12428

Jerry Bellows
September 13, 1993
Page 2

If you have any questions regarding these matters, please contact Mr. Benito Garcia, Hazardous and Radioactive Materials Bureau Chief, at (505) 827-4358.

Sincerely,

Kathleen M. Sisneros, Administrator
NMED Agreement in Principle

cc: Benito J. Garcia, HRMB Chief
Neil Weber, DOE/AIP Bureau Chief
John Parker, HRMB Program Manager
David Englert, HRMB
Teri Davis, DOE Oversight Field Supervisor
Robert Gallegos, DWB Chief
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