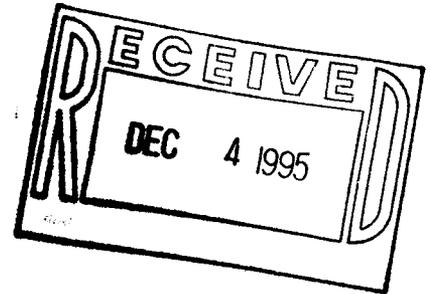




Department of Energy
Albuquerque Operations Office
Los Alamos Area Office
Los Alamos, New Mexico 87544



DEC 01 1995

CERTIFIED MAIL - RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Ms. Barbara Hoditschek
Permits Program Manager
Hazardous & Radioactive Materials Bureau
New Mexico Environment Department
2044 Galisteo St., Bldg. A
P. O. Box 26110
Santa Fe, NM 87505

Mr. Ronald Kern
Technical Program Manager
Hazardous and Radioactive Materials Bureau
New Mexico Environment Department
2044 Galisteo St., Bldg. A
P. O. Box 26110
Santa Fe, NM 87505

Dear Ms. Hoditschek and Mr. Kern:

The Department of Energy (DOE) and the University of California (UC) appreciate the opportunity to have met with you and your staff on October 27, 1995, regarding groundwater issues. DOE/UC feel that a continuing dialogue with the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) will be instrumental in assuring adequate resolution of NMED's concerns. To that end, this letter summarizes DOE/UC's understanding of the discussions that took place at that meeting. DOE/UC's agenda covered the groundwater monitoring waiver denials and the Work Plan for the site-wide hydrogeologic studies.

The conversation about the waiver denials focused primarily on the following issues:

1. DOE/UC questioned why the surface impoundments at Technical Areas (TA) 16 and 35, Building 125, were included in the denial letter despite the fact that they had been closed by removal of the waste. Both closures demonstrated that neither unit presented potential impacts to the groundwater by using data related to soil samples. Such demonstrations are allowed pursuant to New Mexico Administrative Code, Title 20, Chapter 4, Part 1 (20 NMAC 4.1), Subpart IX, 270.1 and acceptable as described in the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Policy Directive #9476.00-18. It was NMED's impression that these two units had been included because the waiver demonstrations submitted addressed more than one unit per TA, i.e., the demonstration for TA-16 apparently included both the surface impoundment and Area P, and the demonstration for TA-35 included the surface impoundments at both Buildings 125 and 85. NMED felt that to separate them out for the denial letter would have been inappropriate. NMED agreed, however, that no further action on these two units with regard to groundwater monitoring requirements would be necessary because closure by removal had been demonstrated successfully.
2. Future activities to be performed at other units identified in NMED's May 30, 1995 letter denying the groundwater monitoring waivers were discussed. NMED agreed that because TA-16, Area P, and the TA-53 and TA-35-85 surface impoundments would presumably be closed by demonstrating compliance with 20NMAC4.1, Subpart V, Section 264 removal standards, DOE/UC could address potential impact to groundwater from these units through the closure process. As described in the aforementioned EPA Policy Directive, this could include the use of soil data in lieu of actually installing wells and sampling groundwater to evaluate potential impact. Once adequate information has been provided to demonstrate successful closure by removal, no groundwater sampling activities specific to these units would be required (see 270.1[c]).
3. We discussed that because it is unlikely that DOE/UC will attempt closure by removal at TA-54, Areas L and G, a clean closure demonstration similar to the approach described



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Addressees

2

DEC 01 1995

above may be inappropriate. However, DOE/UC is in the process of developing additional hydrogeologic information as part of the Performance Assessment for TA-54, the Groundwater Protection Management Program Plan, and other related efforts under the Environmental Restoration Program. NMED agreed to defer potential monitoring activities specific to Areas L and G until collection of sufficient information through the efforts identified above indicated an appropriate direction to take.

4. DOE/UC suggested that vadose zone monitoring be recognized as an appropriate approach to ensure early detection of potential releases rather than waiting until a constituent migrated to and was detected in groundwater. NMED agreed that certain site-specific situations might be appropriate for vadose zone monitoring.

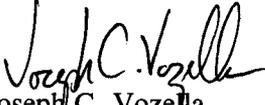
Also, NMED suggested that some closure activities might benefit from vadose zone monitoring. While this issue is certainly recognized by DOE/UC, it was unclear that a comprehensive awareness of all vadose zone activities at certain closing units existed at NMED. It may be beneficial for DOE/UC to meet with NMED to discuss what vadose zone activities have already been and/or are currently performed.

During the October 27 meeting, DOE/UC reviewed the draft outline of Work Plan activities (see enclosed *Discussion Draft LANL Hydrogeologic Work Plan*) to determine whether these work plan activities would meet NMED's Water and Waste Management Division's request for a site-wide hydrogeologic work plan. Briefly, three phases were identified, including the integration of available data for site-wide geology, hydrology, and water quality; the preliminary evaluation of recharge and hydrologic processes; and the upgrade of the groundwater monitoring network and refinement of the conceptual model. These proposed activities will be discussed further during meetings of the DOE/UC/NMED Technical Review Committee (TRC) along with the development of appropriate timelines for implementation.

NMED agreed that, at first glance, the activities delineated in the draft outline appear to address its concerns. NMED representatives have been and continue to be involved in both the discussions for planned activities and the associated implementation schedule through their participation in the TRC. Hopefully, NMED will continue to work with DOE/UC in the development of this Work Plan so that all concerns will be addressed.

Once again, DOE/UC appreciate the opportunity to work together with NMED to resolve these issues. What is described in this letter represents DOE/UC's understanding of the discussions that occurred at the aforementioned meeting. If these understandings are in any way inconsistent with NMED's interpretations, please inform DOE/UC of such as soon as possible. If no indication to the contrary is received, DOE/UC will proceed accordingly. Please feel free to contact Jody Plum, 665-5042, or Ken Zamora, 665-5047, both of my staff, or me at 665-5027, should you have any concerns.

Sincerely,


Joseph C. Vozeila
Assistant Area Manager
Office of Environment and Projects

LAAMEP:7KZ-005

Enclosure

cc:
See page 3

Addressees

3

DEC 01 1995

cc w/enclosure:

J. Plum, AAMEP, LAAO
K. Zamora, AAMEP, LAAO
J. White, ESH-19, LANL, MS-K490
S. Rae, ESH-18, LANL, MS-K497
B. Gallaher, ESH-18, LANL, MS-K497
J. Rochelle, LC, LANL, MS-A187
ESH-19 (950591.ab), LANL, MS-K490
K. McAda, EPD, AL

cc w/o enclosure:

D. Erickson, ESH-DO, LANL, MS-K491
T. Baca, EM, LANL, MS-J591