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11-11-11
General (Land Transfer)

LANL/Non-HSWA REGULATORY

GARY E. JOHNSON
Governor

April 12, 1999

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7/29/99

DOE OVERSIGHT BUREAU

Elizabeth Withers
CT EIS Document Manager
DOE, Los Alamos Area Office
528 35th Street
Los Alamos, N. M. 87544

Dear Ms. Withers:

RE: DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR THE CONVEYANCE AND TRANSFER OF CERTAIN LAND TRACTS ADMINISTERED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND LOCATED AT LOS ALAMOS NATIONAL LABORATORY, LOS ALAMOS AND SANTA FE COUNTIES, NEW MEXICO, DOE/EIS-0293; DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY, LOS ALAMOS AREA OFFICE; FEBRUARY 1999

The following transmits New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) staff comments concerning the above-referenced Draft Environmental Impact Statement (CT EIS).

A PROJECT SUMMARY

The CT EIS examines potential environmental impacts associated with the conveyance and transfer of ten parcels of land at the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). The tracts proposed for conveyance and transfer are situated along the north-central and northeast boundary of LANL. They include the following: TA-21 Site, DP Road Tract, DOE Los Alamos Area Office Site, Airport Tract, White Rock Site, Rendija Canyon Site, White Rock Y Site, TA-74 Site, Site 22, and the Manhattan Monument. The document evaluates two alternatives: (1) the No Action Alternative, and (2) the Conveyance and Transfer of Each Tract Alternative (the Proposed Action Alternative). The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) preferred alternative is a subset of the Proposed Action Alternative, namely, to convey or transfer several of the tracts in the year 2000, several of the tracts entirely or in part (portions without potential contamination issues or mission support concerns) by the year 2007, and one tract by the year 2007.

B. GROUND WATER QUALITY

The following supporting documents were reviewed to prepare the ground water quality comments, below: Environmental Restoration Report To Support Land Conveyance And Transfer Under Public Law 105-119 and A Preliminary Identification of Parcels of Land in Los Alamos, New Mexico for Conveyance or Transfer. Documents referenced and critical to the preparation of the CT EIS include the Hydrogeologic Workplan, Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL, 1996) and the Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement for Continued Operation of



the Los Alamos National Laboratory (DOE, 1999). The documents were reviewed to determine if present ground water quality concerns were adequately addressed during the conveyance and transfer process and what impacts the process would have on future ground-water quality based on the projected land use.

1. Based on the past and present use of the tracts proposed for conveyance or transfer, it is most likely that the TA-21 tract (a tritium research facility), has introduced significant amounts of contaminants to deeper ground-water zones.
2. Ground water quality issues were not addressed on a "tract by tract" basis in the CT EIS document. In many cases, ground water underlying the tracts to be conveyed or transferred has never been investigated. Therefore, ground water characterization and/or remediation costs were not included in the assessment.
3. Characterization of the ground water systems (alluvial, perched, and regional) underlying LANL is addressed in the Hydrogeologic Workplan. Completion of this investigation is scheduled for the year 2006, only a year prior to the scheduled conveyance or transfer, thus making it unlikely that newly identified, site- specific or regional water quality issues could be adequately addressed.
4. Contaminants (uranium, tritium, high explosives, nitrates, and others) have been detected, but not defined, in the regional aquifer as well as alluvial and perched saturated zones in the regional characterization wells installed to date. One of these, the R-9 well, is in the White Rock Y Site and downgradient along the inferred ground water flow direction from the TA-21 Site. In some cases contaminant concentrations exceed state or federal maximum contaminant levels and/or health advisory guidelines.
5. Under the two alternative scenarios (No Action or Proposed Action) set forth in the CT EIS, the document states that there would be no new impacts to ground water quality. However, under both scenarios, increased water usage could accelerate the depletion of the main regional aquifer, possibly degrade existing ground water quality, and increase the potential for contaminant migration towards the public drinking water supply wells, requiring more expensive treatment technology.

C. SURFACE WATER QUALITY

1. The CT EIS refers to the Environmental Restoration Report (ER), a document that is not part of this review packet, nor is it fully discussed as part of the CT EIS. The ER, however, introduces the new "road map" which establishes the future framework for environmental restoration activity (specifically surface water monitoring) associated with potential release sites (PRSs) on properties adjacent and upstream of the land transfer parcels proposed in the CT EIS. The ER document, therefore, should be evaluated by NMED as part of this process
2. Perhaps, the weakest element of the CT EIS with regard to surface water concerns, is a lack of guarantee that surface water will be monitored appropriately after the land transfers and the removal of the PRSs from the RCRA permit have occurred.

3. Also included as part of this land transfer process and the CT EIS should be the Draft Watershed Management Plan. Proposals made in this plan should be viewed in conjunction with the CT EIS because it outlines surface water monitoring strategies that may impact watersheds in which the land transfer parcels described in this EIS are located.

D. AIR QUALITY

The area of the proposed land transfer is currently in attainment for all National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). The CT EIS, however, does not adequately address cumulative impacts, especially from potential radiation exposure.

The cumulative impacts section of the CT EIS should include the potential impacts from proposed sources at LANL in conjunction with the proposed land transfer; e.g., those projects that are currently planned or are planned for the foreseeable future. Some of these projects are listed in section 1.5 of the CT EIS. However, the document does not consider the possibility that the Spallation Neutron Source (SNS) described in the DEIS DOE/EIS-0247 may be located at LANL. Although LANL is an alternative location for this project, the potential impacts of additional community development near the proposed SNS site should be addressed in this CT EIS.

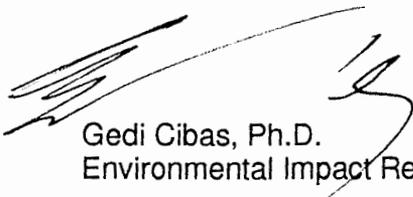
E. EDITORIAL MATTERS AND RECOMMENDATION

Several editorial issues should be addressed prior to final publication. As an example: Figure 14.3.1.1-2 (page 14-16) refers to the "White Rock Tract - Cultural Preservation and Commercial Land Use" yet graphically it is a duplication of Figure 13.1.1-2 (page 3-4) Technical Area 74 Tract - Monitoring Stations and Outfall Locations, with no visual reference to the White Rock Tract at all.

Finally, the environmental restoration or remediation of the affected tracts should proceed under either alternative. The impact of additional waste on existing or planned disposal facilities should be considered. Efforts should be made to mitigate negative impact on habitats as the result of the development of the tracts.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this document, please let us know if you have any questions on the above.

Sincerely,



Gedi Cibas, Ph.D.
Environmental Impact Review Coordinator

NMED File No. 1249ER