

General

SUBSCRIBE | Log out | Why we charge

about Albuquerque, New Mexico
ENTERED
Contact Us

ABQJOURNAL.COM
ONLINE EDITION
of the ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL



SEARCH

In Hand or Onli
ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL
3 Months for

Home News Schools Sports Biz Opinion Health Scitech Arts Dining Movies Outdoors Weather Comics

Journal North: [Home](#) | [Sports](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Obits](#) | [Entertainment](#)

[Front Page](#) [north](#)

Friday, March 28, 2008

State Says U.S. Backing Off on LANL Cleanup

By [Raam Wong](#)
Journal Staff Writer

The federal government is attempting to wiggle out of its commitments to clean up decades worth of hazardous waste at Los Alamos National Laboratory, state regulators alleged Thursday.

New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry said in an interview that recent events have led him to believe the U.S. Department of Energy wants to renegotiate and weaken the terms of its cleanup agreement with the state.

Federal nuclear officials dispute that, saying they're committed to carrying out the 2005 agreement.

The so-called consent order calls for the identification and cleanup of legacy waste over the lab's 40-square-mile property by 2015. Regulators fear that if left untreated, contaminants could pollute regional drinking water supplies, among other problems.

Curry's tough talk could signal rocky

Story Tools

- [E-mail Story](#)
- [Print Friendly](#)
- [Send E-mail To Raam Wong](#)

BY [Recent stories](#)
by [Raam Wong](#)
\$\$ [NewsLibrary](#)
[Archives search](#)
for
[Raam Wong '95-](#)
now
 [Reprint story](#)

Most Requested
1 [Inmate May Have Impregnated Guard](#)
2 [Duke City Shines](#)
3 [\\$37M Plan Includes Rebuilt Del Norte](#)

31646



times ahead for the relationship between the Environment Department and the lab. The state agency already has fined the lab \$750,000 for violations of the cleanup agreement. And tensions have grown as DOE has signaled it may miss some future cleanup milestones due to budget constraints.

Last week, a federally funded citizens advisory board wrote a letter suggesting more time was needed to understand contaminants before further cleanup remedies can be considered.

"Now is the time for a mid-course evaluation/corrections in the multi-year, multi-billion dollar cleanup effort at LANL," states the Northern New Mexico Citizens' Advisory Board's letter to federal officials.

Without additional data, state regulators will continue to shoot down LANL cleanup projects, states the letter by board chairman J.D. Campbell.

The group added that the cleanup agreement should reflect the unanticipated delays that have occurred in shipping thousands of drums of transuranic waste from Los Alamos to a disposal site near Carlsbad due to safety and other concerns.

"The Consent Order schedule must accommodate and put safety first for all aspects of work on the cleanup at LANL," the letter states.

Curry responded: "I don't think they raise one valid point." He noted that one criticism of the consent order has been that it was long on analysis and short on actual work.

"We can't study this to death and not take any action until there's a real dire emergency," Curry said.

The secretary said the letter was evidence that DOE was attempting to

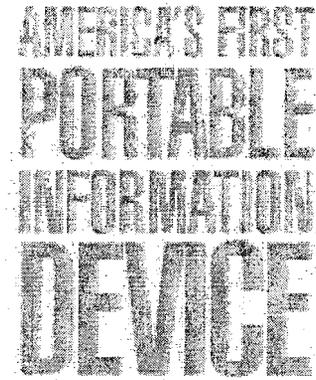
- Most E-mailed**
 1 [N.M. Teacher Pension Fund Fires Adviser](#)
 2 [NEWS: Police Arrest Mother of Buried 3-Year-Old](#)
 3 [UPFRONT: A Year Later, Mystery Remains](#)

Who's Blogging?

Read what's being written about Albuquerque Journal reports.

- ▶ [Oh Fair New Mexico](#) links to story
- ▶ [New Mexico Politics: New Mexico FBIHOP - Front Page](#) links to [NEWS/METRO: Duke City on Verge of Exceeding Federal Standards for Emissions that Cause Ozone](#)
- ▶ [Mario Burgos](#) links to [NEWS/METRO: Streetcar Plan Still Kicking](#)
- ▶ [Crime Time](#) links to [NEWS: Mother Accused of Suffocating Child Arraigned](#)
- ▶ [New Mexico Independent](#) links to [NORTH: ValueOptions Heads to Court](#)
- ▶ [Heath Haussamen on New Mexico Politics](#) links to [NORTH: ValueOptions Heads to Court](#)
- ▶ [Hoops on Hoops - NY Daily News Blogs](#) links to [/sports/live/](#)
- ▶ [Oh Fair New Mexico](#) links to [DOMENICI: In New Mexico, tortillas can be used as utensil](#)
- ▶ [Democracy for New Mexico](#) links to [NEWS/METRO: City Council Slashes Ad Budget](#)
- ▶ [New Mexico Central](#) links to [NEWS/STATE: Nambe Ware: N.M. in Spirit but Made in China](#)

[Full list and what they're blogging](#)



renegotiate the agreement through backdoor channels.

"This letter proves to me that they're being the tool of DOE," Curry said of the advisory board.

Members of the board were unavailable for comment Thursday.

Curry added he has also been approached by National Nuclear Security Administration officials based in Los Alamos seeking an arrangement in which the lab would meet certain milestones, if state regulators looked the other way when others were missed.

The NNSA's site office in Los Alamos said in a statement it is committed to carrying out the agreement's milestones completely and on time.

"The DOE is evaluating the numerous comments provided in the NNM CAB letter and has not provided a response," said Mat Johansen, a DOE environmental manager in Los Alamos.

Johansen said the advisory board is independent of the Energy Department and provides recommendations on environmental projects.

The controversy comes as the NNSA is proposing to make Los Alamos the manufacturing center for plutonium bomb parts. Curry and some watchdog groups oppose the plan, saying Los Alamos should instead focus on cleanup.

Journal North

- » [Home](#)
- » [Sports](#)
- » [Opinion](#)
- » [Entertainment](#)

North

[Family Mourns 3 Generations](#)

[Hotel Plan Clears Hurdle](#)

[State Bans Finder's Fees](#)

[Councilor Eyes Gallery or Fairs](#)

[In 11th Hour, Councilor Says Budget Not Ready](#)

[Around Northern New Mexico](#)

[Concert Series in Los Alamos Is Under Way](#)

[Vigil Case Forensics Challenged](#)

[A Day To Remember](#)

[Redford Planting Roots in N.M.](#)

['Excellent Teacher' Leaves on Top](#)

[Around Northern New Mexico](#)

[History Museum Opens Its Doors](#)

[North Calendar](#)

[Marine's name added to Vietnam memorial in Washington, D.C.](#)

[Chocolate Tasting Benefits Open Hands Services](#)

[Suspect Silent After Two Shot to Death](#)

[More North](#)