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*News Release*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Trustee Council Report Calls for Official Natural Resource Damage Assessment for LANL**

LOS ALAMOS, New Mexico, March 23, 2010—The Los Alamos National Laboratory Natural Resource Trustee Council today released its Preassessment Screen (PAS) that calls for the completion of an official natural resource damage assessment for LANL.

The PAS, produced cooperatively by members of the Trustee Council, including the U.S. Department of Energy and the State of New Mexico, is the first step in the official process for assessing injury to natural resources that may be attributable to the Laboratory.

“Los Alamos National Laboratory must be accountable for its environmental legacy in New Mexico,” said State Natural Resources Trustee Ron Curry. “We anticipate next steps that will allow the public to comment on the assessment conducted by the Trustee Council.”

“We acknowledge that past Lab activities have affected the environment,” said DOE’s Don Winchell, Los Alamos Site Office Manager. “Today we have hundreds of scientists, engineers, and professionals cleaning up our legacy waste and minimizing our waste going forward. This document is an important part of the process of mitigating any impacts.”

The PAS, which is a quick and limited review of environmental data, concludes that an official natural resource damage assessment should take place. The document was produced under the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) process of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA).

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Under CERCLA — federal, state and tribal entities are authorized to recover damages for injuries to natural resources that have occurred as the result of releases of hazardous substances. Compensation for the resource injuries is provided by the responsible party and is used to restore, rehabilitate, replace, or acquire the equivalent of the injured natural resources and any lost human and ecological services the injured resources provide. The process does not address human health issues.

Founded in 1943, LANL has been the site of nuclear weapons research and production, chemistry and physics research, and the handling of various types of hazardous or radioactive materials. Laboratory activities have released toxic substances into the environment, particularly during the Manhattan Project and Cold War eras.

Next steps in the process include development and implementation of a Natural Resource Assessment Plan, which provides additional information regarding pathway and injury determination, injury quantification, and damage determination. The Assessment Plan process will include an opportunity for public comment.

The PAS was completed in 2009 and approved by the Trustee Council, which also includes the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the Pueblo de San Ildefonso. Santa Clara Pueblo and Jemez Pueblo recently joined the Trustee Council after completion of the PAS.

The PAS is available electronically on the LANL public Web site at <http://www.lanl.gov/environment> and through the New Mexico Office of Natural Resources Trustee at <http://www.onrt.state.nm.us/LANL.html>.

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