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GOVERNOR

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November 25, 1992

Jerry Bellows, Manager  
U.S. Department of Energy  
Los Alamos Area Office  
528 35th Street  
Los Alamos, NM 87544

Re: **Los Alamos and Pueblo Canyons Monitoring Systems**

Dear Mr. Bellows:

It has recently been brought to my attention by AIP staff that the existing alluvial groundwater monitoring-well systems in lower Los Alamos and Acid/Pueblo Canyons (LA and AP, respectively) are inadequate, and Bayo Canyon, a tributary of lower LA Canyon, currently has no monitoring system. These canyons are locations of significant historic and current releases of hazardous and/or radioactive materials.

The current environmental surveillance monitoring network does include wells in portions of both LA and AP canyons. However, the perched alluvial-water monitoring wells in these canyons are insufficient in number and location to appropriately monitor possible contaminant movement in the canyons, especially the lower reaches. Only one alluvial-water monitoring well, APO-1, exists in lower AP Canyon, and no wells are in place in Bayo Canyon, or in LA Canyon downstream of the confluence of AP and LA Canyons. These are important areas for monitoring possible contaminant transport off of Lab property. Lower LA Canyon contains the Los Alamos production-well field, where borehole gravel packs (not properly grouted) may serve as a pathway for downward contaminant migration.

Currently, only the production wells in lower LA Canyon (the LA well field) are used to monitor the main aquifer at the eastern edge of the Pajarito Plateau. These wells are not representative of water quality at the upper portion of the aquifer because the wells are screened over very large intervals.

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The New Mexico Environment Department believes that steps should be taken to correct these problems. Please contact Ms. Teri Davis or Mr. Danny Katzman at 827-4313 or 665-7130 if you have any questions on this matter.

Sincerely,



Kathleen M. Sisneros, Director  
Water and Waste Management Division

KMS:dk

cc: Benito Garcia, Chief, Hazardous and Radioactive Materials Bureau  
Neil Weber, Chief, DOE Oversight Program  
Bruce Swanton, Manager, DOE Oversight Program  
John Parker, Manager, Mixed Waste Program  
William Stone, DOE Oversight Program  
Barbara Driscoll, EPA Region 6  
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