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GOVERNOR

State of New Mexico
ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

Water and Waste Management Division

Office of the Director

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PETER MAGGIORE
SECRETARY

GREG LEWIS
DIRECTOR

November 20, 2000

Fred Brueggeman
Los Alamos County
Los Alamos, New Mexico 87544

Dear Mr. Brueggeman:

This letter is written to provide guidance on signage recommended by New Mexico Environment Department staff in a meeting on November 8, 2000 between the Department of Energy and Los Alamos County. During the meeting, NMED staff recommended that the County place signs along the South Fork of Acid Canyon (SFAC) where sampling of sediments by both the US Environmental Protection Agency, Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) and the Environment Department has confirmed the presence of radioactive contamination in excess of risk-based guidelines.

In the meeting, the LANL Environmental Restoration Project staff stated that they planned to submit to NMED a plan to cleanup "hot-spots" in the SFAC. NMED staff stated that they agreed conceptually with this type of clean up proposal but will need to review the details of the plan before being able to provide our concurrence. NMED further stated that given the inability of the ER Project to definitively state when a clean-up would occur, it would be prudent for the County to post signs warning community members regarding possible risks associated with entering the contaminated area. NMED staff noted that this was consistent with the As Low As Reasonably Achievable (ALARA) principle. This principle is embraced by DOE Order 5400.5, *RADIATION PROTECTION OF THE PUBLIC AND ENVIRONMENT*, which requires reasonable actions be undertaken to reduce the potential for exposures to members of the public. NMED stated that fencing was not being recommended at this time. LANL ER Project staff inquired whether signage they've used at other sites that identifies the area as an ER Project site and provides a space for specific information would be acceptable. NMED concurred with this approach and agreed to provide additional guidance regarding the language to be used on the signs.



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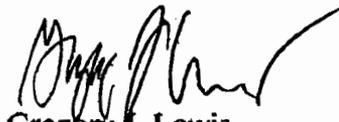
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Previously, contaminated areas at LANL have been posted "CAUTION SOIL CONTAMINATION AREA". This warning should be sufficient to alert people to the potential risks. It would also be appropriate to provide a contact number for those wishing to get more information. Depending on how much room is available on the sign, a brief description of the site and major contaminants would be helpful. NMED staff are available to work with the County to determine appropriate location for the signs. Please contact Steve Yanicak, Manager of the LANL Oversight Office in White Rock if you would like assistance with this.

If you wish to discuss this recommendation further please call me at 827-1758 or Mr. John Parker of my office staff at 827-1541.

Sincerely,



Gregory F. Lewis
Director

GL:jwp

Cc: Joe Vozella, DOE/LAAO
Dave Neleigh, US EPA Region VI
James Bearzi, NMED/HWB
John Parker, NMED/DOE-OB
Steve Yanicak, NMED/DOE-OB
Julie Canepa, LANL ER

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