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ame full plate as Mr. Mar-  
Sena said, referring to his  
offices in the school district  
ity Council.  
a, in an interview after closed-  
board session Tuesday, said  
didn't know who Martinez had  
nd to replace him but she was  
ng fast to her decision on prin-

s become very political," she  
"It's not the good old boy sys-  
f we let Mr. Martinez make his  
ntment. Politics and kids,  
's no room for them both."  
body gave her concrete rea-  
why Martinez shouldn't be  
ed to select his successor like  
did six years ago, she said.  
said the board had no other  
e but to accept applications  
the community after Tippet  
ast year because Tippet didn't  
mend a replacement.  
na also notes that Martinez,  
left in his fourth term, ran  
posed in the last two elections.  
"Anyone knows the time com-  
ment this office takes, it's Mr.  
tinez," she said.  
tzenberg made a motion for an  
r process, but the motion died  
out support from Sena or  
in.

## Week Another Term

rsight of the county jail but said  
standing issues, such as consoli-  
on of sheriff and city E911 dis-  
chers, need attention.  
The sheriff can't be a follower,  
to be a leader, and to be a leader  
to have a real good relationship  
h the County Commission," Vil-  
as said. "The sheriff has a lot of  
ver in terms of doing positive  
igs."  
ll candidates for county races  
st file with the County Clerk's  
ice on the same day — the third  
sday in March. Candidates for  
November general election are  
ermined in the primary election  
the first Tuesday in June.

09/07/01

New Mexico National Guard Sgt  
in exercises near Santa Fe. The

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ISON/JOURNAL  
al Lopez dur-  
ovo.

And even the deployment's  
scheduled seven-month duration  
is indefinite. "It depends on the  
nature of the mission," Gregory  
said. "Could be longer, maybe  
shorter."

# Acid Canyon Cleanup To Begin This Week

## LANL Workers Will Begin Removing Dirt

BY JENNIFER MCKEE  
Journal Staff Writer

Despite deep projected budget cuts, the cleanup of Acid Canyon, a Los Alamos County park freckled with pockets of plutonium, begins this week, although some say the government's plan doesn't go far enough.

Los Alamos National Laboratory workers will start sucking up the pockets containing plutonium with a truck-mounted vacuum cleaner this week, said lab spokesman James Rickman, and the entire cleanup should be done by the end of the month.

Lab workers intend to clean up only those pockets with an average radiation of more than 280 picocuries per hour. A picocurie is a measurement of radioactivity. The vacuum will suck up not only the contaminated dirt but also any dust the operation kicks up. All told, the lab expects to remove up to 300 cubic yards of soil and sediment, all

of which will be packed in waste containers and disposed at the lab's low-level radioactive waste dump.

Acid Canyon, now a nature park with hiking trails and an intermittent stream, was the receiving end of a lab discharge pipe from 1944 until the mid-1960s. Lab crews cleaned radiation off the canyon sides before the land was opened to the public.

Four years ago, a group of New Mexico Environment Department scientists tested dirt in the canyon bottom and found several "hot spots" with plutonium at levels several thousand times greater than they expected. Since then, the Environment Department, the Department of Energy and the lab have studied the canyon in greater detail.

Government scientists said in April that the park is not a health hazard but added they want to clean the place up just in case. Steve Yanicak, of the Environment Department's DOE Oversight Bureau, said the park's plutonium was an "unacceptable risk," and also wanted the place cleaned up.

Both sides were stuck, however, with the Bush administration's DOE budget for next fiscal year, which

cut environmental funding in half and stalled Acid Canyon cleanup.

Local DOE managers said in May they were hoping to scrape together enough money to deal with the park this fiscal year.

That's what happened, said Jude McCartin of Sen. Jeff Bingaman's office. Bingaman, D-N.M., was trying to get \$2 million specifically for the cleanup in this year's Energy and Water Bill, which funds the Energy Department. His plan didn't survive the Senate, but in the meantime, she said, Los Alamos officials decided to spend \$1.2 million they already had to fund the cleanup.

"As long as it gets done, that's what we're concerned about," McCartin said.

According to Jori Arends of Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety in Santa Fe, the government's cleanup plan doesn't do enough.

Arends questioned why the lab plan would leave 280 picocuries of plutonium in the park. She said another University of California lab fouled land that is now a park in California. Lab officials there clean up the park whenever they find plutonium at concentrations as low as 2.5 picocuries, 100 times more strict

than Acid Canyon, Arends said.

"Why is there a double standard?" she said. "The University of California made the mess in both places."

She also questioned the lab's risk analysis, which puts the odds of an excess cancer attributable to plutonium at 280 picocuries at one in 100,000. According to Kirby Olson, a risk assessor with the state Environment Department, a person would have to spend 1,200 hours in the canyon even to gamble with those weak odds.

"I felt those numbers were adequate to protect children in the canyon," Olson said.

Arends thinks otherwise. She thinks a child sitting on 280 picocuries would stand a greater risk of getting cancer than someone merely in the canyon.

"A child never sits down in their analysis," she said. "That's not reality."

Arends thinks the lab should sit and wait to see if the agency gets money in this year's budget to clean up the park more intensely.

"We're glad they want to do this cleanup," Arends said. "But they should wait."

# Public Defender Kept on Taos Case

## DA: Appointment Has Hampered Probe

allowing a suspect representation by the public defender before any criminal charges are filed.

Vigil's wife of six weeks, Nicole Medina, 18, was found dead in their

questions of indigency," Nelson said.

Maestas said the new law extends indigent suspects' rights under the Fifth and Sixth amendments to rep-  
resentation prior to charges being

gos has not pursued the investigation aggressively.

"It seems to us that he is dragging his feet," Nicole Medina's mother, Shawn Medina, said Tuesday.

Donnell said evidence available at

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