

James

Los Alamos

NATIONAL LABORATORY

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Date: January 16, 2002
In Reply Refer To: ESH-18/WQ&H:02-013
Mail Stop: K497
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Mr. James Bearzi
Hazardous Waste Bureau
New Mexico Environment Department
2905 Rodeo Park Road, Building E
Santa Fe, NM 87505

Mr. James Davis
Surface Water Quality Bureau
New Mexico Environment Department
1190 St. Francis Drive
P.O. Box 26110
Santa Fe, NM 87502

Mr. John Parker
New Mexico Environmental Department
Department of Energy/Oversight Bureau
New Mexico Environment Department
2905 Rodeo Park Drive East, Building 1
Santa Fe, NM 87505-6303

Mr. Fred Brueggeman
Los Alamos County
2300 Trinity Drive
Los Alamos, NM 87544

SUBJECT: PCB STUDY

Dear Mr. Bearzi, Mr. Davis, Mr. Parker and Mr. Brueggeman:

You recently received an email from me requesting participation from members of your staff to design a study to evaluate environmental PCB concentrations. This study was inspired by PCB results, analyzed using the congener method, which were recently provided to us by the Oversight Bureau. These results suggest the presence of PCBs above the Wildlife Habitat Standard in canyons draining the Laboratory and draining Los Alamos Townsite.

The congener method can potentially be used to measure low levels of PCB concentrations comparable to the 14 ppt Wildlife Habitat Standard for total PCBs. Ralph Ford-Schmid, of the NMED's DOE Oversight Bureau, has encouraged us to use this method for stormwater sampling. However, we have concerns about using an analytical method that is not approved by the State's Water Quality Control Commission. We also feel that before using this method it will be important to evaluate how robust the method is for the difficult matrix that stormwater represents. Because this method has the potential to measure PCBs at much lower levels than has previously been possible we will also need to evaluate regional background concentrations of PCBs. To this end, we encourage the NMED to sample for PCBs statewide. This will help us all to put our analytical results into a regional context.

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I would like to form a small group to plan a study that will determine: the efficacy of the analytical method, PCB concentrations in stormwater runoff from one or two canyons crossing the Lab, and background PCB concentrations. I would very much appreciate your support in this effort. Your support is initially requested in allowing members of your staff to participate in one or two meetings to design the study. Both Ralph Ford-Schmid and Kirby Olson have been specifically requested. Participation by a representative of the Surface Water Quality Bureau and Los Alamos County would also be appropriate and appreciated. Please call me at 667-0818 or email me at kmullen@lanl.gov if you have questions or to give me the name of the person that would serve as your representative to assist with the study design.

Sincerely,



Ken Mullen
Water Quality and Hydrology Group

KM/tml

Cy: Ralph Ford-Schmid, NMED/DOE/OB, Santa Fe, New Mexico
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