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Department of Energy
National Nuclear Security Administration
Los Alamos Site Office
Los Alamos, New Mexico 87544

May 10, 2004



Mr. Ron Curry
Secretary
New Mexico Environment Department
1190 St. Francis Drive
P. O. Box 26110
Santa Fe, NM 87502-0110

Dear Mr. Curry:

The purpose of this letter is to serve as notification for actions proposed within certain floodplain areas at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). The Los Alamos Site Office of the Department of Energy's (DOE) National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) proposes to conduct actions within DP and Rendija Canyons associated with the conveyance and transfer (C&T) of land as required by Public Law 105-119. These actions would be completed before the end of November 2007. In order to facilitate the C&T of land, the NNSA needs to install a new boundary fence line down a portion of DP Canyon. NNSA also needs to install fencing adjacent to the Rendija Canyon stream channel; place boulders within the Rendija Canyon stream channel to prevent vehicular access to surrounding areas; and may need to clean up contaminated soils and sediments around the public shooting ranges within Rendija Canyon.

In accordance with 10 CFR Part 1022, NNSA has prepared a Floodplain/Wetlands Assessment and will perform these proposed actions in a manner so as to avoid or minimize potential harm to or within the affected floodplains. Reseeding of any disturbed areas and re-contouring of soil will be performed as part of the identified C&T actions as appropriate.

Copies of the Floodplain/Wetlands Assessment are available for review at DOE's Los Alamos Community Involvement and Outreach Office located at 1619 Central Avenue in Los Alamos, New Mexico, and at the Government Information Department at the University of New Mexico's Zimmerman Library in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The draft document may also be sent to you upon your request by calling me at (505) 667-8690.

Any comments about the action are due no later than close of business on May 26, 2004. Written comments should be addressed to me at: Department of Energy, National Nuclear Security Administration, Los Alamos Site Office, 528 35th Street, Los Alamos, NM 87544, or may be submitted to the Mail Room at the above address between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Additionally, written comments may be sent electronically to: ewithers@doeal.gov or sent by facsimile to (505) 667-9998.

For further information on general DOE floodplain environmental review requirements, contact Mrs. Carol M. Borgstrom, Director, Office of NEPA Policy and Compliance, EH-42, Department of Energy, 1000 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington DC 20585-0119; via telephone at (202) 586-4600, (800) 472-2756, or via facsimile at (202) 586-7031.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elizabeth Withers", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Elizabeth Withers
NEPA Compliance Officer
Office of Facility Operations

OFO:EW-012

LA-UR-04-3112

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Title Floodplains/Wetlands Assessment for LANL
Conveyance and Transfer Project:
Rendija and DP Canyons

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Floodplains/Wetlands Assessment for LANL Conveyance and Transfer Project: Rendija and DP Canyons

Proposed Action/Project Description

This assessment by the Department of Energy (DOE)/National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) has been completed in accordance with 10 CFR Parts 1021 and 1022, Federal Register Volume 67, Number 222 dated Tuesday, 27 April 2004 in compliance with Executive Orders 11988 (Floodplain Management) and 11990 (Protection of Wetlands). These Executive Orders direct Federal agencies to consider and protect the benefits of wetlands and implement protection from the risk of loss from floods.

The DOE proposes to have conveyance and transfer (C&T) projects in two canyon bottoms between now and 2007 (Figures 1 and 2).

These project descriptions supersede all comments regarding these particular project sites found in the initial floodplains and wetlands assessments (LANL 1998, 1999) and the C&T environmental impact statement (DOE 1999).

DP Canyon

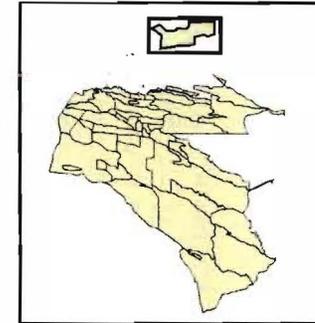
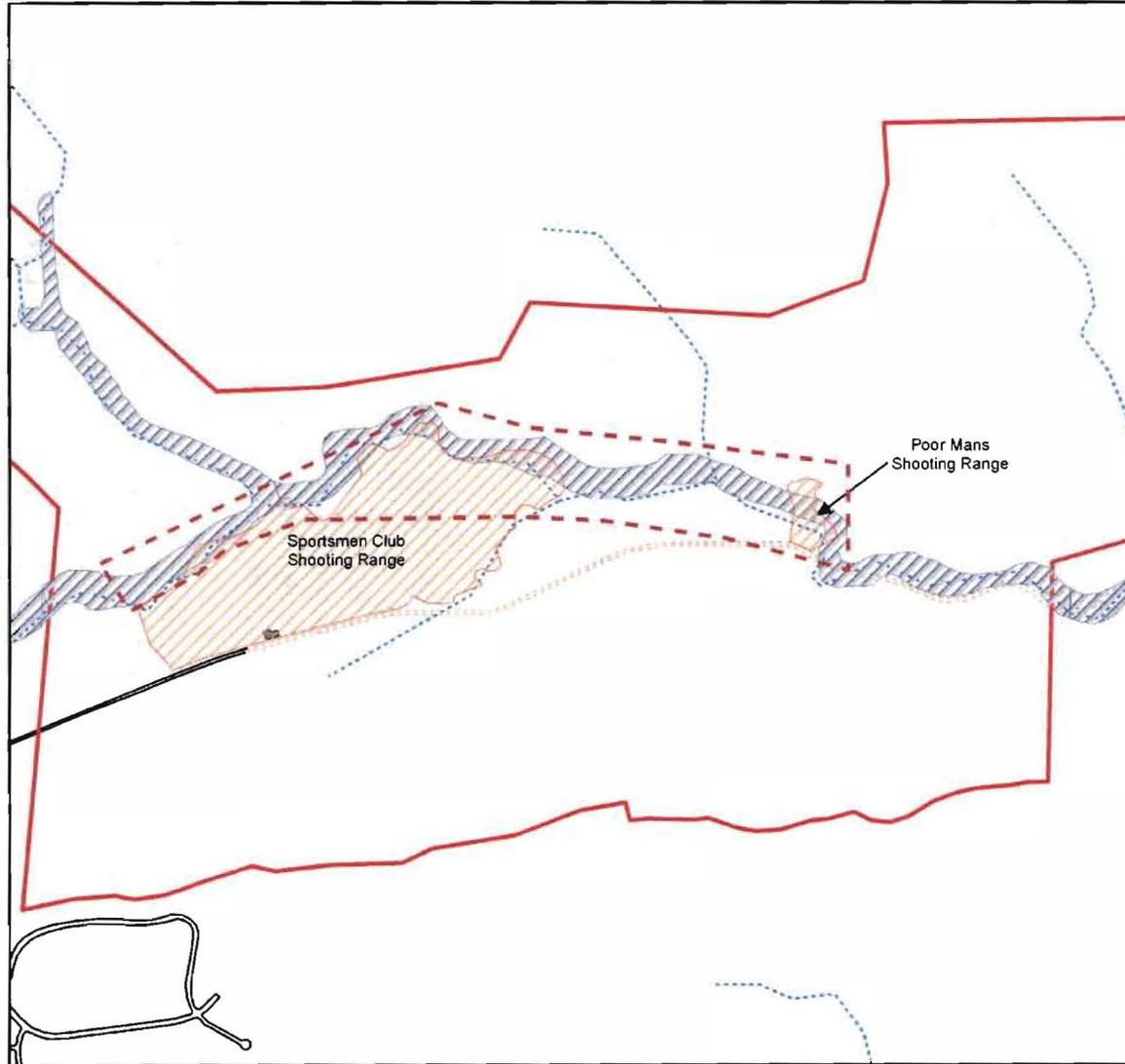
DOE/NNSA is currently determining whether to transfer airport south tract (tract A-5-1 and A-5-2). If DOE/NNSA transfers all of this property, the C&T project will need to install fence posts on 50-foot intervals down DP Canyon for property boundary signs. Based on discussions with Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) experts on floodplain/wetlands issues, these signs will be placed out of the stream channel to the south (DOE side) with adequate setback to protect the integrity of the streambed within the floodplain. LANL Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be utilized in the construction of the new fence so as to contain erosion material or other runoff effects during precipitation events.

Rendija Canyon

The activities in Rendija Canyon that might impact the floodplain are as follows:

1. Canyon road fence. The C&T project will be placing a fence along both sides of the canyon road starting on the 26th of April. This fence will be adjacent to the stream channel and will cross the stream channel in two locations on the eastern end of the property. The fence will be a three-strand smooth wire fence. Because the road follows the stream channel on the eastern end of the property, the fence must be within the floodplain where the road currently exists.
2. Canyon streambed boulder placement. The C&T project will be placing boulders into the primary floodplain channel to block off existing four-wheel drive access. Vandals are entering the canyon at this location and damaging archaeological sites on DOE property. The boulders are to replace a section of fence that has been washed out during a flood event last summer. Work may include the use of heavy equipment and trucks within the active floodplain.

Location of Rendija Canyon C&T tract W/Projects

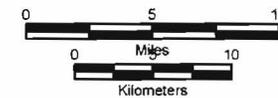


Legend

Rendija (A-14)	Structures
100 yr Flood Plain	Road, Paved
Proposed Project Area	Drainage
	Road, Dirt



1:12,300



State Plane Coordinate System
New Mexico, Central Zone, US Feet
NAD 1983 Datum

RRES-OEIM GIS TEAM
Produced April 28, 2004
Winters Red Star
Map Reference # 04-0047-3

Disclaimer: This cartographic product is intended for use in the Biological Assessment for the Conveyance and Transfer of Land Tracts at LAH. For any other purpose neither the United States Government nor the University of California nor any of their employees, makes any warranty, express or implied, including the warranties of merchantability and fitness for a particular purpose, or assumes any legal liability or responsibility for the accuracy, completeness, or usefulness of any information, apparatus, product, or process disclosed, or represents that its use would not infringe privately owned rights.

3. “Poor Man’s Shooting Range.” The C&T project may clean up the existing “poor man’s shooting range” area within the floodplain of the canyon at the east end of the property. If this clean up happens, a worst case scenario would include removal of approximately 10 inches of soil from the canyon side and streambed. The streambed would then have to be replaced and hardened with rock gabions and other stabilizers, as well as stabilization of the canyon wall removed during the clean up. All areas will be revegetated.
4. Stream channel clean up. If the Sportsman’s Club is cleaned up by the Environmental Restoration Project and it is determined that lead exists in the stream channel at levels requiring remediation, then the stream channel will require dredging from behind the Sportsman’s Club downstream for a distance to be determined (perhaps a mile at least). If this happens, a major restructuring of the streambed and revegetation will be required.

For all of the activities in Rendija Canyon LANL BMPs would be utilized so as to contain erosion material or other runoff effects during precipitation events.

Floodplains/Wetlands Impacts in DP Canyon

- Wetlands (as defined by the US Army Corps of Engineers) are intermittently present immediately adjacent to the DP Canyon stream channel. However, all work would occur near the bank of the stream and at least 50 feet away from the active channel. BMPs would be employed to contain and prevent disturbed earth or other potential erosion materials from entering the stream channel and wetlands. On this basis, there would be no wetland impacts from the proposed work.
- Short-term, direct impacts to the floodplain near the bank of the DP Canyon stream channel might occur from the placement of the fence line. The area includes native grasses, willows (*Salix exigua*), and other vegetation. The fencing would not elevate the area to a degree that would increase upstream flood stages. BMPs would be employed to prevent gravel and other loose materials eroding during rainfall events during construction of the fence line. In conclusion, direct impacts to the DP Canyon floodplain from the installation of the fence would be insignificant and short term.
- Indirect impacts are negligible for this project.
- In consideration of this information, the proposed action conforms to applicable floodplain standards and to Executive Order 11988.

Floodplains/Wetlands Impacts in Rendija Canyon

- Wetlands are not present between the Sportsman’s Club and the “poor man’s shooting range.” As such, there would be no impacts to wetlands from the proposed work.
- Short-term, direct effects to the stream channel would result from fence line placement and canyon streambed boulder placement. The fence line will cross several drainages and will be within the floodplain in several areas. Like the work in DP Canyon, the project will strive to keep fence posts on banks and will attempt to maintain the integrity of the stream banks. If all BMPs are followed for stream bank integrity, the fence line should have no impact to floodplain values. In conclusion, direct impacts to the Rendija Canyon floodplain from the installation of the fence line would be insignificant and short term.

- The placement of the boulders in the active streambed with the use of heavy equipment may temporarily impact downstream floodplain values until the boulders “settle” into place. In a 100-year storm event, it is possible these boulders will dislodge and move to a new location downstream. Boulders selected that are perched are preferred to those that have been entrenched within the floodplain to minimize soil disturbance. Placement of boulders will be done in such a way as to minimize potential movement in a 100-year flood event. If work conducted on this part of the project follows all storm water pollution prevention (SWPP) plan BMPs as well as permitting under 401 and 404 for boulder removal and placement, there should be only minor impacts to the floodplain from this effort. In conclusion, direct impacts to the Rendija Canyon floodplain from the placement of boulders in the streambed would be minor and short term.
- Additionally, direct effects to the floodplain follow the potential remediation of the “poor man’s shooting range” and the stream channels associated with the Sportsman’s Club. Streambed replacement, bank construction, and canyon wall stabilization will need to follow all SWPP plan and permit BMPs, in addition to remediation for erosion control during and after the project to prevent gravel and other loose materials from eroding during rainfall events during and after construction. Disturbed ground would be stabilized and reseeded with native vegetation. In conclusion, while there are impacts within the floodplain from this type of remediation, if all BMPs and stabilization activity are performed per SWPP plans and permits, the effects to the downstream values should be minor.
- Indirect impacts from work remediating the channel would be minimized to prevent erosion damaging floodplain values below the project area. BMPs would incorporate considerations of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit program and Environmental Protection Agency requirements for a SWPP plan and under sections 401 and 404 of the Clean Water Act, as per the project directive.
- In consideration of this information, the proposed action conforms to applicable floodplain standards and to Executive Order 11988.

Alternatives

- Under the No Action Alternative, none of the mentioned activities would take place. This alternative is not a viable solution as it would not meet the purpose and need for the project.
- Alternate Actions: a) for DP Canyon fence line, the fence could be placed on the north side of the channel on County land. Since this action is essentially no different than that of the proposed action, the alternative has been discarded; b) for the canyon road fence, the project does not have an alternative. This action must be performed as it is written; c) for the streambed boulder placement, the alternative action is to place a concrete monolith fence in the stream channel with two-foot posts to impede traffic. While this may seem to cause less disturbance to the floodplain initially, past fences in the exact location have washed out and become dangerous during flood events; d) for the “poor man’s shooting range” there are two alternatives. First do not clean up the stream bed and only remediate the canyon wall. This option may be favorable depending on the level of

lead contaminants found in the floodplain channel. This option may cause less damage to the immediate floodplain, and may therefore be preferred. Second, do not remediate any soil, only clean up surface litter within the floodplain and on the canyon walls. This option does not appreciably damage the floodplain provided heavy equipment and trucks remain on the established road; and e) for the stream channel clean up from the Sportsman's Club an alternative is to provide sediment trapping basins (weirs) at strategic intervals and only remove the lead from these basins following 100-year storm events. While there may be some short-term, minor disturbance from the insertion of the weirs, there would be less overall disturbance to the floodplain from this option.

References

- DOE 1999. Appendix D in Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Conveyance and Transfer of Certain Land Tracts Administered by the U.S. Department of Energy and Located at Los Alamos National Laboratory, Los Alamos and Santa Fe Counties, New Mexico. U.S. Department of Energy, Los Alamos Area Office, Los Alamos, NM. DOE/EIS-0293.
- LANL 1998. Floodplains and Wetlands Assessment for the Proposed Conveyance and Transfer Tracts at Los Alamos National Laboratory. Los Alamos National Laboratory report LA-UR-98-5039.
- LANL 1999. Floodplains and Wetlands Assessment for the Proposed Conveyance and Transfer Tracts at Los Alamos National Laboratory, Los Alamos and Santa Fe Counties, New Mexico. Los Alamos National Laboratory report LA-UR-99-1861.