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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) Technical Area 50
Radioactive Waste Treatment Plant, EPA NPDES Outfall
No. 50

FROM: David Neleigh, Section Chief
New Mexico-Federal Facilities (6PD-N)

TO: Jack, Ferguson, Chief
NPDES Branch (6WQ-P)

Recently, my section has had several inquires from a concerned citizen pertaining to radionuclide contamination (groundwater) in Mortandad Canyon, within the facility boundary of Los Alamos National Laboratories (See Attachments). This shallow, perched aquifer located within Mortandad Canyon contains Strontium 90 and Tritium above the EPA Primary Drinking Water Standards. Currently, the aquifer is not being used and is not a source for drinking water. Under RCRA, radionuclides defined by the Atomic Energy Act are excluded from regulation.

LANL's Radioactive Wastewater Treatment Plant discharges radioactive wastewater into Mortandad Canyon. This facility has been discharging wastewater into the Canyon for approximately 30 years. The perched groundwater aquifer found downstream of the Plant's effluent discharge in Mortandand Canyon is primarily the result of the Plants's continuous discharges.

LANL has an EPA NPDES permit (NM0028355) for this Plant. Presently, the only radionuclides required to be monitored by the EPA permit are Radium 226 and Radium 228. It is my understanding, that DOE may be self regulating in the release of "other radionuclides" discharged by the Plant. Since there are "other radionuclides" being discharged by this Plant and, due to the fact that the effluent discharged ultimately percolates downward into the perched aquifer, the concerned citizen would like to know if EPA has the authority, under the NPDES permit, to regulate the "other radionuclides" discharged by the Plant. Additional radionuclide monitoring in the NPDES permit may reduce the effluent concentrations which in turn may reduce the concentration levels in the perched aquifer.



Should you have any further questions regarding the above information, please contact Rich Mayer of my staff at 5-7442. Also, I would appreciate a response regarding the above issue.

Attachments (3)

cc: Steve Vargo
Toxics (6PD-T)

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