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From: Stone, Marissa, NMENV
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Subject: News: LANL/conagra meeting announcement
Attachments: Picture (Metafile); Picture (Metafile); Picture (Metafile)

LANL director promises to clean up old nuclear waste

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Andy Lenderman | The New Mexican
January 12, 2007

New Mexico's senators have received a commitment from the director of Los Alamos National Laboratory to get on with the business of cleaning up the lab's old waste.

The lab will begin drilling four boreholes under a Cold War-era dump called Material Disposal Area C by the end of the month, and results will go to the New Mexico Environment Department in April, federal officials said Thursday.

The purpose of the boreholes is to further examine if contaminants from the dump have leaked into the ground, lab spokesman James Rickman said.

Environment Secretary Ron Curry has already fined the lab \$30,000 for missing a deadline to complete that drilling project.

"I'm concerned about the missed deadlines and the ongoing uncertainty that area residents have over possible contamination," U.S. Sen. Jeff Bingaman, a Democrat, said in a news release. "But I'm pleased the lab director has committed to moving forward quickly."



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Director Michael Anastasio has pledged to get the drilling project done by the end of February, the senators reported.

The fines and the pace of cleanup at the lab is governed by a consent order, or legal agreement, signed in March 2005 by the lab and the state.

Concerns for worker safety had apparently delayed the most recent drilling project. Thirty-six boreholes have already been completed at Material Disposal Area C.

"While we are aware the laboratory had worker and health safety concerns with drilling these final four holes, we are disappointed that addressing these concerns was not accounted for in LANL's timeline to meet the milestones in the consent order," Bingaman and U.S. Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., wrote to Anastasio.

The senators said they appreciated Anastasio's commitment to getting the job done.

"The results will help address very legitimate health and safety concerns of the residents in the communities surrounding Los Alamos," the senators wrote.

The lab has reported there are roughly 750 contaminated sites to clean up at cost of up to \$1 billion. Money to do those jobs comes from Congress.

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