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DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
National Nuclear Security Administration
Los Alamos Site Office
Los Alamos, New Mexico 87544



12/20/2004

Ms. Darlene Goering
Hazardous Waste Bureau
New Mexico Environment Department
2905 Rodeo Park Drive East, Building I
Santa Fe, NM 87505-6303



Dear Ms. Darlene Goering:

Reference: Request for Response Extension to New Mexico Environmental Department's (NMED) Notice of Approval with Modifications of Phase II Work Plan for the Department of Energy (DOE) Regarding the TA-73 Airport Landfill

The DOE requests a 6 month extension until June 30, 2005, for submitting our response to NMED's Notice of Approval with Modifications of the Phase II Work Plan for the TA-73 Airport Landfill. To insure that DOE has taken a hard look at reasonable alternatives for the remediation of the subject site, we have initiated the preparation of an environmental assessment (EA) in furtherance of the spirit of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This EA preparation process involves public participation opportunities both during the scoping of the impact analysis at the beginning of the compliance process to scope the issues and alternatives to be analyzed, and during a comment and review period on the draft EA.

A public scoping meeting for the EA was held on December 16, 2004; the scoping period ends on January 7, 2005. The purpose of a scoping meeting is to invite or solicit public comments on the scope of issues to be addressed and to identify significant issues related to the action alternatives to be analyzed in the EA. The EA will also consider the No Action alternative as required by NEPA. After the public scoping period ends in early January, the DOE will prepare the draft EA analysis. The DOE currently plans to issue the draft EA in April 2005 for a 14 to 30 day review and comment period (in accordance with the requirements of our NEPA implementing regulations); a public hearing on the draft document will be held during the comment period. Comments received on the draft document will then be used to complete the EA analysis and DOE will make a decision on whether to issue a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for one or more alternatives or whether to prepare an environmental impact statement.

We may seek clarifications to NMED's modifications #1 and #4 with regard to cover thickness, saturated hydraulic conductivity, and compaction at a later date but we will not know if these clarifications are needed until we have completed the EA analysis in late spring of 2005. Therefore, we would likely have a modified or new Phase II Work Plan ready by the end of June 2005.

Sincerely,

John C. Ordaz
Assistant Manager
Environmental Stewardship

