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NMED Hazardous
Waste Bureau

National Nuclear Security Administration
Los Alamos Site Office, MS A316
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Los Alamos, New Mexico 87544
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Date: November 1, 2007
Refer To: EP2007-0675

James P. Bearzi, Bureau Chief
Hazardous Waste Bureau
New Mexico Environment Department
2905 Rodeo Park Drive East, Building 1
Santa Fe, NM 87505-6303

Subject: Response to the New Mexico Environment Department's Direction for a Plan to Install and Monitor New Weirs and Other Sediment-Transport Mitigation Efforts in Los Alamos and Pueblo Canyons

Dear Mr. Bearzi:

This letter responds to the New Mexico Environment Department's (NMED's) requirement in the Approval with Direction of the Los Alamos and Pueblo (LA/P) Canyons Supplemental Investigation Report (the approval letter), dated August 30, 2007, for Los Alamos National Laboratory (the Laboratory) to submit a work plan for installing and monitoring of new weirs and other sediment-transport mitigation efforts in the LA/P watershed.

The Laboratory acknowledges NMED's direction in the approval letter to address stormwater transport in the canyons of sediments containing polychlorinated biphenyl contamination and the overall need to protect Los Alamos and Pueblo Canyons. At an October 18, 2007, meeting with representatives of NMED's Hazardous Waste and Surface Water Quality Bureaus, the Laboratory agreed to respond to the approval letter (due November 1, 2007) with a proposal to develop a work plan for NMED's review and approval. Development of the work plan will first require that we engage affected parties on a number of key issues discussed at our October 18, 2007, meeting. These issues include the following.

- Determine the design objective for control of contaminant transport when considering that its dominant mode is associated with the fine-grained (clay, silt, and fine sand) sediment fraction. This presents a substantial challenge in developing a successful design.

- Resolving with Los Alamos County issues of access and easements, agreements to build or conduct work on Los Alamos County land, and assessing potential impacts to buried infrastructure such as gas and sewer lines. The resolution of these issues may affect where mitigation activities are conducted and the nature of these activities.

- Determining to what extent the project should include actions to reduce stormwater flow magnitudes in the upper watershed to reduce the erosive nature of floods.

- Determining the importance of preventing or mitigating impacts to groundwater associated with ponding behind weirs or other structures that increase hydraulic head at the surface.

The Laboratory will work with NMED and other involved government entities, including Los Alamos County, San Ildefonso Pueblo, and representatives of the Buckman Direct Diversion project (City and County of Santa Fe), to address the technical issues described above and to help ensure that proposed remedies will ultimately meet the needs of the various entities. With this groundwork in place, the Laboratory will submit a work plan to NMED by February 29, 2008. The work plan will address the specific requirements outlined in the approval letter.

The Laboratory understands NMED's position that this process should move along at an appropriately expeditious pace to install and monitor appropriate sediment transport controls.

If you have any questions, please contact Danny Katzman at (505) 667-6333 (katzman@lanl.gov) or Mat Johansen at (505) 665-5046 (mjohansen@doeal.gov).

Sincerely,

Susan G. Stiger, Associate Director
Environmental Programs
Los Alamos National Laboratory

Sincerely,

David R. Gregory, Project Director
Environmental Operations
Los Alamos Site Office

SGS/DRG/PRH/DK:sm

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Max Baker, Los Alamos County
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