FOIA-2009-000350
5/18/2009

Morris, Alexander

From: FOIA-Central@hq.doe.gov
Sent: Sunday, May 17, 2009 11:58 AM
To: FOIA-Central
Subject: DOE Headquarters FOIA Request

Name: Ken LaGattuta

Organization: self

Address:

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2 HOURS SEARCH FREE,100 FREE PAGES

Phone:

FAX: --

Email:

Record Description:

I seek full access to the Water Quality Data Base (WQDB). The WQDB is an online record of measurements of the concentrations of contaminants detected in ground and surface waters at, and in the vicinity of, Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), in Los Alamos, NM. The WQDB contains data collected over the course of the past forty years, and is maintained exclusively by LANL professional staff.

In fact, until approximately the beginning of 2009, the entire WQDB was available to the public at www.wqdb.lanl.gov. However, the WQDB has been removed from public access by the present LANL contractor, Los Alamos National Security Limited Liability Company (LANS LLC).

It is claimed by LANS LLC that all of the data which was previously available to the public in the WQDB has been transferred to a new, publicly available, webtool called RACER. It is said by LANS LLC that RACER assembles data collected by LANL with data collected by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and by the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED).

Although data from LANL, EPA, and NMED does indeed now appear in RACER, it is unfortunately also true that LANL's WQDB data appears only in a severely truncated form. That is, RACER is the merest shadow of the WQDB.

Preferred Form or Format: webtool or website access

Type of Requester (if provided):

An individual seeking information for personal use and not for commercial use.

Fees and Fee Waivers:

I request a waiver or reduction of fees.

Waiver or Reduction of Fees Factors (if provided):

1.. The subject of the request: Whether the subject of the requested records concerns "the operations or activities of the government."

The requested record is a history of measured contamination detgected by, and at, the Los Alamos National Laboratory, in Los Alamos, NM.

2. The informative value of the information to be disclosed: Whether the disclosure is

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"likely to contribute" to an understanding of government operations or activities.

The data requested will assist me in my attempts to understand the history of recorded contamination of groundwater at the Los Alamos National Laboratory.

3. The contribution to an understanding by the general public of the subject likely to result from disclosure, taking into account your ability and intent to disseminate the information to the public in a form that can further understanding of the subject matter.

I am a trained scientist and member of the Northern New Mexico Citizens Advisory Board.

4. The significance of the contribution to public understanding: Whether the disclosure is likely to contribute "significantly" to public understanding of government operations or activities.

My past studies of contamination of groundwater at the Los Alamos National Laboratory has already contributed to improved public understanding of LANL's environmental stewardship.

5. The existence and magnitude of a commercial interest: Whether the requester has a commercial interest that would be furthered by the requested disclosure, and, if so

I have no commercial interest in the data requested.

6. The primary interest in disclosure: Whether the magnitude of the identified commercial interest of the requester is sufficiently large, in comparison with the public interest in disclosure, that disclosure is "primarily in the commercial interest of the requester."

the data requested will serve the public interest exclusively.

Expedited Processing:

I believe a compelling need exists to warrant expedited processing because there is:

an urgency to inform the public concerning actual or alleged Federal Government activity exists (this option available ONLY for requesters primarily engaged in disseminating information)

Specific Justification for Expedited Processing:

Clean up of so-called legacy wastes is ongoing at the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), with $160 million per year now being expended in this effort, and with an additional $212 million of "stimulus funding" having been allocated. In order to encourage public approval of this expensive clean up operation, the DOE has been attempting to increase public awareness of the clean up.

However, if the public is to appreciate the significance of the clean up underway at LANL, I believe that it is important that the public also be more aware of the history of contamination resulting from past LANL activities. With my background in science (I am a PhD physicist), and from my present perch on the Northern New Mexico Citizens Advisory Board, I think that I can supply this information to the public --- but, in order to do this, I need access to LANL's Water Quality Data Base.