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**Department of Energy  
Finding of No Significant Impact  
For Electrical Power System Upgrades  
at  
Los Alamos National Laboratory,  
Los Alamos, New Mexico**

**U. S. Department of Energy  
Los Alamos Area Office  
528 35th Street  
Los Alamos, NM 87544**

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**DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY**  
**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

**Electric Power Systems Upgrades at**

**At Los Alamos National Laboratory,**

**Los Alamos, New Mexico**

**FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:** The Environmental Assessment (EA) for *Electric Power System Upgrades at Los Alamos National Laboratory (DOE/EA-1247)* (attached) provides sufficient evidence and analysis to determine that a Finding Of No Significant Impact is appropriate for the Proposed Action, and Alternatives 1 and 2. The EA documents the evidence and analysis in the following chapters: 1. Purpose and Need for Agency Action; 2. Description of Alternatives; 3. Affected Environment; and 4. Environmental Consequences.

Analyses performed in the EA conclude that potential adverse effects of the Proposed Action and Alternatives 1 and 2, under normal conditions, would be minimal. Engineering and administrative controls or considerations that serve to lessen any potential for adverse environmental effects, have been incorporated as integral features of the Proposed Action and the actions described and analyzed for Alternatives 1 and 2. Examples of this type of mitigating feature include: the use of selective clearing of corridors in wooded areas; the use of existing disturbed areas and access roads for staging and moving equipment; and use of non-reflective materials in line and pole structure construction; placement of power pole structures to avoid archeological resources, as well as Federally-listed threatened or endangered species or their critical habitat; the design of the power pole structures to lessen potential injury or electrocution to nesting, roosting, or flying birds; the re-vegetation of cleared areas; and the use of Best Management Practices to prevent surface soil erosion and sediment migration controls where soil disturbances are unavoidable.

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Electrical Power System Upgrades

The EA considered the cumulative effects of the Proposed Action with past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions. The location of the new electric power line would be adjacent to one existing power line and near another existing power line at its crossing of the Rio Grande. Future foreseeable non-Department of Energy activities on land administered by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management may involve the construction and operation of another 115-kV line extending from the Norton Substation (where the new power line would originate) east towards Tesuque, New Mexico. No new activities are currently being contemplated on land administered by the U.S. Forest Service or on Department of Energy-administered land in the areas where the proposed new electric power line would be placed. The impacts from the construction and operation of the new power line and associated activities would be a minor contribution to the overall cumulative impacts.

**PREDECISIONAL DRAFT REVIEW & COMMENT:** On October 22, 1999, the Department of Energy invited review and comment on the predecisional draft EA from the State of New Mexico; four nearby American Indian Tribes: Cochiti, Jemez, Santa Clara and San Ildefonso (sometimes referred to as the four accord pueblos because each tribe has entered into an accord with the Department of Energy); and the Mescalero Apache Tribe. In addition, the Department of Energy made the predecisional draft EA available to the general public at the same time it was provided to the State and Tribes. The availability of the EA to the public was accomplished by placing it in the Department of Energy Public Reading Rooms located within the Los Alamos National Laboratory's Community Outreach Center and Reading Room, and in the University of New Mexico's Zimmerman Library in Albuquerque. The predecisional draft EA was also placed on the World Wide Web Computer Internet System. Additionally, over 50 local stakeholder groups and individuals, which have identified themselves as interested parties with regards to LANL activities, were notified by letter of the availability of the predecisional draft on October 26, 1999. Copies of the EA were provided to all interested parties for their review upon their requests. The review and comment period was 22 days long and ended on November 12, 1999, although several comments were received after that time period had lapsed. Six separate parties provided comments to the draft

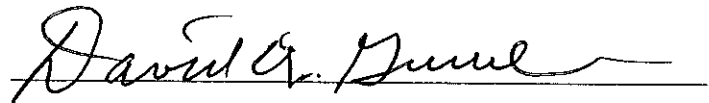
EA. Comments were received from: the Sangre de Cristo Audubon Society; Southwest Energy Institute; Althouse, Inc.; Mr. Tom Ribe; the Pajarito Group, Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club; and the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Bandelier National Monument. These sets of comments were addressed in the Final EA, individual responses to the comments were prepared by LAAO, and these responses were sent to the respondents together with copies of the Final EA.

**AGENCY CONSULTATIONS:** No likely adverse effects to Federally-listed threatened and endangered species or their habitat are anticipated during construction actions or operation of the antenna. Similarly, there are no known historic, prehistoric or other cultural resources that would likely be affected. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has concurred on DOE's determination that the proposed action "may affect but is not likely to adversely affect" the Mexican spotted owl, the bald eagle, the whooping crane and the southwestern willow flycatcher or their critical habitat. The State Historic Preservation Officer has concurred on the DOE's determination that there are no anticipated effects to historic or prehistoric cultural resources; these concurrences completed the DOE's compliance requirements under the Endangered Species Act and the National Historic Preservation Act. The U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Taos Field Office and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Santa Fe National Forest participated in the preparation of the subject EA as Cooperating Agencies (as defined in 40 CFR 1501.6). No other agency consultations were identified as being required for the preparation of the EA with regards to compliance with environmental laws and regulations.

**FINDING:** The United States Department of Energy finds that there would be no significant impact from proceeding with its proposal to construct and operate a new electric power line and associated actions at Los Alamos National Laboratory as described in the Proposed Action and Alternatives 1 and 2. This finding is based on the EA that analyzes the consequences of the relevant issues of environmental concern. The Department of Energy makes this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 [42 U.S.C.

4321 et seq.], the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act [40 CFR 1500] and the Department of Energy National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Procedures [10 CFR 1021]. Therefore, no environmental impact statement is required for this proposal.

Signed in Los Alamos, New Mexico this 9<sup>th</sup> day of March 9, 2000,  
2000.



David A. Gurulé, P.E.  
Area Manager  
Los Alamos Area Office

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: For further information on this proposal, this Finding Of No Significant Impact (FONSI), or the Department of Energy's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review program concerning proposals at Los Alamos National Laboratory, please contact:

Elizabeth Withers, NEPA Compliance Officer

Los Alamos Area Office

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Los Alamos NM 87544

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Copies of this FONSI (with the Environmental Assessment attached) will be made available for public review at the DOE Public Reading Room within the Los Alamos National Laboratory Community Relations Office, 1619 Central Avenue, Los Alamos, New Mexico, 87544 at (505) 665-4400 or (800) 508-4400. Copies will also be made available within the DOE Public Reading Room at the Zimmerman Library, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 87131 at (505) 277-5441.