

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
for the
SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
FOR THE
WILDFIRE HAZARD REDUCTION
AND
FOREST HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM
AT
LOS ALAMOS NATIONAL LABORATORY, LOS ALAMOS, NEW
MEXICO

July 2019

RESPONSIBLE AGENCY: United States Department of Energy National Nuclear Security Administration

ACTION: Issuance of Mitigated Finding of No Significant Impact for the *Supplemental Environmental Assessment for the Wildfire Hazard Reduction and Forest Health Improvement Program at Los Alamos National Laboratory, Los Alamos, New Mexico* (SEA)

SUMMARY: Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) located in north-central New Mexico is a multidisciplinary, multipurpose research institution owned and managed by the United States Department of Energy's (DOE) National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), Los Alamos Field Office. NNSA has prepared an SEA to the 2000 *Environmental Assessment for the Wildfire Hazard Reduction and Forest Health Improvement Program at Los Alamos National Laboratory, Los Alamos, New Mexico* (2000 EA) (DOE 2000c). The SEA augments the 2000 EA by evaluating potential impacts associated with the implementation of new LANL strategies for forest health and wildland fire risk reduction, changes to the affected environment since 2000, and some aspects of global climate change on the northern New Mexico environment. To respond to continued wildland fire risk, NNSA is focused on mitigating the adverse effects of wildland fire through fuels reduction treatments, training, additional personnel and equipment and through collaborative partnerships with surrounding land management agencies. To this end DOE instituted a Wildland Fire Mitigation Working Group that subsequently developed an integrated *Wildland Fire Mitigation and Forest Health Plan* (Plan). The Plan proposes and describes strategies and actions for fire risk reduction efforts and is the subject of the SEA analysis.

PURPOSE AND NEED: Forest conditions have changed since the publication of the 2000 EA, and wildland fire continues to pose a significant risk to LANL operations. NNSA needs to address and reduce wildland fire risk for the protection of LANL operations, natural resources, and the

safety of LANL workers and nearby residents.

PROPOSED ACTION: DOE/NNSA proposes to implement the Plan's strategies and actions to manage wildland fire risks to LANL operations. The strategies and actions are described as forest management treatments that mitigate potential wildland fire and promote forest health. The Plan also defines strategies and actions to ensure the desired final forest conditions for LANL's open spaces.

The Proposed Action described in this SEA differs from the 2000 EA by more aggressive tree thinning encouraging an overall forest mosaic that includes groups of trees of various sizes and ages, and grassy open spaces. The Plan is applicable to all LANL lands, which is a change from the limit of 10,000 acres analyzed in the 2000 EA. Additionally, there is an increased emphasis on soil stability by promoting more ground cover vegetation in open space.

NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE: The No Action Alternative for this SEA is a continuation of the wildland fire program as currently implemented.

SEA REVIEW AND COMMENT: The State of New Mexico, Northern New Mexico Citizens Advisory Board, local governments (City of Espanola, Los Alamos County, and City of Santa Fe) and potentially affected Tribal governments were notified about the proposed project by mail March 20, 2019, in accordance with 10 CFR 1021.301. Tribal governments that were sent letters were Pueblo de Cochiti, Pueblo de San Ildefonso, Pueblo of Jemez, and Santa Clara Pueblo. The draft SEA was available for a 14 day review and comment period from April 29 to May 13, 2019 via distribution to the same recipients of the notification letter; placed in the LANL Public Reading Room located at 94 Cities of Gold Road, Pojoaque, New Mexico; distributed to over 8,000 recipients on the LANL GovDelivery listserve; and posted on the DOE National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) website: <http://energy.gov/nepa/nepa-documents/environmental-assessments-ea>. No comments on the draft SEA were received.

DETERMINATION: NNSA has reviewed the final SEA and determined that the analysis meets President's Council on Environmental Quality and DOE NEPA regulations and adequately assesses and discloses the potential environmental impacts of the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative. Based on the analysis presented in the SEA, lack of public comments, and the Mitigation Action Plan (as identified in Section 4.0 of the SEA) that requires:

- **Standards for new unpaved roads**
 - Revise the LANL Engineering Standards to include standards for new unpaved roads that would be more resilient to damage from storm water.
- **Fire road stormwater plan**
 - Inspect, propose, and prioritize improvements to fire roads that would reduce stormwater erosion. Closure or replacement of fire and other unimproved roads may be recommended. Prioritized projects would be incorporated into existing stormwater work planning.
- **Cultural site monitoring and treatment near fire roads**
 - For cultural sites adjacent to fire roads and firebreaks, identify additional monitoring requirements and treatments as needed, and develop a specific procedure to address cultural site monitoring.

- **Annual operating plan**
 - Development and implementation of an Annual Operating Plan for fuels mitigation and forest health actions.
- **Pesticide Discharge Management Plan update**
 - Review and update as necessary, the LANL Pesticide Discharge Management Plan to prohibit broadcast herbicide use in floodplains or Jemez Mountains Salamander habitat.
- **Invasive Species Best Management Practices**
 - Development or adoption of a LANL invasive species best management practices document.
- **Fuels management and mastication research**
 - Prepare a cost benefit white paper on fuels reduction options for LANL.
 - Incorporate experiments, monitoring, and adaptive management into mastication as feasible, and contribute to scientific literature on mastication.

NNSA has determined there would be no significant impact from proceeding with the Proposed Action. Therefore, NNSA is issuing this Finding of No Significant Impact pursuant to the *National Environmental Policy Act* of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 CFR 1500), and DOE NEPA Implementing Procedures (10 CFR 1021).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For further information on this SEA, contact Kristen Dors, NEPA Compliance Manager, U.S. Department of Energy, National Nuclear Security Administration, Los Alamos Field Office, 3747 W. Jemez Road, Los Alamos, NM 87544 or via email at NA-LA_NCO@nnsa.doe.gov.

For further information on the DOE NEPA process contact the Office of NEPA Policy and Compliance (GC-54), U.S. Department of Energy, 100 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington DC 20585; telephone (202) 586-4600 or (800) 472-2756.



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7-17-19

Date