

## **Record of Decision for the Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement for Continued Operation of the Los Alamos National Laboratory**

**National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA)**

**Department of Energy, Office of Environmental Management (DOE-EM)**

### **PUBLIC AVAILABILITY AND CONTACT INFORMATION:**

- This record of decision (ROD), the *Site-wide Environmental Impact Statement for Continued Operation of the Los Alamos National Laboratory* (LANL SWEIS), and related *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA) documents at:
  - <https://www.energy.gov/nepa/doe-eis-0552-site-wide-environmental-impact-statement-continued-operation-los-alamos-national-0>
  - <https://www.energy.gov/nnsa/nnsa-nepa-reading-room>

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### **Background**

The NNSA is responsible for meeting the national security requirements established by the President and Congress to maintain and enhance the safety, security, reliability, and performance of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile. The continued operation of LANL is critical to NNSA's Stockpile Stewardship/Weapons mission, to prevent the spread and use of nuclear weapons worldwide, and to many other areas that may impact national security and global stability.

The DOE-EM is responsible for the continued legacy cleanup and environmental remediation of the LANL site in compliance with the 2016 *Compliance Order on Consent between the State of New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) and the DOE*, as modified in 2024 (2016 Consent Order, as modified).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The 2016 *Compliance Order on Consent between the State of New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) and the DOE* (as modified) (2016 Consent Order as modified) defines a process to establish annual milestones to achieve

The NEPA process for the SWEIS began with publication of the Notice of Intent and announcement of public scoping in the *Federal Register* (FR) on August 19, 2022 (87 FR 51083). During scoping, NNSA held online public meetings on September 13 and 14, 2022, to discuss the SWEIS and to receive comments on the scope of the analysis. In addition to the online scoping meetings, NNSA provided other methods (i.e., email, postal mail) for submitting comments on the SWEIS scope. Following scoping, DOE issued a Notice of Availability on January 10, 2025 (90 FR 1991), announcing a 60-day public review and comment period on the Draft LANL SWEIS. In response to requests, NNSA extended the comment period to April 10, 2025 (90 FR 11539). NNSA held hearings to receive comments and to present a summary of the Draft LANL SWEIS in Santa Fe (an afternoon and evening session), Española, and Los Alamos on February 11, 12, and 13, 2025, respectively. The hearings in Santa Fe and Los Alamos were held in person and online to expand the public involvement potential. NNSA considered comments received during the 90-day comment period on the Draft LANL SWEIS in the preparation of the Final LANL SWEIS. The Final SWEIS includes a Comment-Response Document (Appendix N) that presents summaries of the key topics raised during the comment period and DOE/NNSA responses.

The Draft SWEIS was prepared in accordance with Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500–1508) and DOE NEPA implementing procedures (10 CFR Part 1021). After preparation of the Draft SWEIS, the CEQ NEPA regulations were rescinded and DOE revised 10 CFR Part 1021 and issued new DOE Implementing Procedures.<sup>2</sup> The Final SWEIS and this ROD are compliant with NEPA and the current DOE NEPA Implementing Procedures.

## **Summary of Alternatives and Potential Environmental Impacts**

The three alternatives are described in Chapter 3 of the LANL SWEIS and summarized below. The No-Action Alternative reflects continuation of current, ongoing operations and implementation of approved projects (those with current NEPA coverage). The No-Action Alternative includes decontamination, decommissioning, and demolition (DD&D) of aging or excess facilities and the continued legacy cleanup and environmental remediation in compliance with the 2016 Consent Order (as modified). The Modernized Operations Alternative includes the scope of the No-Action Alternative plus additional modernization activities, including: (1) construction of replacement facilities; (2) upgrades to existing facilities, utilities, and infrastructure; and (3) DD&D of additional facilities. Under this alternative, NNSA would replace facilities that are approaching their end of life, upgrade facilities to extend their lifetimes, and improve work environments to enable NNSA to continue to meet operational requirements (e.g., offices, warehouses, solar arrays, Los Alamos Canyon bridge replacement). The Expanded Operations Alternative includes the actions proposed under the Modernized Operations Alternative plus actions that would expand operations and missions to respond to future national security challenges and meet increasing requirements. This alternative includes construction and

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desired remediation end states. Information on the current Consent Order and Settlement Agreement can be found : <https://www.env.nm.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2016/05/LANL-Consent-Order-June-2016.pdf> and <https://www.env.nm.gov/hazardous-waste/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2024/09/NzcxOWIxNWEzOWE1OTZiMjcxNTcwNTY1YV8xNjc5MzE.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2025-06/2025-06-30-DOE-NEPA-Procedures.pdf>

operation of new facilities that would expand capabilities at LANL beyond those that currently exist (e.g., future supercomputer infrastructure, one or more microreactors, staging facilities for transuranic (TRU) waste).

In this ROD, NNSA intends to proceed with implementation of all the projects and activities described in the SWEIS for the Modernized Operations Alternative and the Expanded Operations Alternative.

Brief summaries of the potential environmental impacts are provided below for each resource area for the Expanded Operations Alternative:

Land Use: There would be 1,041 acres of permanent land disturbance (95 acres of facilities, 974 acres of infrastructure, and 28 acres recovered through DD&D). The site-wide development footprint would be 4,447 acres, an increase of 31 percent over the No-Action Alternative. Operations would be consistent with current land use designations and historic uses of LANL land.

Visual Resources: Construction activities would result in additional temporary changes to the visual appearance due to the presence of cranes, construction equipment, demolition, facilities in various stages of construction/DD&D, and increased dust. Most planning areas would retain their existing visual resource management classification.

Geology and Soils: Implementation of the alternative would disturb about 806 acres of previously undisturbed soil (above the No-Action Alternative). Ongoing remediation efforts would continue to improve soil conditions at LANL. The Laboratory would apply additional wildland fire risk reduction treatments to certain high-risk areas, which would have the potential to destabilize soils and increase erosion and runoff. No known geologic resources would be adversely affected by construction and operations.

Water Resources: There would be approximately 126 acres of new impervious surface from the new facilities and infrastructure projects. Ongoing remediation efforts would continue to improve groundwater conditions at LANL.

Air Quality: Fugitive dust would be generated during clearing, grading, and other earth-moving activities. Construction emissions would exceed the *de minimis* thresholds for particulate matter with a diameter of 10 micrometers or less (PM<sub>10</sub>) without mitigation measures. The Laboratory would use measures to maintain emissions below the threshold. Radiological emissions during operations would increase by approximately 800 curies per year above the No-Action Alternative. Potential health effects of radiological emissions are presented below under Human Health and Safety.

Noise: No noise regulations would be exceeded. Impacts from an 8-percent increase in the workforce above the No-Action Alternative would result in a negligible increase in traffic noise.

Ecological Resources: Twenty-three projects would potentially occur in undeveloped habitat for the Federally-threatened Mexican spotted owl. Each project would require review/consultation in accordance with Section 7 of the *Endangered Species Act* with the United States Fish and Wildlife

Service (USFWS). In addition, some infrastructure activities would traverse core and buffer habitat for the federally endangered Jemez Mountains salamander and would require USFWS consultation. Thinning or clearing of forest land to reduce the risk of wildfire also could potentially affect these species.

Management actions to reduce invasive feral cattle would reduce ongoing impacts, such as trampling and overgrazing of riparian vegetation, degradation of water quality from cattle defecations, and increased soil erosion from degradation of vegetation cover.

Human Health and Safety: The radiation dose to the maximally exposed individual would increase by less than 1 millirem per year compared to the No-Action Alternative. The radiation dose to the collective population around LANL would increase by less than 1 person-rem per year compared to the No-Action Alternative. Any radiation dose received by a member of the public would be small and well below regulatory limits. The collective worker dose would increase by 28 person-rem compared to the No-Action Alternative. The risk of a latent cancer fatality (LCF) to all LANL workers would remain less than 1 per year (0.42).

Cultural and Paleontological Resources: Thirty-three known cultural resources could be physically impacted; 19 are considered significant and would require mitigation prior to construction. NNSA would continue to manage activities in accordance with the Programmatic Agreement among DOE, NNSA, the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. This agreement was developed through previous consultation under Section 106 of the *National Historic Preservation Act* and is supported by the LANL Cultural Resources Management Plan. Together, they provide the framework for cultural resources management at LANL, addressing the potential effects of its activities on archaeological sites and historical facilities.

Socioeconomics and Demographics: Implementation of the alternative would add an average of 710 construction/DD&D workers per year above the No-Action Alternative. The total workforce at LANL would be about 1,485 more than the No-Action Alternative. Due to the low potential for impacts to the population in the region of influence, steady-state operations would not be expected to affect housing, schools, or community services.

Infrastructure: The existing and approved infrastructure (e.g., potable water, sanitary sewer, electricity) is adequate to support the construction and operation related to the Expanded Operations Alternative. This assertion assumes implementation of the Electric Capacity Upgrade (EPCU) project, which underwent its own NEPA review, including publication of a finding of no significant impact, and was included in the No-Action Alternative in the LANL SWEIS.

Waste Management: Compared to the No-Action Alternative, the generation of TRU waste would increase by about 1 percent; low-level radioactive waste (LLW)/mixed LLW (LLW/MLLW) would increase by about 16 percent; and hazardous waste would increase by about 10 percent. The existing (onsite and offsite) waste management facilities have capacity to adequately manage the increased waste volumes.

Traffic and Transportation: The impacts to traffic and local transportation would not be notably different than under the No-Action Alternative.

Radiological and Hazardous Material Transportation: Compared to the No-Action Alternative, the average annual number of TRU waste shipments would increase by about 2.0 percent; LLW/MLLW would increase by 15 percent; and annual offsite shipments of hazardous waste would increase by about 10 percent. The increase in transportation would yield a cumulative dose to transportation crews of 1,401 person-rem per year, with an associated risk of 0.84 LCF per year. For the entire population along the potential transportation route, the cumulative collective dose would be 224 person-rem, with an associated risk of 0.135 LCF per year. Potential doses to the public and workers would be well below regulatory limits.

Accidents: Accident risks would be small. Less than 1 (0.000282) LCF would be expected annually.

Intentional Destructive Acts: Potential impacts from intentional destructive acts may be similar to, or could exceed, the range of potential accident impacts presented in the LANL SWEIS. Analysis of these potential impacts is presented in a classified appendix.

## **Decision**

LANL is critical to the Stockpile Stewardship/Weapons mission; Global Security Program; and the Nation's excellence in science, technology, and engineering. NNSA has concluded that the Expanded Operations Alternative would best fulfill its statutory missions and responsibilities. Therefore, NNSA has decided to fully implement the Expanded Operations Alternative. This decision would include DOE's continued legacy cleanup and environmental remediation of the LANL site in compliance with the 2016 Consent Order, as modified.

## **Basis for Decision**

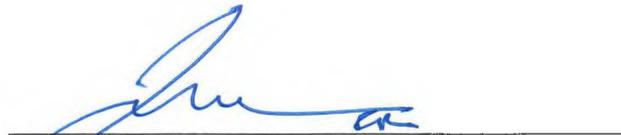
The LANL SWEIS provides information on the potential environmental impacts and options for satisfying the purpose and need for the agency's action. NNSA prepares cost, schedule, and technical analyses separately, and NNSA has considered all relevant factors in the preparation of this ROD. In addition to environmental information, NNSA also considered public and agency comments, statutory responsibilities, strategic objectives, technical needs, safeguards and security, costs, and schedule in its decision-making.

## **Mitigation Measures**

The Laboratory currently operates under the *Mitigation Action Plan for Los Alamos National Laboratory Operations* (LANL MAP); last published in 2020. The LANL MAP provides a comprehensive list of all current mitigations identified during preparation of the 2008 LANL SWEIS and other LANL NEPA documents. The LANL MAP explains how, before implementing any of the alternatives, certain measures must be planned and implemented to mitigate adverse environmental impacts. In some resource areas (e.g., nonradiological air quality) evaluated in the SWEIS and some projects with separate NEPA documents (e.g., EPCU Final Environmental

Assessment [EA] and DOE's Final Chromium Interim Measure and Final Remedy EA), potential adverse impacts would require additional mitigation measures beyond those required by regulation or achieved through design features or best management practices. DOE/NNSA will prepare a new LANL MAP to include such mitigation measures prior to implementation of the selected projects. The new LANL MAP will also include any existing mitigation commitments. Potential mitigation measures are identified in Section 5.16.2 of the Final LANL SWEIS.

Signed in Washington, D.C. this 17<sup>th</sup> day of March 2026.



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