



May 7, 2001

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**Re: LANL Hazardous Waste Permit**

Dear Mr. Kieling:

I am very concerned as a downwind/downstream citizen of the public health impact from what the U.S. Department of Energy and LANL are proposing in this 10 year permit at this final hearing.

My concerns center mostly around air and water quality. Not only must we deal with the clean up from the unsafe storage from 1943 - and the repeated delays in even the authorized clean up - but current and future contamination from proposed open burning of toxic waste.

The effects of contamination in daily inhaled toxic air and from daily ingestion of toxic water may not be immediate and dramatic but are nonetheless dangerous to the health of individuals and communities. This weakens the capability of New Mexico to sustain a viable economic base since much of that depends on services, industries and tourism. It also is a long-term effect.

Clean up must deal with over 21 million cubic feet of radioactive, hazardous and toxic wastes. These rest in unlined pits, trenches and shafts dug into the volcanic tuff subject to erosion and drainage into the water supply for the most fertile and populated area of the state.

I have attended environmental hearings for the last 15 years. Now it is difficult to find credibility in the repeated technical presentations I have heard since so much is promised (fixes, remedies, excuses) and yet there is persistent bypassing of those who urge safety for their communities and their peoples.



Groundwater monitoring that is promised is not to be trusted for the installation, capability and reliability since 1998 does not meet the promises. The Rio Grande River will be more and more polluted with waste from LANL just as more and more communities will be drawing from it. The long range view is very threatening.

Protests of the open air burning have been consistent for years yet the alternatives to this process (notably confined burn facilities) are not seriously considered.

Human health must be viewed as a natural resource – for the state and the nation. When our environment is wasted, human health suffers. And, all this at great cost because it was not sufficiently valued in the first place.

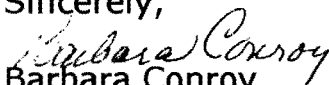
I have two overarching concerns. One is the lack of transparency and accountability of both DOE and LANL. I see this particularly in the limited involvement of those affected by these decisions. Participation has indeed improved somewhat in the last 15 years and this hearing is more comprehensive and open than most. But, it still is nowhere enough.

Solid participation relies on good information readily available. Without a print repository of documents as well as online, involvement is limited by geography and access. Earlier drafts indicated the value of this, but now it is missing.

The second overarching concern is the need for better emergency preparedness. With everything from the changing climate to attack possible, LANL must have better systems in place than it did during the Cerro Gordo fire. Media reports did not reveal all that was missing in the response to that and to the many "incidents" that have been reported as safety and security issues. Again, accountability is diminished in the background.

I urge you please to address the various issues raised in these hearings. We live here and deserve acknowledgement and response. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

  
Barbara Conroy  
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