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**Department of Energy  
National Nuclear Security Administration  
Finding of No Significant Impact  
for the  
Proposed Issuance of an Easement to the Public Service Company of  
New Mexico for the Construction and Operation of a 12-inch Natural  
Gas Pipeline Within Los Alamos National Laboratory,  
Los Alamos, New Mexico**

**U. S. Department of Energy  
National Nuclear Security Administration  
Office of Los Alamos Site Operations  
528 35th Street  
Los Alamos, NM 87544**

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AUG 08 2002

**DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY,**  
**NATIONAL NUCLEAR SECURITY ADMINISTRATION**  
**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

**Proposed Issuance of an Easement to the Public Service Company of New Mexico**  
**for the Construction and Operation of a 12-inch Natural Gas Pipeline within**  
**Los Alamos National Laboratory, Los Alamos, New Mexico**

**FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:** The *Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Proposed Issuance of an Easement to Public Service Company of New Mexico for the Construction and Operation of a 12-inch Natural Gas Pipeline within Los Alamos National Laboratory, Los Alamos, New Mexico (DOE/EA-1409)* (attached) provides sufficient evidence and analysis to determine that a Finding Of No Significant Impact is appropriate for the Proposed Action. The EA documents the evidence and analysis in the following chapters: 1. Purpose and Need; 2. Description of Alternatives; and, 3. Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences. A Floodplains and Wetlands Assessment is included as Appendix A of the document. As required by 10 CFR Part 1022.15, a Floodplain and Wetland Statement of Finding is attached to this Finding of No Significant Impact.

Analyses performed in the EA allow NNSA to conclude that potential adverse effects of the Proposed Action, 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. Examples of this type of mitigating feature include: the use of a previously disturbed site for use as a project staging area and, to the extent practicable, for the pipeline installation; the use of Best Management Practices to prevent surface soil erosion and sediment migration where soil disturbance is unavoidable; the use of standard dust suppression measures during construction to minimize the generation of fugitive dust; and the use of directional drilling to install the pipeline beneath the Los Alamos Canyon streambed.

The EA considered the cumulative effects of the Proposed Action with past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions. The impacts from the construction and operation of the new gas pipeline would be a minor contribution to the overall cumulative impacts.

**PREDECISIONAL DRAFT REVIEW & COMMENT:** On June 25, 2002, the Department of Energy, National Nuclear Security Administration invited review and comment on the

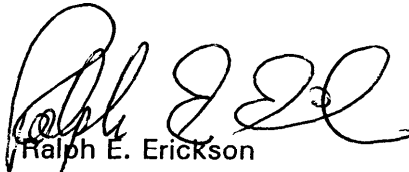
predecisional draft EA from the State of New Mexico; four nearby American Indian Tribes: Cochiti, Jemez, Santa Clara and San Ildefonso (sometimes referred to as the four Accord Pueblos because each tribe has entered into an accord with the Department of Energy); the Pueblo of Acoma; and the Mescalero Apache Tribe. At their requests, the four Accord Pueblos were briefed individually about the proposal. The National Nuclear Security Administration also made the predecisional draft EA available to the general public at the same time it was provided to the State and Tribes for review and comment. The general 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. Additionally, over 30 local stakeholder groups and individuals that have identified themselves as interested parties with regards to LANL activities were notified by letter of the availability of the predecisional draft on June 25, 2002. Notice of the availability of the EA for review was also published in three local newspapers. Copies of the EA were provided to all interested parties for their review. The review and comment period was 21 days long and ended on July 16, 2002.

Two parties provided comments to the draft EA: the State of New Mexico and the Sangre de Cristo Audubon Society. None of the local pueblos and tribes offered comment on the predecisional draft EA. Comments received were addressed through providing individual comment response letters and copies of the Final EA have been sent to the respondents. No changes to the final EA were made as a result of the comments received on the draft document.

**AGENCY CONSULTATIONS:** The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) was engaged in informal consultation under the provisions of section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, as amended. The Service concurred with NNSA's determination that the proposed natural gas pipeline installation and operation may affect but is not likely to adversely affect individual Mexican spotted owls or their critical habitat. Cultural resource inventories of Los Alamos Canyon have located several cultural resource sites within 250 feet of the proposed gas line corridor. However, pipeline construction would be monitored to ensure that these sites are avoided. At two locations the proposed gas line corridor would cross a historic trail that was bladed over during the mid-1940s. The resulting unimproved road has been used since for vehicle access into the canyon. Therefore, the trail no longer has historical context integrity and is not considered to be a Historic Property; it is ineligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. NNSA is not required to engage in consultation with the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Officer according to section 106 requirements under the National Historic Preservation Act.

**FINDING:** The United States Department of Energy, National Nuclear Security Administration finds that there would be no significant impact from proceeding with its proposal to grant an easement to the Public Service Company of New Mexico for the purpose of constructing and operating a new 12-inch natural gas pipeline within Los Alamos Canyon at Los Alamos National Laboratory as described in the Proposed Action of the subject Environmental Assessment. This finding is based on the Environmental Assessment, which analyzes the consequences of the relevant issues of environmental concern. The Department of Energy, National Nuclear Security Administration makes this Finding of No Significant Impact pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 [42 U.S.C. 4321 etseq.], the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act [40 CFR 1 500] and the Department of Energy National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Procedures [IO CFR 1021]. Therefore, no environmental impact statement is required for this proposal.

Signed in Los Alamos, New Mexico this 30th day of July, 2002.



Ralph E. Erickson

Director

Office of Los Alamos Site Operations

**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**

**Office of Los Alamos Site Operations**

**U.S. Department of Energy**

**National Nuclear Security Administration**

**528 35th Street**

**Los Alamos NM 87544**

**(505) 667-8690**

**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.**

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY**

**National Nuclear Security Administration  
Office of Los Alamos Site Operations**

Floodplain and Wetland Statement of Finding for the Proposed Issuance of an Easement to Public Service company of New Mexico for the Construction and Operation of a 12-inch Natural Gas Pipeline within Los Alamos National Laboratory, Los Alamos, New Mexico

AGENCY: National Nuclear Security Administration, Office of Los Alamos Site Operations, U.S. Department of Energy.

ACTION: Floodplain and Wetland Statement of Finding.

SUMMARY: This Floodplain Statement of Findings is for the installation and operation of a natural gas pipeline about three miles in length within Los Alamos Canyon at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). Most of the pipeline easement would be adjacent to the Los Alamos Canyon floodplain and there would be no involvement with wetland areas (see Figure 1). In accordance with 10 CFR Part 1022, the Department of Energy (DOE), National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) Office of Los Alamos Site Operations has prepared a floodplain/wetland assessment and will perform this proposed action in a manner so as to avoid or minimize potential harm to or within the affected floodplain.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Elizabeth Withers, U.S. Department of Energy, National Nuclear Security Administration, Office of Los Alamos Site Operations, 528 35<sup>th</sup> Street, Los Alamos, NM 87544. Telephone (505) 667-8690, of facsimile (505) 667-9998; or electronic address: ewithers@doeal.gov. For Further

Information on General DOE Floodplain Environmental Review Requirements, contact:  
Carol M. Borgstrom, Director, Office of NEPA Policy and Compliance, EH-42,  
Department of Energy, 100 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington DC 205850119.  
Telephone (202) 586-4600 or (800) 472-2756, facsimile (202) 586-703 1.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** In accordance with DOE regulations for compliance with floodplain and wetlands environmental review requirements (10 CFR Part 1022), NNSA prepared a floodplain/wetland assessment for this action. The NNSA the floodplain/wetland assessment document as part an Environmental Assessment issued on June 25, 2002 by the NNSA. No comments were received on the proposed floodplain action.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** NNSA considered a proposal for installing about a three mile-long, 12-inch, natural gas pipeline within Los Alamos Canyon at Los Alamos National Laboratory. This new pipeline would replace a smaller-diameter pipeline located under State Road 502 (also locally called the Main Hill Road). Construction of the pipeline is expected to commence in 2003 and be completed in about 6 months.

**ALTERNATIVES:** Alternative routes for the pipeline were considered but eliminated from future consideration. A combination of site factors were considered that lead to the identification of the proposed route as being the least disruptive to existing environmental resources in the area. Los Alamos Canyon is a disturbed area that has been used for LANL operational activities for nearly 60 years.

FLOODPLAIN IMPACTS: The proposed action would have the potential for minimal impacts the floodplain. Should a rain event occur during this activity, there may be some sediment movement down canyon because of the loosened condition of the soil from the clearing and construction activities.

FLOODPLAIN MITIGATION: Placement of Best Management Practices (such as silt fences, straw bales or wattles, or wooden or rock structures to slow down water runoff and run-on at cleared sites) at the construction area and post-construction reseeding and re-vegetation along the sides of the roadway will minimize soil disturbance and reduce or prevent the potential for soil erosion. The pipeline will be directionally drilled beneath the Los Alamos Canyon steam bed that downstream flow and function of the floodplain will not be impeded. No debris will be left at the work site. No vehicle maintenance or fueling within 100 feet of the floodplain would occur. Any sediment movement from the site would be short term and temporary.



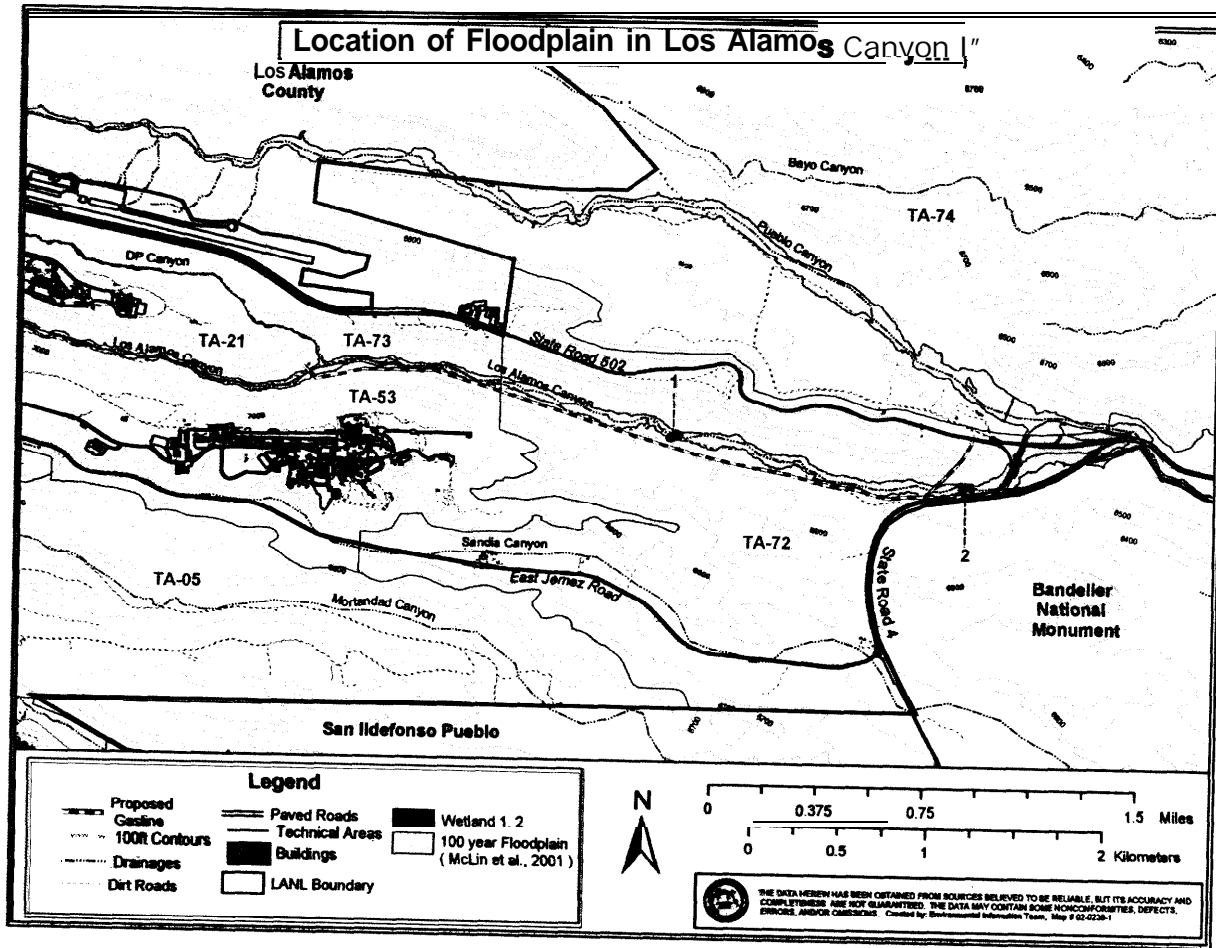


Figure 1. Extent of floodplains and wetlands within the project area.