

DOE/EA-1422

**SITE WIDE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SWEA) for SANDIA
NATIONAL LABORATORIES/CALIFORNIA**

**Finding of No Significant Impact
(FONSI)
MARCH 2003**

AGENCY: NNSA

ACTION: Finding of No Significant Impact

SUMMARY: The NNSA has prepared a Site Wide Environmental Assessment (SWEA), DOE/EA-1422, to assess environmental impacts associated with the continued operation of Sandia National Laboratories/California (SNL/CA), and associated planned activities to support this work. Alternatives considered in the review process included: the No Action Alternative; the Planned Utilization and Operations Alternative, and the Maximum Operations Alternative.

Based on the analysis in the EA, DOE has determined that the three alternatives are not a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of the *National Environmental Policy Act of 1969* (NEPA), 42 U.S.C. 4321, et seq. Therefore, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required.

ADDRESSES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

Single copies of the EA and further information about the alternatives are available from:

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PURPOSE AND NEED: The NNSA needs to continue to meet its responsibilities for national security (including homeland security), energy resources, environmental quality, and science at SNL/CA.

BACKGROUND: SNL is one of three national laboratories that support the NNSA's statutory responsibilities for nuclear weapons research and design, development of energy technologies, and basic

scientific research. SNL is composed of four geographically separated facilities: Albuquerque, New Mexico; Tonopah, Nevada; Kauai, Hawaii; and Livermore, California (SNL/CA). This SWEA focuses on SNL/CA.

In February 2002, the NNSA identified the need to update baseline information and impact analysis to support the current SNL/CA site planning. To meet this need, NNSA decided to prepare a SWEA and separate the analysis of SNL/CA operations from those at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL). The previous site-wide analysis of SNL/CA operations was contained in a joint 1992 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)/ Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prepared for the two sites. At the time that the SWEA decision was made, a revision date for the LLNL EIS/EIR had not been set. The LLNL sitewide EIS/EIR has since been proposed for 2003. The NNSA recognizes and understands that the SNL/CA SWEA will provide valuable information for use in the LLNL NEPA process and analysis of cumulative impacts. NNSA also recognizes that waiting for the next LLNL site-wide EIS (SWEIS) would delay planned actions at SNL/CA and place unnecessary burdens on the NNSA/ Sandia Site Office (SSO) NEPA compliance and decision-making process. As a result, the NNSA decided to continue with preparation of a SWEA to provide a thorough environmental analysis and description of impacts for ongoing and proposed SNL/CA operations.

PREDECISIONAL DRAFT REVIEW AND COMMENT: A Notice of Intent (NOI) was published in the Federal Register on February 4, 2002. The NOI gave the date and times of the public scoping meetings that were held at the Lawrence Livermore Visitors Center Auditorium on February 20, 2002 from 1-4 PM and 6-9PM. A press release was issued and notices were placed in Livermore area newspapers for the scoping meetings. The scoping period ended on March 5, 2002 with no comments received from federal, state, local, or public entities. The Predecisional Draft EA was released on October 28, 2002. Public meetings were held on November 20, 2002 to take comments on the draft EA. No comments were received at this meeting. One set of written comments was received from the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Francisco Bay Region. The comment period ended on November 30, 2002.

AGENCY CONSULTATION: The Predecisional Draft SWEA was distributed to federal, state, and local governmental agencies and private groups and individuals that could have an interest in the alternatives under consideration or could potentially be affected. Consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, as amended, is ongoing with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

ALTERNATIVES ANALYZED: The EA discussed three alternatives including the No Action Alternative.

No-Action Alternative.

The No Action Alternative includes continuing and historical research and development operations and related activities of SNL/CA. Specifically, the No Action Alternative includes:

- continuing the level of activity at 10 existing facilities/groups
- continuing the level of support specified as "balance of operations
- constructing and operating the LIGA Technologies Facility, Distributed Information Systems Laboratory, and the Glass Furnace and Melting Laboratory
- continuing modifications to the Hazardous Waste Storage Facilities
- continuing removal of several small structures)
- continuing routine SNL/CA activities such as maintenance support, environmental monitoring, chemical materials management, and waste management

- completing several General Plant Projects previously approved.

Planned Utilization and Operations Alternative.

The Planned Utilization and Operations Alternative would include all the operations and activities identified in the No Action Alternative, plus implementing planned facility operations in support of SNL/CA's assigned missions, and changing current land use. This alternative differs from the No Action Alternative in that:

- Thirteen facilities/groups would operate at generally higher levels of activity and staffing.
- "Balance of operations" would increase above current levels.
- Arroyo Seco would undergo improvements.
- A 30-acre wildlife reserve would be established.
- A Grant of Easement and Agreement would be made with the landowner concerning the land along the SNL/CA western boundary.
- 93 acres would be designated as future construction sites.
- 122 acres would, for future land use, be identified as undesignated.
- Storm water runoff areas would be upgraded.
- Onsite soil management would be established.
- General Plant Projects would be completed.
- Renovation of Building 916 would be completed.
- A new 5,000 sq ft badge office complex would be constructed.

Maximum Operations Alternative.

The Maximum Operations Alternative would include all the operations and activities identified in the Planned Utilization and Operations Alternative, plus implementing two shifts at specific facilities in support of SNL/CA's assigned missions, and constructing two new facilities. This alternative differs from the Planned Utilization and Operations Alternative in that:

- Most of 13 facilities/groups would operate with two shifts.
- "Balance of operations" would increase above current levels.
- Building 916 would be replaced with a building twice the size.
- A new facility, similar to the existing Chemical and Radiation Detection Laboratory, would be constructed.
- Facilities determined to be beyond economically useful life would be removed.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS: For discussion purposes, the Maximum Operations Alternative was selected to assess a bounding scenario of potential environmental impacts. This approach results in a conservative analysis of the maximum effects.

Continuation of research and development activities implementation of maximum operations and changes in land use would not result in any significant increase in impacts. Specifically, the Maximum Operations Alternatives are not expected to significantly impact the biological, cultural, air quality, geology, human health, infrastructure, hydrology and/or water quality, land use, noise, transportation, waste generation, socioeconomic, or environmental justice resources.

Cumulative Impacts The Maximum Operations Alternative is not expected to contribute substantially to the overall cumulative impacts from activities in the Livermore, CA area. Potential impacts to biological resources, air quality, and transportation pose incremental changes in this assessment. The effects of the Maximum Operations Alternative, when combined with those effects of other actions, do not result in cumulatively significant impacts.

Impacts From Postulated Accidents In addition to environmental impacts that were postulated from routine operations, the EA discussed a range of reasonably foreseeable accident scenarios that could lead to impacts to the human environment. These events include both high consequence with low probability and low consequence with high probability scenarios for SNL/CA. Three general areas of accident analysis were considered in this SWEA: natural phenomenon, material accidents, and operational accidents. Potential consequences of an accidental release of radioactive and/or chemical materials, explosions, and other hazards hazardous materials were evaluated. Two accident scenarios were considered for additional analysis: a postulated event initiated by natural phenomena and a postulated material event initiated by unspecified accident. Analyses concluded that the postulated release of materials would not pose a threat to onsite workers or offsite individuals or population.

DETERMINATION: Based on the analysis in the EA, I conclude that all three alternatives for continuing to operate SNL/CA does not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of NEPA. Therefore, an EIS for the proposed action is not required.

Signed in Albuquerque, New Mexico this 20 day of March, 2003.



Karen L. Boardman
Manager
Sandia Site Office