Floodplain Statement of Findings for Regional Aquifer Groundwater Monitoring Well R-76 Well Pad Construction, Well Drilling, and Well Installation

AGENCY: U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Environmental Management Los Alamos Field Office (EM-LA)

ACTION: Floodplain Statement of Findings

PROPOSED ACTION: On September 22, 2022, EM-LA issued for public review and comment the *Notice of Proposed Floodplain Action for Groundwater Monitoring Well R-76 Well Pad Construction, Well Drilling, and Well Installation*. In accordance with DOE floodplain regulations, EM-LA has evaluated the proposed floodplain action, including alternatives and mitigating measures, and considered substantive comments received.

The drilling and installation of regional aquifer groundwater monitoring well R-76 within Mortandad Canyon on Los Alamos National Laboratory property is to replace the monitoring capability of groundwater monitoring well R-28 for the hexavalent chromium groundwater plume. Well R-76 will provide for: (1) monitoring in an important area of the hexavalent chromium plume where hexavalent chromium concentrations have historically been in the 400-ppb range; and (2) long-term performance monitoring for hexavalent chromium and related constituents as part of future remediation efforts.

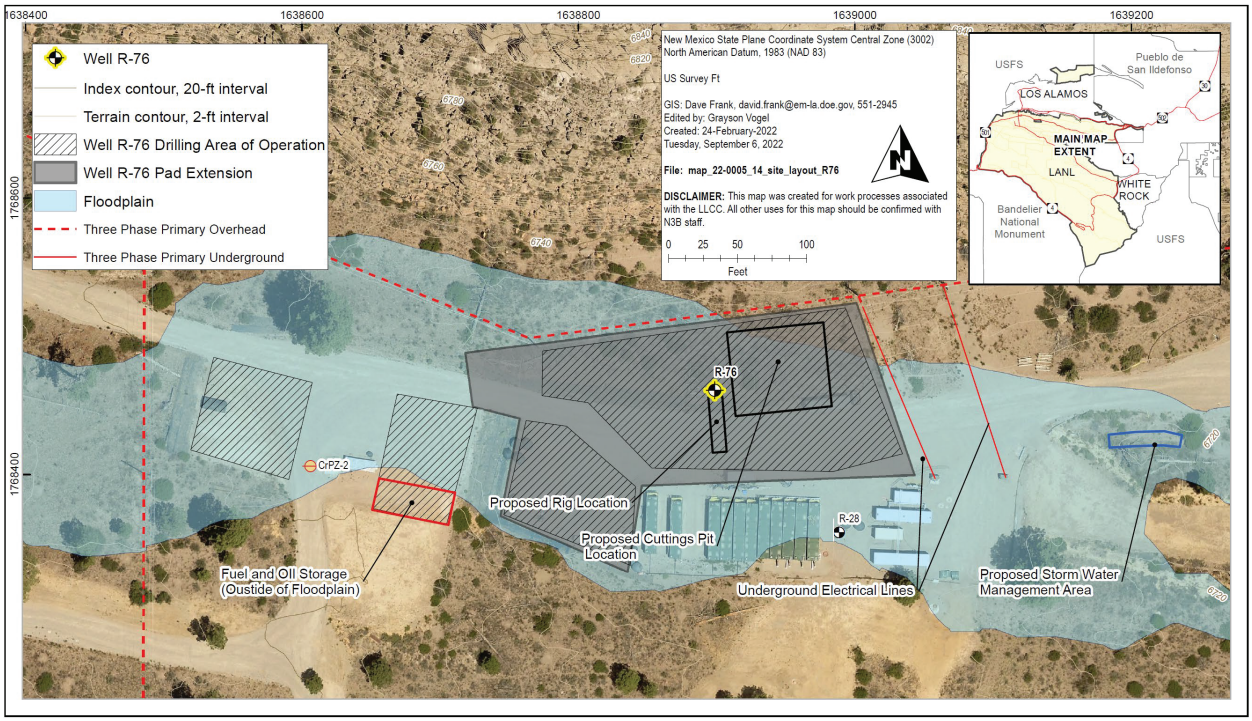

Figure 1. Site layout and location

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This Floodplain Statement of Findings was prepared in accordance with 10 Code of Federal Regulations Part 1022, Compliance with Floodplain and Wetland Environmental Review Requirements.

The *Notice of Proposed Floodplain Action for Groundwater Monitoring Well R-76 Well Pad Construction, Well Drilling, and Well Installation* was sent to appropriate government agencies, tribal entities, and persons and groups known to be interested in or potentially affected by the proposed floodplain action. It

was also made available to the public on the Energy.gov website and in local newspapers. No comments were received.

ALTERNATIVES: The alternatives evaluated for floodplain impacts were: (1) a no-action alternative; and (2) relocating well R-76. The no-action alternative was not selected, as it would not achieve the objectives of monitoring the level, and extent of, hexavalent chromium in the groundwater plume.

Relocating well R-76 is not a practical alternative because: (1) well R-76 is a replacement for well R-28 and, therefore, must be located nearby; (2) the location was specified by New Mexico Environment Department (NMED); and (3) cliffs, cultural sites, and existing chromium treatment facilities significantly limit potential drilling locations near well R-28. Relocating the well R-76 well pad by installing well R-76 as an angled well was not considered because of additional health and safety risks and the challenges associated with, and expense of, drilling and installing angled wells in the vicinity of well R-28.

FLOODPLAIN IMPACTS: EM-LA has determined that to adequately replace the hexavalent chromium groundwater plume monitoring capability of well R-28, well R-76 will be in the floodplain. Short-term impacts to the floodplain are expected due to ground disturbance during the installation of the well R-76 pad. Minor long-term impacts are expected within the floodplain. The footprint of the current roadway and storage development will expand to a small degree following installation of the well R-76 pad. No impacts to lives and private property are anticipated from this project.

Best management practices will be implemented to minimize and mitigate impacts to the floodplain. These include, but are not limited to, reinforcement of the well-pad site to minimize erosion, secondary spill containment for Baker tanks, revegetation of disturbed areas surrounding the project area, and limiting the quantity of hazardous materials stored within the floodplain at any given time. Should activities require removal of shrubs or trees, they will be conducted in accordance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which restricts vegetation removal during peak bird breeding season, May 15 through July 31, unless a biological resource specialist has conducted a survey to determine whether nesting birds are present. If active nests are found, the nest, tree, or shrub will be left in place until the nesting is complete. The proposed action, with implementation of best management practices, conforms to applicable floodplain protection standards.

EM-LA will provide for 15 days of public review after publication of this Statement of Findings before implementing the proposed action.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For further information on this proposed action contact Jesse Kahler via email at EMLA-NEPA@em.doe.gov.