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Contact: Jay Coghlan, Nuclear Watch NM, 505.989.7342, c. 505.920.7118, jay@nukewatch.org

Funding Eliminated for Los Alamos Nuclear Weapons Plutonium Lab Comprehensive Cleanup Can Be the Real Job Creator at Lab

Santa Fe, NM - The Obama Administration's new fiscal year 2013 Congressional Budget Request has zeroed out funding for the controversial Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement Project (CMRR)-Nuclear Facility at the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). While today's budget says that the CMRR-NF is being simply "deferred" for 5 years, that likely terminates the project given ongoing fiscal constraints and its lack of clear need.

For the past five years Nuclear Watch New Mexico has argued that the existing plutonium infrastructure at LANL was more than sufficient to meet the needs of our nuclear weapons stockpile, which official studies should confirm. NNSA now appears to be agreeing with us. While zeroing out CMRR the agency states in its budget request:

Construction has not begun on the nuclear facility. NNSA has determined, in consultation with the national laboratories, that the existing infrastructure in the nuclear complex has the inherent capacity to provide adequate support for these missions. Studies are ongoing to determine long-term requirements. NNSA will modify existing facilities, and relocate some nuclear materials.

Of paramount importance, zeroing out the CMRR-Nuclear Facility is also a *de facto* decision to not expand plutonium pit production, when expansion is simply not needed and would be inconsistent with America's global nonproliferation goals. Hundred's of billions of dollars can be saved over the next half-century by not expanding plutonium pit production to produce new nuclear weapons, when that money is badly needed for truly urgent national priorities.

NNSA's own documents state that the CMRR Project would produce zero new permanent jobs because it merely relocates existing Lab jobs (all that it would produce for ~\$6 billion is an average of 420 temporary construction jobs for nine years). In contrast, LANL's own estimates show that full cleanup of the Lab's biggest radioactive waste dump ("Area G") could take 108 million worker hours at a labor cost of \$13 billion. That is equivalent to 2,700 full-time employees working for 20 years. Moreover, full cleanup is the only way to permanently remove the threat to the environment from Lab wastes and contamination.

Jay Coghlan, Nuclear Watch New Mexico Director, commented, "Now that the CMRR-Nuclear Facility has been zeroed out, our New Mexican congressional delegation and state and local elected officials should be pushing hard for comprehensive cleanup at the Lab. That will create 100's of desperately needed jobs and at the same time protect our

scarce, precious groundwater and the Rio Grande. That's in stark contrast to unneeded nuclear weapons programs that produce more radioactive and hazardous wastes and create few if any new jobs."

The Lab first proposed a similar project to replace the old Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Building in 1990, which Congress rejected because of the lack of need given the end of the Cold War. Twenty-two years later the same remains true. There is no need for the CMRR Nuclear Facility, whose main purpose would have been to support the quadrupling of production at LANL of plutonium pits – the fissile cores of nuclear weapons - from the currently approved level of 20 pits per year to up to 80.

NNSA first requested congressional funding for the CMRR Project in 2004, saying it would cost \$660 million (the current estimate is nearly \$6 billion). At that time NNSA was also aggressively pushing for new design nuclear weapons, the so-called Reliable Replacement Warheads (RRWs). In the same year Nuclear Watch New Mexico asked Senator Jeff Bingaman (D.-NM) for a study on plutonium pit lifetimes, which he successfully required in federal legislation. In November 2006 independent experts concluded that plutonium pits last 85 years or more, double NNSA previous claims. This finding had much to do with undermining the rationale for new-design nuclear weapons that would have required the expanded plutonium pit production that the Nuclear Facility was to directly support, and Congress subsequently rejected RRWs.

In sum, plutonium pits last more than twice as long as previously believed and there is no need for expanded plutonium pit production without new-design nuclear weapons (in fact LANL has zero stockpile pit production currently scheduled). The missions of the old CMR Building can be relocated to the CMRR Project's already built first phase, the 185,000 square foot Rad Lab, and the Lab's existing plutonium pit production facility, without building the Nuclear Facility. Comprehensive cleanup at LANL should be the wave of 100's of new jobs at the Lab, which the New Mexican congressional delegation and state and local elected officials should push hard for.

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The NNSA quote is from the Department of Energy's FY 2013 Congressional Budget Request, Vol. 1, PDF pg. 14, <http://www.cfo.doe.gov/budget/13budget/index13.html>

Nuclear Watch NM will have a detailed tabulation with commentary today on the National Nuclear Security Administration's fiscal year 2013 Congressional Budget Request by 7:00 pm EST or earlier. See: http://www.nukewatch.org/facts/nwd/NWNM_Tab_FY2013_BudgetRequest.pdf

***551 W. Cordova Rd., #808, Santa Fe, NM 87505-4100 • Voice and fax: 505.989.7342
info@nukewatch.org • www.nukewatch.org • <http://www.nukewatch.org/watchblog/>
<http://www.facebook.com/NukeWatch.NM>***