



TAOS COUNTY RESOLUTION 2014-4

A RESOLUTION REQUESTING CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVES TO LOS ALAMOS NATIONAL LABORATORY'S PROPOSED PLAN OF LEAVING NUCLEAR WASTES BURIED IN PLACE AT TA-54, AREA G; URGING INSTEAD FOR FULL CHARACTERIZATION AND EXCAVATION OF THE WASTES, OFFSITE DISPOSAL OF ANY HIGH-LEVEL, TRANSURANIC, AND MIXED LOW LEVEL RADIOACTIVE WASTES; AND DIRECTING THE COUNTY MANAGER TO INFORM THE NEW MEXICO ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT AND RELEVANT STATE LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES OF THIS RESOLUTION.

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners of Taos County is the duly authorized governing body of Taos County, a political subdivision of the State of New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) has announced its preferred alternative to leave approximately one million cubic meters of radioactive, toxic and hazardous wastes buried in place at Material Deposit Area G (Area G) in Technical Area 54 (TA-54), which the New Mexico Environment Department must approve or not; and

WHEREAS, Area G is a 63 acre site, which started accepting radioactive, toxic and hazardous wastes in 1957 when record keeping was poor; and

WHEREAS, Taos County is often directly downwind of Area G; and

WHEREAS, Area G is located 54.2 miles from the center of the Town of Taos, just west of the residential community of White Rock, and 5 miles from the Buckman Well Field near the Rio Grande, which provides drinking water for the City of Santa Fe; and

WHEREAS, Area G is located 0.10 miles from the Pueblo de San Idelfonso boundary, 8.78 miles from the boundary of the Pueblo of Santa Clara, 9.83 miles from the boundary of the Pueblo of Pojoaque, 11.95 miles from the boundary of the Pueblo of Tesuque, 13.56 miles from the center of the Pueblo of Nambe, 14.1 miles from the boundary of the Pueblo of Ohkay Owingeh, 14.03 miles from the center of the City of Espanola, 17.54 miles from the center of the Village of Tesuque, 18 miles from the Santa Fe Plaza, 5.44 miles from the center of Los Alamos; and

WHEREAS, LANL was not originally chosen for its geologic qualities as a permanent nuclear waste disposal site; and

WHEREAS, LANL is located in a complex seismic zone above both the Rio Grande and a sole source aquifer providing drinking water for 270,000 people, including the City of Santa Fe; and

WHEREAS, Area G wastes are buried in unlined pits, trenches and shafts dug directly into the volcanic tuff, in contrast to the composite liners and leachate collection systems that the New Mexico Environment Department requires of local governments; and

WHEREAS, LANL has claimed that full cleanup of Area G would cost the inflated sum of 29 billion dollars, but nevertheless recently successfully excavated its similar Materials Disposal Area B for 136 million dollars; and

WHEREAS, extrapolation from Area B's actual costs demonstrates that full cleanup of Area G could be completed for around 6 billion dollars, or less than the cost of four years' worth of the Lab's nuclear weapons programs that generated the wastes to begin with; and

WHEREAS, full cleanup of Area G would be a win-win for New Mexicans, permanently protecting our precious groundwater and the Rio Grande while creating 100's of high paying jobs for twenty years or more;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of County Commissioners of Taos County hereby urges the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) to NOT allow the *de facto* creation of a permanent nuclear waste dump by approving "cap and cover" of the estimated one million cubic meters of radioactive and hazardous wastes at Area G; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of County Commissioners of Taos County hereby requests that NMED require full characterization and excavation of the wastes; and offsite disposal of any transuranic or mixed low-level radioactive wastes at Area G; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in the unlikely even any high-level radioactive wastes are found and excavated at Area G, they must be safely isolated in Hardened On-Site Storage (HOSS) until transported offsite to another DOE site or final disposal at a future national high-level waste repository; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that wastes at Area G should be completely excavated with no new disposal of wastes; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that DOE and LANL closure and post-closure plans for TA-54 must be submitted to NMED prior to NMED's issuance of its Statement of Basis for Area G; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NMED should provide for a public hearing as required by the New Mexico Hazardous Waste Act and the Federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) requiring protection of human health and the environment on all matters pertaining to the comprehensive cleanup of TA-54; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of County Commissioners of Taos County urges the DOE and LANL to conduct the seismic field studies as required by DOE Orders and industry standards which much be completed before any TA-54 cleanup decisions are

made by NMED and to conduct field studies of the groundwater below LANL as recommended in 2007 by the National Academy of Sciences “Plans and Practices for Groundwater Protection at the Los Alamos National Laboratory” and as required by the New Mexico Hazardous Waste Act; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the New Mexico House Radioactive & Hazardous Materials and Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committees should hold public hearings on all matters pertaining to the comprehensive cleanup of TA-54; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of County Commissioners of Taos County directs the County Manager to send copies of this resolution to the New Mexico Environment Department, our congressional delegation, our governor, the Department of Energy, the National Nuclear Security Administration, Los Alamos National Security LLC, and the two New Mexico legislative committees referenced herein.

PASSED, ADOPTED AND APPROVED THIS 21st DAY OF JANUARY, 2014.

THE BOARD COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF TAOS COUNTY

Gabriel J. Romero, Chairman

Approved as to legal form:

Larry Sanchez, Vice-Chairman

Robert J. Malone, County Attorney

Daniel R. Barrone, Commissioner

Attest:

Tom Blankenhorn, Commissioner

Anna Martinez, County Clerk

Joe Mike Duran, Commissioner

Vote Record:				
G. Romero	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
L. Sanchez	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
D. Barrone	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
T. Blankenhorn	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
J.M. Duran	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent