



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, June 9, 2021

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Following New Mexico Environment Department Lawsuit DOE Dramatically Increases Funding for Los Alamos Lab Cleanup

Santa Fe, NM – The Biden Administration has finally released budget details for Department of Energy (DOE) programs that clean up Cold War contamination and radioactive and toxic wastes. In January the New Mexico Environment Department sued DOE in order to terminate a 2016 "Consent Order" that subordinated cleanup at the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) to the budget that DOE wants, which is increased nuclear weapons production. The Biden Administration has responded by increasing proposed cleanup funding at the Lab by 33% from \$226 million in FY 2021 to \$333.5 million proposed for FY 2022 (which begins October 1, 2021).

At the same time the Biden budget request gives a top range estimate of total LANL cleanup costs of \$8.43 billion through 2090. To put this in perspective, the Trump Administration proposed to cut cleanup at the Lab by \$100 million to \$120 million in FY 2021 (which Congress prevented) while successfully giving nearly \$1 billion to LANL's nuclear weapons programs. Thus, the Biden request for LANL cleanup is nearly triple what Trump wanted.

Further, as a follow-on to the defective 2016 Consent Order, DOE produced a life cycle cost estimate that lowballed total LANL cleanup at \$3.8 billion with a completion date of 2040. It explicitly stated that there was only 5,000 cubic meters of radioactive and toxic wastes to be treated, intentionally ignoring the 300,000 cubic meters of radioactive and toxic wastes in Area G (LANL's largest waste dump) that DOE plans to "cap and cover" and leave permanently buried above our regional groundwater, some three miles uphill from the Rio Grande.

Jay Coghlan, NukeWatch NM Director, commented, "I salute NMED Secretary James Kenney, his staff and Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham for having the guts to sue DOE. The payoff has been immediate in the delayed federal budget with dramatically increased funding for cleanup at the Lab. Further, while projected cleanup costs all the way to 2090 may sound discouraging, it offers New Mexicans the chance to comprehensively clean up the Lab instead of the cleanup on the cheap that DOE wants. In addition, it can provide high paying jobs for generations to come as an alternative to unnecessary expanded nuclear weapons production that will cause yet more contamination and radioactive wastes."

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DOE's FY 2022 Environmental Management Congressional Budget Request is available at <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2021-06/doi-fy2022-budget-volume-5-v3.pdf>
LANL cleanup budget data is at PDF pages 35, 50 and 368.

The Department of Energy's *2016 Lifecycle Cost Estimate Summary* for LANL cleanup is available at <http://nukewatch.org/importantdocs/resources/LBC-Summary-Aug-2016.pdf>