



**Final Los Alamos Lab Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement**  
***The National Nuclear Security Administration's Future Path for the Lab:***  
***Radically Expanded Nuclear Weapons Production***  
***"Defers" Comprehensive Cleanup Until Plutonium "Pit" Production is Done***

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***Santa Fe, NM*** – Today the Department of Energy's semi-autonomous nuclear weapons agency, the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), released its final *Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement (SWEIS) for Continued Operation of the Los Alamos National Laboratory*. This is eighteen years after the last site-wide EIS, during which time the Lab has been increasingly transformed into a nuclear weapons production site for the new global nuclear arms race. As the final SWEIS' accompanying Record of Decision puts it, "NNSA has decided to fully implement the Expanded Operations Alternative." Final LANL SWEIS ROD, page 5.

The final LANL SWEIS also states "At this time, MDA C will be deferred until no longer associated with active facility operations." Final LANL SWEIS, page N-41. Material Disposal Area C is an old radioactive and toxic waste dump, inactive since 1974. Not mentioned is the fact that the New Mexico Environment Department has issued a draft order mandating comprehensive cleanup at Area C, which Nuclear Watch New Mexico strongly supports and DOE and LANL bitterly oppose. The reason DOE and LANL now claim that Area C is "associated with active facility operations" is because it is located within a thousand feet of PF-4, LANL's production facility for plutonium "pit" bomb cores. This strongly implies that the Lab will never be comprehensively cleaned up until LANL's nuclear weapons production mission is over, which in effect means never. Further, LANL still hasn't documented the extent of the massive groundwater contamination that it has caused.

As policy background to the "Purpose and Need" for expanded nuclear weapons operations, the final LANL SWEIS pays lip service to the 1970 NonProliferation Treaty (NPT):

"In Article VI of the NPT, treaty parties "undertake to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament..." The U.S. takes this commitment seriously and has emphasized dedication to both the long-term goal of eliminating nuclear weapons and the requirement that the U.S. has modern, flexible, and resilient nuclear capabilities that are safe and secure, until such a time as nuclear weapons can prudently be eliminated from the world. The NPT does not provide any specific date for achieving the ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament, nor does it preclude the maintenance of nuclear weapons until their disposition. Continued operations at LANL enable NNSA to maintain the safety, reliability, and performance of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile until the ultimate goals of the NPT are attained and are consistent with the NPT." Pages A-5 and A-6.

Left unsaid is the fact that no nuclear weapons power, including the United States, has ever even begun to enter into good faith negotiations toward global nuclear disarmament, pledged to 56 years ago. Moreover, in 1996 the International Court of Justice ruled "There exists an obligation

to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control."

Instead, all nuclear weapons states are now engaged in massive "modernization" programs to keep nuclear weapons forever, leading to today's accelerating nuclear weapons arms race. The final LANL SWEIS is key to this through its sanctioning of expanded plutonium "pit" bomb core production for new-design nuclear weapons. A Review Conference of the NPT, held every five years, begins this April 27. It is universally expected not to make any progress toward nuclear disarmament, for the third consecutive failure over the last 15 years.

In a rigged game, the draft LANL SWEIS gave citizens false choices between three scripted scenarios: expanded nuclear weapons programs, including plutonium pit production (contradictorily called the "No Action Alternative"); yet more expanded nuclear weapons programs (the so-called "Modernized Operations Alternative"); and the yet more aggressive "Expanded Operations Alternative," which NNSA has now formally selected.

As a baseline, all three alternatives primarily revolved around the expanded production of plutonium "pit" bomb cores, the critical component of thermonuclear weapons. NNSA is pursuing a redundant two-site pit production strategy at LANL and the Savannah River Site (SRS) in South Carolina. However, pit production at SRS has more than doubled in estimated costs and is delayed until at least 2035. The final LANL SWEIS sanctions the production of at least 80 pits per year at the Lab, which is now growing more likely because of delays at SRS.

As co-plaintiff, Nuclear Watch New Mexico successfully sued NNSA under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for its failure to complete a new nation-wide programmatic environmental impact statement on simultaneous pit production at two sites. In September 2024 a federal judge ruled in our favor. A draft Pit Production PEIS is now expected in late May or June with a public comment period and hearings at five locations across the country (including Santa Fe, NM).

NNSA's disregard for NEPA is demonstrated by the fact that the draft Pit Production PEIS will be released after the final LANL SWEIS. The reverse should be true, with the site-specific document "tiered" off of the nationwide programmatic document. The LANL SWEIS preemptively declares "that decision [to complete a Pit Production PEIS] does not change the analysis in this SWEIS." Page B-10. That is backwards NEPA compliance.

However, the Trump Administration is eviscerating the National Environmental Policy Act, often referred to as the Magna Carta of U.S. environmental law. For example, NNSA did not wait 30 days to issue its LANL SWEIS Record of Decision as previously required. Looking to the future, NNSA has declared that it is eliminating drafts for a Sandia Labs Site-Wide EIS and an EIS for expanded plutonium operations at a Livermore Lab facility. Instead, NNSA will go directly to final documents with simultaneous Record of Decisions. This means no hearings, no formal comment periods, and the complete elimination of public input.

The January 2025 draft LANL SWEIS had lengthy sections on environmental justice. These are completely deleted in the final SWEIS as per Trump's Executive Orders. New Mexico is 50% Hispanic and 12% Native American, with 14 sovereign Pueblos within LANL's 50 mile radius "Region of Influence."

The highest dose accident scenarios involve a seismically induced fire at PF-4, LANL's plutonium pit production facility. The LANL SWEIS states that "the DNFSB [Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board] acknowledged that the Laboratory had completed a probabilistic risk analysis and concluded that the seismic safety risk of PF-4 is acceptable until the site-specific PSHA [Probabilistic Seismic Hazard Analysis] is updated (which is expected to be published in 2025)." Page 5-24, parentheses in the original. LANL has still not published its long overdue updated Probabilistic Seismic Hazard Analysis, which strongly undermines the credibility of the SWEIS' seismic hazard analyses.

The final SWEIS deleted any discussion of NNSA's surplus plutonium disposition program designed to permanently dispose of weapons-usable material, in which LANL will play a key role. Instead, the Trump Administration has directed DOE to give away weapons-grade plutonium to commercial nuclear power corporations for Mixed Oxide (MOX) reactor fuel rods, without any further NEPA review. LANL SWEIS Summary, page S-7. The grave proliferation concerns of giving weapons-grade plutonium to profit-driven private corporations are obvious. In addition, a previous MOX program ended in utter failure, costing taxpayers ~\$7 billion.

LANL's budget for nuclear weapons programs has already more than doubled in the last decade. Contrary to public relations spin that the Lab is growing increasingly diversified, the budget percentage devoted to nuclear weapons has steadily grown to 84% of LANL's \$6 billion annual budget (see budget graph [here](#)). In addition, nearly all of the Lab's remaining programs either directly or indirectly support those nuclear weapons programs. Cleanup and nonproliferation programs are being cut and renewable energy research entirely eliminated.

The rigged choices that NNSA's LANL SWEIS pushes on New Mexicans will accelerate that trend, which our congressional delegation justifies as jobs, jobs, jobs. However, U.S. Census Bureau data show that New Mexico's per capita income has declined from 32<sup>nd</sup> in 1959 to 46<sup>th</sup> in 2022. At the same time, we remain dead last in quality of public education and the well-being of our children.

Expanded plutonium pit production has largely fueled LANL's ever-climbing budget, cementing it as more and more a nuclear weapons production site. Ironically, future pit production is not to maintain the safety and reliability of the existing stockpile, but instead is for speculative, untested new-design nuclear weapons. They cannot be full-scale tested because of the existing global testing moratorium, thereby perhaps lowering confidence in stockpile reliability. Or these new-design nuclear weapons could prompt the U.S. to resume testing, which would have severe international proliferation consequences. In 2006 independent experts concluded that pits have serviceable lifetimes of at least 100 years (their average age is now ~43) and more than 15,000 existing pits are already stored at NNSA's Pantex Plant near Amarillo, TX.

Jay Coghlan, Director of Nuclear Watch New Mexico, commented: "The United States already has a reliable, extensively tested nuclear weapons stockpile that can end human civilization overnight. These exorbitant sums for the production of new-design nuclear weapons will just push us deeper into the new, increasingly dangerous nuclear arms race. LANL should be cleaning up instead of building up nuclear weapons. That would be a real win-win for New Mexicans, permanently protecting our irreplaceable groundwater while providing hundreds of high paying jobs."

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Selected other issues in the final LANL SWEIS:

- Data Center: In response to a public comment on the draft SWEIS about proposed data centers and artificial intelligence, the NNSA stated “There is no current proposal for any commercial Artificial Intelligence facility on the LANL site.” Final SWEIS page N-14. That is highly misleading as LANL is actively planning an AI data center in Ypsilanti, MI, which the township is vigorously fighting (see article [here](#)). A recent King’s College [study](#) found that in war games AI went to escalation and threatened nuclear war 95% of the time.
- LANL plans to build and operate a BioSafety Level-3 facility for which NNSA claims “The specific BSL-3 bioagents that may be used in the proposed laboratory have not been identified.” LANL SWEIS Volume 2, page 5-131. A 2002 LANL BSL-3 Environmental Assessment (EA) said it would handle pathogens such as anthrax. A similar BSL-3 facility at the Livermore Lab conducts dangerous aerosolized experiments with anthrax. LANL dropped its proposed BSL-3 facility in 2004 after Nuclear Watch New Mexico sued the DOE under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for inadequate analysis. The appropriateness of secret nuclear weapons labs working with bioweapons agents is highly questionable, especially when other federal public health agencies could handle that mission.
- Another controversial issue is a proposed new electrical transmission line that will cross the environmentally and culturally sensitive Caja del Rio, for which the NNSA and U.S. Forest Service have conducted environmental assessments (and received ~24,000 opposing public comments). The final LANL SWEIS considered (but did not decide upon) up to 795 acres of solar arrays for electricity generation. (SWEIS page A-131.) The final SWEIS also acknowledges that Los Alamos County could buy up to 120 MW per hour from the Foxtail Flats battery and solar project near Farmington, NM. These alternatives could eliminate the need for the new transmission line. However, the final LANL SWEIS condones the “Electrical Power Capacity Upgrade” (EPCU) project by noting that it had separate limited NEPA processes. The final LANL SWEIS, which is supposed to consider site-wide and regional impacts, completely fails to consider genuine alternatives to the controversial EPCU.
- The Expanded Operations Alternative that NNSA has selected incorporates the so-called No-Action and Modernization Alternatives. All together this includes a total of 76 new projects of various sizes, totaling around 5.7 million square feet, overwhelmingly dedicated to nuclear weapons research and production, especially plutonium pit production. Pages 3-10, 3-16 and 3-29. Related astronomical costs are not given, which NNSA almost invariably exceeds. Separate budget documents show that upgrades to LANL’s plutonium pit production facilities will cost at least \$8 billion over the next five years.

The final LANL SWEIS Summary, Volumes I and II and Record of Decision are available at <https://www.energy.gov/nepa/doeis-0552-site-wide-environmental-impact-statement-continued-operation-los-alamos-national-0>

Nuclear Watch New Mexico’s extensive formal comments on the January 2025 draft LANL SWEIS are available at <https://nukewatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Formal-Comments-on-the-Draft-Site-Wide-Environmental-Impact-Statement-for-Continued-Operation-of-the-Los-Alamos-National-Laboratory.pdf> Because little has changed other than the deletion of environmental justice issues, our formal comments on the draft are still largely applicable to the March 2026 final LANL SWEIS.

This press release is available online at <https://nukewatch.org/lanl-sweis-pr/> For much more on plutonium pit production and cleanup of Area C please visit [www.nukewatch.org](http://www.nukewatch.org)

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