

# MONITOR

## NUCLEAR WEAPONS & MATERIALS

U.S. National Nuclear Security Administration ♦ Russian Ministry of Atomic Energy  
...plus International Nonproliferation Initiatives (State, DoD, G-8, IAEA) ♦ Uranium Enrichment

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### PROCUREMENTS RELATED TO CMRR -NF PROCESS ON HOLD DUE TO NEPA REVIEW

The National Nuclear Security Administration has suspended all procurements related to the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement-Nuclear Facility while the agency updates the environmental analysis of the multi-billion-dollar facility, a senior Los Alamos National Laboratory official said last week. The move, which is required under the National Environmental Policy Act, could jeopardize the laboratory's plans to complete work to establish the performance baseline for the infrastructure needed for the project in 2011, said Tony Ladino, the project manager for support facilities on the CMRR project. "It'll be a timing thing," Ladino told *NW&M Monitor*. "We'll have to be as agile and responsive as we can be so when the government has finished the NEPA process, we can move to procurements in a quick and efficient way."

Spurred in part by a push from New Mexico nuclear watchdogs including an ongoing lawsuit by the Los Alamos Study Group—the NNSA announced in September that it was preparing a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the CMRR-NF, analyzing changes to the project since an Environmental Impact Statement was completed in 2004. The SEIS hasn't satisfied the Los Alamos Study Group, which is still pursuing its lawsuit and pushing for the NNSA to redo the EIS rather than simply update it. The SEIS will include an analysis of new nuclear safety requirements and modifications to accommodate changed understanding of seismic risks at the site, and the need to use more steel and concrete to build the facility. But the study will also include an examination of the alternative of not building the project at all, but rather modifying the existing Chemistry and Metallurgy Research building so that it could continue to be used to meet the agency's programmatic needs. The Administration has said it needs the new facility, which could cost more than \$4 billion according to estimates, to help revitalize the lab's analytical chemistry, material characterization and actinide research and development work at the lab in support of the agency's plutonium research and pit surveillance activities.

#### Design Work Not Stopped

A separate Radiological Laboratory/Office/Utility Building has already been built adjacent to where the nuclear facility will be constructed, and work is ongoing to install specialized equipment in facility. That work has not stopped, Ladino said. He said preliminary design work on the CMRR-NF project is also continuing as procurement activity on the project has come to a halt, impacting nearly a dozen procurements for which the lab had begun releasing information over the last month. Those include procurements for the excavation of the site for the facility, the construction of a lay-down yard, the relocation of site utilities as well as the procurement of specialized items like nuclear air treatment systems, safety class fire pumps and safety significant air handling equipment.

Ladino declined to estimate how much the suspension of procurements could delay progress on the facility, which is the subject of considerable scrutiny given its importance to plans to modernize the NNSA's nuclear weapons complex. Senate Republicans have insisted on funding to modernize the complex in exchange for support of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with Russia, and along with the Uranium Processing Facility, the CMRR-NF

is the plan's linchpin. Both facilities are expected to cost in excess of \$5 billion when new estimates are completed, and they are expected to be completed by 2020 and up and running by 2022.

Ladino said that the lab is preparing a phased Critical Decision 2/3 package for the project, authorizing a performance baseline and the start of construction, that starts with the infrastructure portion of project. Separate packages would then be completed for the facility and the outside of the plant, which includes the security features surrounding the facility. Ladino said he was hopeful that the SEIS was completed quickly, allowing the procurements to move forward. "It is a challenge for sure, but NEPA is a federal law and big projects sometimes have to update their NEPA and that's what we're doing," he said. "We will just have to be ready and flexible to jump on the procurements as soon as we get green light." —*Todd Jacobson*