



Los Alamos Study Group

Nuclear Disarmament • Environmental Protection • Social Justice • Economic Sustainability

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Citizen Group Releases First Installment of Detailed Los Alamos Contamination Maps, Data for Public Use

New web site is first step in planned “citizen inspection” public archive

Contact: Greg Mello, Trish Williams-Mello, or Darwin BondGraham, 505-265-1200

ALBUQUERQUE, NM – Today the Los Alamos Study Group released a set of maps and tables helpful to citizens who wish to better understand the land contamination at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL).

The information provided today contains some 969 separate files and images, with thousands of internal hyperlinks. It is accessible from the Study Group home page at www.lasg.org. This archive is expected to grow in scope and refinement in the coming months as more maps and other detailed information, both environmental and programmatic, are added to it.

Each contaminated site is linked to table entries showing some of the LANL documents containing further information about the site, as well as to estimated erosion potential and other basic information. All of the larger buildings are shown by function and hazard classification as well. Information is grouped by lab “technical area” (TA), making the environmental impact relatively easy to link to specific programs and facilities. This information has never been available in one easy-to-use place before.

Today’s compendium complements the data and analysis already posted on the Study Group’s web site about LANL’s 26 main disposal sites, especially “Area G,” the active chemical and nuclear landfill. Area G, LANL’s largest dump, now contains roughly twice the ultimate disposal volume of the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) near Carlsbad. Disposal continues: the Department of Energy (DOE) estimates the volume of new waste to be disposed over the next seven decades will roughly equal today’s legacy. The large, shallow pits used at LANL are often hundreds of feet long; none have any impervious barriers to water, plants, animals, or people either above or below the waste; and no such barriers are planned.

The information posted today was given to the Study Group by the DOE, LANL, and the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED). It is presented without substantive modification, but has been organized, reformatted, and cross-referenced for easier accessibility. The entire archive is also being made available in disk form for a small charge.

This project has been partially supported by the “Citizens’ Monitoring and Technical Assessment Fund,” the financial portion of a legal settlement won by the Study Group and 39 other plaintiffs in a 1997 lawsuit challenging the environmental impact of the nation’s nuclear weapons program.

“It’s important that this archive not be under LANL control,” Study Group director Greg Mello said. “There needs to be a public memory of these realities, so that there can be a public meaning for them as well. New Mexico’s involvement with Los Alamos contamination is just beginning, and it must not be controlled by the facility still making the pollution.”

Environmental compliance is not the only focus and legal basis for this archive. LANL’s mission involves maintaining nuclear weapons indefinitely, as well as modifying nuclear weapons for new targets. Both clearly violate the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). This treaty has been ratified by the U.S., making it both international and domestic law. Today’s initial web release, and subsequent ones which build upon this foundation, aim to assist the development of societal verification and treaty enforcement.

For security reasons, this data archive has been disseminated widely.

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