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**LANL Contamination of Drinking Water Must be Addressed Now,
says Concerned Citizens For Nuclear Safety**

Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety (CCNS) sent a letter to the Associate Director of Environmental Programs at LANL demanding that detection of radionuclides and other contaminants in Los Alamos County and Santa Fe drinking water supplies be addressed. The letter refutes data which LANL has repeatedly presented to the public as fact and used to obfuscate their responsibility to protect public health and the environment. The data is not credible, reliable or representative.

The 2006 draft Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement for LANL (draft LANL SWEIS) and the 1999 LANL SWEIS state that radionuclides have been detected at levels above recommended drinking water standards in Los Alamos County and the City of Santa Fe drinking water wells. Independent contractors for the Department of Energy prepared these documents based on LANL data. The detected radionuclides include americium-241, cobalt-60, cesium-137, plutonium-238, plutonium-239, -240, strontium-90 and tritium.

LANL has known about the presence of these contaminants since the 1999 SWEIS, yet has failed to take the necessary measures to address these issues. In the meantime, contaminants continue to migrate towards Los Alamos County and Santa Fe drinking water wells. The detections are an indication that contaminant plumes have begun to reach the drinking water supplies and LANL computer modeling predicts the same movement. The letter states that the initial findings of contaminants are the first sign of an emerging environmental crisis, as the contaminant levels will continue to rise.

Joni Arends, of CCNS, said "It's been years, and still LANL has little or no information about the plumes of radionuclide and chemical contaminants which are in and approaching our drinking water. We need accurate knowledge in order to resolve the questions. And we need a solution."

On March 20, CCNS sent a letter responding to assertions made by former LANL Environmental Programs Associate Director Andrew Phelps that contaminants are either not present in the regional aquifer or are present at lower levels than those detected in drinking water wells. LANL references additional data to support their claims. The CCNS letter states that LANL relies upon a limited amount of unreliable data rather than conducting a full investigation of the contaminant plumes. For example, Phelps has not provided justification for the discrepancy between the different sets of data and LANL persists in using detection methods that are inappropriate for detection of the specific contaminants.

The CCNS letter states, "We note the reoccurring pattern of behavior in which LANL presents data to the public for comment and, upon receiving critical comments about the data, LANL later dismisses that data as spurious. This is the case in this situation."

The front line of drinking water protection would include a system of reliable monitoring wells at the source; however, LANL does not have such system. The current wells do not produce results that are representative of the groundwater for many reasons, including LANL's use of organic drilling fluids and muds during well construction, which later mask the presence of radionuclides and other contaminants.

Robert H. Gilkeson, Registered Geologist, said, "The nature of the problem is that the LANL response lacks credibility." Gilkeson and George Rice, Groundwater Hydrologist, assisted CCNS in preparing the letter.

In order to protect drinking water supplies, CCNS recommends monthly samples of all drinking water wells using the most sensitive methods for detection, the installation of new characterization and monitoring wells and an independent review of all LANL water data.

CCNS has taken independent steps to get accurate information regarding the extent and nature of the contamination. Based on the data presented in the draft LANL SWEIS, CCNS contacted the City of Santa Fe and the County of Los Alamos to discuss the data. As a result of those meetings, CCNS contacted the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) about additional sampling and analysis of key wells in the public drinking water systems. Sampling took place in late February and early March. The results are expected soon.

The letter and additional documents are available at www.nuclearactive.org.

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