



**DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY**  
Environmental Management Los Alamos Field Office (EM-LA)  
Los Alamos, New Mexico 87544

EMLA-2020-1601-02-001

September 30, 2020

Mr. Kevin Pierard  
Bureau Chief  
Hazardous Waste Bureau  
New Mexico Environment Department  
2905 Rodeo Park Drive East, Building 1  
Santa Fe, NM 87505-6313

Subject: Submittal of the Investigation Report for Chaquehui Canyon Aggregate Area

Dear Mr. Pierard:

Enclosed please find two hard copies with electronic files of the "Investigation Report for Chaquehui Canyon Aggregate Area." This report fulfills fiscal year (FY) 2020 Milestone #15 in Appendix B of the 2016 Compliance Order on Consent (Consent Order), under the Southern External Boundary Campaign. This investigation report (IR) presents the results from the 1148 samples specified in the investigation work plan (IWP). Implementation of the IWP resulted in the excavation of approximately 560 cubic yards of soil and debris. A total of 43 solid waste management units (SWMUs) and areas of concern (AOCs) have been investigated.

Pursuant to Section XXIII.C of the Consent Order, a pre-submission review meeting was held among the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED), the Department of Energy (DOE) Environmental Management Los Alamos Field Office (EM-LA), and Newport News Nuclear BWXT-Los Alamos, LLC, on August 27, 2020, to discuss the investigation results and recommendations for additional field investigations. Impacts to field investigations from the COVID-19 pandemic were also discussed.

On March 31, 2020, EM-LA provided written notification to NMED of a force majeure event caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The written notification was provided pursuant to the requirement in Section XXXII, Force Majeure, of the Consent Order, which states "A Force Majeure shall mean any event arising from causes beyond the control of DOE or its respective agents, contractors, or employees that causes a delay in or prevents the performance of any obligation of DOE under this Consent Order."

As a prudent measure in response to COVID-19 in New Mexico, EM-LA transitioned to Essential Mission Critical Activities (EMCA) status on March 24, 2020. Activities supporting the cleanup mission were limited to those necessary to ensure the safety of the public, our workers, and the environment. As indicated in the written notification, investigation work under the Southern External Boundary Campaign, which includes Chaquehui Canyon Aggregate Area, South Ancho Canyon Aggregate Area, and Lower Water/Indio Canyons Aggregate Area, was not considered EMCA and work ceased on March 24, 2020.

As a result of the COVID-19 fieldwork stop on March 24, 2020, the second round of sampling and remediation activities could not be completed in time to include in the IR. In addition, borehole drilling at Material Disposal Area (MDA) K to investigate potential tritium contamination could not be conducted.

Drilling the first borehole at MDA K is scheduled to start during the first week in October 2020. Investigation results for the tritium borehole investigations will be submitted to NMED in an addendum in the second quarter of FY 2021. The additional sampling, remediation, and confirmation sampling will be conducted as a Phase II investigation.

The COVID-19 impacts to the Chaquehui Canyon Aggregate Area field investigations have delayed completion of fieldwork planned for FY 2020 as a single-phase investigation. Carrying additional fieldwork into FY 2021 has resulted in the decision to develop a Phase II IWP and a Phase II IR. The Phase II IWP and Phase II IR are currently proposed as FY 2021 Appendix B Consent Order milestones, due March 31, 2021, and August 31, 2021, respectively.

If you have any questions, please contact Brenda Bowlby at (360) 930-4353 (brenda.bowlby@em-la.doe.gov) or Cheryl Rodriguez at (505) 414-0450 (cheryl.rodriguez@em.doe.gov).

Sincerely,

**Arturo Duran**

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Arturo Q. Duran  
Compliance and Permitting Manager  
Environmental Management  
Los Alamos Field Office

Enclosures:

1. Two hard copies with electronic files – Investigation Report for Chaquehui Canyon Aggregate Area (EM2020-0305)

CC (letter with hard-copy enclosure[s]):  
Brenda Bowlby, N3B  
Cheryl Rodriguez, EM-LA

CC (letter with CD/DVD enclosure[s]):  
Laurie King, EPA Region 6, Dallas, TX  
Chris Catechis, NMED-DOE-OB  
Steve Yanicak, NMED-DOE-OB  
emla.docs@em.doe.gov  
n3brecords@em-la.doe.gov  
Public Reading Room (EPRR)  
PRS website

CC (letter emailed):

William Alexander, N3B

Pattie Baucom, N3B

Emily Day, N3B

Michael Erickson, N3B

Jeff Holland, N3B

Dwight Hollon, N3B

Kim Lebak, N3B

Joseph Legare, N3B

Dana Lindsay, N3B

Pamela Maestas, N3B

Glenn Morgan, N3B

Joseph Murdock, N3B

Joseph Sena, N3B

M. Lee Bishop, EM-LA

Stephen Hoffman, EM-LA

Kirk D. Lachman, EM-LA

David Nickless, EM-LA

Ben Underwood, EM-LA