10/16/10

The Honorable Dr. Steven Chu, Secretary
Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Chu –

I am writing to express my concern about possible environmental impacts, and the lack of analysis and public discussion of impacts, from the proposed "Nuclear Facility" at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). The Nuclear Facility is part of the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement (CMRR) project.

This proposed semi-underground facility for storing, handling, and processing plutonium would have a big impact on the region. It's one of the largest government projects ever built in New Mexico – and it has no applicable Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The multi-billion dollar project appears to have quietly grown through recent years to the point where local leaders like me are almost completely in the dark about it. I do not believe the DOE proposed Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) can adequately address the substantially significant changes in scope, cost, and design, nor does it allow for adequate public comment, scoping and discussion of alternative solutions.

The project has been delayed for some years already. I understand that there isn't even a preliminary design or projected cost at present. It seems premature to proceed without these. So isn't this a good time to thoroughly and publicly check for better alternatives which may have become available, during the long period when the cost and impacts of this one have grown so much?

Many circumstances surrounding this project have changed since it was proposed. It may not even be needed. It may not be worth the cost. Quicker, safer, and cheaper alternatives may exist.

I therefore respectfully request that the Department of Energy (DOE) prepare a new EIS for the CMRR Nuclear Facility and its alternatives, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and its implementing regulations. It's important to me that this EIS is preceded by the required scoping process, so that my colleagues and I, governmental agencies, tribes, and independent technical experts, can fully participate in the development and discussion of project alternatives and scope of analysis.

It is just as important to stop obligating funds while this analysis is going on. If DOE doesn't stop, what would be the point of conducting an analysis?

As you are aware, NEPA requires federal agencies to fully provide notice and comment opportunities to local governments regarding proposed major federal actions, including allowing them help vet alternatives, and including analysis of the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts

upon the human environment. None of this has happened. And none of these are adequately addressed by the SEIS the public scoping process of which is currently being rushed through with almost no time to sufficiently inform the public about meetings taking place or for the public to research and present viable alternatives.

I want to help DOE reach a sound decision on the proposed Nuclear Facility. A New EIS, with scoping, will facilitate public participation and lead to a better decision.

Sincerely,

Francine Lindberg, M.A., LPCC
Director: The Taos Group, an economic solution based think-tank and,
Coordinator/Facilitator: "Taos To Washington D.C." youth mentorship program

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