



Laboratory development considers environmental impacts

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Whether the Laboratory is constructing a new plutonium facility or simply repaving a parking lot, each new project must be reviewed for its environmental consequences. This mandate comes from the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which has ensured since 1970 that all environmental impacts are considered when activities and projects are planned at Los Alamos.

Those impacts include all aspects of the environment, such as biological resources, socioeconomics, and cultural resources. NEPA staff at the Laboratory review proposed projects to analyze potential environmental impacts and to determine if the activities have existing coverage under current NEPA documents issued by the DOE. If the proposed activities pose no impact to the environment and have been previously evaluated by existing NEPA documents, NEPA staff will approve the proposed activities.

Approximately 1,040 proposed projects were reviewed for NEPA coverage at the Lab in 2015. If projects are not covered under an existing NEPA document, further analysis and documentation, such as an environmental assessment (EA), are required to obtain NEPA coverage.

In 2015, for example, an EA was prepared to evaluate an interim measure to control the chromium plume migration and maintain chromium contamination on Lab property. From this EA, the DOE determined the proposed interim measure to control plume migration would not result in any significant adverse effects to the environment. Another NEPA document completed in January 2015 was a supplement analysis to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Building Replacement Project. This supplemental analysis evaluated and concluded that no significant environmental impacts would occur from proposed changes to the project.

To learn more and to see other articles about how the Laboratory's operations might impact Northern New Mexico, please check out the recently published [Annual Site Environmental Report Summary](#), which details the Lab's commitment to environmental programs.

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