



**Pueblo de San Ildefonso**  
*Office of the Governor*

SI-GC25-037

October 25, 2024

Theodore A Wyka  
Los Alamos Field Office Manger  
National Nuclear Security Administration  
3747 W. Jemez Road  
Los Alamos, NM 87544

Michiko Martin  
Reviewing Official - Regional Forester  
333 Broadway Blvd., SE  
Albuquerque, NM 87102

**RE: Electrical Power Capacity Upgrade (EPCU)**

Dear Mr. Wyka and Mr. Martin:

We are writing in response to the proposed Electrical Power Capacity Upgrade (EPCU) project and request for Consultation Under National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 and Determination of Adverse Effect for the Electrical Capacity Upgrade Project. We have previously written to you regarding the EPCU on November 12, 2022 and February 20, 2024.

The Pueblo remains opposed to the construction of the new EPCU power line on the Caja del Rio as well as on the west side of the Rio Grande where its construction has been minimalized, described only as “ultimately span White Rock Canyon onto DOE/NNSA lands at Los Alamos National Laboratories (LANL) for approximately three miles.” These last three miles of the EPCU are on the Pajarito Plateau, the Pueblo de San Ildefonso Ancestral lands, which at no point in time relinquished its claim to them.

We would like to provide context for the Pueblo de San Ildefonso's comments on the EPCU. To be specific the lands on the Pajarito Plateau currently occupied by LANL are the primary current and Ancestral domain of the Pueblo de San Ildefonso.

The Pueblo de San Ildefonso considers the full extent of the LANL to lie within the Ancestral domain of the Pueblo and considers both documented and undocumented cultural resources within LANL to be the material evidence of the occupation and a movement by our Ancestors who spiritual presence resides within the entire domain. In addition, there are extensive resources

within the laboratory that are not documented but are associated with traditional and ceremonial practices conducted since time immemorial, in the present, and our future.

We understand that despite our opposition to the construction, the environmental review process and the Section 106 process are both designed to eventually enable construction of the line as a fait accompli. Against our better judgement we feel it is necessary to provide additional comments on this process.

The Pueblo de San Ildefonso considers the lands crossed by the lines on the Pajarito Plateau, the proposed Caja del Rio proposed lines, and other surrounding land on a variety of land jurisdictions to be within the Ancestral domain to be a traditional cultural landscape of which the archaeological record forms only a part of the larger meanings and uses.

These lands are a living landscape because the spirits of San Ildefonso Ancestors continue to reside and the San Ildefonso people continue to use the land in cultural practices. LANL's own work documents San Ildefonso as the priority party in all discussions about land use and cultural properties (i.e. *Determination of Ownership and Cultural Affiliation for Human Remains and Culturally Sensitive Objects*, LA-UR-06-6796, September 19, 2006).

Although some of the EPCU lies outside lands within LANL the footprint still occupies lands within the extended ancestral domain of the Pueblo as well as lands within the overlapping domains of other tribal communities. Furthermore, this undertaking is visible and impacts the Ancestral view shed, a Traditional Cultural Property. Although other Tribal communities may make overlapping claims for the lands on the Pajarito Plateau and contiguous areas, to be clear, the Pueblo de San Ildefonso is the primary claimant with strong ties to the Ancestral, archaeological, cultural, and traditional resources.

Further, if new weapons development and construction follows the pattern of other research of the Los Alamos facilities, there will be an increased incidence of cancer. The Pueblo considers this a potential but inevitable tragic consequence of continuing and new research, including the EPCU. While we understand there is no box to check on the Environmental Assessment for this foreseeable result our Pueblo has suffered an unjust and inordinate amount of tragic death through cancers related to radioactive substances.

With regard to Environmental Assessment (EA), we feel that the analysis is incomplete for either side of the river. It is our experience that the Rio Grande corridor provides habitat for endangered, protected and special management species including eagles, other raptors and mammal species such as bighorn sheep and elk. Construction of the new line across the Rio Grande has the potential to adversely affect the habitat without significant mitigation. These wildlife resources are an extension of the ecosystem important to the maintenance of Traditional Pueblo lifeways. In addition, if there are any proposed vegetative treatment or maintenance planned this could cause harm to wildlife and adversely affect water quality. Furthermore, there are associated avoidance behaviors exhibited by wildlife due to transmission lines and their impact on changes to natural habitat, avian electrocution, increased unnatural noise, electrical and magnetic fields.

Moreover, the EA is flawed in its recording of individual sites rather than "seeing" the area as a whole cultural and natural landscape. The divisions of the area under discussion are by

Governmental agency and an archaeologist's determination of a site's boundary. As a result, we would maintain that the inventory of historic properties is incomplete and does not account for the additional non—archaeological cultural components and understanding of the cultural landscape.

As continually demonstrated by San Ildefonso and reaffirmed by archaeological records, we maintain a historic, ongoing, and significant cultural connection to the Water Canyon, White Rock and Caja Del Rio cultural landscapes, including through story, song, prayer, hunting, medicine gathering and pilgrimage. Maintenance and protection of the ecological and spiritual relationships between our Pueblo and this cultural landscape are central to the longevity, maintenance and revitalization of our cultural knowledge, histories, practices, and identity as Pueblo de San Ildefonso people. Protection of this area's natural resources, traditional cultural properties, and sacred sites is necessary to our Pueblos' cultural preservation now and into the future.

The absence of this type of consideration in the EA results from the Tribal Monitors meant to stand-in for meaningful consultation with San Ildefonso cultural leadership who would point out the flaws in using archaeological methodology to make sense about San Ildefonso culture and history. Monitors are part of the archaeological dialog and not how our community has operated for untold millennium. As mentioned above, our culture is not to be interpreted or collected as discrete little parcels but as a whole, particularly as it serves within the entirety of our cultural landscape. As a result, the current EA inadequately analyzes direct and indirect and cumulative impacts of the EPCU construction and maintenance.

The EA is inadequate to access and understand due to the lack of information, literature reviews and archeological field surveys informed by limited Pueblo cultural monitoring are not sufficient to evaluate cultural resources and landscapes eligible for inclusion into the National Register of Historic Places, given the significance of the area as a living traditional cultural landscape for Pueblos.

In addition, given our Pueblo's long association with LANL and the continual disappointments of the LANL taking away increasing amounts of our ability to care for our Ancestral lands, the Pueblo de San Ildefonso remains wary of this large infrastructure project. Moreover, past and current LANL engineering is not preventing or mitigating existing and new infrastructure problems. Therefore, the Pueblo de San Ildefonso remains opposed to the construction of the EPCU because of past experiences as well as the flaccid environmental review process and consultation process both designed to enable the building of the new electrical lines.

The Pueblo de San Ildefonso possesses unique and deep experience in working with the Los Alamos projects from their conception to the present day. The lands were taken from the Pueblo without consent, discussion, or payment. Further, in terms of proximity, San Ildefonso is the closest to Los Alamos and the only American Indian tribe that shares a border with an active nuclear facility. Esteemed Pueblo scholar Alfonso Ortiz confirmed that the present-day northern New Mexico geographical configuration and placement of Native American tribes has been in place for more than half a millennium. This situation is true despite the subsequent depredations of the Spanish and American periods of colonization, and despite the import of more recent euromerican influences there continues to be geographical stability of the San Ildefonso community.

As a result, the Pueblo is the only Native nation that shares a border with an active nuclear facility. There have been numerous documents and assurances and promises that San Ildefonso would have access for use as well as protection and preservation of cultural sites. In the majority of the Pueblo's dealings regarding access and use of sites the LANL has proven to be callous at best but mostly intrusive. LANL holds approximately 1738 cultural sites within their fences and guard stations.

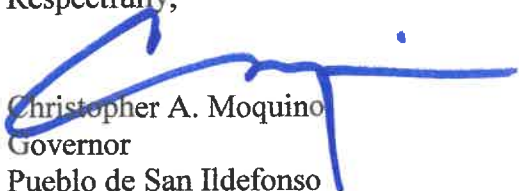
The Pueblo considers itself to be the primary consultation party with priority standing for activities that have the potential to affect resources within LANL over other tribal communities. The Pueblo understands DOE-NNA's and Triad's legal obligation to consult with other tribal communities but when it comes to activities that potentially affect lands on LANL, the Pueblo de San Ildefonso should be the primary consultant.

The intent of the EPCU project is to continue urbanizing and taking over what are our Ancestral and current use Tribal lands. LANL have driven their destructive mission without consideration that it is on never ceded San Ildefonso lands which contain our religious sites and areas. The LANL response is to survey and excavate sites, this documentation interpreted by LANL as a permanent record and all that might be needed before compromising and closing off access to cultural sites. Chimeric documentation does nothing in preserving, protecting, and providing access to these sites for San Ildefonso people and religious leadership.

We look forward to continued engagement between SFNF, DOE NNSA, BLM, and our Pueblo in development of a robust environmental analysis and consultation that implements the Department of Interior and the Department of Agriculture's joint Secretarial Order on Fulfilling the Trust Responsibility to Indian Tribes in the Stewardship of Federal Lands and Water that enjoins the federal government to the principle of stewardship and co-steward of cultural landscapes. Our Pueblo stands ready to ensure the development of environmental analysis that reflects the need for a full environmental impact statement which appropriately incorporates and implements our Pueblo's technical and cultural expertise, guidance, and recommendations to preserve in perpetuity, Pueblo cultural resources and sacred sites in the Caja del Rio, a non-renewable and already heavily-impacted Pueblo cultural landscape.

Many cultural resources and sacred sites impacted by the EPCU are not documented as evidence in State Historic Preservation Office's finding of no adverse effect on cultural resources. We affirm that there is almost no history of federal agencies or state agencies coordinating with the Pueblos on cultural resource surveys on the Pajarito Plateau and within the Caja del Rio. As a result, there exists a void of ethnographic information pertaining to each of the Pueblos' shared and individual Pueblos' unique cultural resources on the landscape.

Respectfully,



Christopher A. Moquino  
Governor  
Pueblo de San Ildefonso

CC: Pueblo de San Ildefonso Tribal Council