

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 10/29/2024 4:00:03 AM

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Comments: Dear Reviewing Official, Michiko Martin, Regional Forester:

The Department of Energy (DOE), National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) did not disclose the active negotiations for a viable alternative to the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) Electrical Power Capacity Upgrade (EPCU) Project that was not considered in the draft Environmental Assessment (EA) as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The undisclosed alternative is called the Foxtail Flats Solar and Battery Energy Storage System (Foxtail Flats + BESS), which would bring a similar electrical power capacity upgrade (EPCU) project to Los Alamos using the Public Service Company of New Mexico (PNM) transmission lines from San Juan County. The solar field is located near the retired and recently demolished San Juan Generating Station.

The new information requires the draft EA to be withdrawn. The Foxtail Flats + BESS project was not considered as an alternative to the Los Alamos National Laboratory Electrical Power Capacity Upgrade (EPCU) Project, DOE/EA-2199, LA-UR-23-32753, November 2023. Nevertheless, it is a similar project, i.e. transmission of energy to LANL.

LANL can and should pursue an alternative to yet another transmission line through the Caja del Rio, an area that has long held immense value and even revered as sacred to nearby Tribal and Hispanic communities.

In summary, DOE and the NNSA have failed to demonstrate the need for the 173 MW LANL EPCU Project to install new electrical line infrastructure to cross the Caja del Rio, the Rio Grande and the Pajarito Plateau. As such, this new information requires the federal agencies to prepare a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for review and comment by the public.

Thank you for your consideration,

Cloe Dickson