

Council requests LANL impact statement

By Matthew van Buren

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The Taos Town Council is calling for a new environmental impact statement before a plutonium processing plant can be constructed at the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL).

According to a resolution the council unanimously approved Tuesday (Jan. 25), Taos lies within the \$4.5 billion Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement Nuclear Facility's impact area.

"Our community and our neighbors deserve to be apprised of the potential adverse effects of removing and relocating unconsolidated volcanic ash from a 125-foot-deep pit, the thousands of heavy truck loads required to remove the ash, and bringing 350,000 cubic yards of concrete to the location to fill the pit," the resolution states. The resolution also states a plutonium plant could affect tourism, local governments and pueblos have not been given opportunities to comment, and "our firefighters, first responders and hospitals are not equipped" to handle an accidental spill.

"Only a new, full and complete Environmental Impact Statement would provide the public with enough information about the current proposal, one which only marginally resembles the proposal under which a 2003 EIS was undertaken, and which does not reflect the 10fold increase in cost or the need for stabilization against seismic disturbances, all of which are major factors which in effect change the entire nature of the proposed project," the resolution states.

Several members of the public spoke in favor of the resolution and applauded when the council approved it. Marilyn Hoff said plutonium is a dangerous substance, and she is worried about the effects an earthquake could have on the proposed facility in the "suspect terrain" of the Jemez Mountains. No speakers opposed the action.

Following the public comment, the council voted 4-0 to approve the resolution with little discussion other than voicing support for the impact statement, which the resolution urges be conducted by the Department of Energy, the National Nuclear Security Administration and LANL.