



# Plans and Practices for Groundwater Protection at the Los Alamos National Laboratory: Final Report

*National Research Council, Division on Earth and Life Studies, Nuclear and Radiation Studies Board, Committee for the Technical Assessment of Environmental Programs at the Los Alamos National Laboratory*

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The world's first nuclear bomb was developed in 1954 at a site near the town of Los Alamos, New Mexico. Designated as the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) in 1981, the 40-square-mile site is today operated by Los Alamos National Security LLC under contract to the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). Like other sites in the nation's nuclear weapons complex, the LANL site harbors a legacy of radioactive waste and environmental contamination. Radioactive materials and chemical contaminants have been detected in some portions of the groundwater beneath the site.

Under authority of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the State of New Mexico regulates protection of its water resources through the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED). In 1995 NMED found LANL's groundwater monitoring program to be inadequate. Consequently LANL conducted a detailed workplan to characterize the site's hydrogeology in order to develop an effective monitoring program.

The study described in *Plans and Practices for Groundwater Protection at the Los Alamos National Laboratory: Final Report* was initially requested by NNSA, which turned to the National Academies for technical advice and recommendations regarding several aspects of LANL's groundwater protection program. The DOE Office of Environmental Management funded the study. The study came approximately at the juncture between completion of LANL's hydrogeologic workplan and initial development of a sitewide monitoring plan.

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