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## Headline News

### Airport landfill plan progresses

ROGER SNODGRASS, roger@lamonitor.com, Monitor Assistant Editor

Concerns about covering and stabilizing two old landfills at the Los Alamos Airport may be nearing resolution under a \$5.2 million closure recommendation finalized by the Department of Energy last week.

A Finding of No Significant Impact, the product of several public reviews, brings the 93-acres closer to the point that ownership can be conveyed to the county.

Technically, the finding concludes that there would be no unacceptable environmental impacts from several typical corrective approaches that were studied.

In effect, the document proposes a "preferred alternative," which would leave the current waste in place, install a MatCon asphalt cover and a retaining wall at the main landfill and a soil and vegetative cover known as an evapotranspiration (ET) cover over a smaller debris disposal area.

MatCon stands for Modified Asphalt Technology for Waste Containment, a trademarked system that minimizes water flowing through the waste.

ET systems also allow water to discharge through evaporation from the soil and the natural transpiration from plants, rather than infiltrate through the waste and into the deeper groundwater.

An earlier proposal called for collecting and capping the solid waste in a high berm, but drew criticism from airport and pilot interests, whose objections were supported by county government and the Federal Aviation Administration.

"We used the NEPA process to facilitate public input into what is a voluntary corrective action," said Elizabeth Withers, the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) officer at the National Nuclear Security Administration's Los Alamos Site Office.

She said voluntary corrective measures are like "stepping up to the plate," and doing something without being required to do it under a regulatory compliance order.

David Carroll, who represents the Airplane Owners and Pilots Association, said the basic plan to stabilize everything and construct a retaining wall was satisfactory.

"That would make everybody happy," he said, but there was still one

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problem, having to do with the future use of the land, where the airport contemplates installing tie-downs and hangars.

Carroll's concern was that once the MatCon was installed, it could not be breached to construct the footings and substructures that would be needed.

Withers said a meeting was taking place today to review the plan and would cover the question of the pylons.

She said the project manager expects to see a resolution that would include a floating concrete cover with subsurface footing reinforced with concrete for the hanger area. ))

"The concerns are being addressed," she said. "They will be engineered into the design of the cover."

The preferred course of action can be completed in about 12 months. ✓


A second alternative, estimated to cost \$4 million, involved the MatCon cover in conjunction with a rock armor cover on the eastern slope.

A third alternative, complete excavation of the main landfill would mean digging up and hauling out 680,400 cubic yards of material. >

The material would have to be driven to a licensed solid waste facility, such as the one in Rio Rancho, requiring 75,600 round trips, or even twice that number, depending on the contractor and other variables.

That job, with all its attendant complications for traffic, could cost about \$30.4 million and take as long as five years to finish. !!

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