

## 6. Terrestrial Monitoring

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Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory monitors several aspects of the terrestrial environment. LLNL measures the radioactivity present in soil, vegetation, and wine, and the absorbed gamma radiation dose at ground-level receptors from terrestrial and atmospheric sources. LLNL also monitors the abundance and distribution of rare plants and wildlife, and tracks the health of special habitats.

The LLNL terrestrial radioactivity monitoring program is designed to measure any changes in environmental levels of radioactivity. All monitoring activities follow U.S. DOE guidance criteria. On-site monitoring activities detect radioactivity released from LLNL that may contribute to radiological dose to the public or to biota; monitoring at distant locations not impacted by LLNL operations detects naturally occurring background radiation.

Terrestrial pathways from LLNL operations leading to potential radiological dose to the public include resuspension of soils, infiltration of constituents of runoff water through arroyos to groundwater, ingestion of locally grown foodstuffs, and external exposure to contaminated surfaces and radioactivity in air. Wine is the most important agricultural product in the Livermore Valley, representing a multi-million dollar annual industry, based on sales, and is sampled annually for tritium analysis. Potential ingestion doses are calculated from measured concentrations in vegetation and wine; doses from exposure to ground-level external radiation are obtained directly from thermoluminescent dosimeters (TLDs) deployed for environmental radiation monitoring. Potential dose to biota (see **Chapter 7**) is calculated using a screening model that requires knowledge of radionuclide concentrations in soils and surface water.

Sampling for all media is conducted according to written, standardized procedures summarized in Gallegos (2009).

In addition to terrestrial radioactivity monitoring, LLNL monitors the abundance, distribution, and ecological requirements of plant and wildlife species, and conducts research relevant to the protection of rare plants and animals. Monitoring and research of biota on LLNL property is conducted to ensure compliance with requirements of the U.S. Endangered Species Act, the California Endangered Species Act, the Eagle Protection Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and other applicable regulations as they pertain to endangered, threatened, and other special status species, their habitats, and designated critical habitats that exist at both LLNL sites.

### 6.1 Soil Monitoring

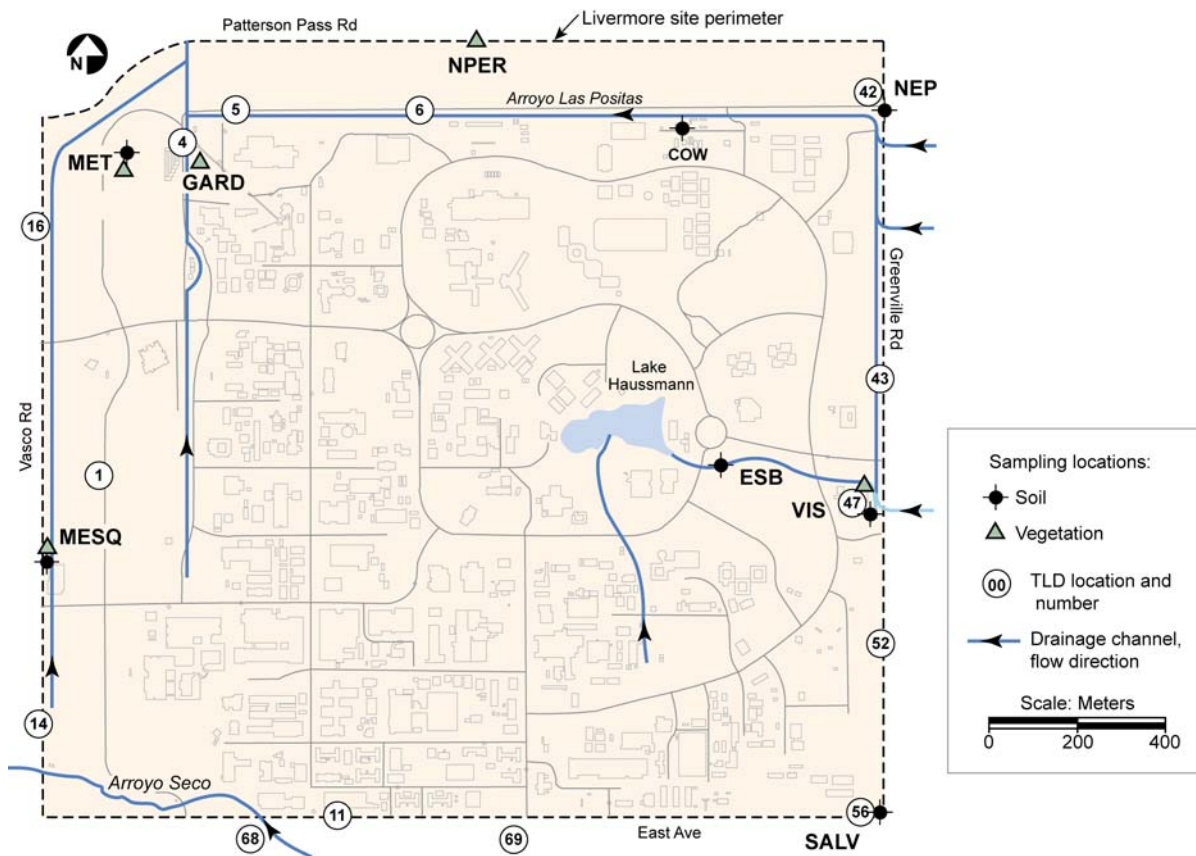
The number of soil sampling locations are as follows:

Livermore site—7 (see **Figure 6-1**)

Livermore Valley—10, including 3 at the LWRP (see **Figure 6-2**)

Site 300—12 (see **Figure 6-3**)

## 6. Terrestrial Monitoring



**Figure 6-1.** Soil and vegetation sampling locations and TLD locations, Livermore site, 2009.

These locations were selected to represent background concentrations (distant locations unlikely to be affected by LLNL operations) as well as areas with the potential to be affected by LLNL operations. Sampling locations also include areas with known contaminants, such as the LWRP and around explosives testing areas at Site 300.

Surface soil samples are collected from the top 5 cm of soil because aerial deposition is the primary pathway for potential contamination, and resuspension of materials from the surface into the air is the primary exposure pathway to nearby human populations. Two 1-m squares are chosen from which to collect the sample. Each sample is a composite consisting of 10 subsamples that are collected at the corners and center of each square by an 8.25-cm-diameter, stainless-steel core sampler.

Additional samples are collected for tritium, gross alpha, gross beta, and metals analyses. At one of the subsample locations, a 15-cm deep sample is taken for tritium analysis; this deeper sample is necessary to obtain sufficient water in the sample for tritium analysis. Vadose zone samples are collected at the same location as the tritium subsample but at increased depths. A 45- to 65-cm deep sample is also collected at location ESB for analysis for PCBs.

6. Terrestrial Monitoring

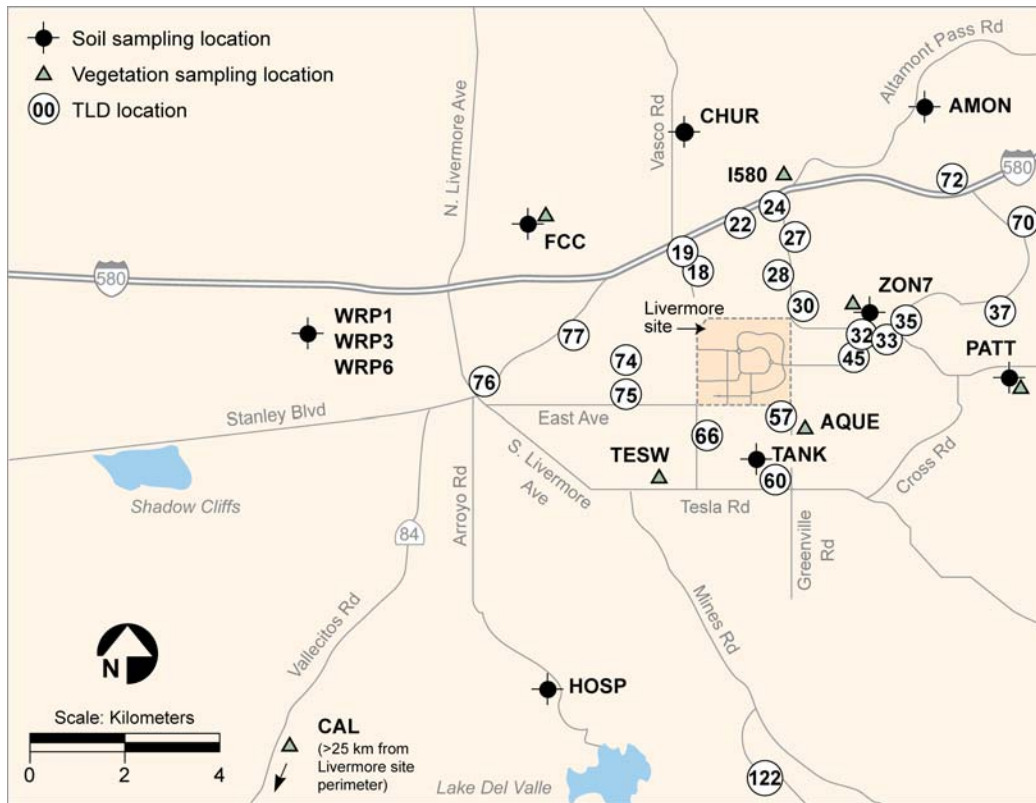


Figure 6-2. Soil and vegetation sampling locations and TLD locations, Livermore Valley, 2009.

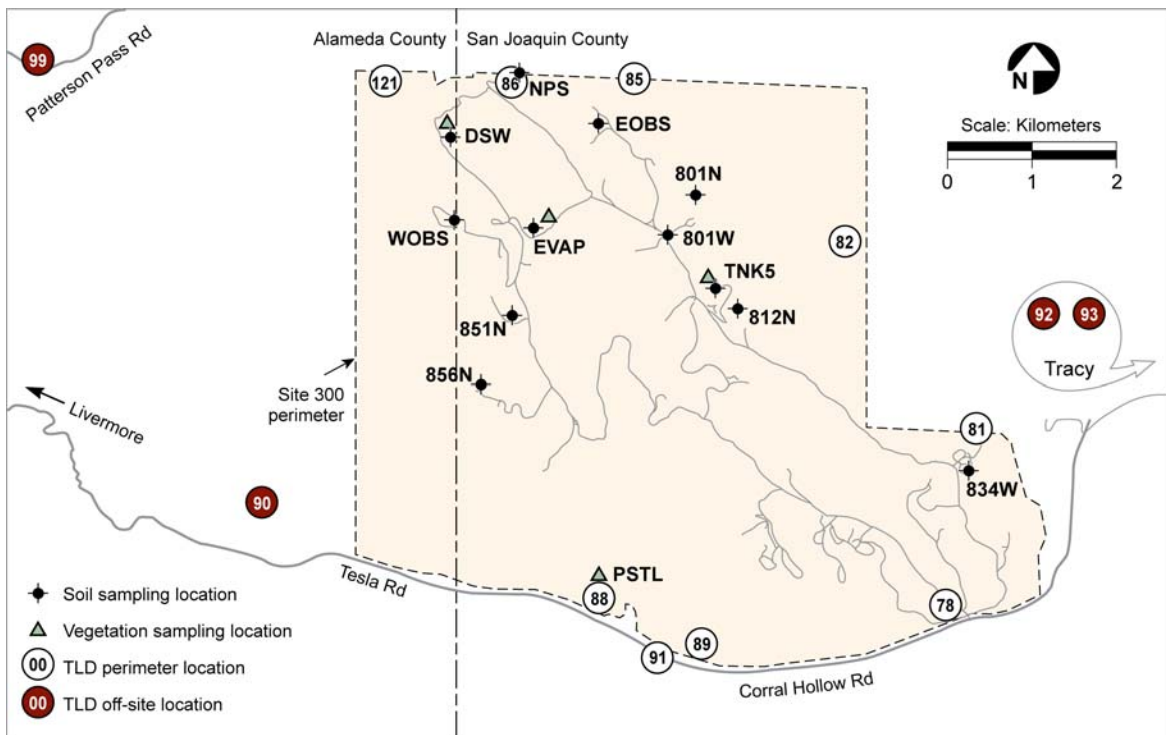


Figure 6-3. Soil and vegetation sampling locations and TLD locations, Site 300 and off-site, 2009.

## 6. Terrestrial Monitoring

In 2009, surface soil samples in the Livermore Valley were analyzed for plutonium and gamma-emitting radionuclides; samples at selected locations were analyzed for tritium, gross alpha, and gross beta. Samples from Site 300 were analyzed for gamma-emitting radionuclides and beryllium.

Prior to radiochemical analysis, the surface soil is dried, sieved, ground, and homogenized. The plutonium content of a 100-g sample aliquot is determined by alpha spectrometry. Other sample aliquots (300 g) are analyzed by gamma spectrometry using a high-purity germanium (HPGe) detector for 47 radionuclides, including fission products, activation products from neutron interactions on steel, actinides, and natural products. Tritium is analyzed by liquid scintillation counting. For beryllium, 10-g subsamples are analyzed by atomic emission spectrometry. Standard EPA methods are used to analyze soil samples for PCBs.

### 6.1.1 Radiological Monitoring Results

The 2009 data on the concentrations of radionuclides in surface soil from the Livermore Valley sampling locations are provided in **Appendix A, Section A.8**.

The concentrations and distributions of all observed radionuclides in soil for 2009 are within the ranges reported in previous years and generally reflect worldwide fallout and naturally occurring concentrations. Slightly higher values at and near the Livermore site have been attributed to historical operations (Silver et al. 1974), including the operation of solar evaporators for plutonium-containing liquid waste in the southeast quadrant of the site. LLNL ceased operating the solar evaporators in 1976 and no longer engages in any other open-air treatment of plutonium-containing waste. Sampling at location ESB, which is in the drainage area for the southeast quadrant of the Livermore site, shows the effects of the historical operation of solar evaporators. The measured value for plutonium-239+240 at this location in 2009 was 2.0 mBq/dry g ( $5.4 \times 10^{-2}$  pCi/dry g). Elevated levels of plutonium-239+240 resulting from an estimated  $1.2 \times 10^9$  Bq (32 mCi) plutonium release to the sanitary sewer in 1967 and earlier releases were again detected at LWRP sampling locations in 2009. The highest detected plutonium-239+240 value at the LWRP in 2009 was 7.8 mBq/dry g ( $2.1 \times 10^{-1}$  pCi/dry g). In addition, americium-241 was detected in one LWRP sample at a concentration of 4.3 mBq/dry g ( $1.1 \times 10^{-1}$  pCi/dry g) and was most likely caused by the natural radiological decay of the trace concentrations of plutonium-241 that were present in these historical releases to the sewer.

The highest detected value for tritium in 2009 (5.0 Bq/L [135 pCi/L]) was at location ESB, which is downwind of the Tritium Facility. This value is consistent with measured tritium emissions associated with the Tritium Facility's operations, as described in **Chapter 4**. All tritium concentrations were within the range of previous data.

The soils data for Site 300 for 2009 are provided in **Appendix A, Section A.8**. The concentrations and the distributions of all radionuclides observed in Site 300 soil for 2009 lie within the ranges reported in all years since monitoring began. At 10 of the 12 sampling locations, the ratio of uranium-235 to uranium-238 reflects the natural ratio of 0.00725. There is significant uncertainty in calculating the ratio, however, due to the difficulty of measuring low

activities of uranium-238 by gamma spectrometry. The highest measured values for uranium-235 and uranium-238 in a single sample were 0.23 µg/g (0.018 Bq/g or 0.5 pCi/g) and 110 µg/g (1.4 Bq/g or 37 pCi/g), respectively. The uranium-235 to uranium-238 ratio in this sample is 0.0021, which at the levels of uncertainty associated with the analysis equals the ratio for depleted uranium of 0.002. Such values at Site 300 result from the use of depleted uranium in explosive experiments.

### 6.1.2 Nonradiological Monitoring Results

Nonradiological monitoring is limited to constituents of concern such as PCBs and beryllium. Samples taken at the Livermore site location ESB are analyzed for PCBs, and samples from Site 300 locations are analyzed for beryllium.

Aroclor 1260, a PCB, has been detected at location ESB since surveillance for PCBs began at this location in 2000. In 2009, samples analyzed for PCBs were found to be below regulatory reporting limits. The presence of PCBs suggests residual low-level contamination from the 1984 excavation of the former East Traffic Circle landfill (see **Chapter 5**). The previously detected concentrations are below the federal and state hazardous waste limits. LLNL will continue to consistently monitor for the next three years, unless the results continue to be below the regulatory reporting limits, at which time the need for PCB monitoring will be reassessed.

Beryllium results for soils at Site 300 were within the ranges reported since sampling began in 1991. The highest value in 2009, 3.1 mg/kg, was found in an area that has historically been used for explosives testing. This value is much lower than the 110 mg/kg detected in 2003. The differing results reflect the particulate nature of the contamination.

### 6.1.3 Environmental Impact on Soil

#### 6.1.3.1 Livermore Site

Routine surface soil sample analyses indicate that the impact of LLNL operations on this medium in 2009 has not changed from previous years and remains insignificant. Most analytes of interest or concern were detected at background concentrations or in trace amounts or could not be measured above detection limits.

The highest value for plutonium-239+240 in 2009 (7.8 mBq/dry g [0.21 pCi/dry g]), measured at LWRP, is 1.6% of the National Council on Radiation Protection (NCRP) recommended screening limit of 470 mBq/g (12.7 pCi/g) for property used for commercial purposes (NCRP 1999).

LLNL has investigated the presence of radionuclides in local soils frequently over the years including possible impacts of the distribution to the public of sludge contaminated by the 1967 plutonium release (see Table 6-5 in the *Environmental Report 2006* [Mathews et al. 2007] for a list of previous studies). The studies have consistently shown that the concentrations of radionuclides in local soils are below levels of health concern. In fact, the concentrations are of such low levels of health concern that the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry

## 6. Terrestrial Monitoring

(ATSDR) (2003) strongly recommended against further study of local soils for the purpose of identifying locations where plutonium-contaminated sludge from the 1967 release may remain.

### 6.1.3.2 Site 300

The concentrations of radionuclides and beryllium detected in soil samples collected at Site 300 in 2009 are within the range of previous data and are generally representative of background or naturally occurring levels. The uranium-235/uranium-238 ratios that are indicative of depleted uranium occurred near the firing tables. They result from the fraction of the firing table operations that disperse depleted uranium. The highest measured uranium-238 concentration was 110 µg/g (1.4Bq/g or 37 pCi/g) and was well below the NCRP-recommended screening level for commercial sites (313 µg/g [3.9 Bq/g or 105 pCi/g]). These values occurred near Bunker 812 and are a result of historic operations at that location. In 2008, a Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study was submitted for the Building 812 operating unit (OU) (Taffet et al. 2008). This Investigation/Feasibility Study specifies the nature and extent of contamination, risk assessment, and remedial alternatives for CERCLA cleanup of the site (see **Chapter 8**). Cleanup remedies to address soil and groundwater contamination in the Building 812 OU are being negotiated with the regulatory agencies.

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## 6.2 Vegetation and Foodstuff Monitoring

Vegetation sampling locations at the Livermore site (see **Figure 6-1**) and in the Livermore Valley (see **Figure 6-2**) are divided for comparison into the following three groups:

- Near locations (AQUE, GARD, MESQ, NPER, MET, and VIS) are on-site or less than 1 km from the Livermore site perimeter.
- Intermediate locations (I580, PATT, TESW, and ZON7) are in the Livermore Valley and 1 to 5 km from the Livermore site perimeter.
- Far locations (FCC and CAL) are more than 5 km from the Livermore site perimeter; FCC is about 5 km away and CAL is more than 25 km away. Both locations are generally upwind of the Livermore site.

Tritium in vegetation due to LLNL operations is most likely to be detected at the Near and Intermediate locations and is highly unlikely to be detected at the Far locations.

Site 300 has four monitoring locations for vegetation (PSTL, TNK5, DSW, and EVAP) (see **Figure 6-3**). Vegetation at locations DSW and EVAP exhibit variable tritium concentrations due to occasional uptake of contaminated groundwater by the roots. At the other two locations, TNK5 and PSTL, the only likely potential source of tritium uptake is the atmosphere, although groundwater in the vicinity of PSTL is contaminated with low levels of tritium.

Vegetation is sampled and analyzed quarterly. Water is extracted from vegetation by freeze-drying and analyzed for tritiated water (HTO) using liquid scintillation techniques.

Wines for sampling in 2009 were purchased from a supermarket in Livermore. The wines represent the Livermore Valley, two other regions of California, and the Rhone Valley in France. Wines were prepared for sampling using a method that separates the water fraction from the other components of the wine and were analyzed using an ultra-low-level scintillation counter.

### 6.2.1 Vegetation Monitoring Results

Median and mean concentrations of tritium in vegetation based on samples collected at the Livermore site, in the Livermore Valley, and Site 300 in 2009 are shown in **Table 6-1**. (See **Appendix A, Section A.9**, for quarterly tritium concentrations in plant water). The highest mean tritium concentration for 2009 was 13 Bq/L at the Near location MESQ located on the west-central perimeter of the Livermore site. For Site 300, the highest mean concentration for 2009 was 90 Bq/L at EVAP located in an area where the groundwater is contaminated with tritium.

Median concentrations of tritium in vegetation at sampling locations at the Livermore site and in the Livermore Valley have decreased noticeably since 1989 (see **Figure 6-4**). Median concentrations at the Far locations have been below the detection limit of approximately 2.0 Bq/L since 1993. Median concentrations at the Intermediate locations have been below the detection limit since 1998, except in 2002 when the median concentration was 2.3 Bq/L. Median concentrations at the near locations have been at or slightly above the detection limit since 2003.

At Site 300, the median concentrations of tritium in vegetation at locations DSW, PSTL, and TNK5 were below detection limit. The median concentration of tritium in vegetation at EVAP was 4.6 Bq/L.

### 6.2.2 Wine Monitoring Results

Tritium concentrations in wines purchased in 2009 are shown in **Table 6-2**. The highest concentration in a Livermore Valley wine is 5.7 Bq/L (150 pCi/L) from a wine made from grapes harvested in 2006. The highest concentration in a California (other than the Livermore Valley) wine is 270 Bq/L (7300 pCi/L) from a wine made from grapes harvested in 2006. The highest concentration in a Rhone Valley (France) wine is 3.8 Bq/L (100 pCi/L) from a wine made from grapes harvested in 2007.

Analysis of the wines purchased annually since 1977 have demonstrated the following relationship between the Livermore Valley, California, and the Rhone Valley wines: Tritium concentrations in the Rhone Valley wines are typically higher than tritium concentrations in the Livermore Valley wines. Tritium concentrations in the California (other than the Livermore Valley) wines are typically lower than tritium concentrations in the Livermore Valley wines. However, one of the two California wines sampled in 2008 did not follow this relationship and contained a higher level of tritium (320 Bq/l) than in wines sampled in past years. To further investigate the much higher level of tritium, the same wine (i.e., the same winery, vintage and type of wine) was purchased and analyzed in 2009. The results show a tritium level (270 Bq/L) similar to the level presented in the *Environmental Report 2008*.

## 6. Terrestrial Monitoring

**Table 6-1.** Median and mean concentrations of tritium in plant water for the Livermore site, Livermore Valley, and Site 300 sampled in 2009. The table includes mean annual ingestion doses calculated for 2009.

Sampling locations		Concentration of tritium in plant water (Bq/L)		Mean annual ingestion dose <sup>(a)</sup> (nSv/y)
		Median	Mean	
NEAR (on-site or <1 km from Livermore site perimeter)	AQUE	4.5	4.2	21
	GARD	2.5	2.5	12
	MESQ	5.6	13	64
	MET	3.8	3.8	19
	NPER	4.4	4.9	24
	VIS	5.3	5.8	28
INTERMEDIATE (1–5 km from Livermore site perimeter)	I580	4.6	4.4	22
	PATT	0.66	0.73	<10 <sup>(b)</sup>
	TESW	1.6	1.8	<10 <sup>(b)</sup>
	ZON7	1.7	2.2	11
FAR (>5 km from Livermore site perimeter)	CAL	0.5	0.46	<10 <sup>(b)</sup>
	FCC	0.86	0.72	<10 <sup>(b)</sup>
Site 300	DSW <sup>(c)</sup>	0.64	0.8	(d)
	EVAP <sup>(c)</sup>	4.6	90	(d)
	PSTL	0.46	0.51	(d)
	TNK5	0.57	0.58	(d)

(a) Ingestion dose is based on conservative assumptions that an adult's diet is exclusively vegetables with this tritium concentration, and that meat and milk are derived from livestock fed on grasses with the same concentration of tritium. See **Table 6-3**.

(b) When concentrations are less than the detection limit (about 2.0 Bq/L), doses can only be estimated as being less than the dose at that concentration.

(c) Plants at these locations are rooted in areas of known subsurface contamination.

(d) Dose is not calculated because there is no pathway to dose to the public.

The Livermore Valley wines represent vintages from 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007, and 2008; the California wines represent vintages from 2006 and 2007; and the Rhone Valley wines represent vintage from 2007. Tritium concentrations must be decay-corrected to the year of harvest to correlate with tritium concentrations in air and soil to which the grape was exposed. In 2009, decay-corrected concentrations for Livermore Valley wine samples ranged from 0.15 to 6.9 Bq/L; for the two California wine samples, 330 and 0.66 Bq/L; and for the two Rhone Valley wine samples, 1.0 and 5.0 Bq/L.



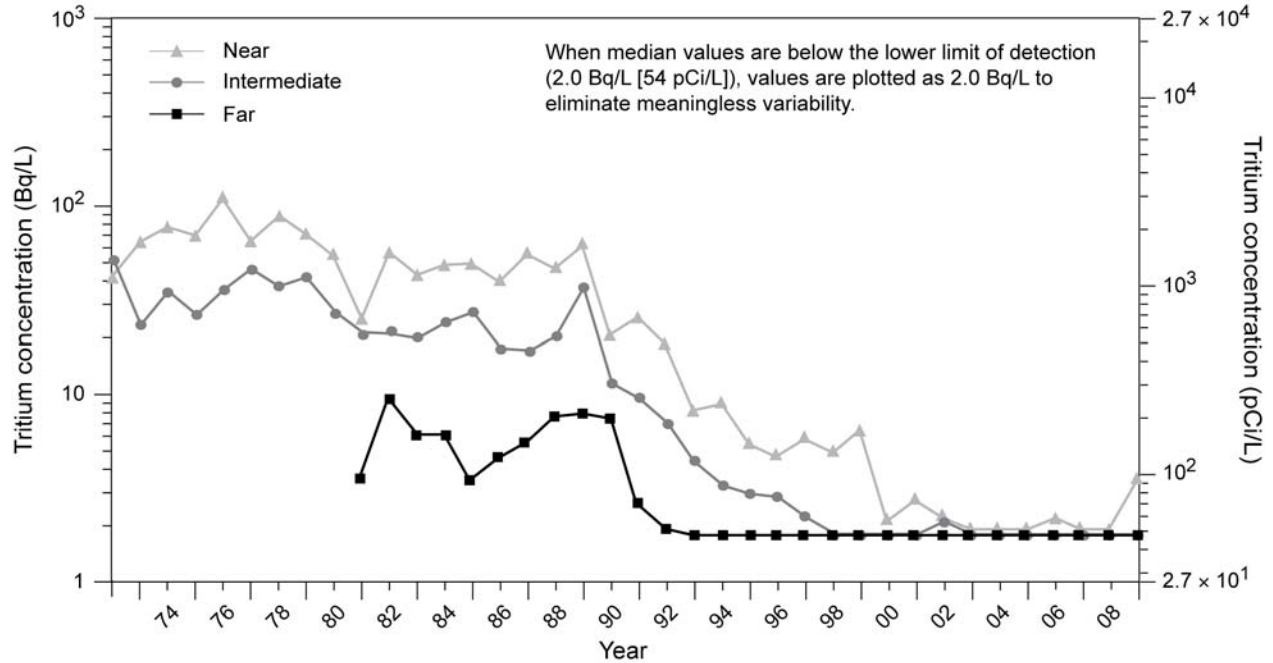


Figure 6-4. Median tritium concentrations in Livermore site and Livermore Valley plant water samples, 1972 to 2009.

Table 6-2. Tritium in retail wine, 2009<sup>(a,b)</sup>

Sample	Concentration by area of production (Bq/L)		
	Livermore Valley	California	Europe
1	5.7 ± 1.8	0.57 ± 1.6	0.79 ± 1.6
2	1.7 ± 1.6	270 ± 6.3	3.8 ± 1.7
3	0.11 ± 1.6		
4	1.3 ± 1.6		
5	3.3 ± 1.7		
6	2.2 ± 1.6		
Dose (nSv/y) <sup>(c)</sup>	6.9	330	4.6

- (a) Radioactivities are reported here as the measured concentration and an uncertainty ( $\pm 2\sigma$  counting error).
- (b) Wines from a variety of vintages were purchased and analyzed for the 2009 sampling. Concentrations are those measured in April 2010.
- (c) Calculated based on consumption of 52 L wine per year at maximum concentration. Doses account for contribution of OBT as well as of HTO.

## 6. Terrestrial Monitoring

### 6.2.3 Environmental Impact on Vegetation and Wine

#### 6.2.3.1 Vegetation

Hypothetical annual ingestion doses for mean concentrations of tritium in vegetation are shown in **Table 6-1**. These hypothetical doses, from ingestion of HTO in vegetables, milk, and meat, were calculated from annual mean measured concentrations of HTO in vegetation using the transfer factors from **Table 6-3** based on U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Regulatory Guide 1.109 (U.S. NRC 1977). The hypothetical annual ingestion dose, based on the highest observed mean HTO concentration in vegetation for 2009, was 64 nSv (6.4  $\mu$ rem).

**Table 6-3.** Bulk transfer factors used to calculate inhalation and ingestion doses (in  $\mu$ Sv) from measured concentrations in air, vegetation, and drinking water

Exposure pathway	Bulk transfer factors <sup>(a)</sup> times observed mean concentrations
Inhalation and skin absorption	0.21 x concentration in air (Bq/m <sup>3</sup> )
Drinking water	0.013 x concentration in drinking water (Bq/L)
Food ingestion	0.0049 x concentration in vegetation (Bq/kg); factor obtained by summing contributions of 0.0011 for vegetables, 0.0011 for meat and 0.0027 for milk

(a) See Sanchez et al. (2003), Appendix C, for the derivation of bulk transfer factors.

Doses calculated based on Regulatory Guide 1.109 neglect the contribution from organically bound tritium (OBT). However, according to a panel of tritium experts, “the dose from OBT that is ingested in food may increase the dose attributed to tritium by not more than a factor of two, and in most cases by a factor much less than this” (ATSDR 2002, p. 27). Thus, the maximum estimated ingestion dose from LLNL operations for 2009, including OBT, is 128 nSv/y (12.8  $\mu$ rem/y). This maximum dose is about 1/23,000 of the average annual background dose in the United States from all natural sources and about 1/79 the dose from a panoramic dental x-ray.

Ingestion doses of Site 300 vegetation were not calculated because neither people nor livestock ingest vegetation at Site 300.

#### 6.2.3.2 Wine

For Livermore Valley wines purchased in 2009, the highest concentration of tritium (5.7 Bq/L [150 pCi/L]) was just 0.77% of the EPA’s standard for maximal permissible level of tritium in drinking water (740 Bq/L [20,000 pCi/L]). Drinking one liter per day of the Livermore Valley wine with the highest concentration purchased in 2009 would have resulted in a dose of 49 nSv/y (4.9  $\mu$ rem/y). A more realistic dose estimate, based on moderate drinking (one liter per week)<sup>(1)</sup> at the mean of the Livermore Valley wine concentrations (2.4 Bq/L [64 pCi/L]) would have been 2.9 nSv/y (0.29  $\mu$ rem/y). Both doses explicitly account for the added contribution of OBT.<sup>(2)</sup>

(1) Moderate consumption is higher than the average consumption of wine in California (15.7 L/yr) (Avalos 2005).

(2) Dose from wine was calculated based on the measured concentration of HTO multiplied by 1.3 to account for the potential contribution of OBT that was removed so that the tritium in wine could be counted using liquid scintillation counting. Dose coefficients for HTO and OBT are those of the International Commission on Radiological Protection (1996).

The potential dose from drinking Livermore Valley wines in 2009, including the contribution of OBT, even at the high consumption rate of one liter per day, and the highest observed concentration, would be about 1/210 of a single dose from a panoramic dental x-ray.

### 6.3 Ambient Radiation Monitoring

LLNL's ambient radiation monitoring program is designed to monitor for any changes in the natural radiation field that may be attributable to LLNL operations. By sampling at enough locations in the surrounding community, the variance in the natural background from season to season and the variance from location to location is measured and compared to a five-year trend. The long-term trend analysis allows the radiation field effects from operations to be readily recognized. Although there may be short-term fluctuations, evaluation of running long-term averages substantiates that short-term fluctuations are inconsequential and the long-term averages tend to smooth the effects of uncontrollable variance due to seasonal effects.

#### 6.3.1 Methods and Reporting

Exposure to external radiation is measured by correlating the interaction of ionizing energy with its effect on matter that absorbs it. LLNL uses the Panasonic UD-814AS1 TLD, which contains three crystal elements of thulium-activated calcium sulfate ( $\text{CaSO}_4:\text{Tm}$ ), to measure environmental gamma exposure. The TLD measurements are corrected in the following way for reporting: the results of the TLD measurement process are normalized to 90-day quarters from their actual exposure period, and the measurement units are converted from absorbed exposure units to reported dose units. These corrections allow the TLDs measurements to be representative of external exposure to the public at these sample locations. Comparisons are made for LLNL perimeter locations to those of the Livermore Valley (background location) for the purposes of determining an elevated radiation field. This is similarly done for Site 300 and its nearby locations.

TLD crystals absorb ionizing energy by trapping this energy. This is accomplished by a solid-state physical process in which electron-hole (vacancy) pairs are created in the crystal lattice, trapping this absorbed energy in the crystal's excited state. The absorbed energy released in the form of light emission upon heating in the reading process is proportional to the TLD's absorbed dose. Comparative dose is reported relative to the calibrated standard of cesium-137 gamma energy of 662 keV. The calculated result of the TLD exposure is then reported in the SI unit of sievert (Sv) from the measured dose in milliroentgen (mR).

To compare LLNL dose contributions with the natural background, the analysis is divided into three groups:

- comparison of the average quarterly dose (mSv) for the Livermore site, Livermore Valley, and Site 300 locations for the five-year period from 2005 to 2009
- comparison of the average quarterly dose (mSv) for the Livermore site and Livermore Valley locations in 2009

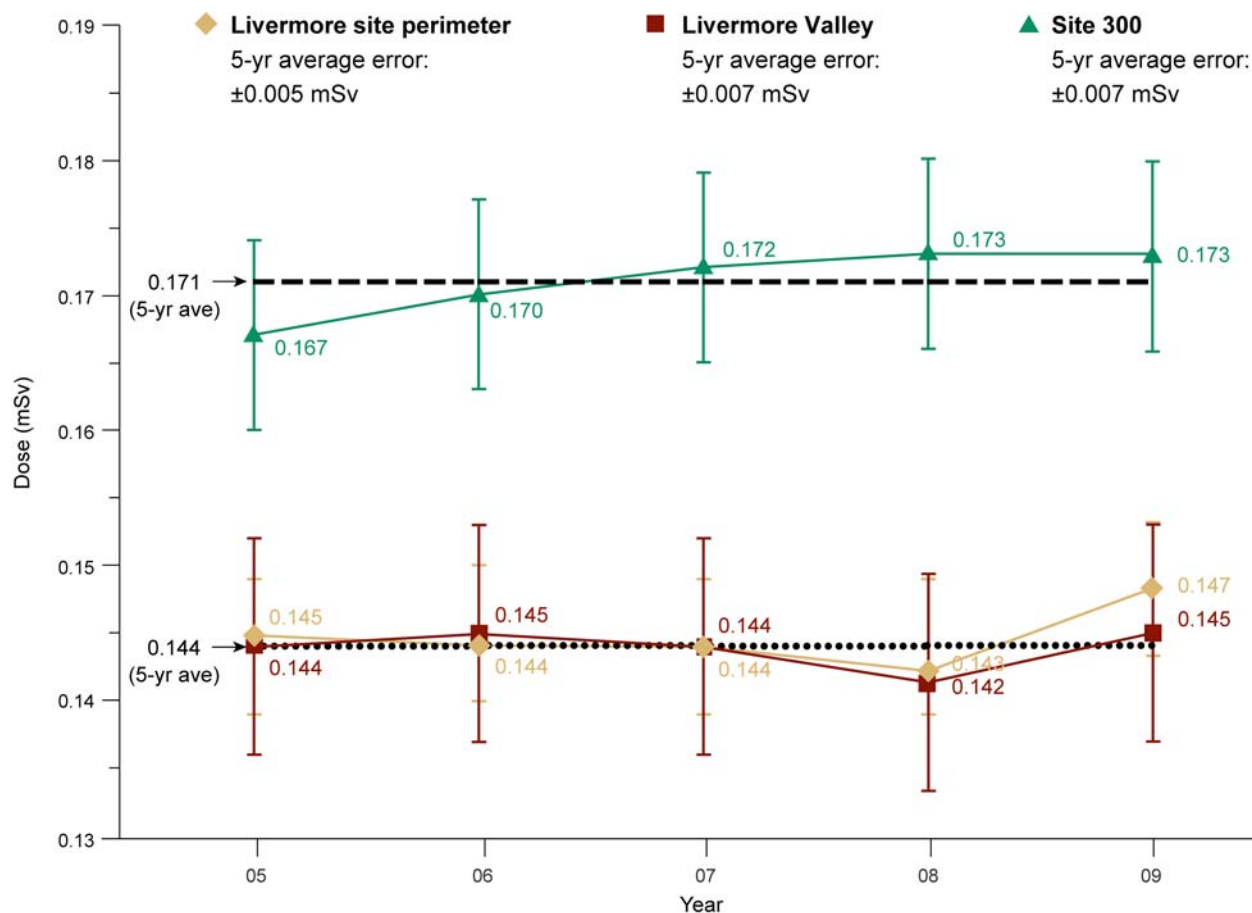
## 6. Terrestrial Monitoring

- comparison of average quarterly dose (mSv) for Site 300, city of Tracy, and Site 300 vicinity in 2009

The results of these comparisons are shown in **Figure 6-5**.

A true representation of local site exposure and any dose contribution from LLNL operations, is obtained through a quarterly deployment cycle. TLDs are deployed at a height of 1 m, adhering to regulatory guidance.

For the purpose of reporting comparisons, data are reported as a “standard 90-day quarter” with the dose reported in millisievert (mSv; 1 mSv = 100 mrem).



**Figure 6-5.** Comparison of the average quarterly dose for the Livermore site perimeter, Livermore Valley, and Site 300 monitoring locations from 2005 to 2009.

### 6.3.2 Monitoring Results

**Figure 6-5** represents the average quarterly dose (in mSv) for the recent five-year period for the Livermore site perimeter, Livermore Valley and Site 300. Tabular data for each sampling location are provided in **Appendix A, Section A.9**.

The difference in the doses at the Livermore site perimeter, Livermore Valley, and Site 300 can be attributed directly to the difference in the geological substrates. The Neroly Formation in the region around Site 300 contains higher levels of naturally occurring thorium that provides the higher external radiation dose.

### 6.3.3 Environmental Impact from Laboratory Operations

There is no increased ambient radiation field produced as a direct result of LLNL operations for 2009 as measured by this network. Radiation dose trends remain consistent with annual average levels for each sample location and synonymous to natural background levels. As depicted in **Figure 6-5**, the annual average gamma radiation dose for the LLNL site perimeter and the Livermore Valley from 2005 to 2009 are statistically equivalent and show no discernible impact due to operations conducted at LLNL.

## 6.4 Special Status Wildlife and Plants

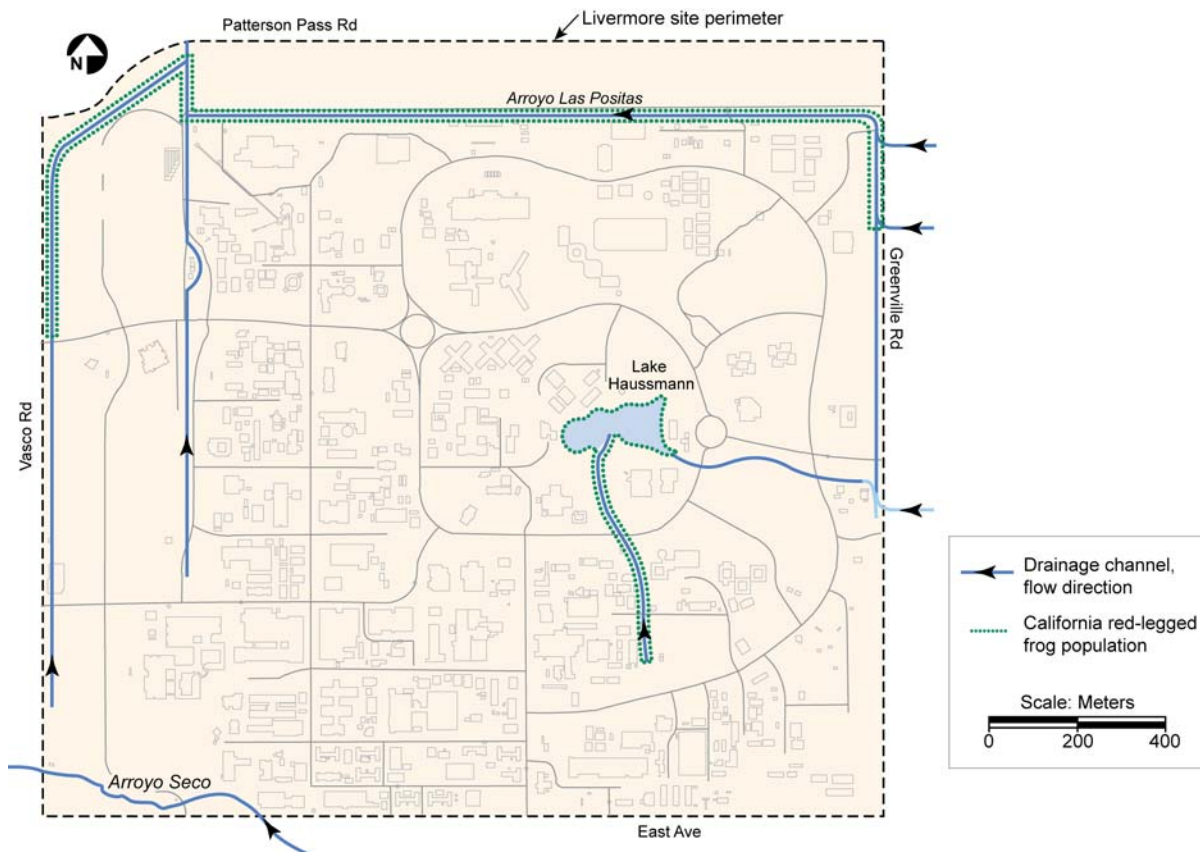
Special status wildlife and plant monitoring at LLNL focuses on species considered to be rare, threatened, or endangered (including species listed under the federal or California ESAs; species considered of concern by the California Department of Fish and Game [CDFG] and the USFWS; and species that require inclusion in NEPA.

The California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*), a threatened species, is known to occur at the Livermore site (see **Figure 6-6**). Because California tiger salamanders (*Ambystoma californiense*) have been observed within 1.1 km of the Livermore site, portions of the Livermore site are considered potential upland habitat for the California tiger salamander. There is no occupied breeding habitat for the California tiger salamander at the Livermore site.

Five species that are listed under the federal ESAs are known to occur at Site 300—the California tiger salamander, California red-legged frog, Alameda whipsnake (*Masticophis lateralis euryxanthus*), valley elderberry longhorn beetle (*Desmocerus californicus dimorphus*), and the large-flowered fiddleneck (*Amsinckia grandiflora*). Although there are no recorded observations of the federally endangered San Joaquin kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis mutica*) at Site 300, this species is known to have historically occurred in the adjacent Carnegie and Tracy Hills areas (USFWS 1998). Because of the proximity of known observations of San Joaquin kit fox to Site 300, it is necessary to consider potential impacts to San Joaquin kit fox during activities at Site 300. California threatened Swainson's Hawks (*Buteo swainsoni*) and California-endangered Willow Flycatchers (*Empidonax traillii*) have been observed at Site 300 .

Known observations of the five listed species and two California species of special concern (Western Burrowing Owl [*Athene cunicularia*] and Tricolored Blackbird [*Agelaius tricolor*]) are shown in **Figures 6-7** and **6-8**. Vertebrate species and rare invertebrate species known to occur at Site 300, including state and federally listed species and other species of special concern are listed in **Appendix C**. A similar list has not been prepared for the Livermore site.

## 6. Terrestrial Monitoring



**Figure 6-6.** Populations of the California red-legged frog, Livermore site, 2009.

Including the federally endangered large-flowered fiddleneck, four rare plant species and four uncommon plant species are known to occur at Site 300. The four rare species—the large-flowered fiddleneck, the big tarplant (*Blepharizonia plumosa*), the round-leaved filaree (*California macrophylla*), and the diamond-petaled California poppy (*Eschscholzia rhombipetala*)—are included in the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) List 1B (CNPS 2009). These species are considered rare and endangered throughout their range. The location of these four rare plant species at Site 300 is shown in **Figure 6-8**.

The four uncommon plant species—the gypsum-loving larkspur (*Delphinium gypsophilum* subsp. *gypsophilum*), California androsace (*Androsace elongata* subsp. *acuta*), stinkbells (*Fritillaria agrestis*), and hogwallow starfish (*Hesperevax caulescens*)—are all included on the CNPS List 4 (CNPS 2009). Past surveys have failed to identify any rare plants on the Livermore site (Preston 1997, 2002).

## 6. Terrestrial Monitoring

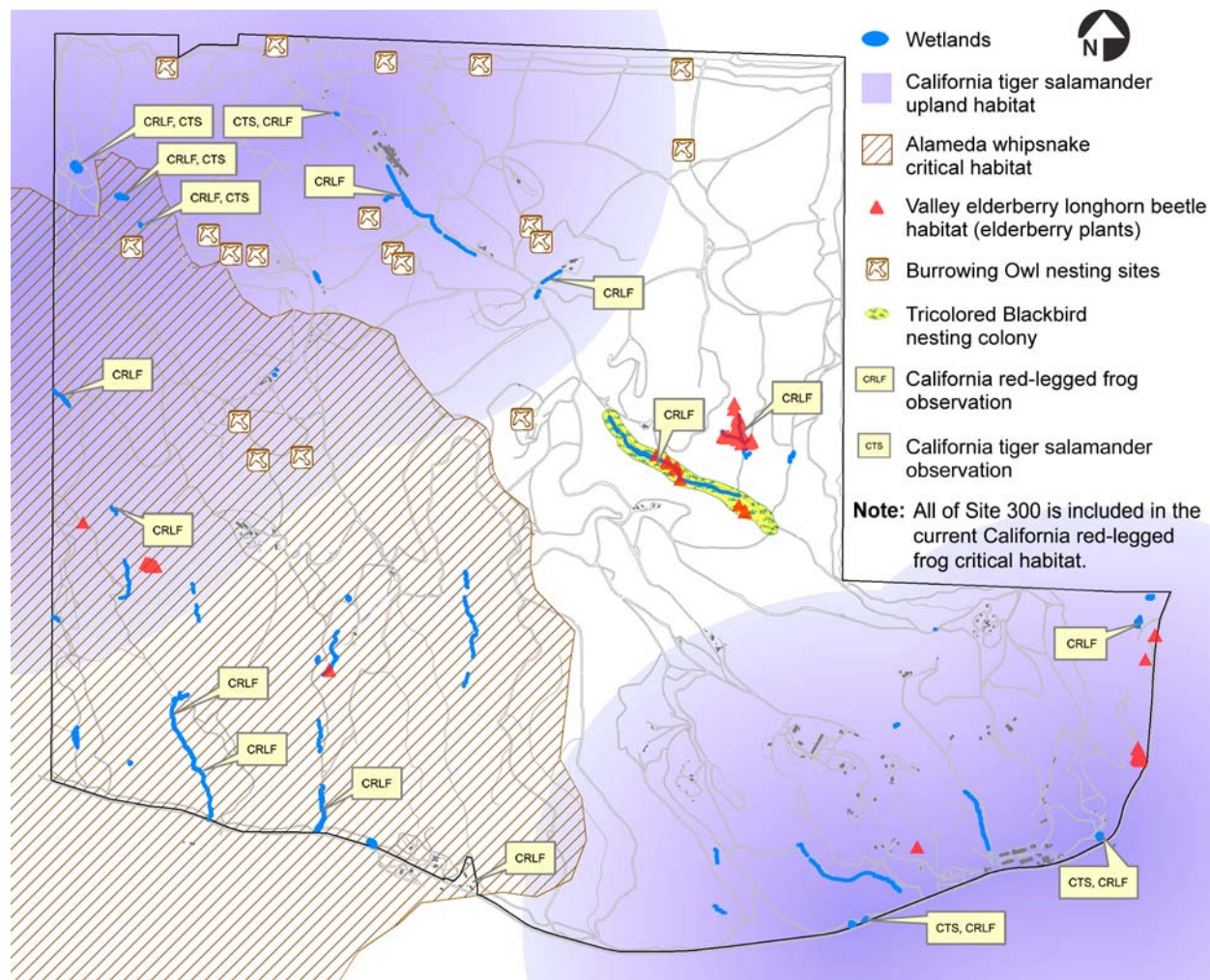


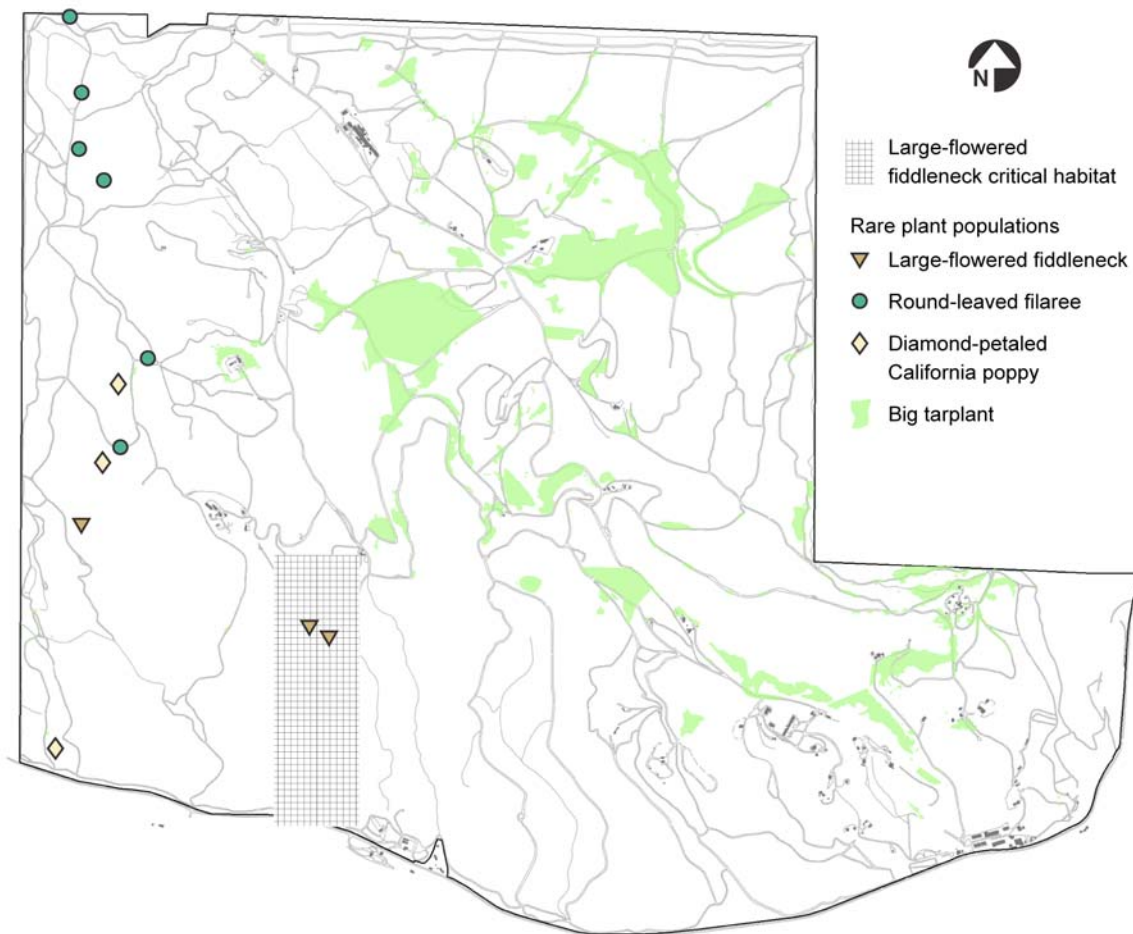
Figure 6-7. Distribution of special status wildlife, Site 300, 2009.

### 6.4.1 Compliance Activities

#### 6.4.1.1 Building 850 Remediation

On November 17, 2008, the DOE/NNSA requested consultation with the USFWS to amend the Opinion for Routine Maintenance and Operations Projects at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, Site 300 Experimental Test Site. The proposed amendment described the environmental clean-up activities for the Building 850 area involving removal of PCB-, dioxin-, and furan-contaminated soil from the hillsides surrounding the former explosives test facility. The resulting Opinion addressed impacts of the clean-up operation on California tiger salamander and California red-legged frog, and issued a conference opinion on the proposed California red-legged frog critical habitat within the action area.

## 6. Terrestrial Monitoring



**Figure 6-8.** Distribution of special status plants, Site 300, 2009.

No California red-legged frogs or California tiger salamanders were discovered at the Building 850 project site during the pre-construction, developmental, or post-construction intervals. No special status species were observed in the project area or nearby during the duration of the project. All construction personnel received the required natural resource education briefing and did not report seeing any species of concern. To ensure wildlife did not enter the work area, perimeter exclusionary fencing surrounding the entire construction site was maintained between April 2009 and December 2009.

The proposed wildlife habitat compensation site related to this project is anticipated to be completed during the summer of 2011. The compensation site mitigates potentially adverse impacts to the California red-legged frog and California tiger salamander as a result of the Building 850 construction. It protects upland habitat for the two species around an enhanced (deepened) breeding pool that currently acts as a limit to population recruitment.



### *6.4.1.2 Habitat Enhancement Project*

In late August 2005, LLNL implemented a habitat enhancement project for California red-legged frogs at Site 300 in accordance with a 2002 USFWS biological opinion (BO) and ACOE and RWQCB permits. California red-legged frogs were translocated to the new habitat enhancement pools in February and March of 2006. Monitoring demonstrated that California red-legged frogs successfully reproduced in these pools in 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009. In 2009, a total of 20 to 25 California red-legged frog egg masses were observed in the Upper and Lower Mid-Elk Ravine pools.

In fall 2005, a depression in the northwest corner of Site 300 below Harrier pool was deepened and expanded to serve as mitigation for California tiger salamander habitat lost as a result of closing two man-made, high explosives rinse water ponds in the Process Area. In 2006, California tiger salamanders successfully bred and metamorphosed from the pool. In 2007, 2008, and 2009 the pool received inadequate inundation and evaporated before the salamander larvae could reach maturity and leave the pond.

### *6.4.1.3 Oasis and Round Valley Culvert Replacement Projects*

In 2006, LLNL completed culvert replacement projects at two Site 300 locations (the Oasis and Round Valley) where unpaved fire trails crossed intermittent drainages. The Round Valley project included the creation of a pool upstream of the project area in part as mitigation for the impacts at the Oasis site and to serve as enhanced habitat for amphibian species. These projects were completed under the USFWS BO for maintenance and operations of Site 300 and ACOE and RWQCB permits. The Round Valley pool did not receive enough water during the 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 winters to pool and afford potential breeding habitat for amphibians.

### *6.4.1.4 Arroyo Seco Restoration*

In 2009, LLNL conducted the fourth year of the five-year monitoring plan required by USFWS and ACOE for the restoration of the Arroyo Seco Management Plan project site. Arroyo Seco crosses the southeast corner of the Livermore site. Monitoring at this site includes annual measurements of the survivorship of plants that were installed as part of the restoration and estimates of the percent cover of grasses and forbs, shrubs, and trees at the project site. Percent cover measurements were recorded separately for four monitoring zones (north bank, south bank, north terrace, and south terrace) and three vegetated geogrids. The geogrids are slopes that are stabilized by erosion control fabric and planted willows. Results of this monitoring are documented in Paterson (2010a). The mitigation and monitoring plan for this project lists annual success criteria based on the percent cover of grasses, shrubs, and trees at the project site, and requires LLNL to replace all trees and shrubs that do not survive during the first five years of monitoring.

In 2009, the project site met the success criteria for grasses and shrubs in all four monitoring zones. The percent cover of trees in three (north bank, south bank, and north terrace) of the four monitoring zones was lower than the required success criteria. As a result, additional trees were

## 6. Terrestrial Monitoring

planted in March 2010. However, trees have been very successful on the geogrids. In the spring of 2009, the percent cover of trees on the three geogrids ranged from 65% to 100%.

### *6.4.1.5 Arroyo Mocho Boulder Removal and Erosion Control Project*

LLNL operates a pumping plant that draws water from the Hetch Hetchy aqueduct located in the Arroyo Mocho Canyon. Several large boulders fell into the channel of Arroyo Mocho below the pumping plant, potentially forcing the flow of the arroyo toward the hillside that the pumping plant is located on and resulting in an erosion hazard to this hillside and the pumping plant. The 2004 BO for the Arroyo Mocho Road Improvement and Anadromous Fish Passage project has been amended to include the boulder improvement project. The 2004 BO was amended again in 2009 to include additional erosion control efforts at the pump station and along the access road.

Arroyo Mocho and the surrounding area are habitat for California red-legged frog, California tiger salamander, and Alameda whipsnake. In 2007 and 2008, boulders were removed from Arroyo Mocho to mitigate erosion hazards and monitoring was conducted as required by the BO amendments. No boulder removal or erosion control work was completed at the Arroyo Mocho site in 2009.

### *6.4.1.6 Arroyo Mocho Restoration*

In 2009, LLNL implemented the fifth year of a five-year mitigation and monitoring plan for the restoration of the 2004 Arroyo Mocho Road Improvement and Anadromous Fish Passage project. This mitigation and monitoring plan is a requirement of the ACOE permit for this project.

Success criteria for this restoration are based on the number of native species present and the percent cover of these species within three monitoring communities (low flood plain, sloping terrace, and upland) at the project site. The project site currently includes a diverse collection of native riparian and upland plants. In all years of monitoring including 2009, the number of native species observed at the site far exceeded the success criteria for species richness.

The low flood plain and upland communities both exceed the success criteria described in the mitigation plan for percent cover of native plants. The sloping terrace community did not meet the recommended success criteria for the percent cover of native species.

The mitigation plan for this project recommends a ratio of 3.5 square feet of wetland habitat restored for every 1 square foot of habitat temporarily impacted during construction. In January 2010, 3.2 square feet of wetland habitat were present at the project site for every 1 square foot of wetland vegetation that was temporarily impacted. Wetland vegetation is naturally expanding to fill all suitable areas at the project including the area that was previously covered by the concrete low-water crossing. The increase in wetland habitat at the project site is largely the result of natural colonization of the project site and is expected to continue over the next three to five years, eventually meeting the 3.5 to 1 goal.

In an attempt to control exotic plants, as specified in the mitigation and monitoring plan, and increase the cover of native plants at the site, hand weeding of exotic species including yellow

star thistle and bull thistle was conducted in 2009. The results of the monitoring are documented in Paterson (2010b).

Army Corp of Engineers biologists visited the project site in March of 2010, and determined that LLNL has successfully met mitigation requirements for the Corps permit for this project. No further monitoring or maintenance action is required for this restoration site.

### 6.4.2 Invasive Species Control Activities

Invasive species control is an important part of LLNL's effort to protect special status species at both sites. Prevention of the downstream dissemination of invasive species is also important to protect native species throughout our region. The bullfrog (*Rana catesbeiana*) and the largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*) are significant threats to California red-legged frogs at the Livermore site, and the feral pig (*Sus scrofa*) threatens California red-legged frog habitat at Site 300.

In 2009, to mitigate threats to California red-legged frog habitat, feral pigs were dispatched at Site 300. At the Livermore site, bullfrog control measures were implemented between May and September of 2009. Bullfrog control measures included dispatching adults and removing egg masses in Lake Haussmann and Arroyo Las Positas. To remove bullfrog tadpoles and invasive fish, the LLNL reach of Arroyo Las Positas was allowed to dry out in November of 2009 by temporarily halting groundwater discharges to the arroyo.

### 6.4.3 Surveillance Monitoring

#### 6.4.3.1 Wildlife Monitoring and Research

**Alameda Whipsnake.** Since 2002, LLNL has participated in a study, in cooperation with the USFWS and four other agencies, to determine the effects of prescribed burns on the Alameda whipsnake. The USFWS issued a BO for this study that outlined the general conditions for conducting prescribed burns and gathering information about potential impacts to Alameda whipsnakes. Participation in this study allowed LLNL to obtain USFWS approval to conduct prescribed burns necessary for Site 300 operations in areas that support Alameda whipsnakes. Previous LLNL Environmental Reports document the study area and baseline conditions, and early results.

A prescribed burn was conducted at the burn site in the summer of 2003, and the post-burn monitoring has been conducted starting in the fall of 2003 through the spring 2009. Both the burn and control sites were impacted by a wildfire in 2005. Although no whipsnake fatalities were documented during post-burn surveys, both trapping areas were burned severely and little remnant vegetation was left in the shrubland.

No whipsnakes were captured during the spring 2009 trapping period. Although the effects of the prescribed burn and subsequent impacts of the wildfire on the whipsnake are not yet determined, both the whipsnake and its habitat are adapted to periodic fire events, and both the snake and vegetation are expected to recover from the fire in subsequent years.

## 6. Terrestrial Monitoring

***Nesting Bird Surveys.*** LLNL conducts nesting bird surveys to ensure LLNL activities comply with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and do not result in impacts to nesting birds. White-tailed Kites frequently nest in the trees along the north, east, and south perimeters of the Livermore site. LLNL staff surveyed potential White-tailed Kite nesting sites during the spring of 2009. One pair of White-tailed Kites attempted to nest, but the nest was abandoned before any eggs were hatched. No other pairs of White-tailed Kites were observed nesting at the Livermore site in 2009. Although White-tailed Kites are also known to occasionally nest at Site 300, site-wide kite surveys were not conducted at Site 300 in 2009 because kites do not typically nest in areas where they may be affected by programmatic activities.

***California Red-Legged Frog Egg Mass Surveys.*** LLNL continued diurnal visual surveys for California red-legged frog egg mass at the Livermore site in Arroyo Las Positas and in the habitat enhancement portion of Lake Haussmann. No egg masses were observed in Arroyo Las Positas in 2009. Although, no egg masses were observed in the Habitat Enhancement portion of Lake Haussmann in 2009, several newly metamorphosed California red-legged frogs were observed in the Habitat Enhancement Pool and nearby areas indicating that California red-legged frogs did successfully breed in Lake Haussmann or the Habitat Enhancement Pool in 2009.

### 6.4.3.2 Rare Plant Research and Monitoring

***Large-Flowered Fiddleneck.*** This species is known to exist naturally in only two locations—at the Site 300 Drop Tower and on a nearby ranch. The Drop Tower native population contained no large-flowered fiddleneck plants in 2009, and fewer than 20 plants each year for the past seven years.

LLNL established an experimental population of the large-flowered fiddleneck at Site 300 beginning in the early 1990s. The size of the experimental population fluctuates as a result of seed bank enhancement efforts conducted in this population. The experimental population contained 28 large-flowered fiddleneck plants in 2009.

In December of 2009, in an attempt to increase the numbers of large-flowered fiddleneck in the experimental population, 100 large-flowered fiddleneck seeds were planted in each of the 20 plots in the experimental population.

***Big Tarplant.*** The distribution of big tarplant was mapped at Site 300 using a handheld global positioning system (GPS) in September and October of 2009. It is estimated that between 6,000 and 22,000 individual big tarplant occurred at Site 300 in 2009. This species is abundant at Site 300, especially in or near areas where prescribed burns are routinely conducted and where wildfires have occurred, although it is rare outside of Site 300. The abundance of big tarplant varies greatly between years depending on environmental conditions.

***Diamond-Petaled California Poppy.*** Currently three populations of this species are known to occur at Site 300; the population locations are referred to as Site 1, Site 2, and Site 3. Although the species is not listed under the federal or California ESAs, it is extremely rare and is currently known to occur only at Site 300 and in one location in San Luis Obispo County. A census of the

three Site 300 populations was conducted in April 2009. In 2009, 452 plants were found at Site 300. The most recently discovered population, Site 3, contained the largest number (405 plants). Numbers of plants at Sites 1 and 2 have been very small in recent years. In 2009, Site 1 had 40 plants, and Site 2 had 7 plants.

***Round-Leaved Filaree.*** Six populations of round-leaved filaree are known to occur at Site 300. All populations occur in the northwest portion of the site. This species thrives in the disturbed soils of the annually graded fire trails at Site 300, but also occurs infrequently in grasslands. Of the six populations, four occur on fire trails and two occur in grasslands. During the spring of 2009, the extent of the six populations was mapped using a handheld GPS, and the size of each population was estimated. The six populations combined were estimated to contain more than 5300 plants. In 2009, the majority of these plants (5170) occurred in the two grassland populations that are not located in fire trails.

### 6.4.4 Environmental Impacts on Special Status Wildlife and Plants

Through monitoring and compliance activities in 2009, LLNL has been able to avoid most impacts to special status wildlife and plants. In addition, LLNL continues to monitor and maintain several restoration sites and habitat enhancements that are beneficial to native plants and animals at the Livermore site and Site 300. Invasive species continue to be one of the largest threats to California red-legged frogs at the Livermore site and Site 300, and LLNL continued its program to remove invasive exotic species of amphibians and fish from the Livermore site, and feral pigs from Site 300 in 2009.