



# Los Alamos Study Group



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December 31, 2019

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  - (12/22 /19): [Important meetings January 2 & 8](#)
  - (12/12/19): [No LANL in Santa Fe -- update](#)
  - (12/07/19): [Please come tomorrow to Collected Works Bookstore, 202 Galisteo Street, Santa Fe, 11 am: Developer to present plans for Midtown Santa Fe campus: will they include nuclear weapons research, training, manufacturing, administration?](#)
  - (12/02/19): [Safety Board: Los Alamos plutonium facility does not adequately protect the public](#)
- Previous Bulletin (12/23/19): [Please help us work this coming year! Also: important meetings Jan 2 & 8 in Santa Fe: Pope Francis and The Bomb](#)
- **This letter: *Reminder: workshop & training Thursday January 2, Santa Fe***

Dear New Mexico activist friends –

There are only two days left before the January 2 workshop we are putting together in Santa Fe. Many factors are coming together to make this a very important gathering, so we hope you will come -- and do your best to recruit others to come as well. **The simplest way to do that is to forward this email to anyone you think might be interested.**

**This workshop and training will focus on the planned industrial plutonium expansion of LANL, and the possible opening of a satellite LANL site in Santa Fe. It will be held on Thursday evening, January 2, from 5-8 pm, at the First Christian Church ([map](#)) in Santa Fe. Soup and bread will be served.**

As we said last time, we in New Mexico have a uniquely powerful role to play in U.S. nuclear weapons policies. The flip side: because of their powerful separate sovereignty and political weight, our twin nuclear weapons laboratories play an outsize role in limiting political discourse and our political representation, no matter who is elected. They help hold New Mexico back in every way, keeping us anchored in a bizarre alternative universe where the Manhattan Project and the Cold War never ended, one where the military-industrial-intelligence complex enjoys unquestioned respect and obedience, to our ongoing cost. They help lead our political class into believing any number of self-serving fantasies about how our economy and environment can be "fixed" with technologies not yet invented (but just wait, we are working on it!) so nobody has to really and truly face and address the social, economic, and environmental realities around us.

It is truly amazing how many people who -- as Thoreau remarked, do not believe in moonshine in other matters -- do not understand that Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) is and always will be supported solely for the sake of developing and maintaining nuclear weapons -- not just mostly, but [almost entirely](#).

(Equally amazing is that otherwise intelligent people think Santa Fe *should*, or even *could*, become some -- any -- kind of "high-tech" or "innovation" mecca, an arty sort of "Silicon Santa Fe." The "rising tide" they hope for -- which [won't happen](#) -- will, they hope, magically "lift all boats" as the "impact" of those high wage jobs "trickles down." Obviously it won't. California, a highly "innovative" state, now has the [highest poverty rate of any state, factoring in cost of living](#). *Inequality* matters, massively. And regardless of all that, LANL has nothing to do with "innovation." It is a highly-specialized, bloated, bureaucratic, secret bomb lab that is trying to become the nation's all-around plutonium processing and manufacturing center despite its impossible location, topography, geology, and other characteristics. Greedy -- yes. Inherently corrupt -- yes. Unmanageable -- yes. Safe -- never. Smart -- no.)

**In 2017, the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), after consulting with a large number of experts current and retired, formally decided that LANL's main plutonium facility (PF-4) could never be an enduring plutonium warhead core ("pit") factory ([pp. 47-48](#)).** You might want to read that again. If there was to be a factory at LANL, it would have to be built from scratch, at great cost (a "greenfield" option). So-called "modules" -- plutonium workshops built underground near PF-4 to get around safety regulations based on public exposure -- wouldn't work either, a plan which the Government Accountability Office (GAO) had already [ripped](#). (At least two plutonium "modules" are still however *required by law*; see [e-page 1058](#) and more recently [here](#) again.)

What happened then? Senators Heinrich and Udall had a cow (or cows), and the entire New Mexico delegation got [legislation passed](#) that would, they hoped, shore up LANL's pit-making role.

Fast-forward to this month, when Congress passed the requested funding for pit factories at LANL (smaller and quicker, with round-the-clock production required using 1,000 to 1,500 additional plutonium and waste-handling workers) *and* in South Carolina (larger and later).

The next Bulletin will go into this in much more detail for a national and international audience, but **the key takeaway right now is that these plans for LANL require dramatic changes and expansion, which will -- according to LANL -- encompass and affect the entire region as well as the communities of Los Alamos and White Rock.**

But what *are* these plans, exactly? The plans that will affect the entire region? *They are entirely secret, and that is how they will remain until there is sufficient public outcry.*

Amazingly, as of mid-November 2019 there were no actual completed plans for pit production at LANL, according to a bevy of NNSA spokespersons, only "LANL proposals." Despite legal requirements otherwise, no firm plans were submitted to Congress (as we kept hearing all year), only a request for a blank check -- which a pusillanimous Congress provided.

Why do NNSA have no final plans?

At bottom, it is because NNSA's and LANL's evolving plans, such as they are, are full of contradictions, uncertainties, and technical and political embarrassments. What would be the environmental impacts of these plans? In detail, nobody knows. We could make a long list of what to expect, to be sure, and that is something that with your help we will produce. What alternatives are there for LANL? Same.

We hope you will join us On January 2. We're going to have a great time. Together, we are quite powerful. Please come, and please tell your friends.

Greg, for the Study Group

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- Previous Bulletin (11/26/19): [Bulletin #264: LANL expansion, new mailing list, staff position available, news and views you can use](#)
- **This letter: important meetings January 2 and 8!**

**Dear New Mexico activist friends –**

Warm greetings to all, as the solar new year begins! We hope it is a time of renewal and joy for you, despite the crises our world faces.

For all the support, financial and otherwise, so many of you have provided throughout the year -- **thank you!**

All of us know that we have our work cut out for us in the New Year. It is a good time to reflect on just how we might most effectively carry forward our responsibilities for the rising generations and this living planet, both profoundly endangered.

This letter is going just to New Mexicans, because **we here have a uniquely powerful role to play in the future of nuclear weapons.**

Why? Because Los Alamos, Santa Fe, and the surrounding region are being asked -- *right now* -- to undertake the industrial manufacture of plutonium nuclear weapon cores ("pits"). Pits are needed *only* for a new generation of warheads for land-based nuclear missiles (and much later, for other new-generation warheads that might follow).

In the crucial 2020s, a decade of decision for the fate of the earth, Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) is the *only* place where pits can be made. No new pits means no new ICBM warheads -- and instead, a profound, devaluing shock to the nuclear weapons enterprise and what it represents.

**If industrial pit production doesn't begin at LANL in the 2020s, it may never happen anywhere.** In the words of the Institute for Defense Analyses, "...eventual success of the strategy to reconstitute pit production is far from certain [[p. v](#)]...A key milestone will be achieving the...goal of 30 [pits per year] at LANL." ([p. vii](#)).

We agree.

LANL has not had an industrial pit production mission since the 1940s, and then it was small. (Since then, LANL has made test pits, and did a small pilot production run in the 2007-2011 timeframe.)

The job went from LANL to Hanford at the end of the 1940s, and then in the 1950s to the Rocky Flats Plant near Denver. In 1989, pit production ended when the EPA and FBI forced that plant to shut down.

Now LANL is to become "the dirty lab," as a LANL spokesman so candidly put it to us in private 25 years ago.

We, including many of you, have prevented this outcome -- so far.

**Because of the nuclear mission assigned to the greater Santa Fe area, there may be no more powerful place on earth to oppose the new nuclear arms race.**

**We implore you to join us, however you can.**

Starting this month and next, the Study Group is making special efforts to support your engagement and that of others you may bring. We will be

resuming regular meetings and will be holding special workshops, starting in January. We have hired one of our long-time board members, the multi-talented Lydia Clark, as a part-time outreach director in Santa Fe to help us, and we will be reaching out to more of you here in Albuquerque, in Jemez Springs, and elsewhere.

**Our first meeting in the new year will be a workshop and training on the planned industrial plutonium expansion of LANL, and the possible opening of a satellite LANL site in Santa Fe. It will be held on Thursday evening, January 2, from 5-8 pm, at the First Christian Church ([map](#)) in Santa Fe. We will serve soup and bread. Please save the date, and spread the word!**

Our aims for this event are to build a broad base of knowledge and leadership in our community as well as mutual solidarity in opposition to this expansion -- which could include a satellite campus on the former College of Santa Fe property, now owned by the City -- and to form action teams for the following week.

**Our second meeting in the new year will be at the Santa Fe City Council meeting on Wednesday, January 8 (at City Hall, [map](#)), at 6 pm.**

This will be the last City Council meeting before the City decides which applicants will be the finalists for "master developer" of its Midtown Campus. As we have alerted you previously, the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), LANL's "landlord" and funding agency, has formally expressed interest in that role. Meanwhile both NNSA and its managing contractor at LANL, Triad, have expressed interest in being part of *other* proposals for the site -- and as far as we know, they are.

**It is very important to prevent creation of a "LANL II" satellite campus in the heart of Santa Fe, and the time to speak up forcefully is right now, before it is too late.**

Happy holidays to all!

Greg, Trish, and Lydia, for the Study Group

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## This letter: No LANL in Santa Fe -- update

December 12, 2019

Dear friends –

There are several important topics to cover but one is enough for tonight.

The 12/8/19 presentation by Mr. Affeldt on his team's plan for the Midtown Campus in Santa Fe (discussed in [Bulletin 264](#) and our letters of [11/29/19](#) and [12/07/19](#)) was attended by perhaps 150 people, including many of you.

Special thanks go to Paul and Roxanne of *Retake Our Democracy* for their helpful blog post ("[LANL Coming to Midtown: The City Different? A Nuclear Weapons Research Center?](#)," Dec 5, 2019) as well as to Robin Collier of [KCEI Taos](#) for his substantive interview ("[Plans for LANL on Santa Fe campus](#)," 12/4/19). The tireless Robin returned to Santa Fe to record Mr. Affeldt's talk for broadcast (archived [here](#)). Kay Matthews of *La Jicarita* followed up with a good article ("[The Fate of the Former Midtown Campus in the Hands of Santa Fe](#)," 12/10/19).

Besides newspaper articles ([here](#), [here](#), now also [here](#) and [here](#)), background information on the Midtown project is available on its [web site](#).

Affeldt's "Central Park Santa Fe" presentation was slick, fast-moving, and filled almost all the available time. There was little time for questions. The most important question asked was something like, "How can we be sure this project will not include Los Alamos National Laboratory [LANL]?" (*Thank you, someone.*)

We thought the long and evasive answer boiled down to something like, "Trust me." (You can listen at the link provided above.)

In other words: *no real answer at all*. **NNSA and LANL are not ruled out**. Affeldt even said it would be "illegal" to rule out LANL -- the logic of which escaped us.

We left with many unanswered questions. A lot of the plan was merely illustrative, hypothetical, or aspirational. Some of it made little practical sense. We have profound misgivings as to the vision overall, as well as many of the details.

Our vision for that space is very different than Affeldt's. It is a far deeper green, far better integrated into the land and responsive to the converging crises we face, much more in tune with the region -- not just to an imagined future Santa Fe as an urban outpost of the global metropole. That's a discussion for another time and place.

On the day after Affeldt's presentation, the *New York Times* covered an important Brookings study on centers of innovation in the U.S. ("[A Few Cities Have Cornered Innovation Jobs. Can That Be Changed?](#)", Eduardo Porter, 12/9/19). Porter's article begins:

There are about a dozen industries at the frontier of innovation. They include software and pharmaceuticals, semiconductors and data processing. Most of their workers have science or tech degrees. They invest heavily in research and development. While they account for only 3 percent of all jobs, they account for 6 percent of the country's economic output.

And if you don't live in one of a handful of urban areas along the coasts, you are unlikely to get a job in one of them.

Boston, Seattle, San Diego, San Francisco and Silicon Valley captured nine out of 10 jobs created in these industries from 2005 to

2017, according to a report released on Monday. By 2017, these five metropolitan regions had accumulated almost a quarter of these jobs, up from under 18 percent a dozen years earlier. On the other end, about half of America's 382 metro areas — including big cities like Los Angeles, Chicago and Philadelphia — lost such jobs.

So I read the [study](#). It examines the powerful agglomeration economies affecting high tech industries. Its principal thrust is to say it might be possible to add 8-10 additional cities in the U.S. where innovation could center, at an estimated federal cost of \$100 billion over 10 years. Threshold criteria for likely success, according to the authors, include a city size of at least 500,000, a notable research university, lots of STEM workers, and so on. The list of possible centers includes Albuquerque (#24 on their list), but as always they overestimate the "high tech" nature of our economy by counting nuclear lab employees who do largely classified work and are not in the private sector. Special nuclear materials and nuclear weapons design skills transfer to the private sector very poorly, we hope!

Albuquerque lost more than 20% of its "innovation" workers from 2005-2017 -- not much "innovation" growth here recently!

Santa Fe was not worth mentioning in this context. **Santa Fe cannot really compete in the "innovation" economy, for many reasons.**

Affeldt's team is just one applicant for "master developer." There is also John Rizzo's team ("[Silicon Valley executive enters midtown campus derby](#)," Teya Vitu, 12/10/19), called "Santa Fe Innovation Village":

Rizzo's vision for Santa Fe Innovation Village at the midtown campus involves about 1,000 residential units and "hundreds of thousands of square feet of office space" for tech companies and education elements that could train tech workers.

**"In a state of 2 million people with a budget surplus, with the Permian Basin, the Spaceport America, Los Alamos National Laboratory, there seemed to be a way to do something interesting for the state, to do all this without wrecking the state,"** Rizzo said. **"The way to do this is with innovative and tech jobs. The midtown campus seems like a very interesting opportunity with a high density of offices, restaurants and bars, things that are open until midnight, extending a Rail Runner stop at midtown. We have a lot more we are thinking about that I am not comfortable sharing right now."** (emphasis added)

Who is John Rizzo? Well, for one thing he has money. Vitu: "Rizzo has spent 30 years in Silicon Valley, now as president and CEO of Deem Inc., a San Francisco corporate travel software company that in January was acquired by Enterprise Holdings, which also owns the Enterprise and Alamo rental car companies and has annual revenue of \$24 billion."

Further details regarding the Rizzo's "Innovation Village" were included in T. S. Last's 11/24/19 [article](#):

Santa Fe Innovation Village, LLC, was formed earlier this year, according to online records, and wants to make Santa Fe **one of three proposed "villages" that would make up an envisaged "New Mexico Innovation Triangle" to include Los Alamos and Albuquerque.**

"All three Innovation Villages will be integrated into the educational and economic development framework on the New Mexico Innovation Triangle and provide housing across a range of income levels, as well as a keen focus on sustainable development," reads a section on Santa Fe Innovation Village included in the Central Park proposal.

"Over the past 18 months, the team has been developing a range of relationships across city and state government, gaining support for the necessary zoning, ordinances and other items to facilitate success on the Santa Fe Innovation Village at Central Park Santa Fe." (emphasis added)

**LANL has been pushing the exact same "innovation triangle" slogan as part of its expansion pitch to contractors and local governments, an expansion to be driven largely by the expanded warhead core ("pit") production mission.**

Significantly, according to reporter T.S. Last, "**Santa Fe Innovation Village...is also part of the [Affeldt-led] Central Park Santa Fe proposal!**" (emphasis added).

This may explain Affeldt's evasive answer to the LANL question.

As previously noted, the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) is also an applicant for "master developer" of the site. That, we believe, would be a major federal action with significant environmental impacts and therefore would require an environmental impact statement (EIS).

**The City of Santa Fe, with some other local jurisdictions, has passed several formal resolutions, excerpted [here](#), that may bar support for the nuclear weapons industry, i.e. what NNSA and LANL do and are. They specifically bar support for expanded plutonium pit production, LANL's new mission.**

### **What to do?**

Retake Our Democracy [got it right](#): **"...the City should not even consider LANL as a Master Developer and...Santa Fe wants no part of a partnership with the nuclear weapons industry....the Midtown Project must not include any LANL presence whatsoever."**

The "master developer" decision will be announced in mid-January, which is obviously very soon indeed.

**Please write or call, publicly or privately, as soon as you can:**

Mayor Alan Webber: (505) 955-6590. [mayor@santafenm.gov](mailto:mayor@santafenm.gov)

**District 1**

- Renee Villarreal, (505) 955-2345, [rdvillarreal@santafenm.gov](mailto:rdvillarreal@santafenm.gov)
- Signe I. Lindell, (505) 955-6812, [silindell@santafenm.gov](mailto:silindell@santafenm.gov)

**District 2**

- Carol Romero-Wirth, (505) 955-6815. [cromero-wirth@ci.santa-fe.nm.us](mailto:cromero-wirth@ci.santa-fe.nm.us)
- Peter Ives, *District 2 Councilor*, (505) 955-6816, [pnives@santafenm.gov](mailto:pnives@santafenm.gov)

**District 3**

- Roman "Tiger" Abeyta, (505) 955-6814 [rrabeyta@santafenm.gov](mailto:rrabeyta@santafenm.gov)
- Chris Rivera, (505) 955-6818, [cmrivera@santafenm.gov](mailto:cmrivera@santafenm.gov)

**District 4**

- JoAnne Vigil Coppler, (505) 955-6811 [jvcoppler@santafenm.gov](mailto:jvcoppler@santafenm.gov)
- Micheal Harris, (505) 955-6817, [maharris@santafenm.gov](mailto:maharris@santafenm.gov)

Thank you,

Greg Mello, for the Study Group

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This letter: **Please come tomorrow to Collected Works Bookstore, 202 Galisteo Street ([map](#)), Santa Fe, 11 am: Developer to present plans for Midtown Santa Fe campus: will they include nuclear weapons research, training, manufacturing, administration?**

**\*\*\* Please come to this presentation if you can. Numbers are important, if only to listen. "A stitch in time saves nine." There is very little time before the City selects finalists for development. Plans are firming up now. \*\*\***

Dear friends –

As discussed in our 11/29/19 [letter](#) and [Bulletin 264](#), the City of Santa Fe is in the process of selecting finalists to be the "master developer" for its 64-acre [Midtown Campus](#) -- formerly the College of Santa Fe -- and possibly some adjacent parcels.

The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), the nation's semi-autonomous nuclear weapons agency within the Department of Energy (DOE), has applied for "master developer" of the parcel and is openly or cryptically present in some of the other proposals as well.

In situations where controversy could ensue (such as this one), NNSA's nuclear weapons work is usually euphemized as "research."

NNSA does do some "defense nuclear nonproliferation" (about 13% of its total) but the bulk of NNSA's work is the development and production of nuclear warheads and bombs, which is and always has been the sole *raison d'être* of Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), its life blood, bones, and muscle.

A partnership led by Mr. Allan Affeldt ("Central Park Santa Fe"), who will speak tomorrow, is seeking the "master developer" role for its \$400 million project on what is now the City's (quite valuable) land.

To his credit, Affeldt is the only applicant who has been at all forthcoming in the City's secretive, privatized process, **which will select finalists by January 15 for master developer without revealing a) what each of the plans are or b) precisely who are the participants and what roles they have.**

Why "secretive," when there has been significant public involvement in visioning this project? Because we have been told by some who took part in meetings about the future of this site that no role for LANL or NNSA was ever discussed or endorsed. As far as we know, any such role is new (or newly-revealed). That such a role could even be contemplated has caught all of us here at the Study Group quite by surprise.

I don't think I need to explain here in full the political and cultural impact that NNSA's involvement in these proposals, let alone the possible "master" role, would have on Santa Fe.

In passing it is worth noting that any "high tech" campus, or "Silicon Santa Fe" tech campus" as Affeldt has [described](#) that part of his plan, will find itself overshadowed politically and institutionally by LANL. What is more, California's Silicon Valley has created not wealth, but poverty for many nearby, an observation we should all investigate very carefully before buying into the notion that subsidized "high tech" development would benefit the Santa Fe public.

For my part, I see very little to like in most of the proposals discussed in the newspaper. Santa Fe -- and New Mexico -- badly needs a campus devoted to the arts of sustainability and community resilience. We all need to think very carefully about the global warming and environmental denialism embodied in some of these plans, as well as the role of the profit motive. It is after all a massive subsidy to investors, who are writing the future of Santa Fe in their plans, as some of them (like Affeldt) fully realize and state.



The process is also terrible. Citizens should be able to see the whole menu from which the City (and its contractors) is selecting.

**It is important to send a signal RIGHT NOW to Mr. Affeldt, other potential developers, and the City, that any LANL or NNSA involvement will be highly controversial, gravely threatening the viability of any proposal that incorporates nuclear weapons institutions.**

Why is NNSA even considering stepping into this hornet's nest?

We can think of several reasons. Fundamentally, it is because the Trump Administration, New Mexico Democrats, and many others want LANL to become a "small" (for now) successor to the Rocky Flats Plant, making plutonium warhead cores ("pits") on a reliable, industrial basis. To do this, LANL needs, first of all, to expand its core and subcontractor staff by thousands of new people. There simply isn't room at LANL for all the people LANL wants to hire. Nor is there adequate housing in Los Alamos County. So LANL is counting on Santa Fe County to house, provide services for, and to educate the children of its expanding staff. Now NNSA wants the City and its taxpayers to subsidize its facilities too.

**Please come tomorrow, to learn, to show concern with silence or with questions, and to make connections for the next stages of rising protest.**

No LANL in Santa Fe!

Greg, Trish, and the Los Alamos Study Group

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December 2, 2019

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## This letter: Safety Board: The Los Alamos plutonium facility does not adequately protect the public

Dear friends –

"We interrupt our regularly scheduled programming" to bring you the following news.

Some time around Thanksgiving the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (DNFSB, Board) published an August [staff report](#), summarizing several longstanding concerns with the safety posture ("basis") of Building PF-4, the main plutonium facility at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL).

PF-4 began operations in 1978 without many modern safety features, such as a ventilation system that would maintain negative pressure in the building in the event of a serious accident such as a major earthquake or fire.

It is now known that Los Alamos can and has experienced earthquakes equal or greater than magnitude 7 on the Richter scale, with far greater accelerations than were used in the design of most Los Alamos buildings, including PF-4.

In the dry language of nuclear safety engineers, the report concludes

**that the approved PF-4 safety basis [5, 6] does not appropriately analyze the hazards at PF-4 and that the current safety control strategy does not adequately protect the public from the post-seismic fire accident scenario...NNSA [the National Nuclear Security Administration] and the Board have agreed for more than a decade on the need to improve the credited safety systems at PF-4; however, these improvements have been delayed. The concerns detailed in this report further emphasize the need for timely upgrades to PF-4's deficient safety systems.** [emphasis added]

These conclusions assume that the building itself would not collapse in an earthquake, but no one can be sure of that until LANL completes its dynamic structural analysis, at least, which will take at least another [two years](#). [See also note 1.]

Study Group board member Bob Alvarez and I met with senior members of the DNFSB staff in November to discuss some of the issues mentioned in this report, not yet released (or mentioned to us by the careful staff). This was one of roughly three dozen such visits to the Board in which we have stressed the importance of fixing PF-4's major deficiencies.

NNSA and LANL had agreed since 2006 to fix PF-4's problems, and Congress had funded various projects to do so. You can see lists of these major deficiencies in Appendix C of this report, with schedule slippages.

**In February of this year the Trump Administration Los Alamos NNSA team unanimously approved PF-4's safety posture without fixing PF-4's deficiencies.**

They did so by making a number of highly-questionable assumptions, as this and predecessor reports explain. For example, a post-seismic fire in PF-4 was found by NNSA to cause an estimated dose to the postulated most exposed members of the public in an accident (at Elk Ridge Trailer Park, [map](#)) of 219 rem, many times the maximum permitted under Department of Energy (DOE) guideline (a "small fraction" of 25 rem; see p. 1, note 1, [here](#)).

To shrink 219 rem to less than 25 rem (never mind the "small fraction" part), NNSA assumed that the old PF-4 building, after suffering a massive earthquake and fire, would barely leak even in a wind. After at most a 5 minute evacuation period, the exit doors would stay tightly sealed. No firefighters would go in. (For details see the highly-technical [DNFSB Technical Report 44: Los Alamos National Laboratory Plutonium Facility Leak](#)

You get the idea. "Baffle 'em with bullshit." Didn't work on the DNFSB.

At this point, expansion of plutonium missions at LANL is based on the assumption that these problems will be "solved," one way or another. The Trump Administration seems to think that the way to get rid of these problems is to disempower, overrule, and exclude the witnesses and truth-tellers, i.e. DNFSB. We made a [web page](#) to chronicle that battle but have not been able to keep up with every twist and turn since May, when the page was last updated.

Also in May we made this [chart](#) of major deficiencies with the projected dates of their resolution provided schedules do not slip further, a very optimistic assumption. Completion dates are perilously close to LANL's statutory pit production deadlines. And after just a few years DOE's estimated end of life for PF-4 begins to loom just ahead, a date which we believe would be accelerated by any attempt to "run the facility hard," for example by running multiple production shifts -- which NNSA has now privately said will be necessary.

We now think PF-4 will never be brought up to modern safety standards. The pace of improvement is so slow and halting that new problems are likely to surface before presently-known ones can be fixed.

Greg Mello

Note: 1. Seismic failure of a single internal column *would* (not *could*) overload the adjacent columns and their capitals and so produce [catastrophic building failure](#):

At issue is whether the facility [PF-4] might collapse in the event of a massive earthquake, an issue that previous studies have ruled out but one about which the Board remains concerned. That concern is centered on round columns that support the facility and informed by the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake that collapsed elevated highways in the San Francisco Bay Area. In public comments at a Capitol Hill Club event this summer [2013], DNFSB member Jack Mansfield explained the Board's concerns. The facility, built in the late 1970s, is "brittle," Mansfield said. "It was discovered after this facility was built that large buildings, to be survivable in serious earthquakes, have to have a bit of ductility. It was also discovered after the Loma Prieta earthquake that round columns, if accelerated up into the plywood they support, crumble. Those two vulnerabilities were identified early, but they're not built into PF-4."

He added: "The result is that there is a probability, albeit small, that the building could collapse, with great loss of life within and with dispersal of plutonium." Previous upgrades were based on calculations that did not fully characterize the problems facing the facility, Mansfield said. Those calculations were "very good" and "did a lot," Mansfield said, but "the problem is that [if] any of the columns, crushed like the ones on the highway did—the whole roof would go down like a zipper."



# Los Alamos Study Group



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November 29, 2019

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- Previous local letter (10/07/19): [So far, elected NM Dems support new ICBM, warheads, pits, huge expansion of N-weapons production, with NO transparency and NO environmental analysis for NM](#)
- Previous Bulletin (11/26/19): [Bulletin #264: LANL expansion, new mailing list, staff position available, news and views you can use](#)

## **This letter: PLEASE COME: City of Santa Fe considering subsidizing "Rocky Flats South" by opening NNSA/LANL satellite in Santa Fe -- developer to present Sunday December 8, 11 am**

Dear friends –

Mr. Affeldt, the developer who is the main source of the article ("[A new urban center for Santa Fe?](#)", T.S. Last, *A. Journal*, 11/24/19) discussed in [Bulletin 264](#), will present his group's plan at 11 a.m. on Sunday, December 8 at Collected Works Bookstore, 202 Galisteo Street ([map](#)) under the auspices of [Journey Santa Fe](#).

**[If you live in the area, please come to this presentation if you can.](#)**

### More background

Further information about this development competition was obtained by reporter Teya Vitu at the *New Mexican* ("[Developer proposals hint at what's in store for city-owned midtown campus](#)"). Many concepts have been submitted by the many partnerships. Vitu's article sheds important light not only on the big picture but specifically also on NNSA's proposal as "master developer:"

The National Nuclear Security Administration, which administers the Los Alamos National Laboratory management and operating contract, submitted a master developer proposal to build an open-campus environment with administrative offices, sustainable green spaces, engineering space, light manufacturing, training facilities and research and development. There would be no radiological or hazardous activities performed at the midtown property, said Al Stotts, an NNSA spokesman in Albuquerque.

"Details regarding any movement of personnel are premature as we continue exploration of Midtown as a viable option for LANL," Stotts said in an email. "LANL is undergoing unprecedented growth and expects to hire more than 1,000 new personnel annually for the next several years. Having a new campus — midway between New Mexico's two national laboratories — to house professional staff, scientists, and engineers in partnership with the city of Santa Fe — would be very beneficial."

Important further background is available in Maire O'Neill's article of 11/27/19 ("[RCLC Quizzes LANL Deputy Director Of Operations On Future Lab Plans](#)," *Los Alamos Reporter*). Taken as whole, this article can be seen as a further explanation of just how hard the plutonium pit mission is for LANL.

The simple truth is that LANL has already failed at this mission, as explained [here](#) (published today in the *Journal* apparently, though I don't see it on line yet).

Entertaining these plans makes the City complicit in creating a new "Rocky Flats South." And should they reach fruition in any form, the City and its taxpayers would be helping pay for the satellite campus that will house non-hazardous activities *so that LANL proper, and the regional road system and housing markets, can better handle expansion of LANL's hazardous missions.*

Los Alamos County, the LANL site, and the greater Santa Fe metro area, pose many problems for industrial plutonium missions. NNSA and Triad more or less understand this. **To succeed, NNSA and Triad need to transform how the region functions for them and for employees, both on a practical day-to-day basis and politically.**

That proposed political transformation can best succeed if wrapped in *en vogue* narratives and interwoven with other agendas and material interests, as for example in the proposed "innovation triangle."

If neoliberal corporate development is political heroin for our political leadership, nuclear-military development is "political fentanyl" -- deadly to the body politic even in very small doses, especially if there are other "political opiates" or "democracy depressants" present in the body politic. Which there are, aplenty.

Don't kid yourself: building and operating a factory for weapons of mass destruction in the greater Santa Fe area will destroy all prospects for real responses to the climate crisis and to our social crises for a multitude of reasons both local and national. This is an inherently fascist industry, an emergency alliance of corporate and state power set up during World War II without the usual protections for citizens, workers, or taxpayers, which never returned to peacetime norms. Nuclear corporate paternalism will not solve anything for New Mexico. Quite the reverse.

Herbert Marks, the first general counsel of the Atomic Energy Commission, observed that this industry was "a separate state, with its own airplanes and its own factories and its thousands of secrets...a peculiar sovereignty, one that could bring about the end, peacefully or violently, of all other sovereignties." This is the process we are witnessing.

The event on Sunday, December 8th, is the first opportunity to register concern about these alarming new plans. **It is a golden opportunity. The sooner this is stopped, the easier and the better it will be.**

Greg Mello

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# Los Alamos Study Group

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## So far, elected NM Dems support new ICBM, warheads, pits, huge expansion of N-weapons production, with NO transparency and NO environmental analysis for NM

October 7, 2019

If you have been forwarded this message and want to be more involved, and to receive these local letters directly, [write](#). Or if you want to be removed from this closed New Mexico list -- a subset of our main email list -- let us know by return email. Previous local [letters](#), wider [bulletins](#), [home page](#). Key resources on [plutonium and pit production in Los Alamos](#). We have shut down our Facebook page; Twitter: [@TrishABQ](#); Blog: [Remember your humanity: forget the rest](#). To subscribe to the Study Group's main listserv [send a blank email here](#). To unsubscribe to the main listserv [send a blank email here](#). [Contribute](#) if you can (several ways are possible). [PayPal Giving Fund](#) (simple, safe, no fees, tax receipt immediately sent by email). [Contact us](#).

### This letter:

1. **We need your help to drag what NNSA itself describes as its "staggering" plans into the sunlight of truth, where they will die**
2. **LANL is not a generic "research lab," as some may think. It is (and will always be) a nuclear weapons facility.**
3. **Our fall fundraising campaign continues: \$1,739 in matching funds are left**

Preceding letter (09/19/19): [Climate strike starts tomorrow, please GO: briefing slides and report from town hall meeting: memorial for John Otter Sunday Sept. 29, 2-4 pm at The Commons: fall fundraising begins with matching fund](#)

### Dear friends--

1. **We need your help to drag what NNSA itself describes as its "staggering" plans into the sunlight of truth, where they will die**

So far there has been no significant concern expressed by any elected New Mexico official regarding Los Alamos National Laboratory's (LANL's) largely-secret \$13 billion expansion and reinvestment plan, despite widespread, excellent reporting.

We need your help to change that. **Please.**

LANL's plan is part of what the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) describes as its "[staggering goal](#)" (video, [key quotes](#)) of hiring 20,000 additional nuclear weapons workers by 2025 to augment the present 41,000-person national workforce at NNSA's sites and headquarters. This includes hiring 1,200 *net* new staff at LANL [over the coming year](#). As NNSA explained, that means about 2,000 new hires at LANL over the coming year. (First reported on Oct. 3 by Dan Leone, Exchange Monitor Publications, "[NNSA No. 2 Discusses Agency's 'Staggering' Hiring Goals](#)," payroll).

This is twice the hiring rate LANL said it was aiming for just 2 months ago.

The proverb, "A stitch in time..." applies *a fortiori* to what is planned now in nuclear weapons for New Mexico, which is more than most rational people think anyone could even consider.

**We'd like you to pester our New Mexico elected officials -- all of them, federal, state, and local (and in every way you can think of, especially publicly) -- with demands for 1) transparency and 2) environmental impact analysis for LANL's plans.**

Just to make this very clear, LANL's plans are also NNSA's plans, i.e. *Trump's* plans.

We've put together a [2-page summary](#) of some of what's been missing. It boils down to this:

**Citizens and Congress need to see LANL's & NNSA's plans, in writing, and we need local and national environmental impact statements (EISs) that analyze those plans. We need EISs before the plans are implemented, as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires.**

These EIS processes involve public hearings. They are the only citizen hearings available under law for these plans.

You might think "Congress" should be able to get these plans. That's not how Congress is working these days. Budget and/or authorization negotiations won't be done until November most likely, and the scope of those discussions is already fixed. Little serious deliberation on these issues

may happen until next year, *if then*. Congress is otherwise engaged.

In this oversight near-vacuum, and with Congress at war with itself, the neocons, aging Cold War ideologues, and contractor "lobbyists-in-place" that run Trump's nuclear weapons "enterprise," as it is called, are moving ahead as fast as they can.

***What they are most afraid of is what you could help create: delay, and accountability. Because their plans do not make sense at any level or in any way. They fear truth. They fear you.***

**New Mexico officials do not have to be against these planned investments to ask *what they are for*, and *what impacts might be reasonably expected from them*.**

Without transparency and environmental impact statements, all parties (including LANL itself) are flying blind.

**So what we are asking you to campaign for are "good government" measures that were once routine.**

The New Mexico congressional delegation, specifically Rep. Ben Ray Lujan and the two senators, could ask for these plans and for a Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement (SWEIS), in ways that would make NNSA tremble. So could the Governor.

But they haven't. **They -- Heinrich, Udall, Lujan, and Grisham -- are allied with Trump's people in this matter, so far.**

Our delegation and governor know what this sudden surge of money is for. They hope we will all avert our eyes, thinking (as they seem to think) that this is economic-development "manna from heaven." As *if* the circa \$100 billion LANL has spent in northern New Mexico to date has been some kind of economic development boon.

## ***2. LANL is not a generic "research lab," as some may think. It is (and will always be) a nuclear weapons facility.***

**News flash: plutonium isn't manna, economic or otherwise, and it isn't from heaven.**

So what is it for?

The crash program NNSA and LANL are beginning is first and foremost designed to meet an (arbitrary) Air Force deadline to begin deployment of an (unnecessary) brand-new intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), dubbed the Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD).

GBSD is expected to cost \$85-140 billion, plus the new warheads (about \$20 billion), plus the new plutonium and uranium parts for the warheads (about \$9 billion for the plutonium cores -- the "pits" -- alone, which NNSA didn't count in its token analysis of alternatives).

All told, GBSD is a \$100-180 billion program, one for which LANL has been assigned what is arguably the dirtiest and most dangerous job. It is that job -- making the pits -- which is the locomotive pulling the LANL expansion and reinvestment plan.

In NNSA's plan, LANL and the Savannah River Site (SRS) will both make pits, with the larger SRS facility starting production after LANL but largely dependent on LANL for transmission of pit-specific know-how to hundreds of new workers. Making pits is hard. There's tacit knowledge involved and tricky, artisan processes.

GBSD is in turn just one element in the roughly \$500 billion, 30-year Obama-Trump nuclear weapons modernization plan. (The *total* cost of nuclear weapons over the coming 30 years is close to \$2 trillion, including environmental cleanup.)

Leaving out detailed arguments, the "use-it-or-lose-it" GBSD system is "necessary" only because the U.S. is in most respects a national security state, not a democracy, and because big defense contractors and the Air Force generally get what they want.

GBSD is about empire, not security, including the empire of defense contractors (like Triad LLC, the LANL manager, and Northrup Grumman, the largest GBSD contractor) over us.

Without GBSD the U.S. would still have 1,200 deployed nuclear weapons and about 1,600 more in the so-called reserve or "hedge" arsenal, plus about 3,000 intact warheads and bombs awaiting dismantlement (including 800 or more ICBM warheads), not to mention the more than 5,000 modern, usable pits currently being kept in reserve.

In 2017 U.S. nuclear weapons spending was larger than the *total* military spending in all but 10 countries. Yet nuclear weapons comprise only a few percent of U.S. "defense" spending overall, which comes to \$8,084 per U.S. household, or \$3,005 per capita.

**You think this country is going to have a "Green New Deal" at the same time as a \$1 trillion/year "defense" budget that consumes most of the discretionary budget of the U.S?**

***Silly you.***

**The bottom line is that the political values, priorities, and spending involved in the proposed LANL expansion are part and parcel of those which are fatal to all progressive hopes for a better country and a better world, full stop.**

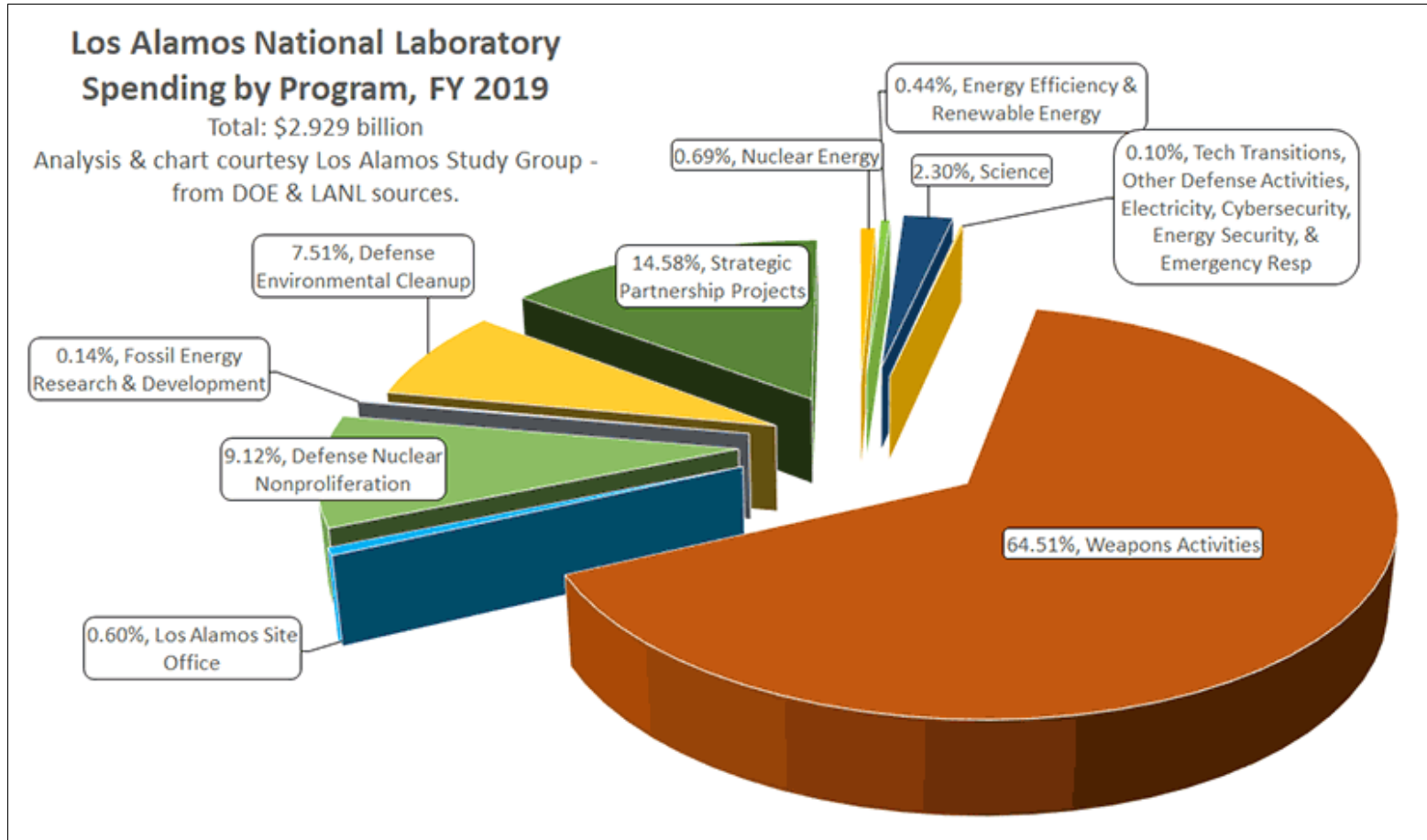
**Climate protection will not move domestically -- nor, given the dominant U.S. place in the world, will it move internationally -- unless the**

## U.S. dramatically changes its defense and foreign policies.

Get it? If you stop or delay pit production at LANL you stop or delay it at SRS also. If you stop or delay pit production you stop or delay GBSD. Delay of pit production and GBSD would be a major dose of reality to U.S. imperialists.

I want to clear up something. LANL is not some sort of general scientific laboratory, capable of a wide variety of work. Some cling to the slender reed that expansion of LANL might be good, somehow -- you know, for "research"...into...something *good*.

So we have to ask ourselves, what is LANL? LANL is the best-funded center for nuclear weapons research, development, testing, and production in the world. Nuclear weapons were and are its *raison d'être* and have made its identity and culture. Nearly all of LANL's programs serve its nuclear weapons mission or are derived from them. Take a look:



For the first time in 70 years, LANL's identity is shifting, away from research. Production is becoming a major focus and the leading source of its planned growth. Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) in California is the lead design lab for the next two warhead upgrades that are planned. LANL's job is to produce plutonium warhead cores ("pits") for LLNL.

That is, LLNL is to be the "clean" lab, and LANL the "dirty" lab. LLNL is in a Bay Area suburb, where NNSA can't get away with crapping up the environment. They can here. They have. **Unless you can help us change their minds, our politicians are about to let them open up a small "Rocky Flats South," without so much as an EIS.** How small? Bigger than most people, including most Democrats in Congress, think.

There is no reason to think LANL could or should become a civilian research facility. We've written about this extensively, but former LLNL physicist put the issue most succinctly in a letter to the *Santa Fe New Mexican* several years ago, quoting and rebutting someone (rather naive) in Santa Fe:

The "brilliant minds" and "use[less] infrastructure" of the nuclear labs are incapable of "work the world needs." That these nuclear weapons playpens might be "useful" to civilian purposes is a great misconception widespread among the public. Certainly, some of the individuals in these labs could apply themselves to "useful" work, applying technical skill to improve social conditions, if they were placed in the right setting (and in rare cases, on their own as lone scientist-inventors). But, such people are the exception. The vast majority are unable to conceptualize actual social needs, and few have technical expertise that is applicable to "real world" problems. Most of these "brilliant minds" need massive high-tech resources to work on arcane details of exotic physical situations with no relation to the experiences and problems that face most of humanity. Also, most of these "brilliant minds" expect lots of money for their work, and would not be cost effective to projects aimed at improving social conditions. Just like an old battleship is useless for passenger or cargo or fishing or ocean research purposes, the nuclear weapons people are similarly useless outside their niche. The only way to make the battleship useful for peaceful ends is break it up for scrap metal. Similarly, the only way to get "usefulness" out of nuclear weapons experts is to put them into civilian occupations at an entry level, and let them start over in a new "peace" mode. Few will



show themselves to be brilliant.

The waste of the labs is that they suck up national resources (money and graduates of technical schools) that would be better spent on projects for the solution of real social problems (e.g., clean water worldwide, renewable energy, public health, care of the environment, etc.) and the education of new young experts to man these projects. Just as the Iraq and Afghanistan wars suck money out of the federal budget and impoverish our society (lack of funding at state and local level for social programs), so do the nuclear labs act like little fiscal black holes of war, that suck up what could otherwise be useful investment in technical education and socially beneficial research. The labs cannot be reprogrammed, only melted down and recycled.

**3. *Our fall fundraising campaign continues: \$1,739 in matching funds are left***

Thank you so much for your support up to now. As we mentioned in our 9/19 letter, a generous donor offered the Study Group \$5,000 in 1:1 matching funds. These are almost two-thirds matched!

As before, we need to leave further details until the next Bulletin to our main mailing list. You'll get that.

Thank you,

Greg and Trish, for the Study Group

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## Climate strike starts tomorrow, please GO; briefing slides and report from town hall meeting; memorial for John Otter Sunday Sept. 29, 2-4 pm at The Commons; fall fundraising begins with matching fund

September 19, 2019

If you have been forwarded this message and want to be more involved, and to receive these local letters directly, [write](#). Or if you want to be removed from this closed New Mexico list -- a subset of our main email list -- let us know by return email. Previous local [letters](#), wider [bulletins](#), [home page](#). Key resources on [plutonium and pit production in Los Alamos](#), [RCLC](#). We have shut down our Facebook page; Twitter: [@TrishABQ](#); Blog: [Remember your humanity: forget the rest](#). To subscribe to the Study Group's main listserv [send a blank email here](#). To unsubscribe to the main listserv [send a blank email here](#). [Contribute](#) if you can (several ways are possible). [PayPal Giving Fund](#) (simple, safe, no fees, tax receipt immediately sent by email). [Contact us](#).

### This letter:

1. **Climate strike starts tomorrow: please GO, and don't stop;**
2. **Briefing slides and report from town hall meeting on plutonium missions, LANL expansion and what you can do;**
3. **Memorial for John Otter Sunday Sept. 29, 2-4 pm, at The Commons, 2300 West Alameda ([map](#))**
4. **Fall fundraising campaign begins with \$5,000 matching fund**

Preceding letter (09/14/19): [Reminder: alert your networks: town hall meeting Tues Sept 17, noon. Capitol Rotunda: Heinrich, Udall embrace and increase Trump nuclear weapons funding](#)

Dear friends –

### **1. Climate strike starts tomorrow: please GO, and don't stop**

We realize this is more or less the last minute to be saying this but we hope you will attend one or another of the many [climate strike events](#) planned in our state for tomorrow -- or that you will take independent action alone or with friends.

Tomorrow, numbers matter. They aren't *all* that matter, and they don't *always* matter, but numbers do matter tomorrow.

So if you are wondering whether to go, or what good it will do, just GO. *Please*. You can discuss the details when you get there, whichever "there" it is. Maybe you'll see some of us.

Going to one of the climate strike events is the most important thing you can do tomorrow and this weekend to stop the new nuclear arms race.

Truly facing the climate danger, with consequential personal actions, is also truly facing the reality of our declining empire, the international struggle for scarce resources, and the new nuclear arms race.

Some of us left relatively easy if boring careers to try to save what we could of civilization and nature a long time ago. Knowing what we knew, there was no real choice to make. That's the reality coming to us, the train on the tracks that all of us are camped on.

That's what we are asking, more or less. We all need to be looking for "biographical opportunity." We all need to be examining our lives, looking at what we can bring to the struggle (hint: the harder you look the more you will find).

We all should be supporting young people, and retired people, and working people with a little extra time, accepting our job of putting together a "partnership of the generations" -- a very conservative phrase and idea, you'll recall -- to break free of the paralysis and co-optation that has marked the climate movement from its inception until, maybe, now.

Now, most of the groups hosting these events may have not had the best environmental policies up to now. Perhaps they didn't support the fracking moratorium in the last legislative session. Perhaps they think our economy can be made "green" by substituting merely renewable energy sources for dirty sources of electricity, and then we can carry on much as before.

Perhaps they think fixing leaks in natural gas extraction will make fracking all right, as long as it doesn't happen near Chaco Canyon. Perhaps they don't put all the oil and gas the Grisham Administration, and our congressional delegation, want to extract on their greenhouse gas books, allowing this Governor to pass herself off as somehow "green."

Perhaps tomorrow's events will create pleasant, easy photo opportunities for Democrats who aren't really doing anything serious for the environment or for the poverty and fragility in our communities, because they imagine that plutonium pit production or Facebook or Netflix or oil and gas or the Spaceport or Meow Wolf or the military will finally bring prosperity and the rising tide that will lift all boats.

Perhaps they will say that Republicans are the biggest problem, rather than deeper, more subtle problems far closer to home. Perhaps they will say that if "we" all drive \$35,000 electric cars "we" can continue our happy motoring into a rainbow-tinged future. And so on and on.

And of course many will say that Trump is awful -- oh, he's the worst! Well of course he is, though it can be argued that having a polite climate-destroying liar as president that puts everybody to sleep is pretty bad as well. Being "against Trump" and \$4.00 will buy a Starbucks venti (I think). Being "against Trump" is not being anything.

Despite all that you should go. We all have things to learn, and many people will be heartened into taking a step into something new. And then another step, and another. Let's be those people, tomorrow, and every day after that.

Our civilization is failing. Nature is being brutally killed. We aren't going to have a nice future in the old, narcissistic, consumerist sense. We can have a much better future than that ever was. But we've got to get our hearts ready, and our minds, and our families and friendship networks. Wholly new careers are now needed and wide open and we've got to support people in them -- support them with intellectual, moral, material, and social resources, as we step into evolving new roles ourselves.



Orphan reticulated giraffe with wildlife keeper

## **2. Briefing slides and report from town hall meeting on plutonium missions, LANL expansion and what you can do**

We had an excellent, well-attended town hall meeting in the state capitol on Tuesday, Sept. 17th ("[Nuclear disarmament group criticizes proposal to produce more plutonium 'pits'](#)," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, Sept. 17). No public officials came to speak or sent staff to observe, despite our requests.

The briefing slides we used, plus a few more, are here: "[LANL's plans for plutonium pit production and weapons expansion: Ending enchantment?](#)"

We added a few bare-bones comments before posting, which are available via the little boxes in the upper left corners of some of the slides. We hope to post a video of Greg's talk in due time, or make another one here in the office. The situation here and in Washington is changing week by week. When more is known we will tell you.

Long-time observers may notice a couple of surprises in those slides, only partially explored. As you will see, plutonium in shipments to and from LANL is expected to increase by a factor of very roughly 100 -- just a ballpark estimate at this point -- mostly without using TRUPACTs. The New Mexico senators know about this new mission, but they probably haven't connected all the dots. If more plutonium missions and more money are inherently good things, why think further?

Only a Site-Wide Environmental Impact Statement (SWEIS) would connect those particular dots along with others. But neither they, nor the Governor, nor Rep. Ben Ray Lujan, have requested one.

Nationally, alternatives and impacts can only be explored with a supplemental or new programmatic EIS (PEIS), as we have formally emphasized to the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), the Pentagon, and Congress since [April of 2018](#) (plus [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)), as well as in briefings in Washington.

As we have [explained](#), the New Mexico senators want an even larger pit mission (80+ pits per year) than LANL now envisions (30+ ppy).

With no positive response from NNSA we anticipate litigating these issues.

We already sued successfully to obtain two NNSA studies of its pit mission, the first of which made clear (2 p. [summary](#)) just what a bad choice LANL would be for any expanded pit mission.

There is still a fairly-universal Democratic Party consensus nationally (and in New Mexico), and among the arms control community and its institutional funders, that LANL should host an industrial pit factory. That was also true in 2010, when we were able to stop and defeat the then-proposed plan.

As is apparent, the situation is complex and developing rapidly, with large consequences for the future of northern New Mexico and the state as a whole.

[What can citizens do?](#)

Right now we urge you to get informed and organize your friends to write letters to editors (LTEs) demanding:

- A SWEIS as well as a nationwide ("programmatic") environmental study of pit production, which is slated to span multiple states, with nationwide as well as local impacts;
- Transparency from the federal government -- not just LANL, a contractor -- about just what its plans really are.

Even in the best, *pro bono* case, litigation is expensive. Our fall fundraising campaign is beginning; see 4. below.

### **[3. Memorial for John Otter Sunday Sept. 29, 2-4 pm, at The Commons, 2300 West Alameda \(map\)](#)**

We were very sad to learn to that our friend John Otter passed away this past Sunday. All who knew John know he was a mighty force for good in many channels in Santa Fe -- always there at meetings, always contributing good ideas and actions, not just for the Study Group but for many organizations over many decades. He was a wonderful example of selfless service for many of us, and his passing leaves a gigantic void where personal virtue and magnanimous action had been. He was our friend. We are stricken.

He is survived by his wife Suzi, who informs us that there will be a memorial for John at The Commons on Sunday, September 29, from 2-4 pm. The Commons is at 2300 West Alameda ([map](#)).

### **[4. Fall fundraising campaign begins with \\$5,000 matching fund](#)**

We haven't asked for financial support in quite a while now. Now we are. A generous donor has put up \$5,000 in 1:1 matching funds, in the hopes of attracting more support for the Study Group.

This doesn't seem like the place to go into detail about this fundraising campaign, and how important it is. We will do that in a Bulletin to our main mailing list, of which this is a subset.

Thank you for your attention, best wishes, and see some of you tomorrow!

Greg and Trish, for the Study Group



## Reminder; alert your networks: town hall meeting Tues Sept 17, noon, Capitol Rotunda; Heinrich, Udall embrace and increase Trump nuclear weapons funding

September 14, 2019

If you have been forwarded this message and want to be more involved, and to receive these local letters directly, [write](#). Or if you want to be removed from this closed New Mexico list -- a subset of our main email list -- let us know by return email. Previous local [letters](#), wider [bulletins](#), [home page](#). Key resources on [plutonium and pit production in Los Alamos](#), [RCLC](#). We have shut down our Facebook page; Twitter: [@TrishABQ](#); Blog: [Remember your humanity: forget the rest](#). To subscribe to the Study Group's main listserv [send a blank email here](#). To unsubscribe to the main listserv [send a blank email here](#). [Contribute](#) if you can (several ways are possible). [PayPal Giving Fund](#) (simple, safe, no fees, tax receipt immediately sent by email).

[Contact us](#).

**This letter: Reminder: town hall meeting Tues Sept 17 Capital rotunda, noon, Capitol Rotunda; Heinrich, Udall embrace and increase Trump nuclear weapons funding**

Preceding letter (09/03/19): [Town Hall meeting Tues Sept 17 in Santa Fe, noon, Capitol Rotunda: letters & calls needed to stop "\\$13 billion plutonium construction plan"](#)

Also see: [Los Alamos Study Group to host town hall meeting on Los Alamos lab expansion](#), press release, Sep 6, 201.

Dear friends –

**We hope you can come on Tuesday, Sept. 17 at noon to the Capitol Rotunda in Santa Fe, and that you will alert your own networks to come as well.**

We cannot bring signs into the Capitol but we certainly welcome them outside, before and after the noon event. We will convene outside afterwards if there are enough questions.

There will be news media and a film crew present. The more people and visibility the better.

Many people ask us, "What can I do?" **Right now the answer is: please come on Tuesday and please bring as many friends as you can. Bring signs, come a bit before noon, stay as long as you want or you can.**

We will discuss the proposed new industrial plutonium warhead core ("pit") mission at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), the catalyst for what LANL hopes will be a \$13 billion (B) capital investment program at the lab, not counting proposed new highways to connect SR4 near White Rock directly with a) I-25 at the Waldo exit and b) SR 599 north of Santa Fe. This would necessitate a major highway bridge over White Rock Canyon.

Further details -- as much as we know of them -- can be found in and are linked to the preceding [letter](#). So far LANL and the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) have been keeping the public, local officials, state legislators, and congressional committees in the dark about their plans.

We know that last bit because we are just now returning from Washington, DC, where we have spoken to members, congressional staff and many others.

NNSA and LANL must follow Department of Energy (DOE) site planning rules, which mandate a public process, but they haven't.

NNSA must produce detailed pit production plans, but it hasn't.

Federal agencies must analyze the environmental impact of their proposed actions, but NNSA hasn't and isn't planning to.

We have asked a range of elected officials to attend and to speak on Tuesday if they wish, with what success we do not yet know. There will be time for as many public questions and comments as we can fit in our two-hour window after a brief presentation, comments by officials, and questions from the press.

In Congress, the joint effort by Senator Heinrich with Senator Lindsay Graham of South Carolina to place the Trump pit requirement (basically, start producing at least 80 pits per year [ppy] by 2030) into statute may well succeed. It has passed the whole Senate and is currently being negotiated

with the House.

Meanwhile Senator Udall's appropriations subcommittee, quickly followed by the whole Appropriations Committee, has reported a bill that also supports the 80 ppy requirement and adds even more money than the Trump team requested. House Democrats tried to limit pit production to only 30 ppy, and only at LANL, and tried to cut pit funding by a third. But with the Heinrich-Graham amendment and now the Senate Appropriations Committee adding even more money while also supporting 80 ppy, it's an uphill struggle to limit pit production requirements.

What this is all about is providing pits for the new warhead now under design for the Air Force's proposed new land-based missile. Democrats are divided as to pace and funding, with only a few voices saying we don't need it. So the plan is going forward so far. Nobody can say what it will cost but with the new warhead, not counting the pits and other expensive parts, the lowest possible figure is in the neighborhood of \$100 B. This is but part of the circa \$1.5 trillion, 30-year commitment to nuclear weapons deployment and modernization that began under Obama and is now expanding under Trump.

As we tirelessly repeat, these plans, in their totality, represent political values and costs that are incompatible with dreams of justice and with the survival of nature and civilization as we know them. The hour is late.

Some want a Green New Deal. What LANL wants is a Brown Old Deal, or maybe an Atomic Retro Deal -- for itself. For its own corporate Plutopia.

I know it's hard to believe anyone could take their grandiose plans seriously but believe me, Congress does. The Pentagon does. This is a very serious plan, not a joke at all. It is NNSA's #1 priority. They are ready to throw more than a billion dollars a year into making a new Rocky Flats, and many people want that money.

Come on Tuesday for more details.

Best wishes,

Greg

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2901 Summit Place NE Albuquerque, NM 87106, Phone: 505-265-1200



## Town Hall meeting Tues Sept 17 in Santa Fe, noon, Capitol Rotunda; letters & calls needed to stop "\$13 billion plutonium construction plan"

September 3, 2019

If you have been forwarded this message and want to be more involved, and to receive these local letters directly, [write](#). Or if you want to be removed from this closed New Mexico list -- a subset of our main email list -- let us know by return email. Previous local [letters](#), wider [bulletins](#), [home page](#). Key resources on [plutonium and pit production in Los Alamos](#), [RCLC](#). We have shut down our Facebook page; Twitter: [@TrishABQ](#); Blog: [Remember your humanity: forget the rest](#). To subscribe to the Study Group's main listserv [send a blank email here](#). To unsubscribe to the main listserv [send a blank email here](#). [Contribute](#) if you can (several ways are possible). [PayPal Giving Fund](#) (simple, safe, no fees, tax receipt immediately sent by email). [Contact us](#).

Preceding letter: [Please join us on Friday evening, August 23, at 6 pm at the Kit Carson Electric Coop in Taos, 118 Cruz Alta Road \(map\), for a lively discussion of LANL's expansion plans and the critical role New Mexicans can play in halting the new nuclear arms race](#)

Useful new resources from us:

- ["Ending enchantment: LANL's plans for plutonium pit production and weapons expansion."](#) briefing slides, Taos, Aug 23, 2019
  - [Included charts about plutonium pit spending, with a short explanation](#), Aug 27, 2019
  - [Video of Taos presentation](#) (47 min.)
- **This is what we want most right now, transparency and environmental impact statements (plural): ["Transparency & Environmental Impact Statements are needed," presentation to NM Gov Lujan Grisham, Aug 22, 2019, linked to our Aug 1 letter request letter. We need your help -- please see below.](#)**
- [Letter to congressional colleagues, update on pit production and Los Alamos plans](#), Aug 21, 2019

(See [previous letters](#) for more background.)

And from others:

- [US \\$13 billion plutonium construction plan](#) [at LANL], *International Construction*, Sep 2, 2019
- [Why do we need plutonium pits?](#), Walter Pincus, *The Cipher Brief* (\$10 paywall), Sep 3, 2019, based in part on the recent [CBO analysis of S. 1790, FY 2020 National Defense Authorization Act](#), Aug 23, 2019.

And, interestingly:

- [White Rock Canyon looking north](#), LASG aerial photo ©2012.
- [Engineering renderings of the proposed bridge over White Rock Canyon of the Rio Grande \(from: "NM State Road 594, Santa Fe to Los Alamos Corridor Study, Supplemental Draft EIS," Sep 18, 1990\):](#)
  - The [Chino Mesa Alternative](#), involving two bridge crossings: a 1,923 ft span across Ancho Canyon and a 3,113 ft span across the Rio Grande 810 ft above the river; and
  - The [Montoso Peak Alternative](#), involving three bridge crossings: a 640 ft span across Chaquehui Canyon, a bridge over Ancho Canyon, and a 2,790 ft span across the Rio Grande at a height of 1,020 ft from the river, 1,000 ft north of the northern boundary of Bandelier National Monument).
- Compare:
  - [Rio Grande Gorge Bridge](#) (span: 1,280 ft., height 565 ft);
  - [Diamond Drive bridge](#) (193 ft. high, 817 ft. long); and
  - [Mike O'Callaghan–Pat Tillman Memorial Bridge](#) at Hoover Dam (not as tall as the Montoso Peak alternative; much shorter span than any White Rock Canyon alternatives).

- [List of bridges in the United States by height](#)
- Here are some random [snapshots](#) of nuclear convoys we have seen in Santa Fe and Los Alamos. Personnel from these armored vehicles have followed us to our various destinations. We take pictures of them; they take pictures of us. Santa Fe and its suburbs will see a lot more nuclear waste and materials traffic with an industrial pit mission in place.

Dear chosen friends on our New Mexico activist list –

### **1. We need your help!**

What we have, friends, is a \$13 billion construction plan to build the infrastructure for a plutonium factory in the Santa Fe "back yard." That figure does NOT include 30+ miles of what is likely to be four-lane highways ("Plutonium Highways") and one of the highest, if not the highest, bridges in the United States, over a lovely, unspoiled reach of the Rio.

No plans for the "extreme makeover" of Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) have as yet been released although dozens of new buildings are planned, together costing more than six times what the Manhattan Project spent in this state and nearly doubling the replacement value of LANL as a whole (from \$17 B to \$30 B).

**No EISs are as yet planned.**

**No public hearings are scheduled.**

**There are no commitments from any elected officials -- the Governor, the senators, the congresspersons -- to release these plans or make these EISs happen.**

**LANL and the National Nuclear Security Administration have been [meeting](#) secretly with the Governor and her cabinet about their plans, specifically with [Economic Development Secretary Alicia Keyes](#) and [Environment Department Secretary James Kinney](#).**

Meanwhile Senator Heinrich has been [working with](#) Senator Lindsay Graham and Trump officials to vastly increase the proposed production capacity of LANL from a nominal 30 pits per year (ppy) to "at least 80" ppy -- i.e. over 100 ppy on average ([note 1 here](#)).

LANL has not made a full-quality, "War Reserve" pit since 2011. LANL's plutonium facility needs years of upgrades to meet today's safety standards, if that is even possible. LANL's present pit production capacity is zero.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) thinks ([pp. 9-10](#)) the LANL pit mission will cost only \$2.3 billion (B) in construction. LANL is proposing \$13 B over the next decade overall; we can't tell how much of this is directly related to the pit mission. It is virtually all related, one way or another, to the new arms race that LANL -- and apparently our delegation -- so desire.

Congress has no idea what all this will cost. There is, at present, a bipartisan consensus for a "30 ppy" pit factory at LANL. As in, 30 going on 100.

**This is a runaway Trump Administration program, a looming environmental disaster and an affront to world peace, fully supported by New Mexico Democrats.**

**Please write letters to the editors of our local papers, as well as to the Governor and senators demanding an end to these ridiculous plans, transparency about them in the meantime, and two environmental impact statements -- one national and one local -- we explained in our August 1 [letter to the Governor](#).**

### **2. Please come to our September 17, 2019 Town Hall in the State Capitol, at noon, on these plans and what we can do about them.**

We will send more details about this Town Hall as the day approaches. Meanwhile, please mark it on your calendar.

Best wishes,

Greg





# Los Alamos Study Group

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**Please join us on Friday evening, August 23, at 6 pm at the Kit Carson Electric Coop in Taos, 118 Cruz Alta Road ([map](#)), for a lively discussion of LANL's expansion plans and the critical role New Mexicans can play in halting the new nuclear arms race**

Aug 17, 2019

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**This letter: Please join us on Friday evening, August 23, at 6 pm at the Kit Carson Electric Coop in Taos, 118 Cruz Alta Road ([map](#)), for a lively discussion of LANL's expansion plans and the critical role New Mexicans can play in halting the new nuclear arms race**

Preceding letter (important!): [August 15, 2019: More details of LANL's regional plans: EIS \(national and local\) needed: we crave your help](#)

Recently to our larger list, of which this is a subset:

- [Bulletin 262: New Mexico Democrats push Trump nuclear weapons agenda regardless of environmental costs](#), Jul 24, 2019
- [Bulletin 261: Public discussion: "The Steepest Time: Youth and Crisis at the End of an Age."](#) Thursday July 25, 2019, 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm, Phil Space Gallery, 1410 Second St, Santa Fe, Jul 19, 2019

**Dear friends on our New Mexico activist list –**

As you now know, LANL is planning \$13 billion in new construction over the coming decade, anchored by an expanded plutonium complex to produce the cores ("pits") for a new generation of warheads.

Our congressional delegation has succeeded in creating a legal [mandate](#) to "implement surge efforts" to produce more than 30 pits per year (ppy) at LANL and to plan, as we [explained](#), for an average production rate of more than 100 ppy using round-the-clock labor shifts. The construction plans referenced in our last [letter](#) reflect an attempt to build the physical capacity to handle plutonium shift changes involving hundreds of people.

No environmental impact analysis is planned.

LANL even wants new highways and a new bridge across Rio Grande to support this expansion.

The [new contractors](#) at LANL apparently understand that they must overcome LANL's geographic isolation -- one of the site's main virtues in the eyes of Manhattan Project planners -- and its dependence on northern New Mexican labor markets to succeed. They seem desperate.

By comparison, expenditures by the Manhattan Project at Site Y (Los Alamos) and the Trinity Test Site through 1945 totaled just 2.07 billion, in 2019 dollars ([Atomic Audit](#), p. 59). LANL and Sandia each spend much more than that -- a little under \$3 billion, or possibly over \$3 billion in Sandia's case, the intelligence budget being elusive -- every year. LANL's planned construction program alone would cost six times the total spent by the Manhattan Project in New Mexico.

Both New Mexico senators and Congressman Lujan have been pushing hard for this expansion, which will also dramatically increase transuranic waste production at LANL, with dramatic consequences for legacy waste shipments from LANL and further impacts nationally.

We believe LANL will fail in this new pit mission, provided it gets some "assistance." And surely a new bridge across the Rio Grande is, well, a "bridge too far."

The crucial question is: [when will these plans fail?](#) And with how much more damage to our institutions, public culture, and environment? How long will New Mexico's politics, society, and economy languish beneath the mushroom cloud (or [upas tree](#)), co-opted and corrupted, addicted and vastly unequal, wasting the waning opportunities available in our declining empire and warming world?

And LANL might not fail. We are in a brave new world of rampant extractivism in this state and " deep state" dominance nationally. Our democratic institutions are hollowed to paper thinness. Propaganda is pervasive. If a politician fully buys into the logic of neoliberalism and growth for growth's sake, and if enough money is spread around, environmental destruction, inequality, and declining security can look like progress. To many influential eyes in this state, what LANL wants is inevitable. They've lost the ability to imagine anything else.

Our current senators haven't met a nuclear weapon or nuclear weapon dollar they don't like and support, if it is spent in New Mexico. They're true believers.

Please come on Friday, 6 pm, and tell your friends. We've got work to do, together.

Best wishes,

Greg

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# Los Alamos Study Group

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## More details of LANL's regional plans; EIS (national and local) needed; we crave your help

Aug 15, 2019

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[Contact us](#).

This letter:

- More details regarding Los Alamos National Laboratory's (LANL's) plans for itself [and the region](#)
- We need your help in persuading community and tribal leaders, opinion leaders, and politicians (those elected, the candidates, the party officials) to ask our Governor, our senators, and Congressman Ben Ray Lujan for:
  - A [national](#) ("programmatic") [environmental impact statement \(EIS\) process for plutonium pit production](#) which analyzes the impacts of the proposed ~\$30 billion (B) program [on a national basis](#). Pit production would significantly affect operations at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP), LANL, and every other current and former nuclear weapons site which stores plutonium or has transuranic waste. After that,
  - A [comprehensive local](#) ("site-wide") [EIS process for LANL](#) which analyzes the regional impacts of the proposed industrial pit production mission at LANL.
- We seek your help and participation in other ways as well, for example as a volunteer on whom we could call upon from time to time, or as a volunteer with a specific mission assignment, role, or skills.

Preceding letter:

- [August 9, 2019: Heads up: grand LANL plans finally being unveiled. should be hitting newspapers tomorrow](#)

Recently to our larger list, of which this is a subset:

- [Bulletin 262: New Mexico Democrats push Trump nuclear weapons agenda regardless of environmental costs](#), Jul 24, 2019
- [Bulletin 261: Public discussion: "The Steepest Time: Youth and Crisis at the End of an Age."](#) Thursday July 25, 2019, 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm, Phil Space Gallery, 1410 Second St, Santa Fe, Jul 19, 2019

### Dear friends on our New Mexico activist list –

The *Albuquerque Journal* covered last week's subcontractor forum in a terrific August 9 article ("[LANL officials detail potential building boom](#)"), based on recordings and photos we provided as well as an interview with LANL Director Thom Mason.

For those who are very interested, we can now share with you the [slides](#) presented there, and some [excerpts from current LANL site plan](#) (LASG snapshots of an unexpected animated presentation during lunch). More was said orally by the speakers than appears on the slides. The lunch presentation by Mr. Beierschmitt especially will give some idea of the massive scale of thinking involved.

As LANL Chief Operating Officer Beierschmitt emphasized, LANL planning is no longer confined to within the LANL fence line. That's what's new -- the financial and territorial scale of ambition involved.

The terrific Robin Collier of KCEI *Cultural Energy* in Taos had a program about this last night ("[Plans for massive construction & huge new roads at LANL as part of plutonium pit production](#)," interview with Greg Mello, 8/14/19).

LANL senior management says -- and for the time being they are correct -- that LANL has bipartisan support in Congress (and of course in New Mexico) for building 30 plutonium warhead cores ("pits") per year at LANL. (Actually it's not "30" ppy, it's "at least 30," which equates to about 41 ppy, single-shift, with more capacity theoretically available from multiple shifts; see note 1 in [Bulletin 262](#).)

So everything LANL proposes is couched as necessary for the "30 ppy" mission. That's how it's being sold.

But as we have been predicting for some time, that "30" is not a stable number. It's just the beginning. A mere 30 ppy isn't enough to support a new warhead, and -- as is proposed by New Mexico Democrats and certain "antinuclear" NGOs -- if LANL is the only pit production site, it will need to be much bigger than a mere 30 ppy.

That is, if NNSA wants a new warhead (and it does), NNSA must have a bigger pit factory, whether at LANL or at the Savannah River Site (SRS), where a large plutonium facility sits so far unused in the middle of a heavy industrial site of some 310 square miles.

If LANL is the only pit production site, no matter at what supposed scale, planning will need to begin soon if not immediately for a bigger, newer, factory, given the age and manifest problems of the current main plutonium facility (Building PF-4).

In for a dime, in for a dollar.

For arms control and disarmament advocates the only decent and logical policy solution to this conundrum is to block the proposed new warhead which requires the new pits, as we have often said. It is "perhaps the most useless and poorly justified warhead ever," as one Trump official put it to us. Halting that warhead (the W87-1) is a work in progress, about which we will provide an update this coming fall.

Meanwhile thanks to all the members of the 2018 New Mexico congressional delegation (sarcasm), LANL has a legal [mandate](#) to "implement surge efforts to exceed 30 pits per year to meet Nuclear Posture Review and national policy" and to have "a detailed plan for designing and carrying out production of plutonium pits 31-80..." and "an assessment of the strategy considered for manufacturing up to 80 pits per year at Los Alamos National Laboratory through the use of multiple labor shifts and additional equipment at PF-4 [LANL's 41-year-old main plutonium facility] until modular facilities are completed to provide a long-term, single-labor shift capacity" (emphasis added).

[Slide 37](#) tells of "145" new "gloveboxes/enclosures" and "170" new gloveboxes to be installed in existing facilities for the new pit mission. By way of comparison, NNSA's [Plutonium Pit Analysis of Alternatives](#) says (e-page 27) that the "at least 30" ppy mission requires only 90 pieces of equipment and the "at least 80" ppy mission requires only 133.

So no matter how you slice it, LANL wants an awful lot of new gloveboxes for a "30 ppy" mission, especially given that LANL already has all the gloveboxes installed to produce pits at a basic level of about 10 ppy.

Recall that LANL has a legal obligation to plan for an 80 ppy mission.

The proposed 6-story parking garage at TA-55, LANL's plutonium area, should also give one pause. It is one of three new proposed parking facilities serving that same location, as the slides show.

Why so much parking? Presenters told us on August 8 that an additional 1,500 people would be needed at TA-55. That's about twice the number LANL said would be necessary to implement the 80 ppy mission.

Finally, think a minute about the new roads proposed (first slide [here](#)).

These are the internal linkages in what Mr. Beierschmitt described as a new high-tech "triangle" embracing Los Alamos, Santa Fe, and Albuquerque. The road was described as essential to employee retention. It might be.

The new road would leave I-25 at approximately the Waldo exit, which is about 45 miles from the center of Rio Rancho. It would cut the distance from Rio Rancho to the LANL plutonium facility from the current 93 miles to about 76 miles. Importantly for some, travel to the Sunport would be much easier.

Travel time for LANL workers from Santa Fe would be decreased a great deal by one or more of the connector roads shown.

Much more is involved with this proposed road network than merely saving time. LANL simply does not believe the northern New Mexico labor force will be adequate in quantity and quality for its plans. These roads are symbolic of LANL's desperate attempts to overcome some basic geographic problems.

The new road would go through a *de facto* wild area, nearly all owned by the Forest Service. There was and may still be a herd of wild horses there. Soon there would be pressure for more residential possibilities on the east side of the Rio Grande, wherever water could be brought.

LANL told us they had already been meeting with the Governor and her cabinet about these plans.

Also last week NNSA Administrator spent two days in the state. Part of that time was in a big meeting with business leaders. That's a lot of time for her to spend here.

Are you getting the picture?

***Meanwhile, there is no plan to produce an EIS for LANL's \$13 billion renovation and pit factory plan. (This does not include operating costs.) There is no plan for an EIS for NNSA's \$30 billion national pit plan, which is riven with internal contradictions.***

**Will you help us open up public debate about this?**

Here are some recent resources specifically concerning these EISs:

- [LASG's comments on the Draft Supplement Analysis of the Complex Transformation Supplement Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement](#), (DSA-CTSPEIS), Aug 12, 2019
  - [Addendum to LASG's comments](#), Aug 14, 2019
- [LASG requests to Governor Lujan Grisham](#), Aug 1, 2019
- [LASG's comments on the scope of the Environmental Impact Statement \(EIS\) for plutonium pit production at the Savannah River Site \(SRS\)](#), Jul 25, 2019

**We want you to bird-dog our senators, congresspersons, and Governor. We want you to write letters to editors. We want you to buttonhole your city councilors and county commissioners and get them engaged. The people who have more than enough power to open up these plans to public scrutiny are the Governor and our two senators. It is they who must feel pressure. What pressure can you put on the Democratic Party in New Mexico, friends? Because it is the most senior Democratic Party politicians in New Mexico who are promoting and enabling this travesty.**

**We want you to write us and tell us what you are doing and what results you are getting.**

**Do you think it is possible to address climate change while also engaging in a new arms race? While maintaining a global empire, sanctioning and starving countries left and right? Do you think New Mexico can become resilient with respect to the crises ahead, or build jobs and communities that give hope and direction to our young people, while building a new Plutonium Highway to make it easier for LANL managers to live somewhere besides boring Los Alamos, aka "Stepford-on-the-Hill"? Do you think that growing LANL will produce more equality and justice in New Mexico, or anywhere? No, no, no, no, no, and no.**

**We are not just talking about pollution any more. We did that in the 1990s. Now we are talking about survival.**

**Beyond this, can we entice you into becoming a Los Alamos Study Group volunteer? We need you.**

We hope to see more of you soon. Let us know of your progress, please.

Best wishes,

Greg



## Heads up: grand LANL plans finally being unveiled, should be hitting newspapers tomorrow

Aug 9, 2019

*Nagasaki Day*

Dear New Mexico activist friends --

Yesterday two of us attended a LANL subcontractor forum, at which some of Los Alamos National Laboratory's (LANL's) grand plans were unveiled to more than 700 attendees representing potential contractors from 30 states.

We have not yet distilled all we learned into a form suitable for this list and many mysteries remain. We did however supply some of what we saw to the newspapers. We expect at least tomorrow's [Albuquerque Journal](#) to carry just a little of this news. The first take on these grand plans will be followed by more detailed stories, in the news media and from us.

What LANL is planning is far, far larger than the Manhattan Project in New Mexico, in fiscal terms.

Tomorrow, you may read about LANL's plans to spend \$5.5 billion (B) on capital projects (construction, basically) in the next 5 years, and \$13 billion over the coming decade. You may read about new facilities for plutonium production workers -- a cafeteria, 6-story parking garage, and training center. You may read about plans to transfer land for construction of new housing for the 1,500 or so new workers that will be needed to prepare for this mission.

You will read about two or three new highways LANL is proposing, one to shorten travel time from Albuquerque and another one or possibly two to shorten the commute from parts of Santa Fe, all coming together to cross the Rio Grande south of White Rock at Ancho Canyon.

Part of the idea is to tap into the bigger pool of workers in the Albuquerque area for the tremendous construction program at LANL and the industrial plutonium mission to follow.

Words we did not hear in 5 hours of presentations were "Española," "Chimayo," or "Rio Arriba County."

We heard that construction accidents had recently doubled and tripled, depending on the measure, at LANL. LANL is desperate to solve its safety and management problems, and desperate to show it has a plan to succeed at the plutonium mission.

LANL has been meeting secretly with the Governor and her cabinet to further these grand plans, as well as with our congressional delegation.

At present, the full scope of these plans is secret.

No environmental impact statements are planned, as yet.

We have written the [Governor](#) and [delegation](#) requesting specific planning documents as well as national and regional EISs.

As we wrote in [Bulletin 262](#), our senators are preoccupied with making sure:

- a) the pit production mission is as large as possible (namely at least 80 pits per year, the same as Trump; Heinrich has joined with Sen. Lindsay Graham to get that requirement into statutory law and is likely to succeed next month); and
- b) no other site shares in that mission.

Neither the Governor nor either senator has responded to our requests to meet.

**We urge you to read, learn, and if you wish, ask how you can help. We have our own plans but our resources aren't huge.**

Friends, more plutonium processing is the exact opposite of what New Mexico needs. More nuclear weapons are the exact opposite of what humanity and the United States need.

These grand plans can be stopped, as they have been stopped before.

If you don't want to stop them, you shouldn't be on this list.

The billions of taxpayer funds LANL plans to spend will not create prosperity or improve the region in any way. Inequality will increase. Housing costs will increase. The labor market will be distorted. Politicians will continue to dream vain dreams about the coming "high-tech triangle" between Los Alamos, Albuquerque, and Santa Fe, losing precious time and opportunities to actually benefit the region.

Need we remind you that every site, in every country, that has hosted the plutonium pit mission has become an environmental sacrifice area? In the neoliberal "development" model, pollution is just another saleable asset.

That's enough for tonight. Get ready. We need your help.

Greg

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2901 Summit Place NE Albuquerque, NM 87106, Phone: 505-265-1200



# Los Alamos Study Group

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## Demonstrate against wars TODAY, 9 am, 500 Eubank SE in Albuquerque (both sides, at Costco)

May 18, 2019

If you have been forwarded this message and want to be more involved, and to receive these local letters directly, [write](#). Or if you want to be removed from this closed New Mexico list -- a subset of our main email list -- let us know by return email. Previous local [letters](#), wider [bulletins](#), [home page](#). Key resources on [plutonium and pit production in Los Alamos](#), [RCLC](#) Facebook: [Los Alamos Study Group](#); Twitter: [@TrishABQ](#); Blog: [Remember your humanity; forget the rest](#) To subscribe to the Study Group's main listserve [send a blank email here](#). To unsubscribe to the main listserve [send a blank email here](#). [Contribute](#) if you can (several ways are possible). [PayPal Giving Fund](#) (simple, safe, no fees, tax receipt immediately sent by email). [Contact us](#).

Dear friends --

I should have included this in last night's email. Better late than never. There are a lot of good reasons to join a protest of this type, especially today when Kirtland AFB is hosting an air show, and the US is threatening war on two continents at the same time. The week before last the US government threatened four countries in a single week. I'm not sure if that's happened before in my lifetime. Come if you can, even if it's too late to make signs. And again, I'm sorry I didn't send this out earlier. We are just slammed with work here.

Greg Mello

# NO MORE WAR!

## Protest Glorification of War

*(see press release below)*

**Saturday, May 18 9 am - 10:30 am**

*(Arrive early if you can and bring large signs)*

We will stand along the sidewalk on Eubank both sides from Costco south.

## NO USE of SPACE for WAR!

Trump and the military are preparing the American public for wars with Venezuela, Cuba, Syria, Iran, Africa and China and more. The use and control of space is key to these global wars of empire. Kirtland AFB is key in space war operations and beam weapons.

**Come out to stop these wars: we say convert fund education, health care and the VA.**

Stop the War Machine, PSL/ANSWER, Veterans for Peace

For info and to endorse call, 505-858-0882, [email swm-owner@swcp.com](mailto:swm-owner@swcp.com)

# Fight Wall Street - Not Their Wars







## Talk and discussion: Jemez Springs Public Library, Sunday May 19, 2 pm

May 17, 2019

If you have been forwarded this message and want to be more involved, and to receive these local letters directly, [write](#). Or if you want to be removed from this closed New Mexico list -- a subset of our main email list -- let us know by return email. Previous local [letters](#), wider [bulletins](#), [home page](#). Key resources on [plutonium and pit production in Los Alamos](#), [RCLC](#) Facebook: [Los Alamos Study Group](#); Twitter: [@TrishABQ](#); Blog: [Remember your humanity; forget the rest](#) To subscribe to the Study Group's main listserv [send a blank email here](#). To unsubscribe to the main listserv [send a blank email here](#). [Contribute](#) if you can (several ways are possible). [PayPal Giving Fund](#) (simple, safe, no fees, tax receipt immediately sent by email). [Contact us](#).

This letter:

1. Talk and discussion: Jemez Springs Public Library ([map](#)), Sunday May 19, 2 pm: "The LANL Plutonium Processing Center: Status and Prospects -- and -- The New Mexico 'energy transition:' green or not? What can we do?" ([details](#))
2. [Global Climate Strike](#), Friday, May 24
3. How you can help if you wish!

Recently to our larger list, of which this is a subset:

- [Bulletin 257: Pentagon pit study: The Trump plutonium pit schedule is impossible. NNSA: 2 warheads are delayed](#) , May 10, 2019
- [Bulletin 256: The Great Transformation: Nuclear Weapons Policy Considerations for Congress](#), May 8, 2019
- [Bulletin 255: Special Report: "Draining the Nuclear Swamp,"](#) May 7, 2019

Most recent letter to this list:

- [March 13, 2019 letter](#): NM youth climate school strike; failure to act to mitigate global warming by NM Legislature, Governor, congressional delegation; deep concern about how partisan propaganda and wishful thinking are displacing critical thinking and action on energy and climate issues

**Dear friends on our New Mexico activist list –**

Since we last wrote we've been focused strongly on nuclear weapons issues, our "day job" here.

Trish had knee replacement surgery, so she was out of commission at first wholly, and then partially, for some weeks. She recovering strongly and is back at work full-time now.

I was in DC for a week recently, briefing and exchanging information and views on and around the Hill. Congressional committees have been very active, with the New Mexico senators playing their usual pro-nuclear weapons, pro-lab roles. The first product of those deliberations is expected Monday from the House Appropriations Committee.

As we wrote on the 10th, the Trump nuclear stockpile agenda is slowing. Pit production, as discussed in [Bulletin 257](#) and after that in *Energy Daily* ("[Study casts doubt on 'extremely challenging' NNSA pit plans](#)," May 14, 2019), is in trouble. Or rather, its trouble is becoming conscious. Denial is slipping. The Pentagon's consultants now agree with us on many things.

For its part, the *Albuquerque Journal*, a reasonably hawkish newspaper overall, is skeptical of the need for the pit mission -- and of Los Alamos National Lab's (LANL's) fitness for it ([Editorial: "LANL leaders must make safety the lab's top mission"](#), May 16, 2019).

As was the case in previous pit plans, billions of dollars are at stake. Now, in overall life-cycle terms, tens of billions. Our senators openly salivate over this. Nothing will change for the better in New Mexico until we hold those in leadership positions to higher standards.

Establishing industrial pit production is repeatedly described by the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) as its highest priority. Establishing production at LANL is an essential first milestone, to be followed by expansion here or elsewhere if all goes well here.

What we collectively do here now -- or don't do here now -- will have overwhelming importance for the success of the Trump-Obama nuclear weapons agenda and all that depends on it.

[This coming Sunday we will be speaking and leading a discussion in Jemez Springs, in the Village Conference Room \(map\), on this subject, on the New Mexico 'energy transition' \(Green -- or not? \) and what can citizens we do in the face of these connected crises.](#)

We want above all to have a good, energizing discussion in the finite time available, so we will have background handouts to cover some aspects of these three requested topics.

We would like to talk with more of you, but it's a two-way street. Invite us.

**Many of you are already much more involved than we on the second item in this letter but nonetheless we would like to promote the Global Climate Strike on Friday, May 24 however we can.**

We are of course very concerned about co-optation of this promising movement by Democratic Party politicians who have no intention of doing anything substantive on the environment, and by the Big Green NGOs closely allied with them. We've been so focused on nuclear issues and on decisions in Washington that we are unsure to whom to send you for more information. But you'll figure it out. Trish and I will be traveling that day to see family.

**Do you want to be more involved? Call or write us. Invite us to speak or meet with your friends, or group. These are the places to start.**

About 15 years ago we realized that the looming crises we face would make many people crazy. That is now happening, in spades. Our country, species, and planet are entering a difficult phase. Over time it will get much worse, beyond imagining. There is no escape, and what many considered "normal" was a shockingly destructive aberration. We need to work together, both in rebellion and in the constructive program. We do not need soothing propaganda, placebo policies, and science-free fantasies. We certainly do not need cynical withdrawal. We do not need more distractions, despair, or mass delusions, which is most of what is on offer these days in the public square. What we do need is surely a great deal less than we think.

We hope to see more of you soon.

Best wishes,

Greg

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## NM youth climate school strike this Friday 15 March: see you in Santa Fe, 11 am to 2 pm for public actions; LASG discussion afterward

March 13, 2019

If you have been forwarded this message and want to be more involved, and to receive these local letters directly, [write](#). Or if you want to be removed from this closed New Mexico list -- a subset of our main email list -- let us know by return email. Previous local [letters](#), wider [bulletins](#), [home page](#). Key resources on [plutonium and pit production in Los Alamos](#), [RCLC](#) Facebook: [Los Alamos Study Group](#); Twitter: [@TrishABQ](#); Blog: [Forget the Rest](#) To subscribe to the Study Group's main listserv [send a blank email here](#). To unsubscribe to the main listserv [send a blank email here](#). [Contribute](#) if you can (several ways are possible). [PayPal Giving Fund](#) (simple, safe, no fees, tax receipt immediately sent by email). [Contact us](#).

### Recently to this list:

- [02/03/19: Moratorium on new fracking permits, press conference tomorrow 9 am Capitol Rotunda](#)
- [01/15/19: Extinction Rebellion Jan 26; avoiding malignant green growth; another public call for clarity on New Mexico energy reforms](#)
- [Bulletin #254 \(01/28/19\): Preview of problems to come with Los Alamos pit production](#)
- [Bulletin #253 \(01/25/19\): Emergency climate mobilization; a "green new deal"](#)

### This letter:

- [Friday's action and meeting in Santa Fe](#)
- [Failure to act to mitigate global warming by NM Legislature, Governor, congressional delegation; many environmental groups are misleading their members](#)

### Dear friends on our New Mexico activist list –

Since writing you last, I (Greg) was in Washington for two weeks working on nuclear weapons issues -- including and especially plutonium warhead cores ("pits"). What I saw, heard, and learned on that long trip was not encouraging, but all those interactions are not the subject of this letter. Many of you have been involved in the New Mexico legislature, which is great as far as it goes. We will talk to you about nuclear weapons when that is over.

Now, with the legislature almost over, **we want you to move heaven and earth to attend Friday's action by Santa Fe students** ("[Santa Fe students to participate in climate march](#)," Olivia Harlow, 12 March 2019, [Santa Fe New Mexican](#)). It is a reasonable request, is it not? ***Wherever you are, whatever else you have planned, please come if at all possible, and help get out the word.***

Friday's event is part of the open-ended "[Fridays for Future](#)" international (and now [US](#)) series of strikes led by youth, which we [recommended](#) to you back on Christmas Day 2018.

We don't want to burden you with detail at this point. Here's the US Youth Climate Strike [website](#); the direct [link](#) to the strike in Santa Fe on Friday; the [thank you page](#) you will receive after RSVPing to the Santa Fe strike.

We have copied the US Youth Climate Strike suggested outreach email at the bottom of this message. Copy and paste it into your own emails if you like. Please recruit as many as you can.

See that email (below) for a detailed schedule of Friday's events.

**After the climate strike events we will meet nearby at Upper Crust Pizza, [329 Old Santa Fe Trail](#) for discussion and fellowship.**

\*\*\*\*\*

Now, regarding the failure in our legislature, by our new Governor, and on the part of many environmental organizations to substantively address the global warming crisis -- this:

... [Tom] Singer [senior policy advisor with Western Environmental Law Center] pointed to a bigger picture. "It's important for all the parties to remain cognizant of the magnitude of the stakes of methane emissions in New Mexico, and the current estimates—including data from the state itself, the OCD [Oil Conservation Division]—indicate that **the amount of methane that's been vented, leaked, and flared is the equivalent to roughly 15 to 20 medium-sized coal plants, so let's say 10 San Juans,**" he said. "It's important, as people engage with this issue, to maintain that appreciation for the scope of the problem and for it to be addressed." ("Lawmakers get another chance on methane regulations," Elizabeth Miller, *New Mexico In Depth*, 9 March 9 2019)

I am not sure about "10 San Juans," but Singer is right: the global warming being caused by vented, leaked, and flared methane ("upstream wasted methane," let's call it) in New Mexico is huge. The Environmental Defense Fund [estimates](#) it at 570,000 tons/year, but nobody knows for sure how much it really is.

So is "upstream wasted methane" the global warming equivalent of 5 San Juan Power Plants, or 10?

Resolution of such matters awaits better data, much of which isn't available. That is among the reasons why [Senate Bill 459](#) ("Hydraulic Fracturing Permits and Reporting," sponsored by [Antoinette Sedillo Lopez](#), [Benny Shendo, Jr.](#), [Patricia Roybal Caballero](#), and [Anthony Allison](#)) is so important. SB 459, which pauses fracking on state and private lands for four years, won't pass this session. To my knowledge it is the only piece of legislation on offer this year which would have mitigated New Mexico's growing contribution to global warming in any serious way.

By contrast the vaunted "Energy Transition Act," [Senate Bill 489](#), addresses a small -- even tiny -- part of the problem. It's not even right to call it a "baby step" because it's being used to hide the larger climate reality of New Mexico's [huge and rising](#) oil and gas extraction business.

This reality is not reported in the mainstream press, and most New Mexico and national environmental groups either don't understand the problem or are deceiving their members and the public. Newspaper readers are getting the exact wrong picture of this year's New Mexico legislative efforts to address global warming.

Citizens are also not hearing about how SB 489 is basically destroying a major part of what could be the foundation for community development and careers based on renewable energy -- what many now call a "Green New Deal." It has been preempted. We already wrote about this to you (see [Bulletin #253: Emergency climate mobilization; a "green new deal"](#) and included links).

My own calculations, summarized below without references and calculations (which have been sent to the New Mexico reporters) show that greenhouse contribution of "upstream wasted methane" is only a small fraction of the greenhouse contribution of the *marketed* oil and gas being produced in New Mexico.

As you can see, instantly getting rid of all coal production in New Mexico would decrease New Mexico's greenhouse gas contributions by less than 10%. Coal has to go, but it's not our main climate problem in New Mexico. Assuming oil and gas production remains steady at current levels, SB 489 would decrease greenhouse gas emissions by New-Mexico-produced-and-marketed fuels by about 2.5% per decade. This is no kind of climate leadership. It's a greenwash. Feeling deceived and angry? You should be.

#### New Mexico sources of greenhouse gases (million metric tons CO2 equivalent):

139 oil  
96 marketed gas  
24 coal  
259 subtotal marketed fossil fuels

~14 flared gas (wild ass guess, WAG)  
~49 leaked gas (WAG from EDF). I evaluate methane over 20 years and therefore use 1 kg methane = 86 kg CO2 equivalent (CO2e).  
~63 subtotal WAG for flared and leaked natural gas

Memo: WAG for natural gas in NM overall ~ 159

~322 Total

Plus:

?? cement manufacture  
?? other GH gases (e.g. refrigerants)  
?? net embodied CO2e in "stuff" imported to state (food, materials, goods)

>322 Overall total CO2e

That's it for now.

Most of you are missing out on our often robust internal discussions and occasional meetings. If you want to be more closely involved, call and let's talk.

See you Friday.

Greg Mello

*Everything below the line is the US Youth Climate Strike suggested email -- their demands; their solutions; etc., not ours. We have formatted it a little for clarity but haven't changed any words.*

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### **Subject: Can you come?**

Friend,

I'm attending an event called NM Climate Strike.

### **Climate Change is threatening our future! Let's show our politicians that the time for bold action is NOW!**

- **11 AM: Gather at the Santa Fe Plaza for Rally**
- **11:30 AM: March up to the Roundhouse**
- **12 PM: Sit-in in the Rotunda with Storytelling and Sharing**
- **12:30-2PM: Music and Community Gathering Outside the Roundhouse**

### **Our Mission**

- We, the youth of America, are striking because decades of inaction has left us with just 11 years to change the trajectory of the worst effects of climate change, according to the Oct 2018 UN IPCC Report.
- We are striking because our world leaders have yet to acknowledge, prioritize, or properly address our climate crisis.
- We are striking because marginalized communities across our nation —especially communities of color, disabled communities, and low- income communities— are already disproportionately impacted by climate change.
- We are striking because if the social order is disrupted by our refusal to attend school, then the system is forced to face the climate crisis and enact change. With our futures at stake, we call for radical legislative action to combat climate change and its countless detrimental effects on the American people. We are striking for the Green New Deal, for a fair and just transition to a 100% renewable economy, and for ending the creation of additional fossil fuel infrastructure. Additionally, we believe the climate crisis should be declared a national emergency because we are running out of time.

### **Our Demands**

- Green New Deal:
  - An equitable transition for marginalized communities that will be most impacted by climate change
  - An equitable transition for fossil-fuel reliant communities to a renewable economy
  - 100% renewable energy by 2030
  - Upgrading the current electric grid
  - No creation of additional fossil fuel infrastructure (pipelines, coal plants, fracking etc.)
  - The creation of a committee to oversee the implementation of a Green New Deal that has subpoena power -- Committee members can't take fossil fuel industry donations [and] [a]ccepts climate science
- A halt in any and all fossil fuel infrastructure project[s]
  - Fossil fuel infrastructure disproportionately impacts indigenous communities and communities of color in a negative way
  - Creating new fossil fuel infrastructure would create new reliance on fossil fuels at a time of urgency
- All decisions made by the government be tied in scientific research, including the 2018 IPCC report
- The world needs to reduce GHG emissions by 50% by 2030, and 100% by 2050
- We need to incorporate this fact into all policymaking
- Declaring a National Emergency on Climate Change
- This calls for a national emergency because we have 11 years to avoid catastrophic climate change
- Since the US has empirically been a global leader, we should be a leader on climate action
- Since the US largely contributes to global GHG emissions, we should be leading the fight in GHG reduction
- Compulsory comprehensive education on climate change and its impacts throughout grades K-8
- K-8 is the ideal age range for compulsory climate change education because: Impressionability is high during that developmental stage, therefore it's easier for children and young adults to learn about climate change in a more in-depth manner, and retain that information
- Climate change becomes a nonpartisan issue, as it truly is because it's based solely on science from the beginning
- Preserving our public lands and wildlife

- Diverse ecosystems and national parks will be very impacted by climate change, therefore it's important that we work to the best of our abilities to preserve their existence
- Keeping our water supply clean
- Clean water is essential for all living beings, when we pollute our water supply, or the water supply of someone else, it's simply a violation of an essential human right

### **Our Solutions\***

- The extraction of Greenhouse Gases from the atmosphere
- Reforestation-- replenishing our forests by planting trees and allowing them to thrive, sustainable forestry
- Reduced food waste-- methane emissions from rotting food in landfills contributes immensely to overall Greenhouse Gases emissions

### **Emission standards and benchmarks**

- We need to create standards and benchmarks for reducing Greenhouse Gases that align with those expressed by the science community to avoid 2° Celsius warming
- Changing the agriculture industry
- Less carbon-intensive farming
- More plant-based farming
- Using renewable energy and building renewable energy infrastructure
- Stopping the unsustainable and dangerous process of fracking
- Stop mountaintop removal/mining
- It is very harmful to our environment and people working in these fields

\*These are not the sole solutions, these are just some solutions that we approve of. To be effective, these solutions need to be implemented at a large scale by the United States government

Can you join me? Click here for details and to RSVP: <https://actionnetwork.org/events/nm-climate-strike?source=email&>

Thanks!



## Forwarded: Moratorium on new fracking permits, press conference tomorrow 9 am Capitol Rotunda

February 3, 2019

*If you have been forwarded this message and want to be more involved, and to receive these local letters directly, [write](#). Or if you want to be removed from this closed New Mexico list -- a subset of our main email list -- let us know by return email. Previous local [letters](#), wider [bulletins](#), [home page](#). Key resources on [plutonium and pit production in Los Alamos](#), [RCLC](#) Facebook: [Los Alamos Study Group](#); Twitter: [@TrishABQ](#); Blog: [Forget the Rest](#) To subscribe to the Study Group's [main](#) listserve [send a blank email here](#). To unsubscribe to the [main](#) listserve [send a blank email here](#). [Contribute](#) if you can (several ways). [PayPal Giving Fund](#) (simple, safe, no fees, tax receipt immediately sent by email). [Contact us](#).*

Dear friends and colleagues --

I don't think I have ever forwarded an email to this list, but this particular effort is very important and timely.

[Common Ground Rising](#), a grassroots group in Rio Rancho, is spearheading a [bill](#) to halt all fracking on state and private land in New Mexico for four years, during which time a number of oversight reports are required from agencies of the state. We have been shocked to discover how little state regulatory agencies know -- about the number and kind of wells drilled and active, the amount of fresh water being consumed and contaminated water produced, the quantity of gas being flared (burned), the amount of methane leaking, the local air quality, and much, much more.

Just the quantities of water being used are staggering. One very experienced oil man whose [blog](#) we sometimes read recently [remarked](#) that a single well fracked with 18 million pounds of sand in the Delaware Basin part of the Permian requires every bit of 600,000 barrels of fresh water, or 25.2 million gallons.

The bill will be introduced tomorrow by Senator Antoinette Sedillo Lopez and Senator Benny Shendo after a press conference in the Capitol Rotunda at 9:00 am.

We have written a great deal (for example [here](#) and [here](#)) about the need to control fossil fuel extractions to prevent runaway climate change. The vector of oil production -- [up](#), or [down](#), in the US, and the world -- depends [a great deal](#) on what happens in the Permian.

New Mexico is now the third largest oil producing state in the U.S. There can be nothing "green" or "climate-friendly" about this state's energy policies as long as this continues.

Those who think Governor Grisham is promoting "green," climate-friendly policies need to think again.

Production declines in fracked wells are usually on the order of 70-90% over three years. It therefore takes a constant program of drilling and fracking just to keep field production constant. The result: a wasteland.

Remember, *promoting and building solar and wind energy does not directly help the climate one little bit*. Only by [not producing](#) so much fossil fuel can we lessen our climate impact.

It will be very interesting to see how many environmental groups and legislators jump on board to support this common-sense proposal.

Good evening,

Greg Mello, for the Study Group

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**please share --**

A discussion draft of the bill is attached as well as video and link ms regarding the background of the decision to file this legislation.



Please consider sponsorship of this bill because of the lack of capacity of agencies to report and address the impacts of fracking on communities throughout New Mexico. Help grant relief to our frontline communities.

Senator Antoinette Sedillo Lopez, Senator Benny Shendo, Senator Nancy Rodriguez, Senator Bill Soules are co sponsors on the senate bill.

Senator Benny Shendo and Antoinette Sedillo Lopez are introducing it on the floor on Monday after the press conference.

Below you will find information regarding threats to the middle Rio Grande water supply and the impacts of multiple permit applications on the region and the climate issue.

After viewing (link below) the conservation committee presentation on the state of fracking in NM we were stunned on the lack of capacity the agencies have enforcing protection for the health, safety and protection of the people and the environment.

This is a citizens grassroots led legislation. We are the ones living with the health risks, from the proposed multiple permit applications for fracking on the drinking water for Rio Rancho to currently impacted DIne' and ranching communities in the Checkerboard. Now the industry is poised to impact Chaco and the Middle Rio Grande Communities, as well as, First Nations, Trust Lands, Allottee and on private lands.

We need leaders who can step up to the challenge. Our legislators courage to step up on this bills deserves our strong support. We need legislators willing to sponsor bill in the House. we are encouraging citizens to contact their legislators.

There is a press conference Monday in the Roundhouse Rotunda at 9:00 am. The discussion draft is attached. Please come to the press conference and let me know prior of your decision.

Thank you for your consideration,

Elaine Cimino  
505-604-9772

### **Fracking Pause on New Permits Set for NM Legislature**

Legislative leaders, in coordination with frontline citizen groups, have proposed a bill that addresses the current threats of multiple permit applications from hydraulic drilling in the Middle Rio Grande Basin -- the drinking water for over 800,000 residents. Legislators' are proposing a 4-year moratorium with a set timeline and administrative milestones on new fracking permits in the State. Hydraulic fracturing impacts destroy the groundwater, disappear 2/3 of the water used from the hydrological cycle, raise dangerous ozone levels causing multiple health and land use impacts, which are already occurring in the Greater Chaco Region in Sandoval County, NM.

*"A moratorium will protect the pristine aquifers being threatened by fracking now," said Legislative sponsor Antoinette Sedillo Lopez, adding, "Our communities are already bearing the brunt of the health and safety impacts that come with fracking. The laws and regulations we have now aren't protecting them, our water, our land or our climate. We have a responsibility to protect the health and safety of our people and our beautiful land and pure water. We need time to get this right."*

After asking for a New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources department presentation to the Senate Conservation Committee about the state of fracking in New Mexico, newly appointed NM State Senator Antoinette Sedillo Lopez became concerned about the fact that the industry has moved forward so fast and it is lagging behind the department's ability to inspect wells and enforce regulations. She is asking for an important pause in the current agenda to facilitate necessary conversations, studies and plans to address the gaps in the state's ability to address the impacts on our air, land, water and human life. The four-year moratorium will prohibit new permits and allow existing wells to continue producing revenues for the State. The bill asks the relevant agencies to report to the legislature and the governor the actual and potential impact of hydraulic fracturing.

#### **The bill tackles:**

1. Current impacts of fossil fuel extraction serious gaps regarding quantity and quality impacts on aquifers, measured emissions, and other land use impacts on health in affected communities, inspection enforcement within our State that constitutes an emergency necessitating immediate legislative action to Protect the Public Health and Welfare for the State of New Mexico.
2. Accelerating climate change must be addressed with Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions capture and drawdowns.

There are over 67,000 gas and oil wells in private and NM state lands. This number does not include tribal or public lands. At present, there is not a complete record of the number of permits application approved and newly active wells. The bill requires agencies to report and recommend measures that address the issues to the legislature on impacts on public health, water, air, land, and the climate before issuing any new permits.

- Moratoriums are common-sense, effective, and perfectly legal. Over 400 cities and municipalities in 20 states have passed local resolutions. Three states have enacted statewide moratoriums. <https://localprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Fracking-Bans-and-Moratoriums.pdf>
- Communities are already experiencing negative health impacts. Over 1200 peer-reviewed papers now confirm the health risks associated with fracking. <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/the-harms-of-fracking-new-report-details-increased-risks-of-asthma-birth-defects-and-cancer-126996/>

- Samuel Sage, Community Services Coordinator for the Counselor Chapter of the Navajo Nation, testified to this. "Since 2014, we have been overrun by oil and gas companies....people are complaining about the foul, smelly air. Our community members started complaining about respiratory *problems. That has increased.* <sup>1</sup> *The cancer rate within our community has gone up....*"
- The Albuquerque Basin, one of only four active rift zones in the world, is uniquely susceptible to groundwater contamination from fracking. We cannot allow the main drinking water source for our state to become polluted. <https://youtu.be/uzE8zS0zViM> Video Presentation from Geologist Don Phillips on the dangers of fracking in the Middle Rio Grande Basin.

**Press Conference Monday 9:00, February 4, 2019, State Capitol Roundhouse - The Rotunda**

<http://commongroundrising.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/HIR-legislative-packet-2017-copy.pdf>

**AMA Internal Medicine:** <http://tinyurl.com/jdj2hxd> **Fracking:** <https://www.epa.gov/hydraulicfracturing> **Asthma:** <http://tinyurl.com/jhpkc7f>

<http://commongroundrising.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/01-11-CHP-of-NY-Fracking-Compendium-copy.pdf>

<http://commongroundrising.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Earthwork-Report-On-health-threats-to-Residents-copy.pdf>

<http://commongroundrising.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/TOO-DIRTY-TOO-DANGEROUS-.pdf>

[https://youtu.be/6D\\_59\\_L7-5M](https://youtu.be/6D_59_L7-5M) Meeting of the State of hydraulic Fracking Senate Conservation Committee meeting Jan 31, 2019

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## Extinction Rebellion Jan 26; avoiding malignant green growth; another public call for clarity on New Mexico energy reforms

January 15, 2019

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Previous [letter](#) (7 Jan 2019) and important [postscript](#) (8 Jan 2019): "Meeting in Santa Fe 5:30 pm this Friday Jan 11; why LANL cannot host a plutonium pit factory; will Governor Grisham's energy policies help, or hurt?" Previous [Bulletin](#) (#252, 1 Jan 2019): "Fundraising reminder; why LANL cannot be any kind of plutonium factory, in a nutshell"

Dear friends on our New Mexico activist list --

- **The op-ed previously sent to this list on 7 January was published** ("[New Mexico needs a better energy plan](#)," *Albuquerque Journal*, Jan 12, 2019).
- **We must mostly leave these issues in your hands.**

All we can do here is to provide a different and we hope better framework for analysis and action. We can't for example track individual bills in the legislature, or lobby there. We trust you to think through what we are saying here, come to your own conclusions, and act.

Frankly, New Mexico has relatively bad outcomes compared to most other states because the state's people, including its leaders, are too passive. As Frederick Douglass said, we get precisely the level of injustice we put up with.

We can't add more hours of work here. We need you.

- **Extinction Rebellion Day 1: January 26**

The US and New Mexico governments are not going to respond adequately (or perhaps at all; there is no sign whatsoever as yet) to the climate crisis, under present political conditions.

Neither are most of our environmental organizations. Since Obama took office in 2009 we have seen the steady co-optation of environmental groups away from science and toward harmony with Democratic Party positions.

So we need to change those political conditions.

Please understand: *more renewable energy does not mean fewer emissions of climate-destroying greenhouse gases, let alone declining atmospheric concentrations*. Using much less fossil fuel is required for that, for starters.

That, in turn, will bring about economic "[degrowth](#)." "Degrowth," a euphemism, is certain (and more likely sooner than later) for other reasons, but in the meantime we are frying the planet.

What to do? End business as usual, because it is fatal.

We have signed up to join the [Extinction Rebellion \(XR\)](#) and we hope you do too. Call (505-265-1200) or [write](#) us. We are unaware of actions planned in New Mexico, but would like to be, so if you are planning something please let us know. We have 11 days to plan and organize before the January 26 Day of Action, and can meet or talk after work early-ish on most evenings. Family will be visiting this weekend.

We [introduced](#) XR to this list on 1 Nov last year. Here is the main (UK) [link](#) again.

- **The Study Group joins 626 organizations in [calling for strong climate action](#), including first and foremost a halt to fossil fuel**

## leasing and a phasing out of fossil fuel extraction.

Which is required if nature and humanity must survive.

We thought you should know that we do not stand alone.

We see 350.org and New Energy Economy on that list (hurrah!) but not the Sierra Club, the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), or Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS). It cost nothing to sign that letter (and accomplishes little), and we don't agree with everything in it. But the failure of so many [Big Green groups](#) to join is [notable](#). In 2009 the big national environmental groups disposed of \$1.7 billion in resources annually, and they dominate environmental discourse in Washington as well as New Mexico. But in 2010 they couldn't bring [even a single Republican senator](#) to vote for their deeply-flawed cap-and-trade policy.

- **Many you may have seen this important article: "[That Green Growth at the Heart of the Green New Deal? It's Malignant,](#)" Stan Cox, 15 Jan 2019, originally published by [Green Social Thought](#).** >

In my (Greg's) opinion this article hits many of the most important notes perfectly. I think it should be widely distributed and discussed.

One difference: I do not agree with Mr. Cox about carbon taxes (which should be "greenhouse gas taxes," or "carbon-equivalent taxes," to avoid creating a methane loophole).

- **Another op ed on energy policy**

Here is another op ed (indented text) that is current pending publication (with comments below);:

Goals for state energy policy changes fall into two broad categories.

Most energy reforms aim to maintain and increase the quality of life in our communities and households. Rightly configured, such reforms have the potential to create not just thousands of jobs, but *tens of thousands*. We can build community solidarity, careers, and a more resilient infrastructure and society – *if* we hold to those goals.

Proposals based on utility-scale, investor-owned electricity projects will not achieve these goals. They will make New Mexico poorer and more unequal, not wealthier and stronger in the ways that really matter. Exporting renewable electricity is a terrible idea.

We need to be clear about this, because we are in the midst of a social emergency. New Mexico was recently rated (again) as the worst state in which to raise a family. Better education is important but only part of the picture.

The second big energy goal is to help halt global warming before self-reinforcing feedbacks take over, delivering unstoppable global warming and mass extinctions – including, as would be likely, our own.

The timeline for action is extremely short. The required social transformations are dramatic. We are in an emergency, which threatens the lives and happiness of children today.

Halting global warming requires lowering atmospheric greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations sufficiently, or else reducing the fraction of solar energy reaching the earth. Lowering emissions is not enough.[1]

New Mexico has the potential for world-class leadership in the fight against global warming. How? Only by cutting back our state's oil and gas (O&G) production – which would have global effects. [2]

The GHG contribution of the O&G industry is so huge that cutting back production is basically the only way the state can lead, once coal use is gone. What we do with sustainable transportation, energy efficiency, and renewable electricity is important but smaller, slower, and secondary.

Eliminating coal is very important, if it is not replaced by gas. The global warming potential of methane supplied by fracking, evaluated over the crucial 20-year period ahead, is [greater](#) than coal. Strong methane regulation – which may not be feasible – would help somewhat but will never make gas a clean fuel.

Most oil-producing countries are in permanent decline. More will join. Oil discoveries have been minimal in recent years; "depletion never sleeps." Since 2005, post-war Iraq and US shale oil released by [hydrofracturing](#) ("fracking") have provided [all the world's net growth](#).

The largest US shale oil reserves are in the Permian Basin, a third of which lies in New Mexico. As goes the Permian, so goes the US. As goes the US, so goes the world.

If plucky New Mexico managed to kick its O&G addiction, we could go a long way toward waking the world from its fossil fuel

nightmare. Conversely if New Mexico remains the third-largest oil-producing state, with or without methane regulation and notwithstanding all other energy reforms, this state will be a global-warming problem, not a solution.

We could start with a fracking moratorium, pending successful leak reduction. Or, elegantly, a dividend for all taxpayers supported by a hefty GHG (not carbon) fee. [3]

O&G [revenue](#) is an addiction, a resource curse [4], that keeps New Mexico from having to face the reality that we actually need a social contract, one that includes everybody. We are far from that, materially and attitudinally. We need to do much more than restore the \$360 million/year fiscal loss created fifteen years ago by Governor Richardson and the legislature.

Our state's twin emergencies are intimately linked. To solve either we must solve both, and energy policy reforms will play a big role – in success, or failure.

#### **Notes to this (very condensed) op-ed:**

In most renewable energy (RE) proposals for New Mexico, e.g the one [offered](#) by the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS), which emphasizes increasing the renewable portfolio standard (RPS) without further specification, social values have almost no place. Few jobs will be created by their plan, which they admit.

To stabilize and build New Mexico communities, it is necessary to get beyond the ideas that

a) electricity should be cheap, which identifies people strictly as consumers and fails to notice that there might be net benefits to higher costs if those costs are *income* to producing communities, households, businesses, and local governments, or to community members and businesses in the RE industry;

b) electricity should be provided and distributed primarily by monopoly investor-owned utilities, which then absorb all electricity sales income, with the political results we see.

Maximizing the social benefits of RE (and of energy efficiency, EE) will strengthen the state and its communities against hard times (the current hard times, with worse coming), position New Mexico to lead in global warming mitigation, as well as help us adapt (to the extent possible) to what global warming cannot be avoided. Utility-scale investment does little or none of this.

EE investments are inherently distributed. Distributed RE, *which costs more than utility-scale RE mainly because it creates more jobs*, is necessary to match and amplify the social and fiscal benefits of EE investments at particular homes, businesses, schools, and government/tribal buildings.

Rapid build-out of distributed RE can be incentivized in various ways (e.g. buying the electricity at sufficiently-high prices, as Germany once did). The best approaches will maximize buildout in capital-starved situations (capital-rich situations will automatically take care of themselves), provide local ownership and control, and minimize unnecessary paperwork and delays. Investor-owned utilities (IOUs) need to be removed from the driver's seat. New Mexico has hundreds of thousands of solar-capable buildings.

There is nothing wrong with the rich RE resources of all the states within roughly 1,000 miles of us. New Mexico doesn't need to help them, or be an "energy mine." That would do absolutely nothing whatsoever good for New Mexico, or for them. Groups like UCS are applying a national "standard template" to New Mexico, without sufficient thought and without sufficient human or environmental values.

[1] This is not clear to many people. Building more solar and wind farms does not mitigate global warming. Only decreasing fossil fuel use, for the purpose of atmospheric concentrations, does so.

[2] Impossible to explain in a 600-word op ed, the *net* energy available from US oil, and the average *quality* of US oil (both in terms of heat content and the production of critical middle distillate products, e.g. diesel), are declining. "Oily stuff" is complicated and unpredictable but the bottom line is that oil availability and prices will not be stable, with major economic ramifications.

[3] A small tax and dividend will not be enough. I think the equivalent of \$1/gallon of gas would be necessary, for starters. The dividend should be hefty enough to eliminate state income tax for most people of ordinary means. Obviously a GHG would apply to coal as well as to O&G. It's a big subject, but try playing around with the [Carbon Tax Center's](#) model [here](#). Some famous Republicans [support](#) a tax -- too many to ignore if you want to get something passed, IMO. We are not endorsing their plan as-is!

[4] Our nuclear and military installations fall into the same category -- a curse -- for essentially the same reasons.

Thank you for your attention and solidarity,

Greg Mello, for the Study Group



# Los Alamos Study Group

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## Meeting in Santa Fe 5:30 pm this Friday -- important postscripts!

January 8, 2019

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Postscripts:

1. Meeting this Friday January 11 in Santa Fe: [Please help us with outreach](#)
2. A new energy economy requires higher taxes on upper income brackets
3. Our energy descent: inevitable, & necessary for survival, justice
4. The fracking industry is driven in no small part by the same imperial policies that animate the US nuclear weapons enterprise
5. Pope Francis just summed most of this up rather concisely

Dear friends on our New Mexico activist list --

1. Meeting this Friday, January 11, in Santa Fe, 5:30-7:30 pm, St. John's United Methodist Church, 1200 Old Pecos Trail ([map](#)).

It's about a) nuclear weapons, pits, and LANL update; b) energy and climate in the coming legislative session.

**[Please help us with outreach for this event](#)**

2. **[A new energy economy requires higher taxes on upper income and/or wealth brackets](#)**

An astute friend reminded me last night that I had forgotten to say anything about the need for a state revenue source to replace oil and gas revenue.

Obviously the state will do nothing to curtail oil and gas production or address climate change (which is the same thing) as long as fossil fuel production funds so many of the state's needs.

As you may recall, Governor Richardson and the legislature "reformed" income taxes 2003 by lowering the top marginal rate from 8.2% to 4.9% (or 7.2% to 4.9%). Reliable sources tell us this lowered state revenues from personal income tax by roughly \$350 million (M) annually. Undoing that disastrous decision would be a good start.

Economist Gerry Bradley at New Mexico Voices for Children estimated in 2015 that raising the rate back to just 5.9% would raise \$130 M per year, based on 2012 tax return data. He also showed that persons with annual incomes over \$100,000 then had an overall tax rate lower than middle- and lower-income New Mexicans, because of other, *regressive*, taxes.

Wikipedia, for what it's worth, [calls](#) New Mexico "one of the largest tax havens in the U.S."

We need to go much farther. [Without much higher taxes on higher incomes, I don't think we have a social contract](#). That's what I see around us here in New Mexico: *no social contract*. It shows, in everything.

To survive the coming years we will need more solidarity, both material and attitudinal. The latter requires the former. To foster a social contract we, not extractive industries, need to fund the state's needs, in a far more progressive way than at present.

Oil and gas revenue is an addiction that keeps New Mexico from having to face the reality that we actually need a social contract that includes everybody.

Dependence on resource extraction is usually a political and social curse around the world. New Mexico is no exception.

Recently, Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez spoke (with analysis [here](#)) of "70%" taxation on the uppermost US incomes, to fund a Green New Deal. Under Eisenhower, the top marginal tax rate was 91%. In 1944-45 it was 94% for couples.

Without a radical shift in burden-sharing, efforts to build a new energy economy will very likely come to naught. Many public goods are scarce and/or of poor quality in New Mexico (e.g. public education). In the relative absence of sound public goods, privatization, neoliberal attitudes, and semi-predatory economic actors and entire sectors have made life pretty tough for most people. Life will get a whole lot tougher as the inevitable recession arrives, probably soon.

We face physical limits to growth (water, for example) and an energy descent in [net usable](#) terms -- not a Black Swan kind of event, but a much more serious [Dragon King](#). The descent is being made far worse than it needs to be by denial and violent, dominating responses and narratives (see 4. below). The unfolding decline of fossil fuel civilization is shaking the foundations of our world.

In the absence of solidarity, those who benefit most from the status quo in terms of profit, power, or prestige will be able to successfully propagandize (and thereby politically *weaponize*) the poor and the precarious near-poor for their political purposes, which include maximizing fossil fuel extraction.

### 3. Our energy descent: inevitable, necessary for survival, justice; no new energy economy without it

"In with the new, out with the old!" is a New Year's saying. In terms of energy transition, too few really mean it. To have a *new* energy economy we need to leave behind the *old* energy economy. Otherwise it's not new, just the old economy with a few solar panels on top.

We read in today's *New York Times* that US carbon dioxide emissions -- presumably not counting net forest and agricultural land losses -- [increased dramatically in 2018](#) according to preliminary estimates. As the *NYT* explains, this is not because of Trump's wholesale deregulation, the effects of which will come later, but because the economy grew. This is why we said [yesterday](#) that supplying New Mexico renewable energy so that California and Arizona can grow will do nothing good for the climate.

George Monbiot [explains](#):

It doesn't matter how many good things we do: preventing climate breakdown means ceasing to do bad things. Given that economic growth, in nations that are already rich enough to meet the needs of all, requires an increase in [pointless consumption](#), it is hard to see [how it can ever be decoupled](#) from the assault on the living planet....When a low-carbon industry expands within a growing economy, the money it generates stimulates high-carbon industry.

Martin Heinrich is not dumb -- surely he understands this. Surely Governor Martinez understands. Surely the Bingaman family understands this. They need to be held to that understanding by environmental groups. Renewable energy cannot be used to support economic growth. We need to "cap the grid." New Mexico should not be used by other states as an energy "mine." We should not prostitute ourselves in this way.

There are strong limits to economic growth (for example, Brian Davey [lecture notes](#), [Feasta](#)). We have reached them. It now takes \$4 of new debt to push \$1 of new GDP growth in the US, or should we say [the illusion of growth](#). We are evidently willing to load a huge debt on our children and older selves in order to move future consumption to the present so we can luxuriate better, indulge our feelings in immature ways, and paper over social problems and rising inequality.

We have arrived at "[a slow and shocking cancellation of the future.](#)"

Unless we courageously face our problems it is likely that the "[morbid symptoms](#)" (Gramsci) that come at the end of growth will result in more fascism, more war, and more [politics of disposability](#).

Shaun Chamberlin:

In this context, then, it's no surprise to be hearing increasingly shrill, desperate alarm from scientists around the world as they observe the natural world crumbling under the impossible, ever-growing pressure. As I write, the latest report announced that 60% of mammals, birds, fish and reptiles have been annihilated since 1970. Put starkly, most of the wild nature that was here fifty years ago is gone. And still we seek to grow the human economy, and cheer when that growth accelerates.[\[ix\]](#)

Similarly, the inherently conservative Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released their *Global Warming of 1.5°C* report, which makes it abundantly clear that the unfolding physical realities studied by climate science are dramatically outpacing the policies notionally intended to address them. They find that we must halve emissions in the next twelve years, and so feel forced to call for "rapid and far-reaching ... unprecedented" transformation in the economy.[\[x\]](#)

...  
Unfortunately, in such times, when more and more people are struggling to support their families, and losing faith in the dominant stories of what is important, the far right has a track record of providing simple answers. It is important to remember that fascists like Mussolini and Hitler didn't only consolidate power on the basis of lies and fear—they also raised wages, addressed unemployment and improved working conditions.

To effectively challenge the drift into fascism, then, we need to present an alternative politico-economic vision that can restore identity, pride and economic well-being. We need to tell a *beautiful* story of how we will make the future better for the desperate, rather than a fearful one.

Material and imperial decline are not *optional*. They are certain and they are happening. We do not know what scope for choice remains, but whatever freedom we have lies in the forms into which we may guide our descent, and our attitudes and actions toward each other and the living world. Much is already gone, but much remains in our care.

There is a big literature on degrowth, simplicity, and the reorganization of society along more resilient lines. Three recent articles, all republished at [resilience.org](https://resilience.org), chosen somewhat at random:

- "Degrowth: the Case for a New Economic Paradigm," Riccardo Mastini, June 12, 2017, [openDemocracy](https://openDemocracy.net).
- "Stability without Growth: Keynes in an Age of Climate Breakdown," December 5, 2018, Center for Economic and Policy Research.
- "Hickel Response [to Dean Baker] on Degrowth," December 17, 2018, Center for Economic and Policy Research.

Degrowth would be smart but is unlikely. Stepwise collapse is another narrative frame for the events we are experiencing.

#### 4. The fracking industry is driven in no small part by the same imperial policies that animate the US nuclear weapons enterprise

Florentine physical chemist Ugo Bardi has just written an insightful post at his [Cassandra's Legacy](https://cassandralegacy.com) blog: "['Energy Dominance,' what does it mean? Decoding a Fashionable Slogan.](#)"

In short, "energy dominance" means *military* dominance. Bardi is quite correct about that. The fracking obsession is very closely related to the "need" to keep Russia from supplying Europe with gas (a failed effort which will fail further), as well as to "win" the economic war against China in East Asia. And these are the "peacetime" needs.

So we and the climate pay the price. Or as the Oil and Gas Association (and both NM political parties, and the President) say, "derive the benefit."

Bardi's insight, not new but here expressed in his clear way, needs to be more widely disseminated.

The eagle of dominance has two wings: exports to support alliances and prevent market penetration by Russia especially; and the US war machine itself, the largest user of petroleum on the planet even in semi-peace or semi-war, whichever this is.

The political problem is not just that oil and gas provide so much money. *To maintain our alliances, and hence our empire, we need to reliably export these fuels.* This sets us all up for an enormous *increase* in the number of wells. Why? Because shale gas and oil wells decline very quickly, and the higher the production rate to be maintained, the more replacement wells have to be drilled, fracked, and pumped. At present production rates in the Permian, it takes about 300 new wells per month *just to keep production constant.*

*The "need" for military and economic dominance that is a hidden imperative behind the fracking industry is the same "need" that drives our nuclear weapons enterprise, our military bases, our international sanctions, and our wars.* It also drives Trump's proposed border wall, which is the defensive part of the same *Heimat und Weltreich* (homeland and empire) way of thinking. They go together, and they are not the unique property of this particularly buffoonish president.

And they all come together in New Mexico.

#### 5. Pope Francis just summed most of this up rather concisely

From His [Address](#) to the members of the diplomatic corps, 7 Jan 2018:

*Rethinking our common destiny*

Finally, I would mention a fourth feature of multilateral diplomacy: it invites us to rethink our common destiny. Paul VI [Pope from 1963-1978] put it in these terms: "We have to get used to a new way of thinking... about man's community life and about the pathways of history and the destinies of the world... The hour has come... to think back over our common origin, our history, our common destiny. The appeal to the moral conscience of man has never been as necessary as it is today, in an age marked by such great human progress. For the danger comes neither from progress nor from science... The real danger comes from man, who has at his disposal ever more powerful instruments that are as well fitted to bring about ruin... as they are to achieve lofty conquests".<sup>[10]</sup>

In the context of that time, the Pope was referring essentially to the proliferation of nuclear weapons. "Arms, especially the terrible



arms that modern science has provided you, engender bad dreams, feed evil sentiments, create nightmares, hostilities and dark resolutions, even before they cause any victims and ruins. They call for enormous expenses. They interrupt projects of solidarity and of useful labour. They warp the outlook of nations”.[\[11\]](#)

It is painful to note that not only does the arms trade seem unstoppable, but that there is in fact a widespread and growing resort to arms, on the part both of individuals and states. Of particular concern is the fact that nuclear disarmament, generally called for and partially pursued in recent decades is now yielding to the search for new and increasingly sophisticated and destructive weapons. Here I want to reiterate firmly that “we cannot fail to be genuinely concerned by the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental effects of any employment of nuclear devices. If we also take into account the risk of an accidental detonation as a result of error of any kind, the threat of their use – I am minded to say the immorality of their use – as well as their very possession, is to be firmly condemned. For they exist in the service of a mentality of fear that affects not only the parties in conflict but the entire human race. International relations cannot be held captive to military force, mutual intimidation, and the parading of stockpiles of arms. Weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, create nothing but a false sense of security. They cannot constitute the basis for peaceful coexistence between members of the human family, which must rather be inspired by an ethics of solidarity”.[\[12\]](#)

Rethinking our common destiny in the present context also involves rethinking our relationship with our planet. This year too, immense distress and suffering caused by heavy rains, flooding, fires, earthquakes and drought have struck the inhabitants of different regions of the Americas and Southeast Asia. Hence, among the issues urgently calling for an agreement within the international community are care for the environment and climate change. In this regard, also in the light of the consensus reached at the recent international Conference on Climate Change (COP24) held in Katowice, I express my hope for a more decisive commitment on the part of states to strengthening cooperation for urgently combating the worrisome phenomenon of global warming. The earth belongs to everyone, and the consequences of its exploitation affect all the peoples of the world, even if certain regions feel those consequences more dramatically. Among the latter is the Amazon region, which will be at the centre of the forthcoming Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops to be held in the Vatican next October. While chiefly discussing paths of evangelization for the people of God, it will certainly deal with environmental issues in the context of their social repercussions.

Greg Mello, for the Study Group

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2901 Summit Place NE Albuquerque, NM 87106, Phone: 505-265-1200



## Meeting in Santa Fe 5:30 pm this Friday Jan 11; why LANL cannot host a plutonium pit factory; will Governor Grisham's energy policies help, or hurt?

January 7, 2019

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2. [Why LANL cannot host a plutonium pit factory \(op ed\), and why this is urgent right now](#)
3. [Will Governor Grisham's energy policies help, or hurt, New Mexico and the climate? \(op ed\)](#)

Dear friends on our New Mexico activist list --

Happy new year, everyone. By which we really mean an authentic, engaged, productive new year, in which we cultivate joy and solidarity despite the conditions which prevail, and despite what grief may come.

Thank you all for your generous support during our end-of-year fundraising period. You make our work together possible.

Call on us, and work with us.

[1. Meeting this Friday, January 11, in Santa Fe, 5:30-7:30 pm, St. John's United Methodist Church, 1200 Old Pecos Trail \(map\): a\) nuclear weapons, pits, LANL update; b\) whither energy and climate in the coming legislative session](#)

We'll have plenty of time for discussion in each of the two topic areas. Both are urgent right now and offer puissant opportunities. Depending on his schedule we may have a second speaker, or "panelist" we should then say, in the energy and climate part.

[Please help us with outreach for this event! Feel free to forward this letter in whole or in part.](#)

[2. Why LANL cannot host a plutonium pit factory, in brief \(op ed\); why this is urgent right now](#)

Two engineering reviews of where (not whether, when, or how much) to manufacture plutonium warhead cores ("pits") are due in Congress in April.

Even prior to that, the White House will request funds and offer some kind of plan on 4 Feb. After that request and especially the engineering reviews, there will be congressional debate, passage of appropriations bills (including for pit production with detailed requirements), possibly new legal requirements or prohibitions in the fiscal year (FY) 2020 defense authorization act, and then the White House will prepare the FY2021 budget request, maybe with pit factory construction in it.

All these are "station stops" on the train to pit production hell. They all (at the moment) assume there is no serious opposition to pit production in New Mexico.

The sooner we can stop this train, the easier and better.

Let's get our cities and towns, tribes, and counties out of the [Regional Coalition of LANL Communities](#) (RCLC), *with prejudice* as the lawyers say. *This winter or spring, please.*

Unlike other states which are rushing to federal court to block plutonium shipments to them or get plutonium out of their state ("[S.C. files emergency motion to intervene in Nevada's plutonium-related lawsuit](#)," *Aiken Standard*, 4 Jan 2019), our congressional delegation *loves* plutonium and has been telling everyone in Washington that New Mexicans like plutonium almost as much as green chile, and that we want to process tens of tons of it in our [plutonium roasters](#), and make piles of pits (which are [like jetliners](#), don't you know).

Déjà vu you say? The same thing happened last year (see entries starting April 2018 [here](#)) but the New Mexico delegation was not satisfied with the result. (Splitting pit production with a non-New-Mexico site! Oh no!)

So by July 2018 a new [law](#) requiring *another* set of studies was well on its way to passage. The previous two [studies](#) (top box) conspicuously *did not* advocate building new factories or underground "modules" at LANL. "This time NNSA and its contract engineers had better get the message that New Mexicans deserve all the plutonium they want! We need to make American pits great -- or at least young -- again!" (We prefer [sterilization](#).)

*Meanwhile we need to stop the push for new, pit-requiring warheads. We will be writing about that more, ASAP. Also I will go to DC for two weeks in February to work on that among other things.*

Meanwhile, hopefully this op end will run this week. It has already been sent to various responsible parties in Washington.

At the end of the Cold War it made sense for the Department of Energy (DOE) to consolidate and temporarily preserve pit production technology at LANL. Given the National Nuclear Security Administration's (NNSA's) mandate, it still does.

However, hopes for a reliable, small, pit production capacity at LANL – let alone an enduring one that could quantitatively contribute to maintaining the nuclear stockpile over decades – didn't pan out.

In 1989, when the Berlin Wall came down and the Rocky Flats Plant made its last pit, PF-4 was only 11 years old. The extent of LANL's seismic hazard was then unknown, officially at least.

Likewise the poor geotechnical properties of the unconsolidated volcanic sediments at LANL's TA-55 were unknown then. They were certainly plain to see in the surrounding terrain and in records of TA-55 borings. When LANL was chosen for the pilot pit mission in late 1997, no further construction at TA-55 or elsewhere at LANL was thought necessary. Or at least that was the story. So the presence of an 80 or so foot thick layer of poorly consolidated volcanic ash – dust, more or less – beneath TA-55 seemed of no particular relevance. It was apparently not brought to management attention. Institutionally it was forgotten until 2010, when engineers discovered that this problematic stratum would have to be entirely removed to build a nuclear facility on the south side of TA-55.

Likewise LANL's dissected, steep topography, which dramatically increases costs and places firm limits on construction at TA-55 and elsewhere at LANL, was not a factor in 1997, when PF-4 was in mid-life and no new construction was envisioned.

The situation is much different now, 20 years later. Originally designed for a 50-year operational life, PF-4 is now 40 years old. By the time pit production is supposed to start in earnest in the late 2020s it will be 50. PF-4 was not built to modern nuclear facility standards. It also was and is an R&D facility, not a factory. Its structural integrity in the event of a design basis earthquake, and the adequacy of its safety systems in routine operation and more so in a design basis accident, have been under constant review, critique, negotiation, upgrade, and repair for the past decade and more. It does not have safety-class ventilation or fire suppression systems. Safety is a perennial "work in progress."

NNSA has said it expects PF-4 to last until 2039 (p. WA-211), but with what confidence, or operational reliability? With what safety risks? No one really knows.

In June 2017 the NNSA determined (p. 76) that continuing to rely on PF-4 for enduring pit production capability presented "unacceptably high mission risk," for two reasons: a) efforts to install equipment in PF-4 beyond what is already planned under the Plutonium Sustainment program present unacceptably high risks to achieving 30 ppy production by 2026; and b) PF-4 is much smaller than is required for stockpile pit production, even if missions such as plutonium dioxide production and plutonium-238 manufacturing were somehow relocated.

Could a suite of single-story underground production "modules" provide enough increased program capacity, either to expand LANL pit production or to replace PF-4?

In a word, no. No matter how many safety and operational corners are cut to save space – current plans involve cramped underground facilities and access, lack safety-class systems, and do not meet nuclear design regulations – there just isn't room.

NNSA and DoD have little choice but to use LANL for "technology transfer" of the pit production mission to the Savannah River Site (SRS). For industrial pit production LANL can only be, at best, a training site.

In objective terms, NNSA's only decent option for a reliable pit factory for the coming decades lies with the brand-new, largely-built, unused, uncontaminated and therefore easily reconfigured, heavily-constructed, "plus-sized" Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility (MFFF) at SRS in South Carolina, built to process tens of tons of plutonium for another (now defunct) program. Nothing at LANL or at any other NNSA or DOE site comes close to MFFF's relatively high feasibility, low cost and risk, and relatively "rapid" schedule for starting up pit production.

That said, nothing about making a pit factory is easy, cheap, low-risk, or quick – or necessary any time soon to maintain any US nuclear weapon system for decades to come. The US has more than 10,000 long-lived pits of modern, usable types that will last several more decades.

Barriers to industrial pit production at LANL are many, intractable, synergistic, and largely independent of anything Congress or the Triad management team might do. It will be more than just "difficult," or "risky," for LANL to establish reliable, enduring industrial plutonium missions, including industrial pit production at any scale. For many reasons -- far more than fit in this column -- it will be

impossible.

The sooner this is realized, the better – for LANL, the nation, and this state.

### 3. Will Governor Grisham's energy policies help, or hurt, New Mexico and the climate? (op ed)

The coming legislative session, which starts in a week, will be a very important one for climate and energy policy.

We urge you to get involved in climate issues however you can and think best.

The clearest policy call coming from the Governor on these issues so far is for an increased renewable portfolio standard (RPS) for electricity.

We don't think her proposals are going in the right direction, generally speaking.

Under current law, an increased RPS will be a sort of [enclosure](#) or privatization, as happened (and is still happening) with the New Mexico land grants, and with the land given to the railroad barons. Only now the process involves the sun and wind, with great monetary value created by an RPS and then given to monopoly corporations by the same means.

The point is that the monopoly investor-owned utilities (IOUs) currently control whether you or I can get solar power, how much we can have, and when. In most cases, they do not pay for the renewable power you generate. And they can sell that too. As someone said the other day, they only like renewable energy (RE) if they own it. Incentives are far from what they need to be, especially for lower-middle income and poorer households and communities.

By far the cheapest way to fulfill an RPS is with utility-scale RE. As many of you know better than I, keeping electricity cheap is a legal requirement. Increasing the RPS, by itself, will fill the RE "demand space" largely with utility-owned generation. And *that will be that*, as they say.

The incoming administration may not sufficiently grasp the opportunities, and the dangers, inherent in the climate, energy, and economic crises breaking upon us. We are in an emergency situation.

It is all too easy to see energy issues through a neoliberal lens. Disaster for New Mexico lies that way.

We need instead a human-scaled, democratic vision of energy production, one where state and local government, tribes, citizens, and businesses – not corporations and financiers – are the ones investing in and owning it. Government should clear the obstacles and provide the incentives to make that happen, fast.

Localize, don't globalize.

Unless locally financed, owned, built, and managed – unless designed to meet demand in our own communities and industries but not elsewhere – unless social goals remain uppermost, renewable energy will neither help New Mexico nor lower greenhouse gas emissions.

To lower emissions we must produce and consume less fuel. Adding renewable energy doesn't do that exactly. There *are* good ways to do it, with strong conservative appeal -- like greenhouse gas taxes and dividends, among other possibilities.

Would increasing the renewable portfolio standard (RPS) for electricity generation from the present 20% to 50% by 2030, as requested by the governor and environmental groups, lower emissions, create jobs, and strengthen communities?

Not much, no, and no.

Last fall New Mexico utilities produced, purchased, or simply took from customers enough renewably-sourced electricity to provide 22.5% of generation. Yet after 15 years of an RPS, only about 2% of New Mexico's *overall* energy production is renewable. Our energy consumption is still about 90% from fossil fuels.

With a fourfold increase in oil production over the past decade, New Mexico's energy portfolio is getting browner, not greener. Democrats and Republicans alike are celebrating. Will environmental groups withdraw support for Democrats over this? Are they serious about the climate, or do they just want to play the game?

Electricity accounts for less than half of energy consumption. Were New Mexico to magically reach 50% or 80% renewable electricity tomorrow, the state would still be a major contributor to climate collapse, both from fossil fuel production, and from consumption in our wasteful buildings and transportation system.

Utility-scale renewable energy creates few jobs, which is why it is cheap. Once built, even fewer jobs remain. With a least-cost RPS New Mexicans would not even inherit the wind, or the sun. Those would be privatized and sold for a mess of cheap energy porridge and naïve environmental votes.

We are poised to entrench existing monopolies, build inappropriately-scaled projects with substantial out-of-state labor, and continue suburban sprawl that will plague us forever. Meanwhile we require little energy efficiency and offer few transportation alternatives.

Helping California grow by adding New Mexico renewable energy, which is basically what Governor Grisham proposes, will only add to our collective delusions and greenhouse gases. Nothing which facilitates growth in overall energy use, as this would, can be green or socially conscious.

We *could* use energy production and efficiency, sustainable transportation, and education at all levels to build skills, careers, and resilient communities. A long policy menu is available.

We *could* foster empowered, self-respecting citizens, the sort required for what we used to call "democracy."

We *could* be producers, stewards, *mayordomos*, not just consumers – which is to say, peasants.

We *could* opt for a different *kind* of prosperity, one that puts people and the living landscape over profits for banks and hedge

funds.

We *could* cut our energy use substantially, creating thousands of accessible jobs while lowering emissions, improving our building stock and quality of life, and saving money.

We *could* maximize solar production on most public buildings and offer not just some, but *sufficient*, incentives for a massive build-out of distributed and on-site solar power.

If we let government give away even more renewable energy to investor-owned corporations, and even more land and water for new suburbs, what will be left here? Why would young people stay?

Conceptually, one way to start reconciling proposals for an increased RPS with the goals in this guest editorial is to require IOUs to fulfill essentially all the increment of new RE -- e.g. for a 50% RE total, another 27.5% of RE generation -- with *distributed*, locally-owned RE generation, which would be enabled by other, separate policies (tax credits, training, requiring solar on state, local, school buildings, providing funding to do so, etc.).

**How can we get our legislators and supporting experts to move in this more fruitful direction? Demand our environmental groups to do so, for starters.**

This editorial does NOT talk about means to actually protect the climate, which frankly are nearly MIA in progressive proposals these days, e.g. in most of the "Green New Deal" (GND) proposals we see. GND proposals are generally (with exceptions) offered *in lieu of* measures to rapidly decrease fuel production and use, e.g. with greenhouse gas taxes/dividends and tariffs. That is a big mistake. Oil and gas production has to wind down, quickly, in a context of [energy descent](#). That descent is coming, like it or not (most won't). Our communities need resilience and we don't have it, not at all. Not mentally, socially, politically, or materially. We are going to need, and get, many different approaches, governmental and not. (More on that another time.)

**My purpose here is to get you to question the proposals of the environmental groups who are leading lobbying efforts in the legislature. What is really going on here? What good is an increased RPS? Who benefits? Given the governor's neoliberal advisors, can such proposals be fixed, or supplemented with sufficient other legislation to create rapid, locally-owned renewable buildout and achieve the other goals listed above?**

I may be mistaken -- the actual agenda of the environmental community in this regard is tightly-held and unknown to me; apparently they think the public are all NPCs ("non-player characters") -- but from what I see we need stronger, but most importantly *different*, policies than what is about to be requested by our environmental groups.

In this connection I want to again thank the good people at 350.org for asking me to speak, twice, to their group here in Albuquerque about some of these issues. They are a sophisticated group, and the reality of our present situation is that, with extinction staring us in the face, we have a very confusing situation. There is plenty of common ground, as I am sure there is with others also, but no room at all for complacency.

Given the enormous ignorance in the public and legislature (in part because we have just one full-time environmental reporter in the state), and in part because the policies we need are so dramatically different from those generated by the usual earth- and civilization-killing assumptions, we are not going to get very far in this or any legislature -- or any court for that matter.

That is why we need the [Extinction Rebellion](#) (XR), right now. The great danger for us is thinking that environment groups, politicians, and political parties can supply answers without first changing, by nonviolent force, the context in which the problem is thought about.

We are seeing, in real time, the co-optation, re-direction, and neutering of the fight for life.

We would like to attend or host a panel discussion on these topics ASAP, as soon as we can. If you want to help, please do.

Greg Mello, for the Study Group