LANL achieves milestone on path to zero wastewater discharge

January 20, 2012

Improved compliance while recycling millions of gallons of industrial wastewater

LOS ALAMOS, New Mexico, January 20, 2012—Millions of gallons of industrial wastewater will be recycled at Los Alamos National Laboratory as the result of a long-term strategy to treat wastewater rather than discharging it into the environment.

The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, which issues permits for industrial and sanitary wastewater discharges, recently approved the removal of four more outfalls from the Laboratory's permit. (An outfall is where wastewater from Lab operations is discharged down canyons.) Only 11 outfalls remain, down from 141 in 1993.

"One of the objectives of our Environmental Management System is to reduce liquid discharges to a single outfall by the end of 2012," said Dennis Hjeresen, Division

Leader of the Environmental Protection Division at the Lab. "Removing four more facilities from our permit is an important step toward reaching that goal."

The wastewater comes from many places at the Laboratory and does many things. It cools the Los Alamos Neutron Science Center (LANSCE), one of the Lab's premier science research facilities, and the Strategic Computing Complex, which creates world-class high-performance computing systems. The water also cools the Lab's power plant and comes out of the sanitary plant that treats water from toilets and sinks.

The treated sanitary wastewater and water flushed from cooling towers is transported to the Lab's Sanitary Effluent Reclamation Facility (SERF). It then can be reused in cooling towers around the Lab.

"The SERF should be recycling up to 300,000 gallons per day by the summer of 2012," Hjeresen said.

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