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Floodplain Assessment for the Construction of a Parking Lot in Los Alamos Canyon

Introduction

There is limited parking available at the Los Alamos County ice rink facility and an unsafe condition has developed over time with ice rink patrons parking along the north side of West Road which requires patrons to cross West Road, an unlit roadway. Los Alamos County is preparing to implement actions in Los Alamos Canyon on an easement of Department of Energy (DOE) land in Technical Areas (TA) 43 and 62 at Los Alamos National Laboratory. Los Alamos National Security, LLC (LANS) biologists conducted a floodplain determination for this project, which is located within the 100-year floodplain.

Project Description

The project location is in Los Alamos Canyon east of the ice rink facility at the intersection of West and Omega roads (Figure 1). Forty eight parking spaces will be constructed on the north and south side of Omega Road, and a lighted walking path will be constructed to the ice rink. Some trees will be removed during this action. A guardrail of approximately 400 feet will be constructed along the north side of West Road to prevent unsafe parking in that area.

Floodplain Impacts

The proposed construction has a footprint of 0.64 acres. Most of this area for the parking lot is already disturbed with a gravel base and little vegetation. Less than ten trees will be removed on the edges of the parking area, some of which are dead hazard trees. The majority of the floodplain in this stretch of Los Alamos Canyon is already developed with paved roads and the ice rink facility (Figure 2). The floodplain is impaired in this stretch of Los Alamos Canyon because of the existing paved roads and structures in this area (Photographs 1-2). Paving an area that is already disturbed will not increase impairment of the floodplain.

Best management practices for work in floodplains will be implemented during all project activities. These protection standards will minimize negative impacts. The best management practices will include:

- Project will not locate equipment staging areas within the floodplain
- Project will refuel equipment at least 100 feet from any drainage, including dry arroyos
- Project will not store hazardous materials, chemical, fuels, and oils within the floodplain

- Project will revegetate following soil disturbances using an appropriate native seed mix or plants
- Project will remove all debris (eg. construction material) from the floodplain at completion

This project has gone through an integrated environmental review to maintain compliance with all laws and regulations. If applicable, all requirements in the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System, Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan will be followed. To comply with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, vegetation will not be removed during the bird breeding season in June and July to protect nesting birds.

Other Alternatives Considered

A No Action alternative was considered, but was not selected because the public safety concerns in this area need to be corrected. An alternative location west of the ice rink facility was considered, but it was not selected because it was in habitat for a federally protected species.

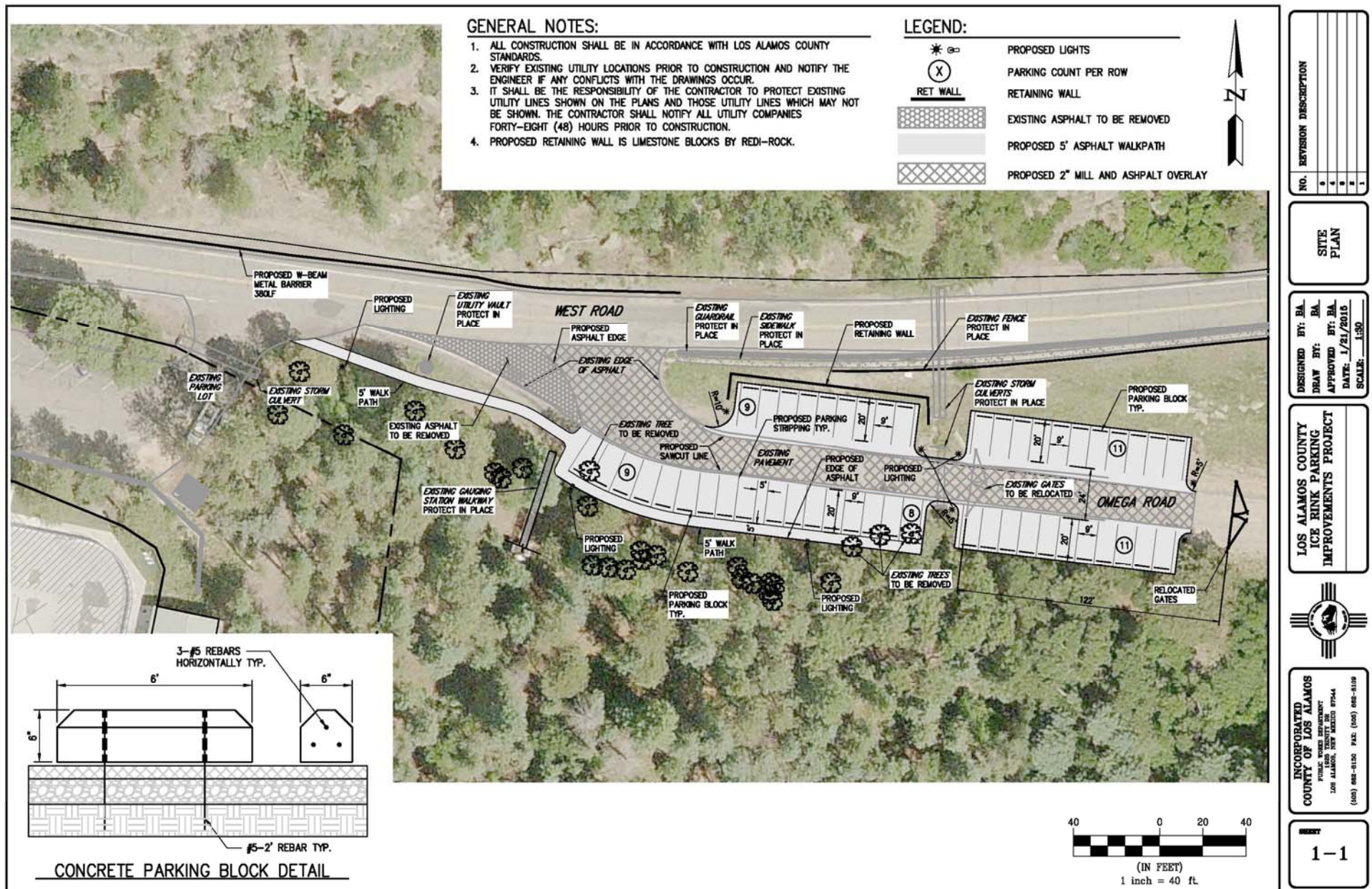


Figure 1. Engineering designs for the parking lot and guardrail.

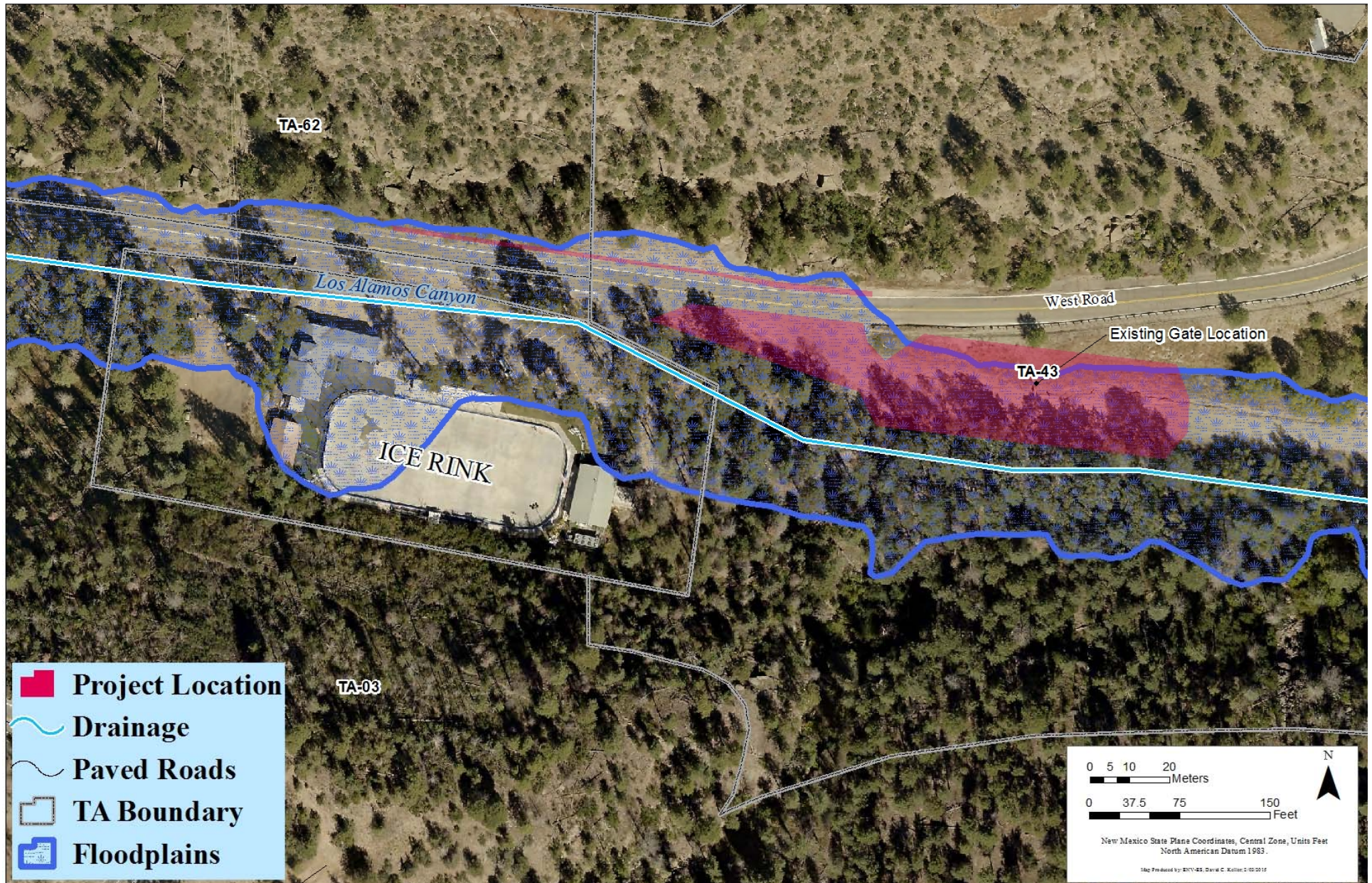


Figure 2. 2014 Orthophoto map showing the general location of the proposed project in relation to the 100-year floodplain in Los Alamos Canyon.



Photograph 1. Looking west, the disturbed area on the left will be used for the parking lot.



Photograph 2. Looking east at the area.