

Mixed Waste Landfill (MWL)

SAND2011-2653P



View looking southwest of the MWL ET Cover in December 2010

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The Mixed Waste Landfill (MWL) is a Solid Waste Management Unit at Sandia National Laboratories/ New Mexico (SNL/NM). The MWL is located 4 miles south of the central facilities at SNL/NM and 5 miles southeast of Albuquerque International Sunport. The landfill is a fenced, 2.6-acre site in the north-central portion of Technical Area-3. The MWL was established in 1959 as a disposal area for low-level radioactive waste generated by SNL/NM research facilities. Approximately 100,000 cubic feet of low-level radioactive and mixed waste containing approximately 6,300 curies of activity (at the time of disposal) were disposed of in the landfill from March 1959 through December 1988.

Wastes disposed of in the MWL include acids, organic compounds and oils, depleted uranium, lead shielding, activation products, beryllium, sodium, lithium, neutron generator tubes, liquid scintillation vials, assorted contaminated equipment, decontamination materials, construction debris, contaminated soils, and solid wastes. The majority of the waste in the MWL is low-level radioactive waste, with some hazardous waste and mixed waste. All liquid wastes were solidified prior to disposal with one exception (the 1967 disposal of 204,000 gallons of reactor coolant water). The MWL has been extensively studied and it does not represent a current or future threat to drinking water.

Regulatory Background Information

The MWL CMS Report, which identified and evaluated corrective measures alternatives for the MWL, was submitted to the NMED in May 2003. The NMED held a public comment period from August 11, 2004 to December 9, 2004 and a public hearing was conducted on December 2-3 and 8-9, 2004. On May 26, 2005, the Secretary of the NMED selected a vegetative soil cover (i.e., an ET cover) with a biointrusion barrier as the final remedy for the MWL. The Secretary requested that a Corrective Measures Implementation Plan

(CMIP) incorporating the final remedy be developed within 180 days following the selection of the remedy. The NMED also required the following items to be addressed in the CMIP: a comprehensive fate and transport model and specific monitoring trigger levels.

The CMIP was submitted to the NMED in November 2005 and contained a description of the selected remedy, the objectives for the remedy, detailed engineering design drawings and construction specifications, a construction quality assurance plan, fate and transport modeling results, and proposed monitoring trigger levels for specific constituents. After two Notices of Deficiency issued by the NMED were addressed by DOE and Sandia, the CMIP was conditionally approved by the NMED in December 2008. The MWL Alternative ET Cover was installed from May 20 through September 3, 2009 and consists of four main layers: compacted subgrade, biointrusion barrier, compacted native soil, and topsoil. The Subgrade varies in thickness from 0 to 3.3 feet, and the combined average thickness of the overlying ET Cover layers (i.e., Biointrusion, Native Soil, and Topsoil Layers) is 5.37 feet. The ET Cover was constructed with approximately 33,000 cubic yards of soil fill and 6,800 cubic yards of rock (in-place, compacted volumes), with an overall footprint of 4.1 acres including side slopes. Verification that the ET Cover materials and construction meet CMIP specifications is based upon



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the results of 113 laboratory tests (Standard Proctor, Gradation, Classification, and Saturated Hydraulic Conductivity), 271 field tests (in-place density and moisture), and visual inspections. All MWL ET Cover construction activities were observed, inspected, and documented by an independent third-party Construction Quality Assurance (CQA) contractor. The CMI Report was submitted to the NMED within 180 days of completion of the cover construction on January 26, 2010.

Long-Term Monitoring and Stewardship

In 2008, the Department of Energy (DOE)/ Sandia updated the groundwater monitoring network at the MWL. Four of the earliest installed wells were decommissioned and four new wells were installed at locations approved by the NMED. All seven monitoring wells at the MWL are proposed for continued monitoring in the Long-Term Maintenance and Monitoring Plan (LTMMMP), which was submitted to the NMED in September 2007. A revised LTMMMP will be submitted to the NMED within 180 days after approval of the CMI Report.

The LTMMMP addresses a comprehensive monitoring program for the MWL that includes sampling the air, surface soil, subsurface soil gas and moisture (in the vadose zone), and groundwater. A maintenance schedule for the ET Cover and site drainage is proposed, as well as physical and institutional controls. Annual reporting of monitoring and maintenance activities and results, as well as a review every 5 years of the effectiveness of the ET Cover is also required. The long-term monitoring will ensure that the final remedy, the ET Cover, is protective of human health and the environment.

Recent Activities, Current Status and Future Work at the MWL

- A soil and soil-vapor survey was conducted in the spring of 2008 in order to update the characterization of soil and vadose zone conditions at the MWL. A final report was submitted to the NMED in August 2008 documenting this work.



Native grass seedlings growing on the MWL ET Cover in November 2010

- The construction of the final ET Cover was completed from May 20 through September 3, 2009.
- The CMI Report was submitted to the NMED on January 26, 2010.
- Following NMED approval of the CMI Report, the LTMMMP will be revised and submitted to the NMED.
- In August 2010, the DOE/Sandia submitted the MWL Toluene Investigation Report. The Report concludes that the MWL is not the source of low level toluene detected in some groundwater samples from the MWL groundwater monitoring network. The DOE/Sandia responded to a NMED Notice of Disapproval in October 2010 and submitted a revised report, which was approved by NMED in January 2011.
- After NMED approval of the LTMMMP, the monitoring proposed in the LTMMMP will begin.
- Groundwater monitoring is ongoing and will continue.

Contact Us!

For more information about long-term stewardship at Sandia, visit our website:

<http://ltes.sandia.gov/>

