

February 17, 2004

Ms. Jan Biella
Deputy SHPO
Historic Preservation Division
Office of Cultural Affairs
228 East Palace Avenue
Santa Fe, NM 87503

SUBJECT: INITIATION OF THE NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT
SECTION 106 PROCESS FOR LOUISIANA ENERGY SERVICES
PROPOSED GAS CENTRIFUGE URANIUM ENRICHMENT FACILITY

Dear Ms. Biella:

Louisiana Energy Services (LES) has submitted a license application to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to construct, operate, and decommission a proposed gas centrifuge uranium enrichment facility. The NRC is in the initial stages of developing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed facility to be located near Eunice, New Mexico, in Lea County. The proposed facility will use gas centrifuge technology to enrich the isotope Uranium-235 in uranium hexafluoride (UF₆), up to 5 percent (assay level for practical use in nuclear reactors). This proposed facility, as well as all associated construction, operation, and decommissioning activities and impacts, will be within the 220-ha (543 acre) LES National Enrichment Facility (NEF) site. The forthcoming EIS will document the impacts associated with the construction, operation, and decommissioning of the facility.

In September 2003, LES performed a survey of the proposed NEF site. Seven prehistoric archeological sites were identified, with three of the sites found in the area of potential effects (APE) and one of these sites is potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historical Places. The APE is considered the NEF site area, including permanent and temporary building(s) footprints, parking and lay-down areas, and all site access roads. LES has indicated that the one site potentially eligible may be affected by an access road. LES has indicated that it intends to submit the complete Cultural Resources Survey Report of all survey findings. The NRC, in consultation with your office and any identified consulting parties, will provide a determination of eligibility after the Cultural Resources Report is received.

As part of the NRC licensing process, LES submitted an Environmental Report (ER) in support of the proposed NEF. In the ER, LES indicated it had contacted six Indian tribes at your request. As required by 36 CFR 800.4(a), the NRC is requesting the views of the State Historical Preservation Officer on further actions to identify historic properties that may be affected by the NRC's undertaking. As part of the EIS preparation the NRC will be hosting a public scoping meeting Thursday, March 4, 2004, at the Eunice Community Center, 1115 Avenue I, in Eunice, New Mexico from 7:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m. The meeting will include NRC staff presentations on the safety and environmental review process, after which members of the public will be given the opportunity to present their comments on what environmental issues NRC should consider during its environmental review.

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This scoping information, along with the forthcoming LES Cultural Resource Report, and any information you provide, will be used to document affects in accordance with 36 CFR Part 800.4 and 800.5. Additionally, we intend to use the EIS process for Section 106 purposes as described in 36 CFR Part 800.8.

We have attached additional background information relating to cultural resources as it appears in the LES ER. If you have any questions or comments, or need any additional information, please contact Matthew Blevins of my staff at 301-415-7684.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Lawrence E. Kokajko, Chief
Environmental and Performance
Assessment Branch
Division of Waste Management
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards

Docket No.: 70-3103

Enclosure: Cultural Resources Information for LES National Enrichment Facility,
Environmental Report, December 12, 2003

Service List

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Service list

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***see previous concurrence**

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