LANL breaks ground on key sediment control project

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Structures will limit flow of sediments toward Rio Grande

Los Alamos, New Mexico, November 5, 2009— Crews broke ground this week on one of two engineered structures in a Los Alamos National Laboratory environmental project to reduce the flow of sediments down two canyons toward the Rio Grande.

Called “grade-control” structures, the approximately $2 million features are up to eight feet high and made of rocks packed tightly into wire enclosures. They will play a major role in controlling and trapping sediments in Pueblo and DP Canyons. In Pueblo Canyon, the structure will help grow an existing wetland which traps sediment by means of thick vegetation.

The project is being implemented in close coordination with the New Mexico Environment Department. It’s also considered important to the Buckman Direct

Diversion Project, which will draw Rio Grande water for use in Santa Fe and Santa Fe County.

“We’ve focused a lot of effort on reducing sediment flow,” said George Rael, assistant manager for Environmental Operations at the Department of Energy’s Los Alamos Site Office. “We’ve heard the concerns of the NMED and the Buckman Board and we’re committed to the success of the diversion project.”

Other elements of the sediment control project are already complete, including the planting of 10,000 willows in Pueblo Canyon.

Contractors on the grade-control project include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, KBR, Inc., PBS&J, and A.S. Horner Construction of Albuquerque.

Construction has begun in Pueblo Canyon near the intersection of highways NM 502 and NM 4. While cones and activity may be visible from both highways, traffic will not be affected. The estimated completion is in early 2010.

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