

July 21, 2009

Legislation to Authorize \$5 Million Annually to LANL, \$30 Million to Research Parks Nationally

Washington, DC – Today, the House of Representatives passed Rep. Ben Ray Luján's bill (H.R. 2729) to formally authorize funding for existing National Environmental Research Parks (NERPs) by a vote of 330 to 96. National Environmental Research Parks are located at national laboratories across the U.S., including Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). The bill received bipartisan support, with cosponsors including Reps. Judy Biggert (R-IL), Gabrielle Giffords (D-AZ), Daniel Lipinski (D-IL), Brian Baird (D-WA) and Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX).

"These Parks have been a critical resource to the national and the global environmental research community for decades, yet they have never had a clearly defined source of support in the Department of Energy before," said Rep. Luján. "This bill finally addresses this issue and provides important guidance for the Parks' research, development, education, and outreach activities. Los Alamos National Laboratory includes a landscape of canyons, mesas, mountains, and the Rio Grande--providing a diverse range of ecosystems to research. The Los Alamos environmental research park conducts ongoing environmental studies on everything from contaminant transport to woodland productivity to long-term climate change effects on the land."

"My bill was developed through a collaborative process that considered comments and concerns from each of the Department of Energy NERP sites as well as helpful input and amendments from both Democratic and Republican Members of Congress. I am happy to pass this bill with bipartisan support, and I look forward to working with our Senate colleagues to send this bill to the President's desk as soon as possible."

Rep. Luján wrote and introduced the legislation, which promotes environmental science programs at Los Alamos National Laboratory by authorizing funding for its NERP as well as for

NERPS located at Oakridge, Fermilab, Idaho, Nevada, and Savannah River National Laboratories.

The research conducted at the NERPs, which have existed for decades, produces valuable data that can be used to fight climate change and clean up contaminated sites. With the new authorization and consistent funding, they can expand their research activities. Rep. Luján's legislation authorizes \$5,000,000 for each NERP for each of the fiscal years 2010 through 2014.

"These parks are unique outdoor laboratories that offer secure settings for long-term research on a broad range of subjects, including wildlife biology, ecology, climate change effects, and maintenance of freshwater ecosystems," Rep. Luján said when the legislation was introduced. "The parks also provide rich environments for training future researchers and introducing the public to environmental sciences."

In June, the Energy and Environment Subcommittee of the Committee on Science and Technology held a hearing that examined climate and environmental research programs conducted by the Department of Energy—which included discussion on Rep. Luján's NERP bill. Dr. Nate McDowell of Los Alamos National Laboratory gave testimony at the hearing.

"I'm glad that we conducted a hearing to discuss the Department of Energy's environmental research along with the National Energy Research Park legislation I introduced last week," said Rep. Luján after the hearing. "The witnesses provided excellent testimony that will help shape future efforts to address issues from climate change to contamination."

Dr. Nate McDowell of Los Alamos National Laboratory talked about the advanced laser facility at the Los Alamos NERP, which uses laser technology to observe and monitor carbon dioxide emissions. He discussed the importance of coordination between the NERPs and collaboration on their respective research projects. He also talked about how NERPs are not consistently funded and often do not have the necessary resources to utilize their full environmental research potential.

"The Research Parks are one of our nation's most valuable environmental research assets. It is time for them to be recognized in law and explicitly provided the resources they need to continue their valuable work," said Rep. Luján. "This legislation supports the Research Parks'

research and monitoring programs. It authorizes core funding that will ensure that they can continue the important work they already perform, as well as provide opportunities to expand on new research and energy development initiatives. This bill also establishes a Research Parks coordinator that will assist the Parks in collaborating with each other. Additionally, it encourages environmental science education and public outreach activities.”

For more information about the Department of Energy's National Energy Research Parks, visit <http://www.nerp.ornl.gov/>

.

For more information about the Los Alamos National Environmental Research Park, visit http://www.lanl.gov/orgs/tt/partnering/user_facility/facilities/environ_research.shtml

.