

STRAWBERRY CREEK WATERSHED COUNCIL

July 28, 2011

Karen Toth, Supervising Hazardous Substances Engineer I
Jacinto Soto, Project Manager Brownfields and Environmental Restoration
Program
Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC)
700 Heinz
Berkeley, California 94710

Re: Comments on Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory's
(LBNL) ***Workplan for Proposed Modifications of the Building 25A
in Situ Soil Flushing System**, June 2011

Dear Ms. Toth and Mr. Soto:

Thank you for meeting with us on July 25, 2011, to discuss issues of contamination concern regarding LBNL's ongoing work at the Old Town site, specifically the demolition of Buildings 25 and 25A and associated workplans for contamination investigations in preparation for construction of the proposed General Purpose Laboratory and the Solar Energy Research Center (SERC). Per our discussion we hope that you will incorporate the following critiques and suggestions in your comment letter to LBNL on the above referenced document.

1) The LBNL "Old Town" site was first constructed in the early 1940's, including Buildings **25, 25A**, 25B, 44, 44A, 44B, 40, 41, 52, and 52A — all having been recently demolished or are in the process of being demolished. This is known to be a highly contaminated area. Therefore specific site contamination investigations should not be piecemealed, but the entire site should be treated as one integrated area (Attachment #1) with unified Workplans for sampling, which LBNL is *not* doing, as seen below:

In October 2010, LBNL issued a **Workplan for the Preliminary Subsurface Investigation of the Building 25A Demolition Area**. DTSC provided written comments on this Workplan, dated February 22, 2011. It is our understanding that these comments were ignored by LBNL as they proceeded with a limited investigation prior to the demolition of Building 25A.

2) We therefore ask that DTSC formally request LBNL to revise their sampling plan to incorporate your comments and requests, especially a) to collect all soil vapor samples for VOC analysis at DTSC's recommended 10 ft depth, in addition to the 5 ft depth, and b) to collect grab groundwater samples from the soil sample locations.

In February 2011, LBNL issued a **Workplan for the Preliminary Subsurface Investigation of the Building 25 Demolition Area**. It is our understanding that DTSC did not have the opportunity to review and comment on this Workplan.

3) We therefore ask DTSC to formally request a pause in all work until DTSC has reviewed and made recommendations to this Workplan.

4) From our review of this Workplan, it is clear that the sampling has been superficial, especially since the soil sampling depth has been limited to mostly 2 1/2 ft. However, we ask that DTSC formally review the sampling data.

5) We urge DTSC to request more comprehensive soil sampling to include soils all the way to the top of the water table to better reflect the historic soil conditions of the site.

6) Furthermore, we urge DTSC to request that sediment samples be collected at the bottom of the water table as well.

In April 2011, LBNL issued a **Workplan for Proposed Modification of the Building 25A In Situ Soil Flushing System**. DTSC provided comments, dated June 2, 2011, on *this* Workplan. It is unclear how the DTSC's comments were received by LBNL because in June 2011 LBNL issued yet *another* Workplan with the same title, *referenced above.

7) The June 2011 Workplan did not indicate whether it was a revision or an update of the April 2011 Workplan. Changes in the June 2011 Workplan were not identified either by strike-outs, underlines, or italics, to indicate changes, revisions, or additions, to the original April 2011 Workplan. We therefore ask that DTSC formally request LBNL to clearly what changes in this Workplan have been made.

In our precursory review of the June 2011 Workplan, we have found that LBNL responded to DTSC's June 2, 2011, comments in an inadequate, vague, and superficial manner. In particular: in response to DTSC's criticism inquiring why VOC results (the chemicals of concern at this location) and/or metals results were not even summarized, LBNL's June 2011 Workplan responded that metals (chromium, cobalt, mercury, nickel, and vanadium) concentrations above the upper estimate of LBNL background were detected as well as one metal (nickel), benzene, and trichloroethene (TCE) exceeding the California Human Health Screening level (CHHSL) and the Regional Water Quality Board Environmental Screening Level (ESL). The vertical sampling remains inadequate, being haphazard and currently only summarily indicative of the detected contaminants. Furthermore, the samplings do not even go to the 20 ft level that is now being proposed to be the depth of excavations for construction,

exposing a *new* surface. It is also significant to note that the June 2011 Workplan evades answering the DTSC inquiry regarding how LBNL will specifically remedy elevated soil gas vapor concentrations.

8) Therefore, we ask DTSC to request LBNL to sample soil and soil vapors to the depth of 20 ft and beyond to the water table.

9) In the June 2011 Workplan, LBNL specifically responds to the DTSC question "where are you moving the infiltration trench?" by responding that they propose not to construct a new one at all. We ask that DTSC requests that LBNL construct a new infiltration trench/bed at a location approved by DTSC and the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB).

10) LBNL avoids answering the DTSC inquiry of June 2, 2011, of accountability and responsibility for contaminants at the Old Town site regarding "where to re-inject water, where to pump, etc. What are the criteria being used to make these decisions and what is DTSC's role?" We ask that DTSC establish that it is expected of LBNL that whenever changes are anticipated LBNL will involve DTSC and the RWQCB *before* proceeding with any decisions regarding changes, to insure adequate time for comment, revisions, and oversight.

In conclusion, we also want to remind you of the fact that there are 4 earthquake faults and/or contacts that intersect the Building 25 and 25A demolition site. This fact needs to be taken into consideration when determining the new locations for extraction and monitoring wells (Attachment #2).

It is also of critical importance to acknowledge that the area includes Building 4, Former Radioactive Waste Storage and Staging Area, and Building 5, Former Radioactive Decontamination Area and Former Outdoor Radioactive Waste Storage Area (Attachment #1).

Sincerely,
Carole Schemmerling
Strawberry Creek Watershed Council
(510) 524-4005

cc:
RWQCB