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Finding of No Significant Impact Released for DOE's Physical Sciences Facility

RICHLAND, WA – The U. S. Department of Energy (DOE) today announced it has issued a “Finding of No Significant Impact” for a project to construct and operate a new Physical Sciences Facility (PSF) at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) north of Richland, Washington. The proposed PSF would replace a number of existing research laboratories in the Hanford Site 300 Area currently occupied by PNNL which are scheduled for removal as part of the Hanford Site cleanup. A Finding of No Significant Impact, or FONSI, is a determination under the National Environmental Policy Act that the project will have no significant adverse impact on the environment.

The FONSI is the result of an Environmental Assessment (EA) conducted by the DOE in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act. A Draft EA was released for public review and comment November 14, 2006 and comments were accepted through December 13, 2006. Comments were considered and responses to those comments are incorporated into the Final EA and detailed in an appendix.

The proposed PSF would be constructed in phases over a 20-year span. The initial phase of the plan, expected to be completed by 2010, would include construction of the following modules as part of the PSF: Ultra-trace, Radiation Detection, and Materials Science and Technology. During this initial phase, several serviceable structures in the 300 Area may be retained and used by PNNL until future phases are scheduled and budgeted.

The Final EA and FONSI represent one step in the process of planning the PSF project and will be used by the DOE as part of the decision making process leading to a final determination on the design and construction of the PSF. Currently the Department plans to make a final decision in the spring of 2007 on the design and start of construction for the PSF.

To view a copy of the environmental assessment and the finding of no significant impact, go to <http://pnso.oro.doe.gov/Default.aspx?tabid=97> or to the DOE Public Reading Room in Richland, WA at <http://reading-room.pnl.gov/default.htm>

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