U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Berkeley Site Office

News Media Contact
Lauren Martinez
(510) 486-4377

For Immediate Release
June 19, 2009

ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW ON PROPOSED BERKELEY LAB LASER ACCELERATOR (BELLA) LASER ACQUISITION, INSTALLATION AND USE FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

BERKELEY, CA - A draft Environmental Assessment for the proposed Berkeley Lab Laser Accelerator (BELLA) Laser Acquisition, Installation and Use for Research and Development, is now available for public review and comment from the U.S. Department of Energy Berkeley Site Office. The draft Environmental Assessment includes a description of the proposed project and an environmental impact analysis covering the following resource areas: hazards and human health, hydrology and water quality, energy use and greenhouse gases, utilities, visual quality, air quality, noise, traffic, cultural resources, intentional destructive acts, and cumulative impacts. The proposed action purpose, need and alternatives are discussed in the draft Environmental Assessment.

The U.S. Department of Energy is seeking public comment on the draft Environmental Assessment. Written comments should be postmarked no later than 5 p.m. on July 18, 2009, and include a return name and mailing address. Comments should be mailed to Kim Abbott, National Environmental Policy Act Document Manager, U.S. Department of Energy, Berkeley Site Office, One Cyclotron Road, M/S 90-R1023, Berkeley, CA 94720 or sent via e-mail to kim.abbott@bso.science.doe.gov.

The U.S. Department of Energy proposes to create and operate an experimental facility for further advancing the development of laser-driven, plasma-based, particle beam accelerators. An existing approximately 7,000 square-foot accelerator laboratory area inside Building 71 at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory would be modified to accommodate the new facility. A utility room and stairwell would be placed in an approximately 2,000 square-foot area of the Building 71 roof. The Berkeley Laboratory Laser Accelerator (BELLA) laser, laser plasma accelerator, ancillary equipment, and radiation shielding would be installed. The laser and laser plasma accelerator would be operated for research and development that would focus the laser system's laser beam pulses on the entry to a meter-long plasma channel (inside the laser plasma accelerator) to produce and accelerate an electron beam pulse to an energy level on the order of 10 giga electron volts (GeV) within the meter length of the channel. The proposed action's unique attribute would be the comparatively short distance over which the laser plasma accelerator generates a 10 GeV electron beam. The ultimate goal of this undertaking is to support the U.S. Department of Energy's need to substantially reduce the size, cost, energy usage, and environmental impacts associated with future electron or positron accelerators.

Copies of the draft Environmental Assessment are available for public review on the web at http://www.lbl.gov/community/BELLA/ and at the Berkeley Public Library at 2090 Kittredge St., Berkeley, CA 94704. A copy of the draft Environmental Assessment may be obtained by contacting Kim Abbott by email at kim.abbott@bso.science.doe.gov or by voicemail at (510) 486-7909.

-30-