Health, coupled with a merit-review system devised with help from the National Science Foundation (*Science*, 22 July, p. 463). The overall effort will require "changing the culture of an entire organization," says Roger McClellan, director of the Chemical Industry Institute of Toxicology and co-chair of an EPA Science Advisory Board panel that favorably reviewed Browner's proposal.

One thing that's not in the cards is large-scale lab closures. That idea, floated in May by the Mitre Corporation as part of a congressionally mandated review of EPA's ORD, would have folded ORD's 12 research labs into four "mega-labs" and relocated staff (*Science*, 20 May, p. 1077). "In truth, we were never very comfortable with physical consolidation, but we felt we had the responsibility to bring the issue to the table," says Gary Foley, acting ORD director. "At least over the near term, consolidation will be costly, will disrupt ongoing research, and will damage employee morale," EPA officials wrote to Congress last week, and in a memo to employees Browner said the subject has been shelved "until at least June 1996." She later told *Science*, "You couldn't ask people to undergo these kinds of changes while they were worrying about where they might be working 6 months from now."

Although she's not closing EPA labs, Browner does intend to consolidate them administratively. She plans to create four mega-labs that will oversee and coordinate the work of other labs. One will focus on basic research on health and environmental effects, another will monitor exposures to potential hazards, a third will prepare risk assessments, and the fourth will develop pollution-prevention and remediation technologies. These labs will coordinate activity at 21 sites. "We're talking a sea change here" in reorganizing the labs around EPA's major activities rather than individual scientific disciplines, says Thomas Hadd, deputy director of ORD's office of research program management. ORD headquarters in Washington will also cede authority for research protocols and daily operations to the mega-labs, easing a paperwork burden that chews up about half of the average EPA scientist's time (*Science*, 29 October 1993, p. 647).

Implementing these changes will be high on the agenda of ORD's new research chief, chemist Robert Huggett, whose nomination will be considered next month by the Senate. And they will have to be done with a budget no larger than the current $533 million. The increase in extramural funds, says Foley, is likely to come from money being spent on private firms under contract to EPA for technical support underlying the issuance of regulations. The shift in focus "will have its impacts on other parts of the program," says Foley, who says that ORD will have to come up with ways to do the same amount of short-term research with less money. "We're taking a very bold step," he says.

–Richard Stone

SUPERCONDUCTING SUPER COLLIDER

DOE and Texas Settle SSC Claims

It's been a long, strange trip, but the ill-fated Superconducting Super Collider (SSC) project, killed in midconstruction last October after receiving more than $2 billion of a planned $11-billion federal investment, is about to be laid to rest. Last week the Department of Energy (DOE) announced that it had reached an agreement with the state of Texas, which had pledged $1 billion toward building the 54-mile-long SSC at a prairie site an hour outside Dallas, that resolves the debates over whether Texas should be reimbursed for its contribution and the fate of facilities already built. DOE agreed to pay Texas $145 million in cash and contribute $65 million toward a project to convert one of the few nearly completed parts of the project—a proton-generating linear accelerator—into a cancer treatment center.

The agreement frees the government of the threat of a lawsuit and allows it to walk away from what was once envisioned as the world's premier high-energy physics laboratory. Since October, lawyers for the two parties have been in a Texas standoff over the state's demand that the federal government reimburse it totally for what it claims was an investment of $539 million in cash, land, labor, materials, and buildings. Negotiations were complicated by what DOE describes as an "unprecedented intermingling of federal and state funds...and the inadequacy of the [original] agreements to resolve matters in the event of project termination." Although DOE disputed Texas' claim that it should be reimbursed for the state's entire contribution, DOE lawyers concluded that Texas had grounds to go to court. Even if the state were eventually to lose, the prospect of having the SSC's existing computer and physics resources and large sums of DOE research funding held hostage to years of litigation was daunting enough to persuade DOE to seek a compromise. "We were really moving into paralysis," says Peter Didisheim, a special assistant to Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary. "This was the best outcome we could get." An aide to the SSC's chief congressional opponent, Representative Sherwood Boehlert (R–NY), calls the settlement "generous but not unreasonable."

Healthy choice. DOE will give Texas $65 million to help convert the SSC's linear accelerator into a cancer treatment facility.

The compromise also ends the debate over the main "follow-on" project for the SSC. As part of a congressionally mandated effort to reclaim as much of the federal SSC investment as possible, DOE has been funding project definition studies on several proposed uses for the remaining SSC assets, including a regional computing center and a project to measure the index of refraction of light in a magnetic field (*Science*, 13 May, p. 898). But a Texas academic-industrial consortium has been pushing for a cancer treatment and radioisotope production facility using the linac, and Texas has asked for federal funding for the medical facility.

Although DOE says it will conduct an independent peer review of the medical and scientific feasibility of the project before awarding the $65-million grant, officials say privately that approval is a near certainty. (DOE will also continue funding the ongoing studies on the other proposals and turn the information over to Texas.) The linac proposal, however, has already failed to pass muster with a special panel convened by the National Research Council. In a 12 January report, the panel concluded after a brief examination of the proposal that the linac was not optimized for either proton radiotherapy or radioisotope production and was "too remote from established medical facilities to be attractive as a center for treatment." Although the linac has moved no closer to other medical centers, other aspects of the proposal have matured since the panel's review, says Didisheim.

For the U.S. high-energy physics community, the best news from last week's agreement may be that the SSC will probably not eat up any more scarce research dollars. DOE already has some $735 million reserved for the SSC. With the actual costs of termination estimated to be only $524 million, DOE expects to be able to settle up with Texas without asking Congress for additional funding. Boehlert and others plan to make sure that DOE keeps its word.

–Christopher Anderson