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DEPARTMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: Bruce Krasnow

Bruce.Krasnow@state.nm.us

(505) 827-0226, cell: (505) 795-0119

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham
Cabinet Secretary Alicia J. Keyes
Deputy Secretary Jon Clark

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Aerial Inspection Company Plans Major New Mexico Expansion

*State Assistance From LEDA Helps LaSen Inc. Move to Global
Marketplace*

Las Cruces, N.M. – A company that specializes in aerial inspection and mapping services is planning a major expansion in New Mexico, more than doubling its highly trained workforce and speeding global expansion, Economic Development Department Cabinet Secretary Alicia J. Keyes announced today.

LaSen Inc. has been awarded a state Local Economic Development Act (LEDA) grant of \$750,000 to construct a larger headquarters facility, add new drones and helicopters, and hire 79 additional employees over the next 5 years.

The company will invest \$8.4 million into a new 37,000-square foot location at the Pioneer Industrial Park, west of Chapparral Building Materials and ProCon, off of W. Amador and Pioneer, South of former San Saba Pecan in Las Cruces.

The average annual wage for employees is \$80,000, and the expansion is expected to have a statewide economic impact of \$463 million over 10 years. The City of Las Cruces has made an additional \$400,000 offer to the project from its local LEDA fund. LaSen expects to move into the new facility in the summer of 2021.

"I'm thrilled about the expansion of this cutting-edge company in Las Cruces. It will bring even more highly skilled, high-tech jobs to New Mexico," Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham said.



To listen to LaSen's Founder and the CEO talk about expansion plans in New Mexico, click on the video image left.

LaSen has developed a niche in the oil and gas industry by providing detection of pipeline leaks and hazards using aerial observation from helicopters and drones, utilizing sophisticated LIDAR mapping, high-resolution video, and sensing technology that can detect leaks from 300 to 500 feet above the ground.

The mid-infrared laser used by LaSen is particularly well suited for detection of hydrocarbons such as methane, propane, and butane, as well as volatilized liquid petroleum products.

The economic development assistance not only helps with physical expansion, it also gives the company the resources to move into new global markets by providing aerial leak inspection and safety monitoring of power lines to potential new customers in Australia, Canada, Belgium, Germany, and Portugal.

"LaSen is a company with experience in New Mexico. It now wants to further invest in the state and expand its workforce so it can provide services around the world," Cabinet Secretary Keyes said. "These new high-paying jobs coming to Southern New Mexico, as a result of our LEDA investment, will help diversify our economy and move the state toward recovery. LeSen's expansion is part of a trend we are seeing: companies want to double down here or move from busier cities into N.M., where they can have a better quality of life with their families."

The aerial and unmanned technologies allow for a more complete and safer inspection of power lines and equipment damaged by wind, lightning, or even animals. Aerial technology is quickly replacing physical inspection by workers driving down rugged backroads and walking right-of-ways with cameras and notepads.

LaSen has its own flight operation and it manufactures the LiDAR sensor. It also has its own maintenance and machine shop, which is at capacity in its current space, 300 N. Telshor Blvd., Las Cruces, according to La Sen President Tim Goolsby.

"We've been talking about getting out of this building for the last two years. LEDA allows us to make that decision a lot sooner and with a little more comfort," Goolsby said. "We want to make the right decisions that will keep us in New Mexico for a long time."

The City of Las Cruces is the fiscal agent for the project and the Mesilla Valley Economic Development Alliance (MVEDA) provided location and technical assistance.

"We are excited to be in a position to help foster the growth of technology companies like LaSen and bring high paying jobs to Las Cruces," Mayor Ken Miyagishima said. "The close collaboration between the New Mexico Economic Development Department, the City's Economic Development Department, and MVEDA allowed us to quickly respond to LaSen's needs and secure Las Cruces as their long-term home."

“It has been rewarding to work with the team at LaSen and assist in their growth here in Las Cruces,” Davin Lopez, President and CEO of MVEDA, added. “Their expansion is indicative of the robust industry supporting aerial assets that can be found in the region and the opportunities we have to further grow this industry, with LaSen as our flagship.”

LaSen was founded in 1989 to commercialize technology developed for the Department of Defense, tested at White Sands Missile Range, to detect biological and chemical pathogens. The advancement into methane detection was a logical progression for LaSen, and in 2004, after being awarded a Small Business Innovation Research Grant (SBIR), LaSen developed the Airborne LiDAR Inspection System (ALPIS). ALPIS has inspected more than 500,00 miles of pipeline right-of-way, detecting more than 40,000 leaks, and saving more than 44.6 billion cubic feet of methane from escaping into the atmosphere.

The company has a quick-response model with helicopters available in Fresno, CA, Las Vegas, NV, Denver, CO, Fort Worth, TX, Lexington, KY, and Vancouver, BC. Pilots work staggered schedules in several locations in order to be available 24 hours a day.

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Photos courtesy of Lasen Inc.

The New Mexico Economic Development Department's mission is to improve the lives of New Mexico families by increasing economic opportunities and providing a place for businesses to thrive.