

Dan Warren

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my concerns regarding the continued operation of the Waste Isolation Pilot Project (WIPP). ♦ My three primary concerns are:

1. The potential for adverse health effects from the release of radioactive contaminants into surrounding communities and the environment.
2. Perpetuation of New Mexico serving as a nuclear 'playground' and dump, demonstrating a clear behavior pattern of disregard for the overall population of New Mexico - an unethical and immoral example of environmental injustice where adverse impacts are brought to the most economically disadvantaged state in the United States.
3. ♦ Adverse impacts to the endangered Lesser Prairie Chicken due to cumulative ♦ effects from man's activities.

RADIOACTIVE CONTAMINANT RELEASES

It was only a few years ago that a catastrophe occurred at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico. ♦ The accidental release of radioactive material was caused by the failure to use inorganic "kitty litter" to pack waste containers. ♦ Of course, this was no accident - it was simple bad management of the facility and the suppliers of the nuclear waste.

The people in charge of ♦ WIPP have failed to understand simple organic chemistry principles and properly train their workers - it ♦ is very frightening. ♦ There is no assurance that a similar accident will occur - of course, the operators will undoubtedly assure us it will be safe, but that is far from a ♦ guarantee.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Having been born in New Mexico, it has been disheartening to see such a beautiful state get more than its share of adverse impacts caused by various Federally-sponsored actions - including huge forest fires, very consuming military activities such as White Sands Missile Range, nuclear testing, uranium mining, and PFAS contamination. ♦ If one were to believe all the economic forecasters, we should be rolling in \$100 bills and all driving luxury cars. But that is not the case.

New Mexico has been promised and has expected prosperity from all of the Federally-sponsored actions over the years, but after 177 years of control by the U.S. government, New Mexico is in worse socio-economic ♦ condition than any other state. ♦ To make matters worse, some of these Federal actions have actually led to a distorted economic picture of New Mexico. ♦ The economic benefits of nuclear activities have led to isolated pockets of wealth (often with gated and/or exclusive neighborhoods) that are then averaged into the poor surrounding areas...and magically New Mexico is seen as economically able to compete with other poor states like Mississippi and Alabama. ♦ Take Los Alamos County (source of much of the waste envisioned to end up at WIPP) out of the economic ♦ mixing ♦ machine and let's see where New Mexico stands! ♦ Often the people landing the high-paying jobs for these high tech fields are not even residents of the state when hired; many leave when their jobs are done. ♦ The nuclearization of New Mexico has been horrible;

the Federal government is blind to their cumulative adverse socio-economic impacts. ❖ WIPP is part of a huge series of environmental injustice actions that ❖ has gone on for decades.

A requirement needs to be added stating that, before any expansion of any nuclear waste facility occurs, and before any new nuclear waste dump is created, the following must occur:

Until the socio-economic conditions of New Mexico, including child ❖ welfare, are better than 9 other states (with Los Alamos County taken out of the New Mexico averages!!), no further nuclear waste can be placed at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant.

New Mexico needs to begin to share the benefits of any economic benefits of nuclear projects at a statewide level - not in small pockets of activity. ❖ The Federal government could provide ❖ every New Mexico citizen a check for \$5000 every year until we reach the above status (20% from the bottom). ❖ This would help repair the cumulative ❖ social and economic injustices that have been done in the past 100 years or so.

LESSER PRAIRIE CHICKEN

Last November, the Lesser Prairie Chicken was classified as endangered. ❖ This struggling avian species is being impacted by the cumulative impacts of livestock grazing, oil well production, and other human activities.

The habitat for this endangered species is immediately adjacent to the east side of WIPP. ❖ Chances are reasonable that some of the habitat where WIPP was originally built, was also habitat for this species. ❖ Any expansion of WIPP that disturbs the surface landscapes has the potential to adversely affect this species. ❖ In addition, noise, dust and other pollutants can leave the site of WIPP and also cause adverse impacts. ❖ Consideration needs to be given to the cumulative impacts of the oil industry (which has been in the area for 100 years) and the impacts of WIPP and other human activities.

A proposed ❖ nuclear waste dump is located halfway between Carlsbad and Hobbs. ❖ This HOLTEC proposal will affect the same small island of critical habitat for this endangered species. ❖ Even the Andrews waste dump that is supposedly in Texas appears to be moving earth material within New Mexico, potential affecting habitat in the region.

Impacts to the Lesser Prairie Chicken must consider the additive impact of multiple surrounding activities. ❖ In February, the U. S. Court of ❖ Appeals for the Tenth Circuit decided a case concerning Chaco Canyon National Monument . ❖ The ❖ court apparently decided cumulative impacts must be considered. ❖ Oil drilling was determined to contribute ❖ to adverse cumulative impacts. (Link to decision - <https://westernlaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/2023.02.01-Chaco-2.0-Final-Decision.pdf>)

I suggest the following requirement:

No increases in nuclear waste storage should be allowed until the Lesser Prairie Chicken becomes delisted.

Thank you again.