

Patricia Cardona

My name is Patricia Cardona, I am a New Mexican Resident and work on environmental issues related to Radioactive Waste as well as wildlife and energy issues. I am also the policy analyst for Southwest Alliance for A Safe Future (SAFE), which represents approximately 70 individuals and organizations that worked hard to get SB 53 passed this last legislative session. We are increasingly alarmed at the failure of the Department of Energy's inability to build new permanent repositories for storage of radioactive waste on a permanent basis.

The expansion of WIPP is of great concern because of the fact that this site was to be closed in 2024 under the original agreement. There has been no other United States permanent geological repositories developed other than the one in New Mexico. The nuclear industry has targeted NM for a consolidated storage site for "spent fuel" also categorized as "high level waste". The WIPP expansion is not needed to serve the original purpose of WIPP. The decommissioning of the approximately 98 existing nuclear power plants has started and nuclear waste companies are looking for storage sites. WIPP is the only national geological repository as required by federal law for storage of high level waste. This makes expansion alarming. The containers for storing high level nuclear waste are vulnerable to salt corrosion. The pressures from other states to find a geological repository could result in WIPP becoming the only place to store the countries waste.

The decommissioning sites have over 30 million spent fuel rods with highly radioactive matter for which they need to find storage. Centralized storage is not only a national security issue but placement of more nuclear waste in New Mexico will make us targets for terrorist attacks whether domestic or foreign origin.

In addition there are other contamination issues- there are millions of gallons of water at each nuclear power plant that need storage because it is radioactive. In addition, to all the concrete, wiring, motors, soil, office equipment, workers clothing that need to be isolated from contact with living matter. Reclassifying the WIPP Waste to facilitate storage of high-level waste is of great concern. There is no consent when the rules are changing or ignored especially safety which has already happened. There is no practice that measures the cumulative impacts of radiation in NM at the present time nor cumulative impacts from adding more radioactive waste which the WIPP expansion requires.

None of the nuclear power plants are offering to store their own high- level and medium level nuclear waste generated during the decommissioning process, nor is the DOE providing the financial incentive to decommissioning nuclear power plant owners for storing the waste close to the point of generation where it is currently stored. This keeps NM with a target on the back of its residents.

The Department of Energy can consolidate spent fuel and transuranic waste into one category like "high-level" waste and make the WIPP site a storage site for spent fuel rods and all other nuclear waste by continually expanding the site. The associated risk of transporting the waste is high risk. We need a full hearing on this matter and full disclosure from DOE.