

Comments concerning the waste isolation PILOT plant (wiPp) – Broken Promises

In the 1980s I lived in Michigan. I have two memories of New Mexico during that period. First, the horrible prison riot in Santa Fe. I heard about it on NPR late one afternoon. Second, I heard about the state-wide effort to stop construction of the WIPP. My family and I moved to New Mexico in 1994.

Now 40+ years later, the WIPP is an ever present horrific, festering scab on the soul of New Mexicans.

The DOE made a **COVENANT** with the people of New Mexico that in exchange for a set size (6.2 million cubic feet) and date, TRU waste could be deposited at the WIPP. The time set for closing the WIPP is 2024. It is apparent the people now in charge of the NNSA and DOE have no intent of complying with that commitment. Forty years is more than sufficient time to locate and build other facilities to store the TRU waste in similar suitable geologic strata around the United States.

Now the NNSA has no plan to close the WIPP. Instead, it plans to expand the facility capacity, keep it open indefinitely, and dump surplus (waste) plutonium in the facility. In essence, it has opened the facility to all kinds of nuclear weapons waste. The Hanford Site certainly wants to dump its waste there.

The WIPP has proven to be unsafe – with no consequences to the various management teams. Two preventable accidents occurred in the facility with one month in February 2014. The second explosion and fire cost billions of dollars and shut down the facility for three years. The first was poor maintenance of a salt hauler. What was the punishment for this? The management company was given a year-end bonus. The second event was much more serious. LANL changed its use of inorganic kitty litter to organic kitty litter! The change was approved up the LANL management ladder with no thought of the consequences. Apparently LANL, the WIPP, NNSA, and DOE managements did not evaluate the impact of this “minor” change. Sloppy. Consequences? Apparently, none on these management teams.

LANL legacy waste remains buried on the Los Alamos mesa. Why wasn't disposing of this waste a priority for burial at the WIPP? I understand the current plan is to - figuratively and literally - cover up this legacy waste on-site and only ship new plutonium pit waste to the WIPP. This is a despicable history. Why wasn't a main priority of the WIPP facility to remove this LANL waste?

Now the NNSA has a plan – already implemented – to ship “surplus” plutonium and other unsanctioned waste to the WIPP. There is no consensus this plan should be approved. There seem to be no limits to what the DOE wants to dump there including high level waste, commercial waste, and new plutonium waste. It is apparent the DOE, NNSA, and other agencies are *desperate* to use the WIPP as their only disposal site.

I ask our New Mexico Environment Department and governor find the legal basis to shut down the WIPP in 2024 and prevent the new plutonium waste from further being shipped to the WIPP. The health and welfare of our citizenry depend on your efforts! We must force the DOE to keep the Covenant it made with the people of New Mexico.

Sincerely,

Willard Hunter

Willard Hunter
Veterans For Peace – Albuquerque
Progressive Democrats of America – End Wars and Occupations Committee