

1600 Brae Street, Unit A  
Santa Fe, NM 87505

June 8, 2026

Megan McLean, WIPP Program Manager  
Hazardous Waste Bureau - New Mexico Environment Department  
2905 Rodeo Park Drive East, Building 1  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87505-6303

Dear Ms. McLean:

I am writing to express my support of the NMED's proposed agency-initiated modifications on the draft Hazardous Waste Facility Permit for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in Carlsbad, NM (EPA Identification Number NM4890139088-TSDF). I encourage NMED to continue holding the DOE accountable for compliance with state regulation and safer storage of toxic nuclear waste.

New Mexico has long been treated as a sacrifice zone, where extensive collateral damage to people and environment from military activities is normalized. This is unjust and abhorrent. The Department of Energy (DOE) and Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) have both legal and ethical responsibilities to clean up existing waste and minimize risks to humans and the environment before embarking on any new waste production. As per the fact sheet published by NMED, the state has determined that the DOE is out of compliance with permit conditions regarding waste disposal. The state has the authority to modify or revoke permits to produce waste if activities pose significant health risks. The NMED's proposed modification reinforces that DOE's priority should be to "emplace legacy waste and reduce the risk of LANL legacy waste during the current permit term" and indicates measures on how that should be done to ensure compliance ([Waste Isolation Pilot Plant](#)). I support the permit modifications and urge the state to revoke the permit as soon as possible should the DOE continue to be out of compliance.

I support the NMED's proposed Permit modifications to ensure more public input and reporting mechanisms, as well as metrics to ensure DOE stores legacy waste in a safer manner. In particular, I support the requirement to move and emplace waste currently stored aboveground in Area G by July 1, 2028. The current storage method is insufficient and poses great risks due to its location in an area that has been marked by frequent wildfires and will continue to be in an active wildfire zone (<https://www.burythebarrels.org/copy-of-lanl-fire-map>). According to recent data published by the US Drought Monitor (see image below), as of May 2026 all of the state of New Mexico is experiencing at least some level of drought, with the area where LANL is located

classified as D2:Severe drought

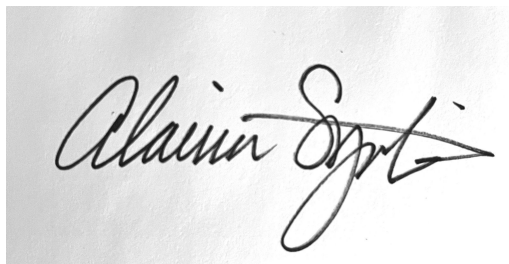
(<https://www.nifc.gov/sites/default/files/NICC/2-Predictive%20Services/Outlooks/NSWF%20-%20Potential%20Outlook/2026/June/usdm.png>). There is particularly high wildfire danger at the start of the season this month due to this year's abysmal snow pack and early lightning (<https://sourcenm.com/2026/06/01/new-mexico-has-unusually-active-start-to-wildfire-season/>). While conditions are expected to improve later this season, climate models indicate that wildfire danger will continue to increase due to rising temperatures and drier conditions. Therefore, it is urgent that the DOE find safer methods to store existing legacy waste before it is too late.

I currently work as an educator at a school located on the Pueblo de Cochiti, a tribal nation about 10 miles directly downstream from LANL and a community that has been heavily impacted by area wildfires and post-fire flooding, including the 2000 Cerro Grande Fire, the 2011 Las Conchas Fire and the 2022 Cerro Pelado Fire (<https://nmfireviewer.org/>). According to data published by Nuclear Watch New Mexico, the community has also been impacted by contamination caused by LANL activities ([https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local\\_news/watchdog-group-says-lanl-data-shows-widespread-plutonium-migration/article\\_44e7bbba-01c5-11ef-96ee-d7f38539894e.html](https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/watchdog-group-says-lanl-data-shows-widespread-plutonium-migration/article_44e7bbba-01c5-11ef-96ee-d7f38539894e.html)); see also diagram below. Cochiti would be at grave risk once more if a wildfire were to occur in the area; sacred sites and cultural landscapes have already been irrevocably harmed. Prioritizing legacy waste first and instituting a timeline and reporting requirements holds LANL accountable for cleaning up the mess it has already made. The best action to take, however, is to stop creating toxic waste in the first place.

The WIPP NMED AIM Draft Permit represents a good faith effort on the part of the state to use its regulatory power to hold the DOE accountable, and I support the inclusion of measurable metrics that promote greater transparency and follow-through for LANL. I encourage the NMED to continue its work in this area and to go further in revoking the permit if necessary. I have included links to the sources referenced in this comment where they cannot be included in the document itself.

Thank you for your time and efforts regarding this issue.

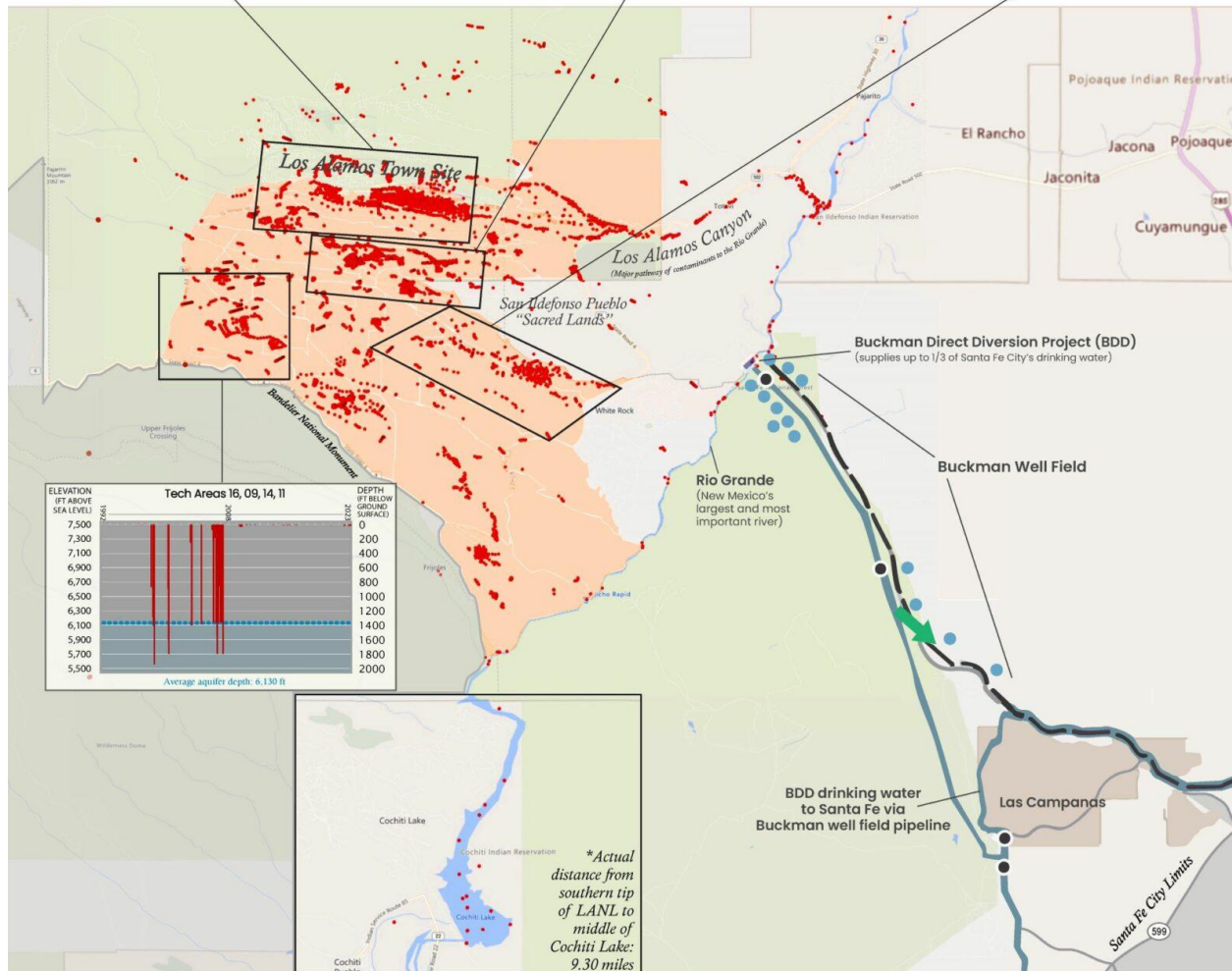
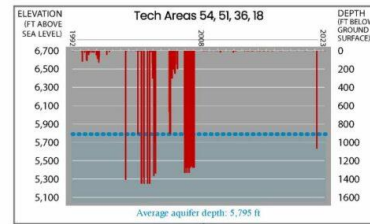
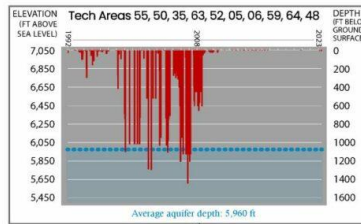
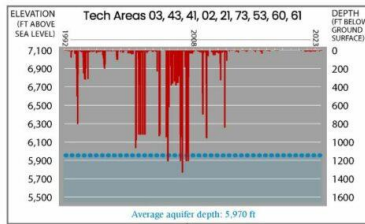
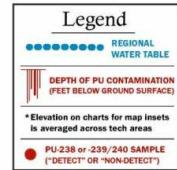
Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Alaina Szostkowski". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the last letter of the last name.

Alaina Szostkowski

# Plutonium Sampling at the Los Alamos Lab Demonstrating Contaminant Migration to the Rio Grande and Groundwater

ALL DATA FROM LANL'S INTELLUS DATABASE [www.intellusnm.com](http://www.intellusnm.com)



View an interactive, full digital version of this map at [nukewatch.org/issues/lanl-cleanup](http://nukewatch.org/issues/lanl-cleanup)

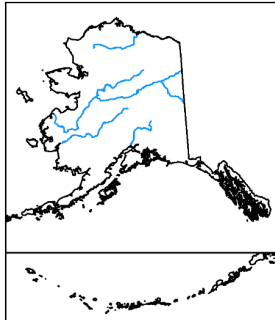
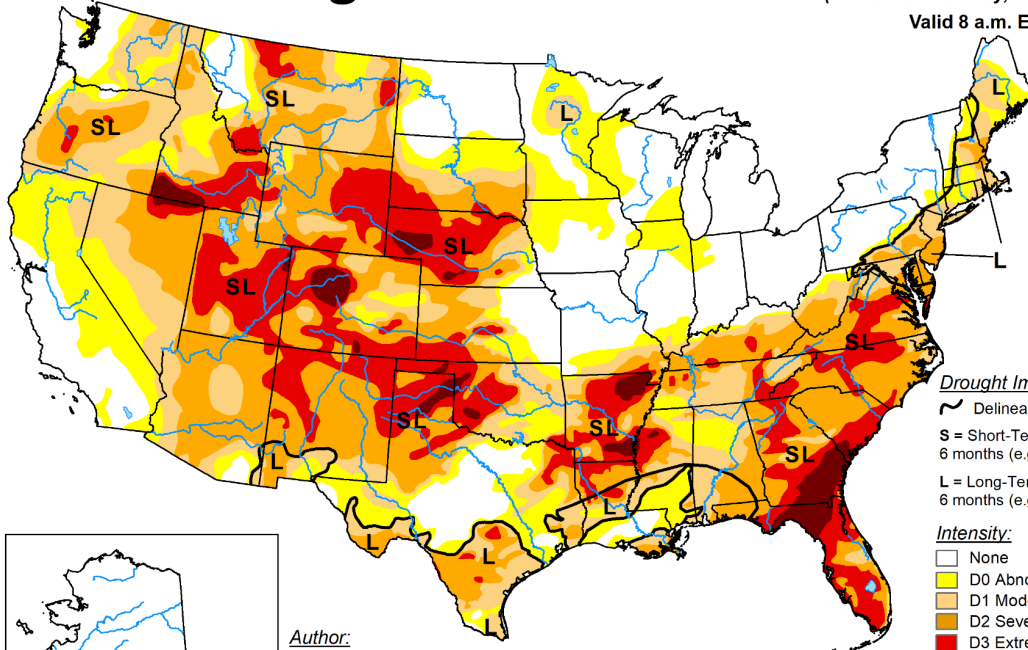
@nukewatchnm | NukeWatch.NM | @nukewatchnm

# U.S. Drought Monitor

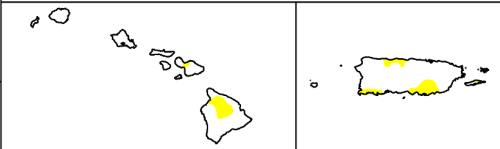
May 26, 2026

(Released Thursday, May. 28, 2026)

Valid 8 a.m. EDT



Author:  
Adam Allgood  
NOAA/NWS/NCEP/CPC



## Drought Impact Types:

~ Delineates dominant impacts

S = Short-Term, typically less than 6 months (e.g. agriculture, grasslands)

L = Long-Term, typically greater than 6 months (e.g. hydrology, ecology)

## Intensity:

- None
- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Moderate Drought
- D2 Severe Drought
- D3 Extreme Drought
- D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>



[droughtmonitor.unl.edu](https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu)