

Jean Stevens

To whom it may concern,

I'm writing in support of the WIPP Agency-Initiated Modification Draft Permit as proposed by NMED for the

following reasons:

DOE's irresponsible storage of legacy waste threatens the health and safety of people and their property in

several states.

The proposed permit modifications are needed because DOE is not fulfilling its legal agreements.

I am also including this letter to the editor, Santa Fe New Mexican, of which I am in complete agreement:

"here are two opposing views whether the New Mexico Environment Department should modify the permit that allows the Department of Energy to operate the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant. By modifying the permit, the state NMED forces the federal DOE to do what it always agreed to, move Cold War "legacy" waste to WIPP, where it's safer underground. DOE failed to move this waste because it improperly handled it when it was made. It will, therefore, take extra time, workers, and equipment to get it ready to ship to WIPP.

The two sides seem to be divided by geography, north vs south, and whether the federal or state government should decide what's best for New Mexico.

Northerners worry about their health, property values, and economy. They want the nuclear waste made by the feds in the 1950s at Los Alamos National Labs moved from the forest, where it is currently stored in fabric tents in a wildfire zone. Radioactive waste vaporized in a wildfire is spread on winds, permanently contaminating property and people. Northerners, closer to the waste in the forest, want it shipped to WIPP now. They believe WIPP is needed and expected it to go there decades ago. Moving legacy waste from LANL and other labs remains the original mission of WIPP, one which DOE has failed for LANL. Northerners think the state does a better job of protecting New Mexicans than the feds on this issue.

The southern part of NM is worried it will lose jobs and WIPP. The majority of comments opposing the permit modification are from out-of-state union workers and most say, "based on the historically low number of shipments [of legacy waste from the Cold War] received from LANL," it will be almost impossible to move it to WIPP without people losing jobs. The first part of this argument is exactly why people support the permit modifications: the number of shipments IS historically low. It shouldn't be. If DOE were doing what it agreed to, LANL legacy waste would have high numbers of shipments, now be in WIPP, and no longer a risk. Some who oppose the change have even claimed it is a "political hit job" by the outgoing administration. They accuse northern folks of seeing no use for WIPP, despite their desperate calls to move it out of the forest and into the underground repository. Southerners blame the state and think the feds will better protect them.

In reality, DOE failed New Mexico. It's unfortunate it has to be forced to keep New Mexicans safe from the waste it created here, but that's why the permit must be changed.

The modifications will protect New Mexicans all over the state. A radiation release, likely where the waste is now, would devastate the whole state by:

Killing 50% of the nearby population within 30 days

Causing astronomical rates of cancers further from the release (Downwinders show the feds don't reimburse health costs due to radiation)

Bringing property values down to zero (Downwinders show the feds don't reimburse property loss due to radiation)

Permanent economic ruin for agriculture, ranching, recreation, etc. on land made useless for 500,000 years, destroying the tax base for the state.

Disasters can be avoided and this one must because it will be permanent. Changing the permit moves the LANL legacy waste, not in decades, but now. DOE's progress will be tracked and consequences applied if DOE continues to fail. New Mexico is standing up FOR us and TO the feds."

Please save New Mexicans from this insane catastrophe by not moving the nuke waste ASAP before another 220,000 acres blaze (2022 Mora region fire) overtakes LANL and makes the Land of Enchantment into the Land of Disenchanted Ghosts!

Sincerely,

Jean Stevens, MFA