

June 17, 2026

New Mexico Environment Department
Hazardous Waste Bureau
2905 Rodeo Park Drive East, Building 1
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87505

New Mexico Environment Department
Office of Public Facilitation / Hearing Clerk
1190 St. Francis Drive, Suite S-2102
Santa Fe, NM 87505

RE: Joint Regional Public Comment in Opposition to Proposed WIPP Permit Modification

Dear Cabinet Secretary Kenney and NMED Leadership,

On behalf of the **Carlsbad Department of Development (CDOD)**, **Economic Development Corporation of Lea County (EDCLC)**, **Lovington Economic Development Corporation (LEDC)**, and **Roswell-Chaves County Economic Development Corporation (RCCEDC)**, we submit this **joint letter in strong opposition to the proposed permit modification for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP)**.

As the leading economic development organizations representing Southeast New Mexico and the greater regional economy, we are deeply concerned that the proposed changes threaten one of the most strategically important federal assets in our state and nation.

For more than two decades, WIPP has served as a national model for safe, secure, and effective transuranic waste disposal while simultaneously generating substantial economic benefits for New Mexico communities. WIPP's continued operational efficiency supports thousands of jobs, regional business growth, workforce development, tax revenues, infrastructure investment, and broader economic diversification across Eddy, Lea, Chaves, and surrounding counties.

The proposed permit modification introduces restrictive operational mandates that could significantly hinder WIPP's flexibility and long-term effectiveness, including:

- Shipment prioritization requirements that could disrupt national cleanup coordination
- Mandatory waste volume quotas favoring specific sites
- Potential interruption of shipments from other DOE facilities
- Increased operational inefficiencies and regulatory burdens

These changes create unnecessary uncertainty for one of Southeast New Mexico's largest and most reliable economic drivers.

The broader consequences to our region may include:

- Reduced employment stability for high-paying technical and skilled labor positions
- Negative impacts on supporting industries, contractors, suppliers, and small businesses
- Decreased investor confidence in Southeast New Mexico's long-term industrial stability
- Slower momentum for nuclear-related workforce and infrastructure development
- Potential setbacks to regional economic diversification efforts tied to energy, advanced manufacturing, and national security sectors

For our communities, WIPP is not an isolated facility. It is part of an interconnected economic ecosystem that supports families, strengthens public services, and enhances the resilience of our entire regional economy.

WIPP remains the nation's only operational deep geologic repository for defense-generated transuranic waste. Restricting its operational capacity could:

- Delay cleanup at federal sites nationwide
- Increase environmental and security risks
- Escalate long-term taxpayer costs
- Undermine federal defense cleanup obligations
- Weaken America's national security infrastructure

At a time when domestic energy security, defense readiness, and infrastructure reliability are paramount, operational restrictions on WIPP could have far-reaching consequences well beyond New Mexico.

Our region has consistently demonstrated that economic growth, public safety, environmental responsibility, and national service can coexist successfully. Southeast New Mexico has built a specialized workforce, community support structure, and industrial base that make it uniquely capable of hosting and supporting critical national missions like WIPP.

This permit modification risks destabilizing that success.

We strongly urge NMED to reject or substantially revise the proposed permit changes to ensure:

- **WIPP maintains operational flexibility**
- **Federal cleanup missions remain uninterrupted**
- **Regional jobs and economic stability are protected**
- **Regulatory decisions remain grounded in science, safety, and practical operations**
- **Southeast New Mexico's role as a strategic national asset is preserved**

Our organizations stand united in support of policies that protect both our communities and America's long-term environmental and national security objectives.

WIPP's success is not only a Southeast New Mexico success story, but also a national success story. We urge NMED not to jeopardize that legacy.

Sincerely,

Kristen Gamboa

Executive Director

Carlsbad Department of Development (CDOD)



Jennifer Grassham

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Economic Development Corporation of Lea County



Evelyn Holguin

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