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## **Public Comment**

### **NMED Agency Initiated Modification Draft Permit Regarding the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant**

May 4, 2026

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Southeast New Mexico College (SENM)

SENM proudly serves the students and families of Eddy County and the surrounding region. Our mission is to provide access to quality higher education and workforce training that strengthens our communities. That mission is closely connected to the strength of our local economy.

The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) is not only an asset that supports national security and the safe disposal of transuranic waste; it is the economic foundation of Eddy County. It provides stable, high-quality jobs, supports local businesses, and contributes to the public infrastructure our students and families rely on every day.

Our concern with the proposed permit modification is rooted in its potential impact on students. Limitations on WIPP's operational capacity mean fewer pathways for our graduates, fewer internships, fewer training partnerships, and fewer reasons for students to stay and build their futures here. The region we serve cannot thrive when the economic foundation is weakened.

Governor Lujan Grisham set a bold goal for New Mexico to lead the nation in education. SENM is committed to that vision, and a stable local economy that supports our students and their families is essential. Any unnecessary limitation to WIPP's operational capacity would diminish the benefits for our region, our state, and the nation as a whole.

We urge NMED to consider the full economic consequences of this proposed amendment and to preserve WIPP's ability to carry out its mission. Responsible environmental stewardship and a strong regional economy are not competing priorities — they are both essential to the future of New Mexico.

On behalf of SENM — our students, faculty, and the communities we serve — we respectfully ask you to stand with Eddy County. Support WIPP's mission. Protect the economic stability that allows our community, and our college, to thrive.

Furthermore, as a citizen of New Mexico and the United States who has read the proposal, I understand the goal of NMED to protect this and future generations from unnecessary exposure to environmental hazards. I believe a change that incentivizes the processing and preparation of waste currently in New Mexico for emplacement at WIPP—with the proposed requirements included in the amendment serving

as the penalty if that does not occur—would be a more productive path forward. The sooner all transuranic waste is safely entombed, the better for Eddy County, the state, and the nation.

To this end, I ask for a 60-day extension so that technical experts, stakeholders, and the public can determine a science-based recommendation that secures the above, as well as a public hearing by the New Mexico Environment Department to gather input from all parties. It is through such a dialogue with key communities and stakeholders that the best solution will be determined.