

Jean Nichols

I am writing in support of the WIPP Agency-initiated Modification Draft Permit. DOE has made it clear that it will never fulfill its agreements unless guided to do so. The modifications clearly and concisely give DOE step-by-step instructions on how to fulfill its commitments. They allow NMED to measure and track DOE's progress, which is necessary in this time of shifting priorities and political changes. DOE should have no problem with this since it has previously agreed to prioritize the legacy waste at LANL. NMED has also wisely set a penalty if DOE fails to deliver on its mission. It's unfortunate that this is required, but the current political

environment has shown a culture of deregulation, relaxed safety standards and a rush to act without a focus on common sense and possible consequences.

NMED has taken this remedial action because the safety of New Mexico citizens is in danger. Waste from the original Manhattan Project is still being stored in unsafe conditions in an area that has been endangered by multiple wildfires and also sits on a known seismic fault. We are asking that this waste be cleaned up and buried at WIPP before any new waste is created. WIPP was built for this purpose and as the name states, was to be a pilot project and not the one and only nuclear waste depository. DOE has shown it is unwilling to take the most basic protections for New Mexico's land, property, economy, and physical health. The legacy waste sits in tents on a mesa in a known wildfire zone. Several fires have come very close. Had they ignited the waste, it would create an environmental disaster that couldn't be recovered from. It hasn't happened yet and can be avoided. NMED is taking the steps that are necessary to solve this problem before it becomes one that can't be solved.

Thanks for standing up for New Mexico's health and security with this modified draft permit. I live in the Peñasco area which is 40 miles directly downwind of Los Alamos, as demonstrated by the smoke during the Cerro Grande fire. Studies of our soil and dust and fruit after the fire, came up with disturbing results, too high in Strontium 90, Beryllium, and other toxins that could only have come from the lab. I can only imagine what our situation would have been if the waste in tents had been overtaken by the fire.

Please continue to protect us by passing and enforcing this modified draft permit. We commend and thank you for this action.

Sincerely,

Jean Nichols