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For Immediate Release

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## **Environment Department Issues Notice for Public Comment on Draft Hazardous Waste Permit for Waste Isolation Pilot Plant**

(Santa Fe, NM) – The New Mexico Environment Department today released for public comment a draft hazardous waste facility permit for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant near Carlsbad.

The draft permit is a renewal of the existing permit, which has been in effect since 1999.

WIPP is authorized by the U.S. Congress to dispose of transuranic radioactive waste materials generated by the federal government and its contractors through the development and manufacture of nuclear weapons, and other defense activities related to the nation's nuclear weapons arsenal.

The department issued a hazardous waste facility permit to WIPP in 1999 that allows the facility to dispose of transuranic mixed waste containers 2,150 feet below ground. The waste is stored in a mined geologic repository within the Salado Formation, and geologic unit of salt. The containers of waste must undergo complete waste characterization by the sites that generate or store the waste, in compliance with requirements of the permit prior to disposal. WIPP is permitted to accept contact-handled TRU waste containers with a surface dose of less than 200 millirem per hour that may be handled directly by humans. The facility can also accept remote-handled TRU waste containers with a surface dose of 200 millirem or greater that must be handled either remotely or with sufficient shielding to reduce the effective dose to humans.

WIPP is located north of Jal Highway or N.M. 128 in Eddy County, approximately 26 miles east of Carlsbad. The U.S. Department of Energy's Carlsbad Field Office owns and operates the WIPP Facility, and Washington TRU Solutions LLC. co-operates the Facility. Those entities are collectively referred to as "Permittees" or "WIPP" in the draft Permit.

**WHAT:** NMED invites the public to submit written comments on the draft permit during a 60-day public comment period that ends at 5 p.m. MDT on June 28. Members of the public may submit to NMED written comments on the draft permit at any time during the public comment period. The department will issue a final decision on the permit after considering all written comments received from the public. NMED will schedule a hearing, if requested and granted, to take place after the end of the public comment period.

**WHEN:** Written comments and requests for a public hearing will be accepted until 5 p.m., June 28.

**WHERE:** The draft Permit and the administrative record may be reviewed from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday at the NMED Hazardous Waste Bureau at 2905 Rodeo Park Drive East, Building 1, Santa Fe, NM 87505-6303. Procedures for submitting written comments, requests for a public hearing, and reviewing or obtaining a copy of the draft Permit are also available at <http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/wipp/index.html>.

For more information, call Marissa Stone Bardino at (505) 827-0314 or (505) 231-0475.

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