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## **Environment Department Approves Renewal of WIPP Groundwater Discharge Permit**

(Santa Fe, NM) – The New Mexico Environment Department today approved a five-year groundwater discharge permit renewal and modification for the U.S. Department of Energy’s Waste Isolation Pilot Plant east of Carlsbad.

The permit, which will be valid until 2013, allows for the discharge of sewage effluent, impacted storm water and nonhazardous wastewaters from the facility to synthetically lined impoundments.

“The permit renewal reflects the continuing efforts between us, DOE and WIPP to protect the environment,” said New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry. “We are confident this is a strong permit that will protect residents and the area’s natural resources.”

The department did not receive requests from citizens for a public hearing on the permit.

The permit will allow for the discharge of up to 23,000 gallons per day (gpd) of sewage effluent, up to 150,000 gpd of brine, purge waters and miscellaneous non-hazardous wastewaters. In addition, it will allow for a designed flow of 4,224,835 gpd of storm water runoff from salt storage areas based on a 24-hour, 25-year storm event. Modifications to the discharge permit primarily include changes in some of the monitoring requirements and increases in allowable discharge volumes to some of the synthetically lined impoundments. The depth to groundwater at the facility is about 164 feet and has a total dissolved solids concentration of approximately 3,400 milligrams per liter.

The Environment Department first approved a groundwater discharge permit for WIPP in January 16, 1992.

The permit imposes New Mexico Water Quality Act and Water Quality Control Commission Regulations to control the discharge of water contaminants from WIPP to protect groundwater and surface water.

WIPP, a hazardous and radioactive waste disposal facility operated by DOE, lies in a bedded salt formation 2,150 feet below ground. WIPP is about 26 miles east of Carlsbad.

For more information, call Marissa Stone at (505) 827-0314.