



BILL RICHARDSON
GOVERNOR

State of New Mexico
ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT
Office of the Secretary
Harold Runnels Building
1190 St. Francis Drive, P.O. Box 26110
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502-6110
Telephone (505) 827-2855
Fax (505) 827-2836



RON CURRY
SECRETARY

CINDY PADILLA
ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY

May 9, 2006
Immediate Release

Contact: Adam Rankin, NMED Communications Director
Phone: (505) 827-0314

**Agreement Reached on Waste Isolation Pilot Plant Permit;
Hearing Scheduled for May 31**

(Santa Fe, NM) — The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) has concluded negotiations on the draft permit for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP), which was issued for public comment on November 23, 2005.

The negotiations occurred over a two-month span starting March 9, 2006, and were intended to resolve concerns raised over the draft permit by the several parties that requested a hearing. Although the hearing will go on as scheduled, the negotiations culminated in several important agreements between the participants.

“I would like to recognize the hard work and commitment to this process on the part of everyone involved in these negotiations,” NMED Acting Deputy Secretary Cindy Padilla said. “These issues are contentious and the negotiations were arduous, but under the direction of James Bearzi, the Department’s Hazardous Waste Bureau Chief, the parties worked well together to make these important agreements. That said, a final decision won’t be made until all public comments have been considered and the hearing is complete.”

Participants in the negotiations included NMED; the WIPP permittees (the U.S. Department of Energy, the owner and co-operator of WIPP, and Washington TRU Solutions, LLC, the co-operator of WIPP); Southwest Research and Information Center (SRIC); Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety (CCNS); Citizens for Alternatives to Radioactive Dumping (CARD); the New Mexico Attorney General’s Office (AGO); and others who participated by phone.

As a result of the negotiations during these meetings, NMED, the Permittees, the AGO, and SRIC have agreed to changes to the Draft Permit related to waste characterization, the volume of waste stored and disposed of at WIPP, the acceptance of remote-handled waste, and expanded public notification of specific permit activities. CCNS and CARD agreed to some of these changes, but preserved their rights to challenge specific areas of disagreement at the public hearing.

NMED has afforded members of the public – regardless of whether or not they have participated before – an additional opportunity to participate in this negotiation process. Instructions on how to participate were mailed to all persons and entities that commented on the original draft permit. The

-more-

May 9, 2006
Agreement Reached on WIPP Permit

instructions may also be found on NMED's website at <http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/wipp/>. A draft of NMED's proposed permit modification, a detailed fact sheet, and the agreement reached today are also available on the website.

The public hearing on the November 23, 2005 Draft Permit will convene at 9:00 a.m. on May 31 at the Stevens Inn in Carlsbad, and will continue in Carlsbad through 5 p.m. on June 6. Public comment will be taken each day (except June 4) at 11:30 a.m. and 3:00 p.m., and at 7:00 p.m. on May 31, June 1, 2, and 3. The hearing will reconvene in Santa Fe at the Santa Fe Community College Board Room (Room 223) on June 7, and continue through June 9 or until all people have been afforded an adequate opportunity to present comment. Public comment will be taken on June 7 and 8 at 6:00 p.m., and on June 8 and 9 at 11:30 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

For further information, contact Adam Rankin, NMED Communications Director, at (505) 827-0314.

###