September 19, 2019

infocntr@wipp.ws

Mr. Bobby St. John

WIPP Information Center

P. O. Box 2078

Carlsbad, NM  88221

Re:    Comments about the Proposed Scope of the Hazardous Waste Facility Permit
        Ten-Year Renewal Application for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP)

Dear Mr. St. John:

Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety (CCNS) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments about the proposed scope of the hazardous waste facility permit ten-year renewal application for WIPP.

CCNS was disappointed the Permittees did not provide paper handouts of the powerpoint at the September 12, 2019 public meeting in Santa Fe.  We are pleased that the Permittees did, upon CCNS's request on September 17, 2019, post the powerpoint to the WIPP website. We suggest that in the future powerpoint presentations be promptly posted on the WIPP website and made available at public meetings.

CCNS is disappointed the Permittees, U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and Nuclear Waste Partnership, LLC, are delaying the submittal of their application until March 2020, which is required to be submitted by July 3, 2020.  Nevertheless, Permittees have known about the public’s concerns about these delays for a long time based on written comments and comments made at the town halls and public meetings. CCNS urges WIPP to hold the required pre-application meetings before Thanksgiving 2019 and submit the application by no later than early January 2020. Otherwise, the public will be disadvantaged by a condensed schedule. The renewal process takes time to prepare informed public comments, as well as to prepare for the inevitable negotiations and public hearing. The last renewal in the 2009-2010 time frame took 21 months – we are already behind schedule – all to the detriment of the public.

Specifically, CCNS has stated repeatedly that because both the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) and WIPP facility permits – both located in New Mexico - are up for renewal in 2020, DOE Headquarters needs to plan ahead so that the public has the necessary time to review and provide informed public comments, as well as participate in negotiations and public hearings, about both important permits – all before the permits expire at the end of 2020. We understand that LANL will submit their application also in March 2020.

Additional comments:

1. CCNS opposes the extension of the disposal phase and closure date to 2052. Attachments G and H1.
2. CCNS remains concerned about the number of proposed permit modification requests (PMRs) that are waiting in the wings for the permit renewal to be issued by the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED). These include existing Class 3 PMRs for the above-ground storage facility and excluded wastes. Others include the new shaft; Panel 10 (2019), Panel 11(fall 2020), and perhaps others; and more rooms.
3. CCNS requests Permittees promptly withdraw the above-ground storage facility and excluded wastes Class 3 PMRs before the renewal application is submitted.
4. CCNS requests DOE define the following terms: “clarifications,” “streamline,” “streamlining,” “updates,” and “enhancement” in their submittals.
5. We also request Permittees identify the types of edits used in the renewal application.
6. We are concerned about the removal of the preventative maintenance details for the RH equipment in Attachment E and look forward to reading the basis for such changes in the renewal application.
7. The permit renewal must include exposure information as required by 40 CFR §§ 270.10 (j) and (k), as it has since the WIPP permit process began decades ago. The Permittees must be required to use a 50-mile radius, as required by the National Environment Policy Act (NEPA), in all exposure analyses.

To reiterate our September 12, 2019 comments, CCNS requests that a color paper copy of the permit application be provided to us when the permit renewal application is submitted to the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED).

Thank you for your careful consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

cc: John Kieling, NMED, at John.Kieling@state.nm.us

Ricardo Maestas, NMED, at Ricardo.Maestas@state.nm.us