February \_\_\_\_\_, 2020

Ricardo Maestas, WIPP Program Manager

New Mexico Environment Department

2905 Rodeo Park Drive East, Building 1

Santa Fe, NM 87505

Re: Request for NMED to Use Its Authority to:

* Not change the 2024 date to stop waste disposal in the WIPP Permit
* Not allow the proposed new shaft and other facility expansions
* Enforce the legal limits for the amount and types of waste, including eliminating the “Volume of Record” from the WIPP Permit

Dear Mr. Maestas:

Since the 1970s when the Waste Isolation **Pilot** Plant (WIPP) was proposed, there have been concerns that the “pilot” could be expanded to be much more. We are at that point.

As required by the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) hazardous waste permit, WIPP is scheduled to stop receiving waste and begin closing the facility in 2024. But the Department of Energy (DOE) wants NMED to renew that permit to allow the site to receive much more mixed chemical and transuranic (TRU – plutonium-contaminated) radioactive waste until 2052, or 2080, or … essentially forever.

NMED must renew the Permit so that New Mexico can regulate WIPP, but NMED does not have to approve the “Forever WIPP” dates.

DOE’s expansion plans include the mining of a new (fifth) shaft into the WIPP underground – 2,150 feet below ground surface. DOE has submitted a permit modification request and - without NMED acting on it – has awarded a $75 million contract to begin shaft construction before NMED and public review as required by the hazardous waste laws and regulations.

DOE also has other plans to expand WIPP for high-level radioactive waste from Hanford, Washington and other sites; commercial waste from West Valley, New York; weapons-grade plutonium from the Savannah River Site in South Carolina; 50 years or more of waste from building new nuclear weapons; and even to create a surface storage facility.

DOE is supposed to find additional waste sites for this waste. It has not done its job. DOE proposes expansion of WIPP that violates the legal requirements and is using a “Volume of Record” to increase the amount of waste allowed for disposal by about 30 percent.

As a New Mexican, I demand that NMED enforce the legal requirements and not approve DOE’s wishes for waste disposal for decades more and not allow the proposed expansions.

Sincerely,

Clearly print your name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Contact information: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_