

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRESS RELEASE

NEW MEXICANS SUPPORT GOVERNOR ACTING TO STOP WIPP EXPANSION

OVER 1,000 SIGNATORIES SEEK TO HALT PROPOSED INCREASE OF TRANSPORTATION OF NUCLEAR WASTES

WHAT: Press Conference to Urge Governor Michele Lujan Grisham to protect the public health and our environment by taking all necessary actions to **stop the expansion of the nuclear waste facility called the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in southeastern New Mexico.**

THE PETITION READS:

We oppose this nuclear waste expansion at WIPP because:

- The federal government's expansion plans would transport each shipment of deadly waste **past our homes twice**, over and over for **the rest of the century**.
- The plutonium **nuclear waste** in the WIPP expansion is a **different and more dangerous form**, will remain dangerous for hundreds of thousands of years, and endangers the health of my family and future generations.
- Unless New Mexico says **NO** to WIPP expansion, other disposal locations will not be developed, and WIPP will always be the only dump site, which is not fair. New Mexico never agreed to bear the burden of being the **only** site.
- The federal government's plans would expand the size of the nuclear weapons dump to **more than twice its current size** and more than is allowed.
- The federal government is not being transparent about expanding WIPP, even though it has clearly admitted its intention in published documents. By repeatedly refusing to discuss its plans with the public, most New Mexicans are not even aware of those plans.

We will strongly support our Governor taking all necessary actions, including denying permits for the piecemeal expansion.

Petitions delivered to Governor on March 1, 2022

WHERE: Outside East side of the Statehouse

WHEN: Tuesday, March 1, 2022, 11:30 am

WHO: County Commissioner Anna Hansen will be joined by advocates of Stop Forever WIPP, 285ALL, Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety, and Veterans for Peace

Today, New Mexican groups will present over a thousand signatures to Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham urging a halt of plans to transport more nuclear waste past our homes.

"I am deeply concerned about the transportation of nuclear weapons waste along our highways in New Mexico including I-40, US 285, State Routes 599 and 502. The potential risks to the health and public safety of our motorists and residents along these routes is substantial. The transport of this nuclear weapons waste will also impact 10 other states I-40 East from New Mexico to South Carolina and back along I-20 West from South Carolina to New Mexico. The waste that needs to go to WIPP needs to be from legacy waste at Los Alamos," said County Commissioner Anna Hansen.



The WIPP repository for nuclear weapons' waste has been operating for 23 of its 25-year permitted lifespan. It is scheduled to stop taking waste in 2024. Citizens on the transportation routes hope to see the end of current operations, which will stop disposing of the waste in two years. Continued transportation is a concern, especially since the explosion of a waste drum in 2014 that shut WIPP down for three years, could have happened en route instead of in the underground repository.

With the new, planned expansion that the Department of Energy (DOE) is quietly trying to put into place, it is obvious the federal government plans to have WIPP continue to accept new waste until 2080 and beyond—possibly forever. "This new plan," according to Cindy Weehler, "involves a more dangerous form of waste that WIPP is not authorized to accept. It will require WIPP to continue accepting waste for the decades spanning the rest of the century. This unsafe and poorly planned project puts New Mexicans and hundreds of thousands of other Americans in 11 states at risk."

Kathleen Sanchez, given Tewa Name of Wan Povi, is an Elder of San Ildefonso Pueblo and a founding mother of Tewa Women United. She states, "My greatest fear is that an increase in WIPP's mission would drastically increase the risk of transportation accidents. Two schools are located on NM 502 where most of our Pueblo children are in attendance. An accident [of inhaled plutonium] threatens the genocide of our future because children are most at risk." The waste will be in a more dangerous powdered form that, if accidentally released, is quickly carried on breezes and inhaled by anyone in the area. Inhaled plutonium causes cancer 100% of the time.

"This unsafe plan will multiply by thousands the number of shipments eventually planned for WIPP," explains Ed Hughs, a rancher in Quay County near the new route along I-40. "Farmland and ranch land would be permanently contaminated in the event of a serious accident and would need to be abandoned, according to a study by Sandia National Labs."

Further detailing protester's concerns, John Wilks of Veterans for Peace states, "DOE has refused to discuss their WIPP expansion plans publicly and their secretive implementation of this new mission makes it almost impossible for those who will be affected to know about it before it is in place. Many state legislators don't even know about this complete change in mission. The new expanded WIPP plan violates federal laws and agreements with the State of New Mexico. We insist the DOE abide by these laws."

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For more information:

Don Hancock, Southwest Research & Information Center, www.sric.org, 505-262-1862

Joni Arends, Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety, www.nuclear.active.org, 505-986-1973

References:

NOI for 34 MT Disposition, 121620, 6450-01-P, available online at federalregister.gov/d/2020-27674

Government Accountability Office, Nuclear Waste Disposal, Better Planning Needed to Avoid Potential Disruptions at Waste Isolation Pilot Plant <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-21-48.pdf>

The National Academies of Sciences 2020 Report, Review of the Department of Energy's Plans for Disposal of Surplus Plutonium in the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant <https://www.nap.edu/read/25593/chapter/1>

Site Restoration: Estimation of Attributable Costs from Plutonium-Dispersal Accidents, Sandia National Laboratories, 1996, SAND96-0957; <https://www.osti.gov/biblio/249283>

Stop Forever WIPP www.stopforeverwipp.org