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GROUPS SUE TO STOP WIPP EXPANSION

Today, Southwest Research and Information Center (SRIC) and Nuclear Watch New Mexico (NWNM) filed an appeal in the New Mexico Court of Appeals to overturn the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) approval of the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) Disposal Volume permit modification, which was issued on December 21, 2018.

The modification would allow expansion of WIPP's capacity by approximately 30 percent, and was issued over the repeated opposition of many New Mexico organizations.

“The modification is contrary to federal law, changes 20 years of practice in the WIPP Permit and operations, ignores the record in the proceeding including testimony in three days of hearings, and violates the New Mexico-DOE Consultation and Cooperation Agreement. The new Governor and NMED Secretary should not defend the unlawful modification in Court, but should overturn it and require that historic practices be followed,” said Don Hancock of SRIC.

WIPP is operated by the Department of Energy (DOE) and Nuclear Waste Partnership, its contractor. “Rather than pursuing the permit modification, the Department of Energy should comply with the legal capacity limit and begin a public process to explain what additional waste it wants to bring to WIPP and how it intends to address the loss of disposal space that cannot be used because of the significant underground contamination,” said Scott Kovac of NWNM.

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The SRIC-NWNM appeal is at: http://sric.org/nuclear/docs/20190117_notice-of-appeal-w-order.pdf

Objections from many organizations to the rushed permit process and the modification are at: http://sric.org/nuclear/docs/2018_08_20_Tongate_extension.pdf and http://sric.org/nuclear/docs/2018_09_20_Group-hearing-letter.pdf

NMED's information about the modification is at: <https://www.env.nm.gov/hazardous-waste/wipp/>

Other documents related to modification are at: http://sric.org/nuclear/wipp_permit.php