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GARY E. JOHNSON
GOVERNOR

June 17, 1998

(505) 827-3000

The Honorable Federico Pena
US Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20565

*Attn: Beate
for your files*

via facsimile: (202) 586-4403

Dear Secretary Pena:

This letter is in response to your letter of June 12, 1998, regarding the New Mexico Environment Department's "Notice of NMED Determination that LANL Waste Stream Has Been Inadequately Characterized."

I want to assure you that I am committed to seeing WIPP open. In my opinion, the WIPP geological repository is the best place for the permanent disposal of defense-related, transuranic waste. However, we have a statutory obligation to our citizens to be able to assure them that only non-mixed, transuranic waste is stored or disposed at WIPP prior to final approval of the hazardous waste permit.

We must be diligent in ensuring that all waste intended for storage or disposal at WIPP is characterized properly. At this time, we cannot be certain that the waste proposed for storage or disposal is not mixed with hazardous materials.

Environment Department staff are diligently working through the thousands of pages of characterization documentation provided to them by DOE, Department of Justice, and Los Alamos National Laboratory. I have been assured that DOE and LANL will cooperate fully and that, barring unforeseen circumstances, we expect to have an additional determination by July 10.

Again, I want to assure you that my staff will work in a cooperative manner to achieve the goal of opening WIPP.

Sincerely,

Gary E. Johnson

Gary E. Johnson
Governor

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