

2000  
MVF

# Los Alamos Monitor

\*\*\*\*\*-DIGIT 87501  
4516 12-16-99 W 11P 3S  
CCMS  
107 CIENEGA  
SANTA FE NM 87501

Vol. 37, No. 19

Thursday, January 27, 2000

## Legislators learn about WIPP progress

By DANICA TUTUSH  
Monitor Assistant Editor

SANTA FE — The first Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) shipment last year was a "true New Mexico accomplishment," Ines Triay told state legislators today in Santa Fe at annual legislative update on WIPP.

"There was pride in Los Alamos being the first site," added Triay, director for the Carlsbad Area Office of the Department of Energy.

Triay also noted that the historic event was 25 years in the making, as Carlsbad was originally chosen for exploratory work in 1974.

The first WIPP shipment took place on March 26, 1999, four days after the U.S. District Court lifted an injunction from 1992 that barred the shipments.

Triay credited the progress to the "true leadership of Carlsbad citizens who thought handling waste for the DOE was the right thing to do."

"The impact of this project is huge," Triay said. International circles are watching closely for examples from WIPP efforts, particularly with geological repositories, which

have also been a controversial issue. National and internationally, others are looking to WIPP to prove that it can be done safely, she said.

To date, WIPP has received 44 shipments, according to statistics provided by Triay: 17 from Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL); 23 from Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site (RFETS); and four from Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratories (INEEL).

Until now, only non-mixed transuranic waste has been shipped to WIPP under current Reserve Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) permitting. The project managers are focusing next on an RCRA Part B Permit that would allow shipments of mixed waste, which would have a radioactive component. To be issued such a permit, public hearings must be held. Triay said these will take place in Santa Fe and Carlsbad beginning in late February and are expected to conclude by March. Officials are hoping to have the permits issued by the fall.

(Please see WIPP, Page 6)



## WIPP

(from Page 1)

In addition, the DOE has filed an appeal for permit stipulations, which Triay said will further examine waste characterization issues and ground water monitoring. The New Mexico Environment Department has also issued a compliance order regarding shipments from Rocky Flats, which re-examines the "non-mixed categorization" of some shipments that have already been made to WIPP.

Triay commented on the progress of the WIPP transportation infrastructure in New Mexico and the number of emergency responders trained along the route, which included 3,357 nationwide in 1999 and 3,964 in New Mexico between 1988 and 1999.

The expansion of the Santa Fe Relief Route to four lanes is expected to be completed by October 2000, and a four-lane segment between Clines Corner and Roswell is slated for December 2000. Recent full-scale exercises of incident scenarios had been practiced in Tremonton, Utah, in 1999 and Odessa, Texas, this year.

Triay also remarked on the economic benefits of WIPP within New Mexico in the last year, noting a \$32 million impact, the 32 employees at the Carlsbad Area Office, 763 contractors, and 241 subcontractors.

The focus today, she said, is alignment of the program as the next RCRA permitting process continues.

As noted earlier, RCRA Permit Class 2 modifications will include public hearings in both Santa Fe and Carlsbad.

Triay also said that it will require coordination with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), for the handling of radioactive materials and disposal; the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for addressing the contaminants and transportation issues, and the NMED on waste certification and examining the hazardous solvents involved.

According to Triay, the CAO has contracted with Westinghouse Engineering Products Division, its lead industrial partner in the project, and NAC International for additional shipping containers and has issued a request for proposal (RFP) for two carriers, which they hope to have awarded in May. CAO hopes to have a final management and operational contract RFP issued by April and then awarded by August, along with a technical assistance contract at that time.

Following what Triay called Westinghouse's lead in "just in time mining," work also is being done on the excavation of Panel 2 at WIPP, with approximately 30 percent of it already completed. The completion of Panel 2 is slated for October 2000.

CAO is also conducting a "gap analysis" of its current program and that slated for the new permit. At LANL an audit is scheduled for April and the projected certification is for July, Triay said.

The future of WIPP could look at continuing regional economic growth, Triay said, as well exploring underground and repository sciences, such as studying the site's geochemistry and the properties of salt of waste disposals.