



**Department of Energy**

Carlsbad Area Office  
P. O. Box 3090  
Carlsbad, New Mexico 88221

January 28, 2000

2000  
**RECEIVED**

Mr. Greg Lewis, Director  
Water and Waste Management Division  
New Mexico Environment Department  
1190 St. Francis Drive  
P.O. Box 26110  
Santa Fe, NM 87502

Dear Mr. Lewis:

The U. S. Department of Energy, Carlsbad Area Office, proposes to create a new facility in the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) underground near Carlsbad, NM. The purpose of the facility is to provide the infrastructure to support a variety of experiments that could best be conducted in the underground environment of the WIPP facility. Current plans would locate experimental equipment in the north end of the WIPP underground where it would not interfere with waste disposal operations.

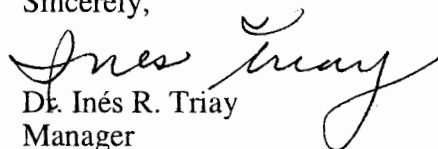
An example of one experiment currently proposed for the facility is a research effort in the field of particle physics. The intent is to establish an observatory for multiflavor neutrinos from supernovae. This experiment would involve building detectors constructed of lead and iron in the northern portion of the WIPP underground. These modules are to interact with neutrinos produced by supernovae, producing particles that would be counted by fluid filled scintillation detectors embedded in the equipment. This experiment would provide data that would enhance our understanding of the behavior of neutrinos and enable us to compare behavior with theoretical predictions.

In addition to experiments in the field of particle physics, DOE believes that the WIPP underground would provide a suitable environment for other types of experiments in the fields of waste repository science, mining technology, low radiation dose physics, fissile materials accountability and transparency, and deep geophysics.

In accordance with DOE policy, I am notifying you that an Environmental Assessment (EA) will be prepared for this proposed project. You will be given the opportunity to review and comment on a predecisional draft EA prior to my final determination on this project.

If you have any questions concerning this proposal, please contact Harold Johnson, the Carlsbad Area Office NEPA Compliance Officer at (505) 234-7349.

Sincerely,

  
Dr. Inés R. Triay  
Manager

cc:  
Gedi Cibas, NMED  
Steve Zappe, NMED



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