



November 30, 2000

Secretary Peter Maggiore
New Mexico Environment Department
Santa Fe, NM

VIA FAX - 827-2836

Dear Secretary Maggiore:

Thank you for agreeing to meet with us on **Friday, December 8** at 10:30 a.m. We look forward to a useful discussion about important issues related to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP).

We wanted to provide you with a brief summary of the major issues that we would like to discuss so that you can be prepared to respond to our concerns.

1. Our organizations represent more than 15,000 New Mexicans. Our supporters are very interested in and concerned about WIPP. In our meeting, we would like to discuss our perception that you and some NMED staff do not seem to appreciate or respond to that public interest. For example, you and your staff ignored our organizations' and others' public comments on the "class 1 modification" issued on April 25; on October 12, Joni Arends of CCNS requested that Greg Lewis let us know whether the extensive public comments on the July 21 Class 2 modification would be considered as part of the expected revised modification request. We would appreciate a written response to that request. Further, we want to understand your perspective on these issues and discuss ways that we can have better communication about our concerns in the future.

2. We are very concerned about Department of Energy (DOE) plans to expand WIPP--including characterizing waste at WIPP, substantially increasing surface storage, bringing remote-handled waste, disposing of PCB waste, among others. The proposals threaten public health and the environment. For this reason, we would like to discuss our opposition, including how the expansions will inexorably lead to further dangerous activities that should not be allowed at WIPP. We also want to discuss the NMED public participation process for these and related issues and make some suggestions for improvements.

For example, the WIPP HWA permit requires confirmatory testing, not just acceptable knowledge characterization, and prohibits remote-handled (RH) waste. However, DOE appears to believe it will be allowed to send RH waste to WIPP on the basis of acceptable knowledge alone, without confirmatory testing. We want to understand your perspective on these important issues.

3. We are also very concerned that DOE continues to use Panel 1, which endangers workers and the public. We want to discuss our concerns and suggestions as to how NMED can encourage DOE to begin using Panel 2.

Again, we look forward to a productive meeting on December 8.



Deborah Reade
CARD

Joni Arends
CCNS

Lynda Taylor
NM CVA

Maurice Weisberg
NM PSR

Margret Carde
Nuclear Watch

Peggy Prince
Peace Action New Mexico

Don Hancock
SRIC