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CARLSBAD, N.M., April 30, 2013 – The U.S. Department of Energy’s (DOE) Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) was recognized by the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) with Green Zia Environmental Leadership Program (GZELP) Gold Level membership for excellence.

The GZELP annually recognizes organizations and businesses for their demonstration of environmental leadership in support of pollution prevention and sustainability. The Gold Level is the highest GZELP recognition. WIPP was chosen by the NMED as a Silver Level Leader in 2012 and Bronze Level Leader in 2011.

The NMED, the state regulatory agency, selected WIPP based on continuing environmental achievements, including hazardous waste reduction, energy conservation and pollution prevention.

“We’re honored to be recognized by NMED for environmental practices at WIPP, said DOE Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) Manager Joe Franco. The CBFO has responsibility for WIPP and the National Transuranic (TRU) Program. “WIPP is committed to protecting the environment and conserving natural resources so they’re available for use by future generations. Credit goes to the WIPP team which is very deserving of this recognition.”

NMED Secretary Ryan Flynn and New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department Secretary F. David Martin presented the Gold Level Leader recognition to members of the WIPP team at a ceremony in Carlsbad on April 25, 2013. Secretary Flynn congratulated employees for their commitment to the environment and commended WIPP for improvements to recycling programs and reduced use of water, electricity and petroleum products.

WIPP is one of only three New Mexico organizations to achieve Gold Level status in 2013 for its documented improvements and associated cost savings for the period of October 2011 through December 2012. The organizations that were recognized have shown commitment to and innovation for reducing waste and natural resource use in New Mexico, according to the NMED.

The WIPP Team Program Leader Susan McCauslin, CBFO National Environmental Policy Act manager, said it takes a team effort to achieve Gold Level status. “We consistently review new projects and work packages to identify ways to conserve resources. Can we use recycled materials? Save water or fuel? It’s a systematic process that requires everyone’s participation if we are to improve.”

In addition to McCauslin, Franco and Farok Sharif, president and project manager of Nuclear Waste Partnership (NWP), LLC, the WIPP management and operating contractor, those recognized from the CBFO, NWP, LLC, Regulatory Environmental Services (RES), NWP, LLC affiliate, and Xcel Staffing Companies included: Royce Allen, Joe Arrey, Joe Baca, George Basabilvazo, Billy Beeman, Randy Britain, Roy Byrd, Jason Chadwick, James Cobb, Francine Cohen, Curtis Cox, Shari Cullum, Joel Frier, Marty Gonzales, James Hedin, Jennifer Hendrickson, Bruce Jeffress, Richard Jimenez, Lynn Johnson, Stewart Jones, Cliff Kemp, Kendra Kessler, Red Keyser, Johnny Marrs, Judy McClemore, Helen Moore, Brian Navarrette, Jeff Neatherlin, Jimmy Neatherlin, Jamie Newton, Doug Pitzer, Butch Reid, Bobby Roberson, Rick Salness, Robbin Spoon, and Kenny Walker.

The GZELP is modeled after the Malcolm Baldrige Performance Excellence Program with emphasis on integrating environmental improvements into core business practices. Participating organizations and businesses that implement sustainable practices complete a GZELP application each year to document environmental achievements and set future goals. Since its inception in 1999, over 140 organizations and businesses have participated in the program.

WIPP is a DOE facility designed to safely isolate defense-related TRU waste from people and the environment. Waste temporarily stored at sites around the country is shipped to WIPP and permanently disposed in rooms mined out of an ancient salt formation 2,150 feet below the surface. WIPP is located 26 miles southeast of Carlsbad, N.M.

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