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September 19, 2018

Mr. Ricardo Maestas
New Mexico Environment Department--Hazardous Waste Bureau
2905 Rodeo Park Drive E, Building 1
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87505
ricardo.maestas@state.nm.us

Re: Public Comments Proposed WIPP Draft Permit and Expansion

Dear Mr. Maestas:

As faith leaders working with various communities around New Mexico, we have the opportunity to be with many people in their communities. We know that they want healthy lives and futures for their children. People of all spiritual traditions are also concerned about caring for our sacred creation. In addition, they believe in fairness and the common good. It is out of this ethical and moral worldview that we write with great concerns for the proposed expansion of the WIPP site and request a public hearing and that NMED postpone the negotiations for at least 30 days to allow people to be notified and read the documents. We also request that when the hearing date is delayed that the location be moved to Santa Fe, the Capitol of New Mexico, which is more centrally located and accessible to all New Mexicans.

Over the last years, with the accidents and near accidents, WIPP has cast doubts of safety and this affects New Mexicans and all people in the United States. We have concerns about the current operation of this facility and future implications on health and the common good. In addition, New Mexicans were promised at the onset that the facility would be limited in size, and scope. The current proposal would increase waste by nearly 30%. We believe there is a lack of transparency in the current permit process.

As Catholic Sisters, we seek guidance from the scriptures, one from 2 Timothy 2:15 states: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." Increasingly, all Religious traditions hold that the opportunity for community wisdom, concerns, and questions are essential in issues of the public good.

Usually, the only argument for expansion of waste in New Mexico is short term economic gain. We hold that an "integral ecology" approach grounded in ethical principles of environmental justice, social concern and economics must be held together and hope this approach would be utilized.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to hearing from you soon regarding the extension time for the WIPP expansion hearing and input from citizens.

Peace and good,

Sister Joan Brown,osf
Sister Marlene Perrotte, rsm

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