Key Ventilation System Construction Contract Awarded at WIPP

CARLSBAD, N.M., November 19, 2018 – The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) and Nuclear Waste Partnership (NWP) announced today the award of a key infrastructure contract at the Department’s Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP).

NWP President and Project Manager Bruce Covert confirmed that Critical Applications Alliance (CAA) has been awarded a $135 million contract to construct a new ventilation system at WIPP. The Safety Significant Confinement Ventilation System (SSCVS) is key to restoring full operations at the WIPP facility. It will be the largest containment fan system among DOE facilities and the largest construction project at WIPP in close to 30 years.

“This is an extremely important day for us,” said Covert. “After an exhaustive and thorough procurement process, we believe CAA is the right contractor to undertake the largest construction project at WIPP in almost three decades.”

NWP developed the SSCVS design and will manage construction efforts through completion, said Covert. CAA is headquartered in Carlsbad and comprised of Christensen Building Group and Kilgore Industries, both of Houston, Texas. The ventilation construction project is expected to be completed in 2021.
"This is a significant improvement for the WIPP facility in support of DOE's national mission of nuclear waste cleanup," said CBFO Manager Todd Shrader. "I want to thank all those who worked so hard to get us to this point."

The SSCVS will provide a modern air supply system designed to run continuously in unfiltered or HEPA filtration mode. The system will provide approximately 540,000 cubic feet per minute (cfm) of air to the underground, significantly more than the 170,000 maximum cfm provided by the current ventilation system. The increased airflow will allow simultaneous mining, rock bolting, waste emplacement, maintenance and experimental scientific operations.

In advance of the SSCVS construction, Xcel Energy completed the required relocation of overhead transmission lines. Initial grading operations, including placement of contractor trailers and excavation of a storm water runoff pond, were also completed.

NWP, an AECOM-led partnership with Babcock & Wilcox and ORANO, is the management and operating contractor at WIPP.

WIPP is a DOE facility designed to safely isolate defense-related transuranic (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, which began waste disposal operations in 1999, is located 26 miles outside of Carlsbad, N.M.