

From: [Maestas, Ricardo, NMENV](#)
To: [McLean, Megan, NMENV](#); [Biswell, David, NMENV](#)
Subject: FW: [EXT] Re: PUBLIC NOTICE No. 20-03 - New Shaft at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP)
Date: Tuesday, August 4, 2020 3:44:19 PM

From: CL Hughes <clhumd@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 4, 2020 1:29 PM
To: Maestas, Ricardo, NMENV <Ricardo.Maestas@state.nm.us>
Cc: Christine Hughes <clhumd@gmail.com>
Subject: [EXT] Re: PUBLIC NOTICE No. 20-03 - New Shaft at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP)

Dear Mr. Maestas:

I object to the proposed permit modification that would authorize construction of a new WIPP shaft and drifts (tunnels) for WIPP. I also object to the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) allowing construction to begin seven weeks before the draft permit was issued, and long before the public hearing will be held.

NMED's actions make it clear that the public process is neither supported nor respected when it comes to WIPP. The fact sheet for this permit modification provides little vital information in Spanish, doesn't say that the shaft is already being built, and continues to claim that the shaft is needed for air flow in the current underground repository. Yet it is clear there is no emergency requiring NMED to sidestep the public process. In fact, the New Filter Building will provide over 100% of the air required for workers in the partially contaminated repository and will be providing that air nearly two years before the new shaft and drifts are finished.

The new shaft actually is needed only for an expanded WIPP that could more than double the current disposal area. DOE needs this space because existing, waste rooms will soon be filled and DOE wants to expand WIPP for more waste and more kinds of waste, including:

- high-level radioactive waste from Hanford, Washington and other sites;
- weapons-grade plutonium from the Savannah River Site in South Carolina;
- commercial waste from West Valley, New York; and
- 50 years or more of waste from building new nuclear weapons.

In 1999 and before, DOE promised the People of New Mexico that WIPP would operate for 25 years and then close. Despite this promise, DOE says now it needs to keep WIPP open FOREVER.

It's time for NMED to support the promises DOE made to the People of New Mexico and close WIPP in 2024. The new shaft must be stopped. NMED must withdraw the temporary authorization to build the shaft and deny the modification request.

Additionally, we must be given time to submit comments once the pandemic is over. It is impossible for the public to do so while trying to protect our families from Covid, keep our jobs or find new ones, and pay rent or mortgage. This decision affects us directly because the DOE plans to transport this waste for decades past our homes on HWY 285. It is only fair to allow us to present our concerns once the pandemic is over.

Thank you for your careful consideration of my comments.

Christine Hughes

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