

Mary Spargo Márquez  
105 Narrow way  
Alto, NM 88312  
(575) 336-7083  
[marymarquez@windstream.net](mailto:marymarquez@windstream.net)



September 26, 2020

Stephanie Stringer  
Resource Protection Division Director  
New Mexico Environment Department  
1190 St. Francis Drive, Suite N4050  
Santa Fe, NM 87505

Re: Request to Not Re-issue the Temporary Authorization for the New Shaft at the  
Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP)

Dear Ms. Stringer:

I object to the proposed permit modification for the construction of a new shaft and associated drifts (tunnels) into the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) underground. I also object to the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) re-issuing the Temporary Authorization for the construction of the shaft long before the required public hearing on the new shaft will be held.

Allowing the Department of Energy (DOE) to start digging the shaft before the required public hearing is complete and before the permit has been issued makes it clear that the required public process on WIPP is neither supported by nor respected by the NMED.

The new shaft is all about expanding 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, the DOE promised New Mexicans that WIPP would operate for 25 years and, as its current permit requires, close in 2024. The DOE says now it needs to keep WIPP open forever.

It's time for the NMED to support the People of New Mexico and ensure the DOE keeps its promise to us. The NMED must not re-issue the temporary authorization. The NMED must stop the drilling of the shaft. The NMED must deny the permit modification request for the new shaft.

Thank you for your careful consideration of my comments. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Spargo Márquez". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.