

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY  
CARLSBAD AREA OFFICE  
WASTE ISOLATION PILOT PLANT  
P. O. BOX 3090  
CARLSBAD, NEW MEXICO 88221

# DOENEWS:

*John P. ...  
Barbara ...  
Benito ...  
You should ...  
get into ...  
this ...  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## ENERGY, INTERIOR DEPARTMENTS SIGN WIPP LAND MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT

CARLSBAD, N.M., July 26, 1994 -- A memorandum of understanding between two federal agencies specifies arrangements and procedures by which the agencies will cooperatively manage land use at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP). The U.S. Department of Energy, which oversees activities at the WIPP, and the U.S. Department of the Interior signed the agreement last week.

The WIPP Land Withdrawal Act, which became law in 1992, ordered that a land management plan and a cooperative agreement be written, detailing responsibilities of the two governing agencies. The Carlsbad Area Office represents the Energy Department, while the Roswell District Office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) represents the Interior Department in carrying out the terms of the Congressional mandate.

The Land Withdrawal Act of 1992 withdrew 10,240 acres in Eddy County from the BLM's jurisdiction and public use to reserve the land for construction, experimentation, operation, repair, disposal, shutdown, monitoring, and decommissioning of the WIPP.

The WIPP is a research and development facility operated by the U.S. DOE's Carlsbad Area Office. It is designed to demonstrate the safe, permanent disposal of transuranic radioactive wastes left from production of nuclear weapons.

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Energy, Interior Departments Sign  
WIPP Land Management Agreement

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Several areas are addressed under the DOE-BLM memorandum of understanding for the withdrawn land, including cultural resources, grazing management, wildlife, fire management, mining, gas and oil production, as well as reclamation.

Key language in the agreement details the continuation of the DOE-BLM's intent to manage wildlife habitat within the withdrawal area, specifically raptors, upland game, and any rare plant or animal species occupying the area.

The withdrawal area also includes two grazing allotments that will continue to be administered by the DOE and the BLM. To assure the rangeland is not overgrazed or misused, officials from both entities will continue to monitor livestock and plant life within the withdrawn area.

In addressing mining, gas and oil production, the DOE-BLM will ensure that related mining and drilling activities do not encroach upon the withdrawal area. "Adherence to this memorandum of understanding is crucial to protecting the repository from inadvertent human intrusion (into the disposal area)," the document states.

Under the agreement, it is the responsibility of the BLM to forward drilling and mining applications to the DOE for review and comment. The document specifically states that drilling and mining locations will not be allowed within 330 feet of the 16 square-mile withdrawal boundary.

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**Energy, Interior Departments Sign  
WIPP Land Management Agreement**

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Once a permit is approved, the BLM will carefully monitor all mining and drilling activities to avoid any vertical deviation into the WIPP boundary. With the exception of two leases that are under evaluation, surface or subsurface mining or oil and gas production, including slant drilling from outside the boundaries to points within the withdrawal area, will not be permitted at any time. Even after the project is decommissioned in about 30 years, no oil and gas drilling or mining, unless related to the WIPP project, will be allowed within the 16 square-mile boundary.

The DOE is responsible for returning land disturbed by the disposal activities to a stable ecological state after decommissioning.

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