



Attorney General of New Mexico

PO Drawer 1508
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504-1508

505 827-6000
Fax 505 827-5826

TOM UDALL
Attorney General

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MANUEL TIJERINA
MARIAN MATTHEWS
Deputy Attorneys General

Ms. Hazel O'Leary
Secretary of Energy
Forrestal Building Room 7A-257
1000 Independence Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Secretary O'Leary:

We appreciate the invitation to comment briefly on DOE-stakeholder relations. We have reviewed your July 29, 1994 guidance on public participation and join you in our dedication to the possibility of an informed two-way dialogue. We look forward to DOE-CAO's development of a program in accordance with that guidance. Immediate issues are as follows:

1. DOE-CAO has given maximum priority to meeting the unrealistic schedule of its Disposal Decision Plan. As a result, stakeholders are rushed to comment upon complex compliance issues on unreasonably short notice. For example, stakeholders received two books, containing DOE's position on scenario development and on Salado fluid flow and transport, on September 15 and are asked to respond at a Carlsbad meeting on September 28-29 (while also attending DOE-EPA technical exchanges on September 22-23 and a stakeholder forum on September 26-27). These are merely two of a series of DOE technical positions that stakeholders must respond to. The time available is totally inadequate and is fixed by DOE-CAO's arbitrary disposal schedule.
2. At the same time DOE-CAO responds extremely slowly to stakeholders. DOE-CAO answered our March 24, 1994 inquiry letter concerning the Systems Prioritization Method on September 9, 1994 -- taking nearly six months. DOE-CAO's response to our April 8, 1994 comments on the 1992 Performance Assessment has still not been provided. It requires months even to obtain already-existing documents from DOE-CAO.
3. Without funding for technical assistance to review WIPP's compliance with EPA regulations we cannot participate effectively. We have been negotiating with DOE to obtain such funding for more than a year and still have obtained nothing.
4. The DOE-CAO stakeholder program is essentially ceremonial. In the forthcoming Stakeholder Forum, DOE-CAO has attempted to assemble on short notice groups to discuss numerous aspects of WIPP -- suggesting that the purpose is to let stakeholders sound off and be done with them. Such a one-shot exercise contributes little to ongoing public participation in DOE decisionmaking, as called for by your July 29 guidance.

Respectfully,

Lindsay A. Lovejoy Jr (by AB)

LINDSAY A. LOVEJOY, JR.
Assistant Attorney General

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