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NEWS RELEASE
June 19, 1998

**DOE AND NEW MEXICO ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT
 REACH AGREEMENT ON WIPP**

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) have reached agreement on the schedule and process to be used in determining the readiness of the first shipment of transuranic waste from Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in Carlsbad, New Mexico.

The department has worked with NMED over the past week to understand and respond to NMED questions and concerns related to the characterization of non-mixed transuranic waste to WIPP for disposal. The DOE has provided extensive documentation to the NMED including a listing of all documents used in the waste stream certification process and a flow chart of the process used for characterization and certification of the first waste stream to be shipped to WIPP.

In addition, the DOE and NMED have agreed to the following schedule of activities:

- Two NMED technical staff members began reviewing the waste characterization data on Thursday, June, 18, 1998. The NMED staff are working at Los Alamos National Laboratory to expedite their review. NMED expects that the review process will last approximately 10 working days.
- NMED has agreed that on or before July 10, 1998 it will notify DOE whether it believes the waste stream in question has been adequately characterized as non-mixed waste.
- DOE agrees that it will not issue a 14-day notice of its intent to ship waste to WIPP prior to its receipt of notification from NMED on July 10, 1998 unless



the DOE notice is expressly conditioned on DOE's receipt of a favorable determination from NMED.

The DOE is also planning to ask the court to move back the proceedings in order to accommodate the agreement with NMED.

Editors Note (Attached is the letter issued by DOE to the State of New Mexico on June 19, 1998)

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