



# U.S. DEPARTMENT OF **ENERGY**

U.S. Department of Energy  
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**For Immediate Release**

## **State Renews Groundwater Discharge Permit for WIPP**

**CARLSBAD, N.M., September 11, 2008** – The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) has renewed the U.S. Department of Energy’s (DOE) Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) groundwater discharge permit until 2013. The permit regulates the discharge of water from WIPP facilities and operations to lined ponds, which protect groundwater resources.

The permit allows WIPP to discharge domestic wastewater, non-hazardous wastewater and storm water into 13 on-site, synthetically-lined ponds. The new permit also provides for increased daily discharge volumes to allow more flexibility in plant operations.

“This permit is the result of a positive year-long effort with the New Mexico Groundwater Quality Bureau,” said Jody Plum, DOE Carlsbad Field Office Permitting and Compliance acting director. “It provides a regulatory framework that protects human health and the environment, and supports plant operations.” The DOE submits a semi-annual compliance report to the NMED.

The permit allows WIPP to discharge up to 23,000 gallons per day (gpd) of domestic wastewater to a sewage treatment system that consists of seven ponds, three of which may also be used for up to 150,000 gpd of condensation water and groundwater

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produced from pumping nearby wells. This water is referred to as “miscellaneous non-hazardous waste waters” in the discharge permit.

The permit also incorporates maintenance provisions for five storm water collection ponds, constructed by DOE to contain storm water that runs off from salt tailings. The pond system, equipped with double lining and a leak detection system, is designed to retain over four million gallons of storm water run-off for evaporation.

The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant is a U.S. Department of Energy facility designed to safely isolate defense-related transuranic waste from people and the environment. Waste temporarily stored at sites around the country is shipped to WIPP and permanently disposed in rooms mined out of an ancient salt formation 2,150 feet below the surface. WIPP, which began waste disposal operations in 1999, is located 26 miles outside of Carlsbad, N.M.

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