



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF **ENERGY**

U.S. Department of Energy
Carlsbad Field Office
Waste Isolation Pilot Plant
P.O. Box 3090
Carlsbad, New Mexico 88221

Media Contact:

Deb Gill
U.S. DOE Carlsbad Field Office
(575) 234-7270

www.wipp.energy.gov

For Immediate Release

Waste Isolation Pilot Plant Receives Second EPA Recertification

CARLSBAD, N.M., November 18, 2010 – The U.S. Department of Energy’s (DOE) Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) crossed a key milestone today when it was recertified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This decision means that the EPA, after a thorough review, concluded that the underground repository continues to display its ability to safely contain transuranic (TRU) waste for the duration of WIPP’s 10,000-year regulatory period.

“The EPA’s thorough review concluded that WIPP continues to meet all regulatory performance requirements,” said- DOE Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management Dr. Ines Triay. “The EPA’s recertification supports my long-held belief that WIPP personifies our commitment to the American taxpayer toward cleaning up the nation’s defense-generated waste in a safe, efficient and compliant manner.”

EPA recertification verifies the site’s continued compliance with federal disposal regulations and is based on various independent technical analyses, public comments and a thorough review of facility information submitted by DOE. On June 29, 2010, the EPA declared WIPP’s Compliance Recertification Application to be complete.

EPA initially certified WIPP in 1998. The recertification process with the EPA takes place every five years, as required by the WIPP Land Withdrawal Act. This is the second time WIPP

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has been recertified since opening in 1999. In 2004, WIPP submitted its application for the previous recertification, which it received in 2006. For WIPP to receive recertification, the EPA verifies that the changes made at the facility during the preceding five-year period will not impact the ability of WIPP to contain TRU waste. The recertification process is not a reconsideration of the decision to open WIPP.

“The EPA’s decision shows that the plan for managing WIPP, which was put together after decades of research and study, remains the best way to safely isolate TRU waste for thousands of years and beyond,” said Interim Acting Carlsbad Field Office Manager Ed Ziemianski.

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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