

Waste Isolation Pilot Plant Community Relations Plan

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Plan Required by Permit

This Community Relations Plan (Plan) is a requirement of the Hazardous Waste Facility Permit (Permit) for the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) facility. The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) re-issued the 10-year Permit to the U.S. Department of Energy and Salado Isolation Mining Contractors, LLC (SIMCO) Nuclear Waste Partnership LLC, the Permittees, in October 2023 ~~November 2010~~.

The Plan is tied to Permit-related topics only. Topics outside the Permit are not included. ~~If stakeholders have questions~~ Discussions regarding topics not related to the Permit, should be brought to the attention of the Community Relations staff who will assist in identifying the proper venue for such discussions. ~~discussing the topic.~~

1.2 Participants

The intended participants of this Plan are ~~interested members of the public who reside within the state of New Mexico and include~~ individuals, organizations, special interest groups, communities, federal, state and local government entities, tribal governments and tribal members. Collectively, these entities are referred to as "interested parties" in this Plan.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of the Plan is to provide Permit-related information to ~~communities and interested members of the public~~ parties and to alert ~~the public~~ them to opportunities for participation in the Permit process. Permit-related activities include waste characterization and confirmation, waste receipt, storage and disposal operations at the WIPP facility, facility closure, post-closure, and Permit-driven corrective actions.

The ~~U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)~~ operates the WIPP facility in a transparent manner. The DOE has conducted WIPP Project outreach programs in New Mexico for more than three decades to establish open working relationships with ~~communities, tribal governments and residents~~ interested parties statewide. The Permittees view this Plan as an opportunity to expand ~~public~~ participation and dialogue in the WIPP facility Permit process.

The Plan is web-based to reach a broad spectrum of ~~New Mexico residents and tribal governments~~ interested parties. Alternate methods to disseminate permit-related information to ~~members of the public~~ interested parties who may not have computer access are included in this Plan. These avenues of communication are further discussed in Section 3.0 How to Use this Plan.

2.0 Overview of the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant

So that ~~members of the public~~ interested parties may better understand the WIPP mission and Permit, this Plan begins with an overview of the WIPP facility.

The WIPP facility is owned and operated by the DOE through its Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO). Salado Isolation Mining Contractors, LLC (SIMCO) Nuclear Waste Partnership LLC (NWP) is the management and operating contractor hired by DOE to perform day-to-day plant operation. Under the Permit, ~~NWP~~ SIMCO is considered a co-operator of the WIPP facility.

2.1 Location and Facility

The WIPP facility is located 26 miles southeast of Carlsbad, New Mexico. It is designed and operated for the safe disposal of transuranic (TRU) radioactive waste resulting from U.S. nuclear defense programs.

In 1992, Congress permanently withdrew 16 sections of land from all forms of entry, appropriation, and disposal under the public land laws the public domain to be used by the DOE for the purposes of fulfilling the WIPP mission of safely disposing of defense TRU waste.

The WIPP facility consists of surface facilities structures used by WIPP facility personnel to receive and prepare waste for disposal and an underground repository that includes disposal rooms excavated from a geologically stable salt formation nearly one-half mile underground. A characteristic of the salt formation demonstrates is an absence of circulating groundwater as a viable pathway to the accessible environment, which along with the prohibition on oil and gas drilling or other development from within the WIPP site, ensures long-term isolation of TRU mixed waste constituents.

2.2 TRU Waste

Transuranic waste is a byproduct of the nation’s nuclear defense program and consists of materials contaminated with radioactive elements, mostly plutonium. The majority of this waste resulted from federal government-sponsored research and development and the production of nuclear weapons. Transuranic waste is also being generated as the result of the decontamination and decommissioning of DOE facilities involved in federal nuclear weapons activities.

Transuranic mixed waste contains both radioactive and hazardous waste components. Some TRU waste contains non-radioactive hazardous constituents chemicals such as metals and solvents which are classified as hazardous waste under federal and state regulations laws. The WIPP Permit is required in order for the DOE and SIMCO NWP to manage and dispose of these hazardous wastes as TRU mixed waste. The NMED regulates the management, storage and disposal of the hazardous waste contained in the TRU mixed waste through the Permit. The Permit requires that waste disposed in the permitted WIPP facility be managed as TRU mixed waste.

In 1999, NMED issued the initial Permit that allowed the DOE to receive its first TRU mixed waste shipment from the Rocky Flats Plant in Colorado for disposal at the WIPP facility. The Permit was renewed for a 10-year period in 2010. A second Renewal Application was submitted in March 2020 and a renewed Permit was issued in October 2023, is pending before the NMED.

~~2.3~~ 2.2 Regulatory Background and the Hazardous Waste Facility Permit

In 1976, the U.S. Congress passed the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) to regulate “cradle to grave” management of hazardous waste. In accordance with RCRA, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) can authorize states to implement their own hazardous waste regulatory programs in lieu of the federal program. The State of New Mexico is authorized to implement and enforce its own hazardous waste management program which includes regulating the hazardous components in TRU mixed waste that are disposed at the WIPP facility.

~~The EPA certifies DOE compliance with environmental standards for the disposal of radioactive materials such as the TRU waste disposed 2,150 feet underground. At five-year intervals, the DOE must demonstrate to EPA through a recertification process that the WIPP underground disposal system will continue to safely contain radionuclides for 10,000 years.~~

This Plan is specific to the New Mexico Hazardous Waste Management Program Regulations.

3.0 How to use this Plan

3.1 Elements of the WIPP Community Relations Plan

The Permit identifies elements six objectives that this Plan is to address:

1. Establish working relationships with interested parties, communities and interested members of the public.
2. Establish productive government to government relations between the DOE U.S. Department of Energy and affected tribes and pueblos.
3. Inform communities and interested parties of permit activities including pre-submittal meetings for Class 2 and 3 permit modification requests.

4. Minimize disputes and resolve differences with interested parties. ~~communities and interested members of the public.~~
5. Provide timely responses to individual requests for information.
6. Establish mechanisms for ~~communities and interested~~ parties ~~members of the public~~ to provide feedback and input to the Permittees.
7. Conduct WIPP Community Forum public meetings three times per year with interested parties.

3.2 A Broad Approach to Communicating Permit Activities

The Permittees determined that the most effective way to meet Permit objectives regarding the Plan is a broad approach to communications with interested parties ~~individuals, organizations, special interest groups, federal, state and local government entities, tribal governments and tribal members in New Mexico.~~ The Plan makes Permit-related information available to interested New Mexicans through numerous points of access.

Affected tribal governments and tribal members will be provided information about WIPP Permit- related actions in the same manner as that outlined in this Plan for ~~communities, the general public, and~~ interested parties. This manner is not to be understood as a surrogate for or amendment to DOE O 144.1, Department of Energy American Indian Tribal Government Interactions and Policy.

3.3 Community Relations Plan WIPP Project Web Page

This Web page (<https://www.wipp.energy.gov>) provides a broad spectrum of information regarding the WIPP Project in general, including links to information ~~on~~ relevant to current permit activities and public meeting schedules¹. and It also includes a link to the WIPP Permit Information Repository wipp.energy.gov/information-repository-index where interested parties ~~members of the public~~ can access specific documents related to the Permittees' compliance with current Permit requirements ~~and other Permit resources~~. To assure public access, the Web page includes instructions for the software required to view documents in the WIPP Permit Information Repository and provides access to free downloads the software required to view documents ~~to public reviewers~~, as needed.

Documents available in the WIPP Information Repository include:

- WIPP Hazardous Waste Facility Permit renewal application, Parts A and B
- A complete copy of the Permit, as modified by NMED's Hazardous Waste Bureau
- Permit modification notifications and requests associated with the Permit and any associated responses from the NMED
- Waste Minimization Report submitted per Permit Part 2, Section 2.4
- Extensions of time submitted per Permit Part 1, Section 1.10.3
- Corrective action documents submitted per Permit Part 8
- Written reports, such as notifications of planned changes, submitted per the Permit Part 1, Sections 1.7.11 and 1.7.13

¹Information on the RCRA Permit activities can be accessed from the WIPP Home Page by selecting the "Document" and "RCRA Permit" icons.

- Requests for Temporary Authorizations, Temporary Authorization Responses and Requests to Withdraw a Temporary Authorization
- Notices of Deficiency or disapproval, responses, final approval letters and directives from the NMED associated with renewal permit applications, permit modifications and corrective action documents
- Notices of Violation or administrative compliance orders, and responses to such required by the NMED and directives from the NMED associated with the Permit
- Biennial Reports submitted per Permit Section Part 2, Section 2.14.2
- Administrative Orders and associated responses

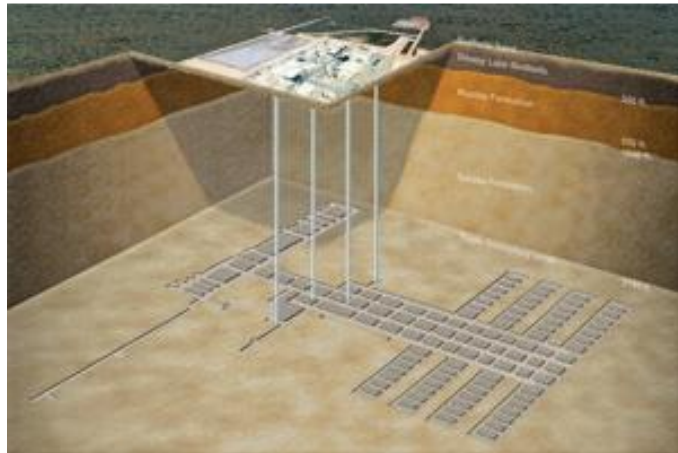
The WIPP Permit Information Repository provides access to Permit-related documents dating back to 2009 when the Web page was set up. [Information older than 2009 may be available from the NMED WIPP Permit Web Site at https://www.env.nm.gov/hazardous-waste/wipp/.](https://www.env.nm.gov/hazardous-waste/wipp/)

3.4 Notifications in Major Newspapers

Notifications regarding substantive (Class 2 and 3) Permit Modification Requests ([PMRs](#)) by the Permittees or the NMED are published in major local newspapers [as described in Section 3.7 below](#). Included in the notification is a description of the proposed Permit change, dates for a public comment period, contact information at NMED and the WIPP Project, and the time, dates and locations for public meetings. Notifications are provided in both English and Spanish in order to reach a broader population. [This does not include notifications for pre-submittal meetings for Class 2 and Class 3 PMRs. These will be provided to interested parties separately.](#)

3.5 Facility mailing list

The facility mailing list consists of [interested parties](#) individuals, organizations, special interest groups, federal, state and local government entities, affected tribal governments and tribal members who have [requested to be](#) expressed interest in being notified by mail of WIPP Permit-related actions. By regulation, the NMED maintains the WIPP facility mailing list; the Permittees are responsible for certain mail-outs to WIPP facility mailing list subscribers. The facility mailing list benefits users of the Community Relations Web page and [interested parties](#) members of the public who do not have computer access. ~~There are a number of~~ Opportunities to subscribe to the facility mailing list [are listed](#) below. Please include your name, mailing address, phone number and organization, if any, when you subscribe to the facility mailing list.



Options for signing up include:

- Email the request to communityrelations@wipp.ws and request to be added to the facility mailing list
- Email the request directly to the New Mexico Environment Department at ricardo.maestas@state.nm.us.
- Sign up at WIPP Hazardous Waste Facility Permit public meetings
- Call 1-866-271-9640 and request Bobby St. John, [SIMCO Nuclear Waste Partnership](#), to forward your name and mailing address to NMED for inclusion on the facility mailing list.

- Mail a request to subscribe: Ricardo Maestas New Mexico Environment Department, 2905 Rodeo Park Drive East, Building 1, Santa Fe, N.M. 87505 OR Bobby St. John, [SIMCO Nuclear Waste Partnership LLC.](#), P.O. Box 2078, Carlsbad, N.M. 88221

3.6 Email Notification Service

The Permittees also maintain a Permit-related email notification service. Subscribers to this service are assured timely email notification for a specific set of Permit actions. This service provides information regarding ~~some~~ Permit-related actions that would not otherwise be directly available to [interested parties](#) ~~the public~~. Adding your name to the email notification service is quick and easy. The names of subscribers are kept confidential.

Visit wipp.energy.gov/Stakeholders/Notice and follow the directions ~~to~~ for sign up.

3.7 Public meetings

Federal and state regulations require hazardous waste facilities to schedule public meetings for Class 2 and 3 [PMRs and for Renewal Applications](#) ~~Permit Modification Requests~~. These public meetings provide the Permittees a forum to explain proposed changes to hazardous waste management and for [interested parties](#) ~~members of the public~~ to ask questions regarding the proposed changes and express their views by submitting written comments specifically regarding the [PMRs](#) ~~Permit Modification Request~~ to the NMED. [Interested parties are](#) ~~The general public~~ is notified of public meeting schedules in the [following newspapers](#):

- Carlsbad Current-Argus
- Albuquerque Journal
- Santa Fe New Mexican
- [Indian Country Today](#)
- [Roswell Daily Record \(on the date of a bi-monthly Spanish page edition\).](#)

[In addition to the meetings required by RCRA regulations, the Permittees often conduct pre-submittal meetings prior to finalizing a Class 2 or 3 PMR. These meetings are intended to gather comments from interested parties that help the Permittees finalize a Class 2 or 3 PMR.](#) ~~Interested parties~~ ~~members of the public~~ are encouraged to monitor the Community Relations Web page and subscribe to the WIPP facility mailing list for public meeting schedules related to [Class 2 or 3 PMRs](#) ~~Permit Modification Requests~~.

Permit Modification Requests [and Permit renewal applications](#) can be reviewed [on the WIPP Permit Information Repository](#) wipp.energy.gov/information-repository-index. ~~in draft stage prior to being submitted to NMED at~~ wipp.energy.gov/rcradox/ProposedMods. The link provides the opportunity to [review and](#) submit comments on ~~draft~~ Permit Modification Requests [and Permit renewal applications](#) to the [NMED](#) ~~Permittees~~.

[The Permittees will conduct WIPP Community Forum public meetings three times per year with interested parties. Notification of these public meetings will be via broad communication methods outlined in the Plan. Notification will occur at least 30 days before the meeting. The WIPP Community Forum public meetings will provide interested parties an opportunity to ask questions regarding the Permit and other WIPP-related topics of interest. Meetings will be live at a location determined by the Permittees, as well as virtually to reach a larger number of interested parties.](#)

3.8 Community Relations Plan email address

A Community Relations Plan email address provides ~~the public~~ direct communication to WIPP project staff for inquiries related to the Permit. The email account is monitored by staff members during normal business hours, Monday through [Thursday](#) ~~Friday~~, 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The Permittees will respond to requests as quickly as possible, within the constraints of applicable regulations such as those involving dissemination of security or personal information. That email address is communityrelations@wipp.ws.



3.9 Toll-free telephone number

A Community Relations Plan toll free telephone number is a convenient way to contact Permittee staff for Permit-related information or questions. The toll-free number will be staffed during normal business hours, Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. If prompted, be sure to leave a message so someone can get back to you.

The toll-free number is 1-866-271-9640.

3.10 Public outreach products

To increase public awareness of the Plan, the Community Relations Plan Web page address, toll-free telephone number and dedicated email address will be printed on WIPP Project information products and Permit-related public notifications in major local newspapers.

4.0 Community Relations Plan Goals

4.1 Changes to the Plan

The goal of this Plan is to provide timely information to members of the public interested parties about Permit actions and opportunities for participation in the Permit process so that they can make informed decisions about Permit actions.

The Plan is intended to be useful and responsive to public information needs related to the Permit. It is a “living” document which is expected to change throughout the ten-year Permit period to accommodate public and Permittee input as well as new communication technologies.

In October of each year, the Permittees will solicit comments and suggestions from interested parties stakeholders through major local newspapers, the facility mailing list, and the Web-based Community Relations Plan. Periodic changes may be made to the Plan to enhance functionality and content, or to incorporate new or changed Permit conditions. Interested parties

Members of the public are encouraged to send comments or suggestions to improve the Plan at any time. Comments may be sent by email using the form in the Comments section of the Plan or to communityrelations@wipp.ws. Comments also may be sent by mail to Bobby St. John, [SIMCO Nuclear Waste Partnership](#), P.O. Box 2078, Carlsbad, N.M., 88221.

4.2 Resolving Differences Between the Interested Parties Public and Permittees Regarding the Community Relations Plan

The Permittees will give careful consideration to public comments and suggestions, and work in consultation with communities and with interested parties members of the public to avoid disputes and to resolve differences regarding the Community Relations Plan.

The Permittees will address comments that require a response and provide the response to the interested parties community or individual who originated it. Responses specific to this Plan will be posted to the Community Relations Plan Web page, with the consent of the interested parties involved.

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5.0 Resources

The Permittees will provide the resources necessary to maintain the Plan for as long as the Plan is a requirement of the Permit.

6.0 Records Management

Consistent with Permit requirements, the Permittees will annually compile comments from communities and interested parties members of the public concerning how they may become informed of the topics related to the Permit. The Permittees shall annually post on the WIPP Home Page the compilation of such comments², including any statements of disagreement, with the express consent of the commenting interested party(ies). individual or group.

²Comments on the most recent Community Relations Plan can be accessed at: <https://wipp.energy.gov/community-outreach.asp#1>. Archived comments can be accessed at: <https://wipp.energy.gov/community-outreach.asp#2>.