



Department of Energy
Carlsbad Field Office
P. O. Box 3090
Carlsbad, New Mexico 88221
November 4, 2014

Eddy and Lea County Residents:

We continue to make progress here at the U.S. Department of Energy's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP). During September and October we completed and released our WIPP recovery plan, were paid a visit by Acting Deputy Secretary of Environmental Management Mark Whitney and, most importantly, we made significant progress on several tasks that are key to recovery of the underground facility.

The WIPP Recovery Plan outlines the strategy, key activities and management approach that we will be using to ensure a safe and compliant return to WIPP's mandated mission of disposing of the nation's defense transuranic nuclear waste. The plan describes both recovery and capital projects that must be completed and provides some cost and schedule projections for the work. The plan is a "living document" and, like any project of this size and complexity, we expect there to be changes as we progress. The plan is available on the WIPP website, and I encourage everyone to visit the site obtain more information about the plan and the WIPP Recovery Project.

On October 16, Mr. Whitney became the first non-WIPP employee to tour the underground facility since the February incidents. This was an important benchmark for us in the recovery process. The assistant secretary expressed his gratitude for the hard work being done and reiterated DOE's commitment and support for the recovery project.

Other important recovery milestones include reclassification of over 60% of the underground facility from radiological controlled areas to radiological buffer areas, eliminating the need for radiological protective equipment to be worn in these areas; cleaning and release of the underground maintenance shop and lunch room; and use of the first liquid fueled vehicle in the underground since the February incidents.

November looks to be a productive month as well with reactivation of the waste hoist, final data collection efforts in Room 7, Panel 7 by the REACH team in support of the Accident Investigation Board (AIB) Phase II activities, and resumption of ground control (roof bolting) in the WIPP underground facility all on the agenda. Rest assured that as we move forward with recovery, the safety and health of the workers, the community and the environment is our highest priority.

Lastly, I want to again thank our workforce and the host communities for your continued support as we work toward resuming our important mission at WIPP.

Sincerely,

//Signature on File//

Jose R. Franco, Manager
U.S. Department of Energy
Carlsbad Field Office