

Abstract Submission for March Meeting 2022

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Submission Type Invited Abstract

Sorting Category: 32 PUBLIC POLICY (FPS)

Sub-Category: 32.00.00 FPS Symposium Invited Speaker (Invitation Only)

Abstract Title: WIPP: The Only TRU Waste Repository?

Feedback and Support

The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in southeastern New Mexico is the world's only operating deep geologic repository for nuclear waste. Agreements with New Mexico state officials and federal law provide that WIPP would be the first, but not only, repository. However, the Department of Energy (DOE) is not seeking to find sites for other repositories, though the agency is planning for the creation of much more transuranic (TRU or plutonium-contaminated) waste. Two major new sources of such waste, which were not included in the original WIPP inventory, are surplus plutonium from the existing nuclear weapons stockpile and TRU waste from the production of thousands of new plutonium pits or cores for future nuclear weapons. Despite agreements and laws, those wastes that require geologic disposal would have to go to WIPP if there is no other site.

Abstract Body:

The presentation will explore:

- * The 50-year history of agreements and laws regarding WIPP,
- * WIPP's performance since waste was first received in March 1999,
- * Recent DOE efforts to expand WIPP's physical facilities and change permitting requirements to accommodate new sources and larger amounts of waste, and
- * Issues raised by the National Academies of Sciences 2020 Report regarding Surplus Plutonium at WIPP and public concerns about and opposition to DOE's plans.

In 2012, the Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future pointed to WIPP as a successful example for geologic repositories and for a consent-based siting approach for other storage and disposal facilities for high-level nuclear waste and spent nuclear fuel. WIPP's operational difficulties show challenges that other repositories will have to address. The physical expansion and new missions for WIPP raise questions about the viability of consent and non-consent for other nuclear waste facilities.

Thus, the future of WIPP has direct implications for any new U.S. stor and disposal facilities for TRU waste, high-level waste, or spent nucle fuel.

Feedback and Support

Category Type: Experimental

Newsorthy Research? No

Order	Name	Role	Email	Affiliation	Presentation	Justification	Justification Reference	Action
001	Don Hancock	Speaker	sricon@earthlink.net	Director of Nuclear Waste Program, Southwest Research Information Center, PO Box 4524, Albuquerque, NM 87196-4524	WIPP: The Only TRU Waste Repository?	Mr Hancock has been investigating, for m...		Submitter

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