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APPEAL FILED TO STOP MORE “HOT” WASTE AT WIPP

Southwest Research and Information Center (SRIC) and Margaret Elizabeth Richards today filed a Notice of Appeal in the New Mexico Court of Appeals against the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) decision of November 1 to allow “hot” Remote-Handled (RH) transuranic nuclear waste in shielded containers to come to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP).

The Appellants and approximately 200 individuals requested that the request to modify the state’s WIPP permit be subject to a public hearing because of the dangers posed by RH waste, the technical complexity of handling RH waste at WIPP, and the substantial public interest in the request. NMED ignored those comments and approved the Department of Energy (DOE) request despite the fact that the state agency had in December 2011 and January 2012 rejected virtually the same request.

“SRIC feels that the permit request was incomplete and did not adequately address the real reason that DOE wants shielded containers – there is not enough space for RH waste because of the way the facility has been mismanaged. State law requires a public hearing, but since NMED rubberstamped the request, we have no choice but to sue,” said Don Hancock of SRIC.

In another action, the Appellants asked NMED Secretary Dave Martin to stay the approval until the Court of Appeals issues its decision because of the dangers that RH waste in shielded containers pose to public health and the environment since any releases would leave the “hot” waste stranded at WIPP.

The lawyer for the Appellants is Lindsay Lovejoy of Santa Fe.