



SOUTHWEST RESEARCH AND INFORMATION CENTER

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CURRENT DOE PROPOSALS TO EXPAND WIPP

1. **Rename high-level waste (HLW) in 20 tanks at Hanford (WA) and ship it to WIPP.**

High-level nuclear waste (HLW) is prohibited at WIPP, but the Department of Energy (DOE) wants to rename some HLW in Hanford tanks as “transuranic” waste and ship it to WIPP. One of the several steps needed is to remove the provision in the WIPP permit that requires a public hearing if DOE proposes renaming HLW in tanks. Because of public opposition, the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) has not approved the permit change.

2. **Bring commercial Greater-Than-Class C waste to WIPP in shielded containers.**

DOE’s *Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Disposal of Greater-Than-Class C (GTCC) Low-Level Radioactive Waste and GTCC-Like Waste* proposes disposing commercial waste, even though the WIPP Land Withdrawal Act prohibits transportation, storage, or disposal of commercial waste at WIPP. The Final EIS has been delayed.

3. **Bring commercial “transuranic” waste to WIPP from West Valley, NY.**

DOE’s *Final West Valley Demonstration Project Waste Management Environmental Impact Statement* in January 2004 stated that WIPP was the preferred site for 7,118 cubic meters of commercial waste from reprocessing. Because of opposition to the proposal, no final Record of Decision has been issued and no congressional legislation to allow such waste has been enacted.

4. **Bring 10,000 metric tons of mercury for long-term storage on the surface at WIPP.**

DOE’s *Final Long-Term Management and Storage of Elemental Mercury Environmental Impact Statement* in 2011 did not consider WIPP. But the Final Supplemental EIS in September 2013 stated that WIPP was an alternative, but Waste Control Specialists is the preferred site.

5. **Bring “surplus” plutonium that has never been in the planned WIPP inventory from Savannah River Site, even if it displaces waste from other sites.**

Since 1996, DOE had not included WIPP as an alternative for surplus weapons-grade plutonium. Because of many problems with the Mixed Oxide (plutonium-uranium) fuel project, since 2012 DOE’s *Surplus Plutonium Disposition Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement* has proposed that at least 6 metric tons come to WIPP. Other reports have suggested up to 51 metric tons could come, which would require expanding WIPP’s legal capacity.

6. **Create a new surface storage facility at WIPP.**

Even though WIPP is shutdown, DOE plans to submit a permit modification to allow for a new surface storage facility, which would operate while no waste disposal is occurring at WIPP.

7. **Conduct heater tests in the WIPP underground to show that it could handle HLW.**

DOE’s Salt Defense Disposal Investigations (SDDI) would place heaters in underground rooms to show that the site could handle highly radioactive waste, despite much scientific data in the U.S. and internationally that salt formations are not suitable for such “hot” waste. DOE is proposing to site a defense high-level waste repository.