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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

	ORIGINAL DATE 1/22/08	
SPONSOR <u>Heaton</u>	LAST UPDATED _____	HJM <u>8</u>
SHORT TITLE <u>Change Waste Allowed in WIPP Site</u>		SB _____
		ANALYST <u>Cox</u>

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

SUMMARY

House Joint Memorial 8 addresses reclassifying the types of nuclear waste that will be stored at the WIPP Project. This Joint Memorial request that ‘Greater than Class C’ (GTCC) nuclear waste be allowed to be stored at the WIPP site. This Joint Memorial points out that transuranic waste, another high level type waste, is currently stored at the WIPP site. The conventions and safety procedures for storing both GTCC and transuranic are similar.

Radioactive wastes are waste types containing radioactive chemical elements that do not have a practical purpose. They are sometimes the products of nuclear processes, such as nuclear fission. However, other industries not directly connected to the nuclear industry can produce large quantities of radioactive waste. For instance, over the past 20 years it is estimated that just the oil-producing endeavors of the US have accumulated 8 million tons of radioactive wastes.^[1] The majority of radioactive waste is "low-level waste", meaning it has low levels of radioactivity per mass or volume. This type of waste often consists of used protective clothing, which is only slightly contaminated but still dangerous in case of radioactive contamination of a human body through ingestion, inhalation, absorption, or injection.

In the United States alone, the Department of Energy states that there are "millions of gallons of radioactive waste" as well as "thousands of tons of spent nuclear fuel and material" and also "huge quantities of contaminated soil and water".^[2]

The NRC has categorized Low Level Waste (LLW) into four classes (A, B, C, and GTCC) based on the concentration of specific short-lived and long-lived radionuclides given in two tables in 10 CFR 61.55. These waste categories are illustrated in the following table.

NRC Category	Description	Disposal Method
Class A	Least hazardous – short & long-lived waste that will not endanger inadvertent human intruder beyond 100 years	Near-Surface

Class B	More hazardous – short-lived wastes that will not endanger inadvertent intruder beyond 100 years	Near-Surface with 300 year waste stability
Class C	More hazardous short and long-lived wastes that will not endanger inadvertent intruder beyond 500 years	Near-Surface with 300 year waste stability, and greater depth or 500 year intruder barrier
Greater-Than-Class C	Most hazardous of LLW - dangerous to inadvertent intruder beyond 500 years. Must be disposed in geologic repository unless alternate method proposed by DOE and approved by NRC	To be determined

Transuranic waste is defined as:

Waste containing more than 100 nanocuries of alpha-emitting transuranic isotopes per gram of waste with half-lives greater than 20 years, except for high-level radioactive waste... All TRU elements are heavier than uranium, have several isotopes, and are typically man-made. Key radionuclides found in TRU waste include americium-241 and several isotopes of plutonium.

There is currently only one place in the United States accepting shipments of TRU, the [Waste Isolation Pilot Plant](#) (WIPP). Other countries do not include this category, favoring variations of High, Medium, and Low Level waste.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

There may be some added revenues for the State of New Mexico, resulting from actions relating to this Joint Memorial.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

House Joint Memorial requests that the WIPP site be allowed to receive and store nuclear that has higher levels of concentration than Class C nuclear waste (GTCC). This Joint Memorial is based upon WIPP’s successful handling of transuranic waste in the past.

PRC/bb

Footnotes (1), (2) Wikipedia