



**Department of Energy**  
Washington, DC 20585

**MAR 23 2018**

Mr. Dennis Wilson, Chair  
Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board  
P.O. Box 2001  
Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37831

Dear Mr. Wilson:

Thank you for your recent letter regarding a proposed above ground storage capability at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) near Carlsbad, New Mexico. The Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) performed an initial evaluation of the potential of an above ground storage capability in 2016, and a Hazardous Waste Disposal Permit Modification Request was submitted to the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) for this initiative. The proposed new above ground storage capability could enable receipts to continue at times in which the underground facility is undergoing planned or unplanned maintenance activity or in instances where waste emplacement is delayed due to inclement weather.

Additionally, DOE is taking steps to position WIPP for extended operations and to enable ramp-up of waste emplacement in the underground. Two major capital projects will support these objectives: the Safety Significant Confinement Ventilation System and a new Utility Shaft. These two highly important capital projects are key to the future of WIPP's disposal capability and resumption of full operational capacity.

Thank you for your continued advice and support to the Office of Environmental Management. If you have any questions, please contact me or Mr. Dae Chung, Acting Associate Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Field Operations, at (202) 586-1426.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "JO" followed by a stylized flourish.

James M. Owendoff  
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for  
Environmental Management

