Written by Gallupsun Staff
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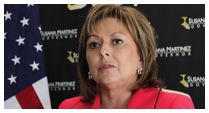

T*he Department of Energy and the State of New Mexico Agree to Projects for Safer Roads, Improved Water Infrastructure, and Enhanced Emergency Response in New Mexico*

WASHINGTON, D.C. —New Mexico Governor Susana Martinez and Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz released the terms of a $73 million settlement of the State's claims against the Department of Energy (DOE) and its contractors related to the February 2014 incidents at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in Carlsbad, New Mexico, including the associated activities at the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) on April 30.

"The Department of Energy and the State of New Mexico have worked together to identify projects at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant and the Los Alamos National Laboratory that are mutually beneficial and do not detract from cleanup at these sites," said Secretary Moniz. "I am pleased that we were able to find a solution that will allow the Department to focus on resuming operations at WIPP and improving our waste management operations, while providing benefit to the environment and to local communities in New Mexico."

"This agreement underscores the importance of WIPP and LANL as critical assets to our nation's security, our state's economy, and the communities in which they operate," said Governor Martinez. "The funds we will receive through the agreement will be used to continue ensuring the safety and success of these important facilities, the people who work there, and their local communities. I commend the Department of Energy for taking responsibility, and we look forward to continuing to work with the federal government to ensure the safety and success of LANL and WIPP."

Under this agreement, instead of paying fines DOE will provide support for a variety of mutually

beneficial and critical projects that will protect local communities and better safeguard transportation routes in New Mexico and around DOE sites, which will improve the safety and security of nuclear materials and the designated roads on which they travel.

• These projects, estimated at a total value of $73 million, include approximately:

• $34 million to improve roads and transportation routes around the WIPP site in Southeastern New Mexico;

• $12 million to improve transuranic waste transportation routes in and around Los Alamos;

• $10 million to upgrade critical water infrastructure in and around Los Alamos;

• $9.5 million to build engineering structures and increase monitoring capabilities around LANL to better manage storm water flows;

• $5 million to construct an emergency operations center in Carlsbad and provide enhanced training for emergency responders and mine rescue teams; and,

• $2.75 million to fund an independent triennial compliance and operational review.

• The agreement further provides for DOE and its contractors to implement the necessary corrective actions at both facilities in order to ensure safe and sustainable continued operations.

In December, NMED issued two Administrative Consent Orders to DOE that asserted 31 violations at WIPP and LANL in December 2014, resulting in NMED's request for $54,350,899 in civil penalties. Today's Settlement Agreement resolves those Consent Orders as well as any other potential DOE and DOE-contractor liabilities to the State of New Mexico arising out of the

February 2014 events at WIPP.

The agreement signed by NMED, DOE, Los Alamos National Security and Nuclear Waste Partnership today will bind the Parties' execution of a more detailed implementation plan in the weeks to come.