
Meeting Date: May 20, 2015
Staff Contact: Rick Shean, Water Quality Hydrologist

TITLE: R-15-7 - Resolution Requesting the U.S. Department of Energy to Respond to Assertions made by Citizen Action New Mexico Regarding the Existence of High-Level Radioactive Waste in the Sandia National Laboratory's Mixed Waste Landfill

ACTION: Recommend Approval

SUMMARY:

At the request of Councilor Rey Garduno, T-15-7 directs Water Authority staff to request the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and Sandia National Laboratories (Sandia) to respond to assertions recently made by Citizen Action of New Mexico regarding the contents of the Mixed Waste Landfill at a future Water Protection Advisory Board (WPAB) meeting.

During the public comment period of the February 2015 Water Authority Governing Board meeting, Mr. David McCoy, Executive Director of the local environmental advocacy group Citizen Action New Mexico (CANM), told the members that during a review of Sandia National Laboratory (Sandia) documents that CANM had acquired he had discovered that high-level radioactive waste was included with in the contents of Sandia's Mixed Waste Landfill (MWL). The MWL is a regulated solid waste management unit that contains classified and unclassified wastes made of chemical and radioactive material from lab experiments, and was covered with an engineered soil cover by the U.S. Department of Energy in 2009. The existence of high-level and transuranic waste are in contrast to previous claims by the DOE and the New Mexico Environment Department that the high-level waste was put in another storage facility. CANM asserts that the existence of this waste requires excavation of the MWL, and relocation of the high-level and transuranic wastes to a deep geologic repository.

The WPAB has listed the MWL as one of its top areas of focus for water quality protection in the Albuquerque area and desires to hear the DOE and Sandia response to the CANM claims about the contents in this impoundment.

FISCAL IMPACT:

None

1 5. CANM asserts that Sandia’s own records show that the MWL is leaking
2 radioactive waste, solvents and heavy metals from shallow, unlined pits and trenches
3 into Albuquerque’s drinking water aquifer;

4 6. CANM asserts that High-level nuclear waste such as that buried at MWL
5 requires deep geological disposal in an engineered facility, not shallow disposal in
6 unlined pits and trenches;

7 7. CANM asserts that MWL’s buried wastes lie above Albuquerque’s aquifer
8 stored in plastic bags, cardboard boxes, steel drums, canisters that will eventually
9 decay and corrode;

10 8. CANM asserts that Groundwater monitoring for the MWL dump has been
11 inadequate and does not support the decision to leave the wastes under a dirt cover;

12 9. CANM asserts that No complete inventory of the MWL wastes was made;

13 10. CANM asserts that Sandia possesses the technology to safely excavate
14 and store the MWL wastes.

15 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE WATER AUTHORITY:

16 Direct the WPAB to request a presentation and response from U.S Department
17 of Energy (DOE) to CANM’s assertions at a future meeting of the WPAB and follow-up
18 as appropriate.

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