

“News Release ”

For Immediate release April 30<sup>th</sup> 2018

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### **“We Don’t Want it” Says Group Concerned about Potential Radioactive Waste Impacts on Health, Safety and Existing Industries**

(Roswell, NM) A press conference held today at Eastern New Mexico University in Roswell featured speakers concerned about the health, safety and financial impacts of a controversial high-level radioactive waste storage project, proposed for a site between Hobbs and Carlsbad. The NRC will host an open house there today from 4-7 pm and a public meeting from 7-10 pm which will include public comment.

Holtec seeks “interim” storage of the nation’s deadly high-level radioactive waste, which they hope will be for 120 years. An unsafe de facto permanent dump site could be created and the waste might never move again if there is no political will or inadequate funding in the future. The company plans to transport 10,000 canisters of irradiated reactor fuel rods from around the county and store them near the surface in New Mexico, inviting disaster and creating massive risks. This is more waste than has been created by all U.S. nuclear reactors to date.

“The New Mexico dairy industry currently has a total economic impact exceeding \$5 billion annually, second only to oil and gas revenues in economic impact to our state,” said dairy owner and operator Al Squire. “The dairy industry currently provides employment for nearly 6,000 people directly and over 17,000 related jobs. A contamination event that released radionuclides into our towns or farmland, irrigation and drinking water, or into the air that we and our animals breathe could cause serious disruption of our ability to market highly perishable dairy products. An entire industry could be destroyed in the midst of widespread consumer panic that would most certainly follow such an accident.”

“If the waste comes here it might never move again. We could get stuck with an inadequate de facto permanent dump, not designed for the long-term, creating potential for disaster,” said Pastor Emeritus Gene Harbaugh, founder of Citizen’s with Questions in Carlsbad, New Mexico. Furthermore, the rail line infrastructure in this region is in poor condition, so transporting the very heavy dangerous waste would come with huge risks. Who would pay for infrastructure improvements and at what cost?”

“My family and I own and operate Graham Farms, a 100-acre pecan arm here in Roswell that we started in 1965, said Roswell native Jimi Gadzia. “Just the proximity of this deadly high-level

radioactive waste to our food crops could devastate our industry. Any leakage or accident could threaten our farm, our crop and our very way of life.”

“As an oilman, I am very concerned about the effect of a leak, whether accidental or through terrorism, on the oil and gas industry. No one would want radioactive oil, and no one would want to work in an area contaminated by radiation,” said Randy Prude, a Midland oilman and County Commissioner. “Midland County Texas passed a resolution opposing the risky transport of high-level radioactive waste through our county. I invite New Mexico counties to join with Dallas, Bexar, Nueces and Midland Counties and Lake Arthur, New Mexico by passing similar resolutions and sending them to the NRC.”

“Our lands are not the nation’s dumping ground for dangerous high-level radioactive waste, which brings risks for cancers, birth defects and deaths. Those who created the waste should take responsibility for it.” said Noel Marquez an artist from Artesia and co-founder of Alliance for Environmental Strategies, based in Southeast New Mexico. “It would be an extreme environmental and economic injustice for the rest of the nation to dump deadly radioactive waste on New Mexico. We’ve already been burdened with the contamination from uranium mining, processing, weapons and radioactive dumping that has been carried on the backs of New Mexico’s native peoples, affecting their health and lands. Now Holtec want to continue the contamination in the southeast area and Texas border area where the Hispanic population is the majority.”

Pecan farming has annual revenues of over \$213 million in the state. Chavez County alone produced over 4 million pounds of pecans. Tourism in Chavez county creates \$158 million in revenue employing 4,660 of 12.6% of the workforce in 2015. In Lea County tourism accounted for \$186 million in revenue, employing 6,000 or 10.85% of the workforce. Eddy and Lea Counties are the two richest oil and gas producing counties in the country. The industry employs over 8,600 people. Why risk more than 20 thousand existing jobs for 55 jobs at a dangerous radioactive waste storage site?” asked Jimi Gadzia.

“There is everything to lose with the plan to bring the nation’s high-level radioactive waste to New Mexico. The risks to health, safety, security and financial well-being are immense and people need to act now to stop this massive mistake that imperils people in New Mexico as well as along transport routes throughout the country,” said Karen Hadden, director of the Sustainable Energy and Economic Development (SEED) Coalition.

People should speak up at the public meeting tonight at 7 the Eastern New Mexico University Campus Union building, in Hobbs on May 1<sup>st</sup> at the Lea County Events Center and on May 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Eddy County Fire service training center. Comments can be submitted to the NRC until May 29, 2018.

More information can be found at [NoNuclearWaste.org](http://NoNuclearWaste.org)

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