

Whitlock wants WIPP land transfer made

By Bill Feather
Associated Press

CARLSBAD (AP) — Land for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant must be transferred from the Interior Department to the Department of Energy before tests on the proposed nuclear waste site can begin, a legislator said.

A National Academy of Sciences panel has recommended experiments be conducted to resolve concerns over gas generation.

The interim Legislative Radioactive Waste and Hazardous Waste Committee renewed a request Tuesday that New Mexico's congressional delegation pursue a bill to transfer 10,000 acres for WIPP from Interior to DOE.

"Before tests recommended by the NAS can proceed we must have a land withdrawal bill," said state Sen. Louis Whitlock, D-Carlsbad,

chairman of the committee. "That doesn't mean WIPP will open, only that the tests could proceed."

The committee unanimously adopted a motion by Sen. Manny Aragon, D-Albuquerque, that the committee chairman and vice chairman go to Washington to meet with the congressional delegation to discuss WIPP land withdrawal legislation. Whitlock said he, Rep. Bob Hawk, D-Albuquerque, and Sen. Steve Stoddard, R-Los Alamos, will make the trip soon.

Anita Lockwood, secretary of the state Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, also will be asked to go along to discuss the issue of designating WIPP transportation routes, Whitlock said.

He said WIPP is a pilot project to test a theory that radioactive waste can be safely disposed of in underground salt beds.

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