

New Mexico Environment Department's Response to Comments on the February 19, 2026 Draft NASA White Sands Test Facility Permit Modification

The 60-days comment period on the Draft (NASA WSTF) Permit Modification began on February 19, 2026 and ended on April 22, 2026. The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) received one comment from the public and two comments from the Permittee. The following index lists the members of the public that submitted comments. The next Table summarizes the comments received and NMED's responses.

Index Table for Public Comments Received on NASA WSTF's Draft Permit Modification

Commenter	Date Comments Were Submitted	Matrix Comment Numbers
NASA WSTF	4/15/2026	1-2
Ms. Judith Cook	2/20/2026	3

NOTE: The "Department" and "NMED" are used interchangeably throughout this document. Highlighted sentences (for example, highlighted sentences) denote proposed language to be added and/or the numbering of the comments is subject to change; while strikeout text (for example, ~~strikeout text~~) denotes what the commenter proposes should be deleted.

Comment Number	Draft Permit Section	Page	Comment	NMED Response
1	Table 4-1	Attachment 4, page 9	SWMU 13 is listed on Table 4-1 as ‘Removed from Permit’. NMED requested the history of this SWMU in February 2026. A summary of the history of SWMU 13 was included in NASA’s June 27, 2011 <i>400 Area Closure Investigation Work Plan, 400 Area Historical Information Summary (HIS), 400 Aspirator Discharge Pipes HIS, and 500 Fuel Storage Area HIS</i>. NMED provided the <i>Notice of Disapproval 400 Area Closure Investigation Work Plan</i> on September 21, 2011. NMED Comment 1 stated: <i>The Permittee has presented sufficient documentation and evidence that SWMU 13 (400 Area Aspirator Discharge Pipe) was mischaracterized in the mid-1980s.</i> <i>Aspirators are required to assist in cleaning test articles and systems after completion of a test and have been used at WSTF from 1964 to present. The aspirator system transported residual liquids or vapors remaining in the test article through vertical pipes and discharged over concrete under the Test Stands (TSs). Around 1980, a water-driven system was in use. The system discharged water containing fuel and oxidizer (within separate pipes) in concentrations in the parts per million (ppm) range into the concrete flume, which drained into the concrete lined 400 Area impoundments. There were two ADPs; one associated with Test Stand (TS) 401 and another associated with TS 403.</i> <i>Within the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) Preliminary Assessment and Draft RFI, the ADPs were confused with the WSTF 400 Area Large Altitude Simulation System (LASS). These two systems were not and are not connected. The LASS is used to create and maintain a vacuum in the test chamber, using steam, and two cool and remove exhaust from propulsion systems during testing, while the ADPs remove small amounts of fuel and oxidizer from test systems following testing. The LASS ejectors are approximately nine feet in diameter, whereas the ADPs were approximately two inches in diameter. Neither hazardous waste</i>	<u>NMED Response:</u> In response to the permittee’s request to remove SWMU 13 from the RCRA permit, the following documents were evaluated: Facility Comment on SWMU 13 designation (June 5, 2019 RCRA Permit Application): “Mischaracterized. Recommend removal of SWMU designation during the permit renewal process.” NMED Response: NMED previously acknowledged, in the September 21, 2011 Notice of Disapproval for the 400 Area Closure Investigation Work Plan, that the 400 Area Aspirator Discharge Pipe had been mischaracterized in the 1980s. This unit is not a SWMU and does not require investigation or corrective action. 2023 Permit Renewal: The unit was incorrectly retained in Table 4-1, with the unit description of “Removed from the Permit” and listed as “Not Applicable” for the due date of work plan Submittal. Permit Modification: NMED concurs and has moved SWMU 13 from Table 4-1 to Table 4-3 SWMUs and AOCs with Corrective Action Complete without Controls in Permit Attachment 4. See Page 17 of the modified Permit.

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			<i>nor hazardous substances were ever discharged to grade from the ADPs are previously reported.</i> SWMU 13 was included in NASA's June 5, 2019 RCRA <i>Permit Renewal Application</i> (Section 7.13, p. 24) with the recommendation that the 400 Area Aspirator Discharge Pipe not be included as a SWMU in future RCRA Permits. In the final Permit, the unit was listed in Table 4-1 as "Removed from Permit." NASA requests that SWMU 13 be moved from Table 4-1 to Table 4-3 as a unit with corrective action complete without need for controls.	
2.	Table 4-1	Attachment 4, formerly pages 26-27, currently on updated pages 16-17	Table 4-1 of the Draft Permit indicates that SWMUs 11, 12, 18, 20, 48, 52, and 53, have "60 or 90 days prior to closure" listed as the Work Plan Submittal Date. Typically, Closure and Post Closure are RCRA terms used for Closure of HWMUs, not SWMUs. To avoid future confusion, NASA requests the Work Plan Submittal Date language be revised to state "90 days prior to start of corrective action, a work plan will be submitted" for SWMUs 11, 12, 18, 20, 48, 52, and 53.	NMED's Response: NMED agrees that the terms "closure" and "post-closure" are specific to RCRA-permitted HWMUs and are not appropriate for describing work plans submitted under corrective action requirements. The statement "a work plan will be submitted" is unnecessary in the context of Table 4-1, which has a column heading denoting the entry as the work plan submittal date. Permit Modification: NMED has revised the text for SWMUs 11, 12, 18, 20, 48, 52, and 53 on Table 4-1, Permit Attachment 4, pages 16 and 17 to "90 days prior to initiation of corrective action."
3.	Information on the contamination, comments by Judith Cook, February 20, 2026		I am new to the area and was just advised of this situation. Could we get more detail details, please?.. the effects that it may have on the area, particularly since this is a high wind situation this time of year will this affect it further. I also have small animal (any effect to the ground or areas that I need to be concerned about when walking my pet)	NMED's Response: Thank you for your comment and for sharing your concerns as a new resident in the area. Below is some additional information that may help address your questions about possible health or environmental effects. Septic Tanks. The facility had several septic tanks that were used for regular sanitary waste. These tanks (Units 21, 23-27, and several unnamed tanks) never stored hazardous waste. Because no hazardous materials were handled in these tanks, they do not pose a risk to people, animals, or the environment. One septic tank (Unit 22) did have some contamination in the soil about six to eight feet underground. Soil tests were compared to health-based screening levels for both people and wildlife. The results showed the contaminant levels were well below anything that would

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				be considered a concern, and the results indicated no unacceptable risks to the human health and the environment. Former small arms firing ranges. Two other areas (Units 30 and 31) were old small arms firing ranges where spent ammunition had accumulated. These areas mainly contained metals commonly found in bullets, such as lead, copper, and zinc. There was no evidence that hazardous waste was stored or disposed of at these firing ranges. All spent ammunition was removed from both areas, and the soil was sampled afterward. Test results showed that the remaining soil contamination met protective levels and did not indicate any impact to groundwater. Overall Determination Based on historic use of sanitary waste, and/or cleanup activities and soil testing, NMED determined that these sites do not pose an unacceptable risk to people, pets, wildlife, or the environment. Walking pets or spending time outdoors in the area is not expected to pose any risk. <u>Permit Modification:</u> None.