FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Snake River Alliance Touring Southern Idaho to Discuss Nuclear Waste, WIPP & INL

Sites across the US Department of Energy (DOE) nuclear weapons complex have sent more than 11,890 shipments of plutonium waste to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in New Mexico, the only deep geologic repository in the country.

Far and away the largest shipper has been the Idaho National Laboratory. That’s because INL was the dumping ground for plutonium (or transuranic – TRU) waste from the Rocky Flats, Colorado weapons plant, which meant the largest inventory of TRU waste ended up above the Snake River Aquifer. Before 1970, the waste was buried in unlined pits and trenches. After 1970, it was placed on a giant above-ground asphalt pad and covered with dirt.

But WIPP shut down after two serious accidents last February spread radioactive contamination through a third of the underground facility and contaminated 22 workers after radioactivity traveled half a mile up to the surface. Beatrice Brailsford of the Snake River Alliance cautions, “efforts to reopen WIPP safely will be expensive, time-consuming, and may not succeed.”

The Snake River Alliance is touring Southern Idaho to share the latest information about what’s happening at WIPP and what it means for the Idaho National Laboratory and other sites. The panel of nuclear watchdog activists includes Don Hancock, Southwest Research and Information Center, New Mexico; Beatrice Brailsford, Snake River Alliance, Idaho; and Tom Clements, Savannah River Site Watch, South Carolina.

The schedule of events follows:

Monday, March 2 – Pocatello
• 6 pm: Presentation & Dinner at Portneuf Valley Brewing, 615 South 1st Ave. $10; RSVP required by Feb 27 to bbrailsford@snakeriveralliance.org or 208-233-7212

Wednesday, March 4 – Boise
• 1:30 pm: Presentation to Public Meeting of Energy, Environment & Technology Committee of the Idaho Legislature, Idaho State Capitol, 700 West Jefferson Street, Room EW41
• 7 pm: Presentation & Refreshments in the Majority Caucus Room, the Idaho State Capitol, Room W433

Thursday, March 5 – Ketchum
• 2 pm: Presentation & Refreshments, Ketchum Community Library, 415 Spruce Avenue
• 6 pm: Presentation & Reception, Kirk Anderson’s Art Gallery, 115 Northwood Way. RSVP to lford@snakeriveralliance.org or 208-344-9161