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Environment Department, Freeport-McMoran Tyrone Inc. Reach Settlement for Tyrone Copper Mine in Grant County

(Santa Fe, NM) The New Mexico Environment Department and Freeport-McMoran Tyrone Inc. have settled a longstanding appeal associated with closure requirements for the Tyrone copper mine in Grant County, N.M.

The settlement addresses longstanding disagreements between Freeport and the department regarding key closure requirements for final disposition of leach stockpiles and waste rock piles at the mine.

“The settlement provides the citizens of Grant County and New Mexico assurance that groundwater quality will be addressed in an appropriate and responsible manner,” said New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry. “The department and FMI can now spend resources protecting water quality rather than on disputes that drain the state’s limited resources.”

Those closure requirements are critical aspects of controlling acidic seepage from waste rock and leach stockpiles that have contaminated groundwater beneath the mine. Also included in the agreement are abatement requirements to address existing groundwater contamination, and a requirement that Freeport employ full technological controls at new facilities to prevent future groundwater contamination. Additional closure requirements that will apply after the Tyrone mine ceases to operate will be specified in a discharge permit issued by the department.

The department and Freeport have been engaged in nearly a decade of administrative and judicial proceedings under the New Mexico Water Quality Act, beginning with the department’s issuance of a 2002 comprehensive closure permit for the Tyrone mine and a subsequent 2003 appeal by Freeport’s predecessor, Phelps Dodge Mining Co.

For more information, call Marissa Stone Bardino at (505) 827-0314.

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