



BILL RICHARDSON  
Governor  
DIANE DENISH  
Lieutenant Governor

NEW MEXICO  
ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

*Office of the Secretary*

Harold Runnels Building  
1190 Saint Francis Drive (87505)  
PO Box 5469, Santa Fe, NM 87502-5469  
Phone (505) 827-2855 Fax (505) 827-2836  
www.nmenv.state.nm.us



RON CURRY  
Secretary  
SARAH COTTRELL  
Deputy Secretary

July 23, 2010  
For Immediate Release

Contact: Marissa Stone Bardino, NMED Communications Director  
(505) 827-0314 or (505) 231-0475

## **Environment Secretary Urges EPA to Review 2008 Report Highlighting Need to Prevent Impacts of Off Road Vehicles on Surface Waters of State Forests**

(Santa Fe, NM) New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry sent a letter to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 6 Administrator Al Armendariz today urging him to review a 2008 report confirming the need to better manage unauthorized off road vehicle use in New Mexico's National Forests.

The report, submitted to the New Mexico legislature in December 2008 on behalf of Governor Bill Richardson and several New Mexico state agencies, includes recommendations consistent with NMED's desire to assess impacts of the vehicles on water quality and to identify areas where ORV usage has the greatest impact.

"In the arid southwest, a significant percentage of the state's water supply originates in headwater streams on federally managed National Forests lands," Secretary Curry states in the letter (attached). "It is imperative that the federal government assist in efforts to assess and mitigate impacts to water quality associated with federal land management policies."

The New Mexico Legislature passed Senate Joint Memorial 40 in February 2008 requesting that a study be conducted on off-road motorized vehicle use. The state departments of Energy Minerals and Natural Resources, Tourism, Agriculture, Game and Fish, and New Mexico State University's Range Improvement Task Force conducted the study. The study can be viewed on EMNRD's Web site at <http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/main/sjm40/> under the topic "The Senate Joint Memorial 40 Report."

Impacts associated with off trail ORV use include damage to soil structure and vegetation, increased runoff and decreased infiltration, increased sediment yield, and reducing effective habitat, Secretary Curry's letter states. The findings of the agencies and researchers involved in this effort confirm and emphasize the need to assess the degree of water pollution associated with ORV use and to optimize monitoring and assessment procedures so that connections can be made between motor-derived pollutants and their sources.

Secretary Curry's letter also requests that the administrator follow-up on a previous letter sent earlier this month to EPA requesting assistance in addressing water quality impacts from the use of unauthorized off road vehicles in the the Jemez Mountains within the Santa Fe National Forest. Curry requested \$150,000 in EPA

funding in the previous letter to conduct an assessment of water quality impacts caused by ORV and ATV use in that area.

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

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