



Environment Department

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NEWS RELEASE

July 13, 2011

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Environment Department to Investigate Surface Water and Ground Water Contamination at Continental Mine

Santa Fe, N.M.- The New Mexico Environment Department's Ground Water Quality Bureau received a Stage 1 Abatement Plan proposal from Freeport McMoRan Copper and Gold – Cobre Mining Company (Cobre) to investigate surface and ground water contamination at the Continental Mine. The facility is located along Fiero Road, approximately 3 miles north of Hanover, in Grant County, NM.

Monitoring wells at the facility showed concentrations of total dissolved solids (TDS), sulfate, aluminum, copper, cobalt, cadmium, manganese, nickel, zinc, in excess of New Mexico ground water standards during past investigations. The depth to ground water at the site ranges from 0 to 450 feet. Cobre's current discharge permit for the Continental Mine requires that an Abatement Plan proposal be submitted to NMED.

The Stage 1 Abatement Plan submitted by Cobre proposes collecting soil, surface water and ground water samples and installing additional ground water monitoring wells to define the extent of soil and water pollution.

The New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission regulations require responsible parties to remediate surface and ground water pollution. After the investigation is completed, a Stage 2 Abatement Plan proposal will be submitted to NMED. A public notice of the Stage 2 Abatement Plan proposal will be issued by Cobre within 30 days of submitting the proposal to NMED. The public will have an opportunity to comment on the Stage 2 Abatement Plan proposal and request a hearing or meeting. NMED will seek written comments from the public within 60 days of determining that the cleanup proposal is administratively complete.

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