



NEWS RELEASE

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Source Water Protection Plan Completed for Peña Blanca Water and Sanitation District (PBWSD)

(Santa Fe, NM) - This fall, the Peña Blanca Water and Sanitation District (PBWSD) and New Mexico Rural Water Association (NMRWA) collaborated with New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) Drinking Water Bureau to develop the first PBWSD Source Water Protection Plan. Access to clean, safe drinking water is a key component to a healthy and viable community. Protecting sources of drinking water from contamination and depletion can prevent adverse human health, ecological and economic consequences.

The PBWSD Source Water Protection Plan establishes measures to monitor and protect its wellhead and assembles valuable information to serve as a reference about the water. The Peña Blanca Well produces high quality drinking water, and received recognition for its water from the NMRWA in 2008, 2009, and 2011.

Development of the Source Water Protection Plan began in March of 2014 and was signed by the PBWSD Board of Directors in September 2014. The Board was very pleased with the result. "The Source Water Protection Plan is a valuable tool for our District," said Karman Kleinschmidt, Board President. "This document summarizes known facts and sets up future milestones for action. We are very grateful for the work of our partners NMRWA and NMED. We couldn't have done it without them!"

Peña Blanca, located in the middle Rio Grande Valley between Kewa (Santo Domingo) Pueblo and Pueblo de Cochiti, is a community with about 700 residents serving 137 water users. The Peña Blanca Source Water Protection Team included representatives from PBWSD, NMRWA, NMED, and Pueblo de Cochiti. The Source Water Protection Area is a 1-mile radius around the Peña Blanca Well and includes Pueblo de Cochiti land.

PBWSD and its Source Water Protection Team will monitor groundwater levels, water quality, and potential sources of contamination within the Protection Area. PBWSD has established a 200-foot radius *Wellhead Protection Zone*, around the well and will exercise its authority to prevent new potential sources of contamination within this zone. PBWSD will also establish Wellhead Protection Zones around future water supply wells. It has already assessed potential sources of contamination at several possible locations for a second well.

Some residents of the Peña Blanca community are members of the PBWSD; others rely on private wells for their source of drinking water. As part of the PBWSD Source Water Protection Plan, NMED, PBWSD, and NMRWA will organize a Water Fair in 2015 to provide the community with educational materials on topics such as local drinking water sources and how to protect them, abandoned wells, septic tanks, and other potential sources of contamination.

NMRWA's and NMED's Source Water Protection Programs work with water systems throughout the state to provide technical assistance for drinking water protection and development and implementation of source water protection plans.

For more information about the PBWSD Source Water Protection Plan, contact Sandra Gutierrez at office@pbwsd.com. For information about NMRWA's Source Water Protection Program, contact Martha Graham martha@nmrwa.org. For information about NMED's Source Water Protection Program, contact David Torres at david.torres@state.nm.us.

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