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Environment Department Makes Approximately \$1 Million Available to Help Protect New Mexico Rivers and Streams

(Santa Fe, NM) —The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) will be distributing approximately \$1 million in the coming months to local governments, non-governmental groups and private citizens to help them with projects that prevent pollution from entering New Mexico waterways. These funds will be distributed by NMED's Surface Water Quality Bureau to qualified projects that help fight nonpoint source pollution. Nonpoint source pollution is defined as pollution attributed to runoff or other sources that cannot be traced to a single point of origin. These funds come from the federal Clean Water Act Section 319(h).

“In addition to our strong regulatory commitment to protecting all of New Mexico’s surface waters, NMED is also engaged in cooperative efforts with communities across the state,” said NMED Secretary Ron Curry. “This funding is one of the most direct ways NMED has to help communities protect their own rivers and streams. These grassroots efforts are having a profound impact.”

In the past two years NMED has awarded approximately \$2.6 million for these watershed projects. Projects undertaken have included efforts to protect and restore the Animas and San Juan Rivers in Northwestern New Mexico, the Gallinas River in Northern New Mexico, and Mangas Creek in the Southwest.

To announce this year’s drive and help solicit applications for project funding, the Department will hold a series of public meetings in August. Check the SWQB’s website (www.nmenv.state.nm.us/swqb) for dates and locations, or call 505-476-1866 for more information.

This year, NMED intends to focus the funding on projects in areas that contain stream segments with approved Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for pollutants or where a TMDL will be written within the next six months. A focus will also be placed on areas with completed Watershed Restoration Action Strategies (WRASs). This will allow for the efforts to have measurable results on a waterbody where NMED has noted a need for improvement.

A TMDL is a watershed budget for pollutant influx to a watercourse. TMDLs are developed by NMED with the cooperation of local water users and citizens. These planning documents provide pollution reduction targets and guidance on how to reduce pollutant loads.

NMED will issue Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for these projects on August 1, 2005. These RFPs will be available at www.nmenv.state.nm.us/swqb or by request. Proposals are due by September 16.

The RFPs are separated into two initiatives. One RFP will fund the creation of watershed groups that will address TMDLs in the future. A second RFP will provide financial support for established watershed groups that are ready to implement on-the-ground projects to address TMDLs. All governmental, non-governmental, or private citizens are encouraged to apply.

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