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**State Environment Department Works with U.S. Forest Service  
to Improve Water Quality in Streams, Rivers and Lakes**

(Santa Fe, NM) – The State Environment Department and U.S. Forest Service have agreed to revise efforts to protect watersheds containing streams, rivers and lakes not meeting clean water, natural resource and public health goals.

The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) and the Southwestern Region of the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service (Forest Service) have signed a five-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to replace a similar document created ten years earlier. The updated MOU is intended to encourage the Forest Service, in collaboration with the NMED, to use new processes for watershed restoration in New Mexico watersheds not meeting clean water, natural resource and public health goals; and, to sustain healthy conditions in other watersheds in the state. A watershed is the land area that catches rain or snow and drains water into a particular stream, river or lake.

The New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission has designated the Forest Service as the management agency for water quality protection on National Forest Service lands within the context of the New Mexico Water Quality Management Plan and the New Mexico Nonpoint Source Management Program, which is administered by the NMED.

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The MOU states that the NMED and the Forest Service agree to:

- set priorities for planning and developing watershed restoration strategies for watersheds not meeting clean water or natural resource goals through the implementation of Best Management Practices to improve or protect water quality on Forest Service lands;
- share data, data analysis, and watershed assessment results to improve future planning and management activities and to validate existing water quality criteria and designated uses;
- develop the data into proposed standards revisions for consideration by the Commission during regularly scheduled water quality standards reviews; and
- work together to acquire watershed protection and restoration grant funding.

This MOU is part of an on-going effort by the NMED to create partnerships among agencies and the public to implement a collaborative watershed approach to restore watersheds in New Mexico.

For additional information, contact Peter Monahan, Program Manager, WPS/SWQB/NMED, at (505) 827-1041, or Gretchen Barkmann, Forest Service Liaison to NMED, at (505) 476-3799.

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