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For Immediate Release

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Environment Department Receives Plans to Investigate Groundwater Contamination at DeGroot Dairy near Roswell

(Santa Fe, NM) – The New Mexico Environment Department received a Stage 1 Abatement Plan proposal to investigate soil and groundwater pollution at the DeGroot Dairy located in Roswell.

The Department's Ground Water Quality Bureau required DeGroot Dairy, located at 3715 Lovers Lane, to submit the plan to address soil and groundwater pollution associated with its operation. The purpose of a Stage 1 investigation is to define the extent of soil and groundwater pollution at a site where groundwater contamination has been identified. New Mexico's Water Quality Control Commission's regulations require responsible parties to remediate groundwater pollution.

Wastewater from DeGroot Dairy is discharged to two evaporative lagoons and then applied to crop land for nutrient uptake. Groundwater in the shallow aquifer is monitored regularly through wells at the site and is contaminated with nitrate, chloride and Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) at levels exceeding New Mexico groundwater quality standards. State groundwater quality standards are 10, 250 and 1,000 parts per million (mg/L) for nitrate, chloride and TDS. The DeGroot Dairy Stage 1 Abatement Plan proposal shows current maximum concentrations of 69 mg/L nitrate, 5,700 mg/L chloride, and 11,900 mg/L of TDS in groundwater.

The dairy proposes an investigation of soil and groundwater pollution through the installation of eleven soil boring and two monitoring wells. Once a Stage 1 Abatement Plan has been completed, a proposed Stage 2 Abatement Plan will be submitted to NMED outlining proposed actions to clean-up the pollution which was identified as a result of the Stage 1 investigation. The public will have an opportunity to comment on the Stage 2 Plan and may also request a hearing. The department will seek public comment within 90 days of receiving the plan.

Monitoring data available to the Department shows that more than 65 percent of dairies in New Mexico have polluted groundwater beneath their facilities. Proposed discharge regulations specific to the dairy industry address environmental issues such as how groundwater is best protected, the lining of wastewater lagoons, and monitoring well requirements.

The Department drafted new regulations for dairies as a result of legislation passed in the last regular session of the New Mexico Legislature in 2009. Senate Bill 206 implemented changes to the New Mexico Water

Quality Act and required the WQCC to adopt new regulations that identify specific requirements for the discharge of dairy wastewater to protect groundwater quality. The regulations, which the dairy industry requested to provide more certainty in laws governing dairies, are available at:

<http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/gwb/documents/RevisedDairyRegs.pdf>.

Those regulations include requirements for protective liners for wastewater storage lagoons and an early warning system of sentry wells to monitor and protect underground aquifers against pollution. According to the regulation development schedule approved by the WQCC, a public hearing before the WQCC is scheduled to begin April 13, 2010. Public notice regarding the public hearing and hearing participation was published Jan. 29, 2010.

A copy of the proposed Stage 1 Abatement Plan is available by contacting:

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