



BILL RICHARDSON
GOVERNOR

State of New Mexico
ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT
Office of the Secretary
Harold Runnels Building
1190 St. Francis Drive, P.O. Box 26110
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502-6110
Telephone (505) 827-2855



RON CURRY
SECRETARY

CINDY PADILLA
DEPUTY SECRETARY

June 29, 2007
For Immediate Release

Contact: Marissa Stone, NMED Communications Director
Telephone: (505) 827-0314 or (505) 231-0475

Recent Tests Show Hobbs City Wells are Clean after New Mexico Environment Department Completed \$4.4 Million Cleanup of Gasoline Contamination
Cleanup Restores Portion of Ogallala Aquifer

(Santa Fe, N.M.) The New Mexico Environment Department's Petroleum Storage Tank Bureau completed a \$4.4 million cleanup of 25 acres of petroleum-contaminated groundwater in the City of Hobbs that had forced the closure of four city wells. The project is NMED's biggest petroleum cleanup to date.

The work restored contaminated water in the wells and the Ogallala Aquifer, the city's drinking water source. Work involved removing three forms of gasoline from the aquifer — 135,000 gallons of gasoline that was 1.8 feet high and covered an area of five acres, 10 acres of vapor gasoline and 25 acres of dissolved gasoline or gasoline contaminated groundwater.

"I am proud of the department's Petroleum Storage Tank Bureau's hard work on this project, which took several years to complete," said New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry. "This is one of the most rewarding types of projects we undertake. It is gratifying to see that the city's threatened water source is now clean for Hobbs' residents."

Money for the project came from the state's Corrective Action Fund, which pays for similar cleanups around New Mexico. The groundwater was contaminated by leaks from old gas stations southwest of the city's Snyder Park.

Inspectors discovered benzene, a compound found in gasoline, in Hobbs City Well 9 during a routine check of the well in 1988. Further investigations showed that a plume of liquid gasoline covered about five acres of the aquifer, gasoline vapor contaminated an area of about 10 acres and a dissolved gasoline compound covered about 25 acres. That contamination threatened the Hobbs City Well field at Snyder Park. The city closed four wells to prevent gasoline from contaminating the city water supply.

NMED used two methods to remove the three forms of gasoline from groundwater during an aggressive cleanup program that lasted between 1994 and 2002.

One method involved extracting gasoline and contaminated groundwater from 25 city wells and burning the gasoline on site. That water, which was then treated to remove gasoline compounds, was subsequently re-injected into the aquifer.

Another method involved vacuuming contaminated air from the ground and burning it on site. That method involved using two separate soil-vapor extraction systems consisting of 87 vapor extraction wells to remove the vapors from the soil.

After those methods of removing the contamination were exhausted, monitored natural attenuation was used to complete the cleanup. Monitored natural attenuation involves close observation of groundwater conditions by regular monitoring while naturally occurring processes, such as biodegradation and dilution, remove residual contamination.

PSTB has been monitoring the groundwater since 2002. Recent tests show all contaminants associated with the gasoline release have been below the New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission's groundwater standards. PSTB will continue to monitor for another year to confirm that the groundwater is clean.

Today, the Ogallala Aquifer is clean under Snyder Park. The previously contaminated four city wells are also back in production.

For more information, call Marissa Stone at (505) 827-0314 or (505) 231-0475.

###