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## **Environment Department Updates Policy for Use of Reclaimed Wastewater to Protect Health, Lessen Demands on Potable Resources**

(Santa Fe, NM) — Already used on golf courses and public parks around the state, irrigation with reclaimed wastewater offsets demands on limited drinking water resources. A new Policy recently issued by the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) will promote that use while also protecting human health and the environment.

“In this time of drought we need to find ways to make our water go as far as possible; to be efficient and effective with conservation and reuse policies,” said NMED Secretary Ron Curry. “The state depends on this department to ensure that water quality is protected. By doing this job well we can also expand the amount of water that can safely be drawn upon. Wastewater that has been thoroughly treated and disinfected is safe to irrigate with, so long as our Policy is followed.”

NMED’s new Policy for the use of reclaimed domestic wastewater—water that has passed through a permitted wastewater treatment plant—includes strict provisions to protect human health and limit exposure. These include limits on ponding and spraying, increased monitoring requirements and the mandatory posting of bilingual notices identifying application areas. This is the first update to the reuse policy since it was issued in 1985.

“A lot has changed since 1985,” said Secretary Curry. “The new Policy reflects the knowledge of wastewater treatment and public health information we have gathered since ‘Back to the Future’ was at the Cineplex.”

New Mexico recognizes four categories of reclaimed wastewater (Classes 1A, 1B, 2 and 3). The Policy establishes specific quality standards, operational requirements and approved uses for each category. Broadly speaking, the quality standards for Classes 1B, 2 and 3 assume a minimum of conventional secondary wastewater treatment plus disinfection. Class 1A (the highest standard) adds treatment to remove fine organic matter and other substances that interfere with the highest level of disinfection.

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This additional treatment allows Class 1A reclaimed wastewater to be used adjacent to dwelling units or occupied establishments and many other uses.

This policy was developed through the input of an NMED organized workgroup that included representatives from the Department of Health, Municipal League, water and wastewater engineers and the regulated community.

While NMED feels the standards set forth in this Policy are protective of human health and the environment, the Policy does not prevent communities from adopting more stringent requirements.

For further information contact Jon Goldstein, Communications Director, NMED at (505) 827-0314.

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