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Immediate Release

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### **Environment Department Issues \$45,000 Penalty for Illegal Septage Dumping Near Abiquiu**

(Santa Fe, NM) – The New Mexico Environment Department has issued a Compliance Order assessing a civil penalty of \$45,000 to Reggie’s Septic Service for illegally dumping septage near the Rio Chama, east of Abiquiu. The dumping took place on at least three occasions in January 2006. An NMED inspector witnessed one of the incidents.

“When people pay to have their septic tanks pumped, they expect the waste to be handled properly, not just dumped somewhere where it poses a threat to public health and water quality,” NMED Secretary Ron Curry said. “Illegal septage dumping is frequently reported in Rio Arriba County and in other areas of the state, as well. We intend to pursue these cases aggressively because they pose a serious threat to our scarce water resources and to public health.”

NMED cited Reggie’s Septic Service for two violations of state Water Quality Control Commission Regulations. One of the violations was for failing to report the discharge of a contaminant and failing to take corrective action. The other was for discharging without a permit, for which a civil penalty of \$15,000 was assessed for each of the three days the dumping occurred. In addition to assessing civil penalties, the Compliance Order requires Reggie’s Septic Service to clean up the dumpsite, which is on private property belonging to a third party.

Septage refers to the contents of septic tanks, which must be periodically pumped and the contents disposed of at approved facilities. Septage contains pathogens that can pose a public health threat and nitrogen compounds that can contaminate rivers and ground water.

Secretary Curry encourages people who see illegal dumping to contact their local NMED field office or call the NMED toll-free complaint hotline at (866) 428-6535.

Reggie’s Septic Service has 30 days to respond to the order and can request a hearing. For further information or for a copy of the Compliance Order, contact Adam Rankin, NMED Communications director, at (505) 827-0314.

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