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Immediate Release

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### **Environment Department Proposes Action to Improve Water Quality in Rio Hondo; Meeting Planned for Public Comment**

(Santa Fe, NM) –The Twining Water and Sanitation District in the Village of Taos Ski Valley has proposed an expansion of their wastewater treatment plant to meet the demands associated with the ski season. In order to address the impact this will have on local water quality, the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED), Surface Water Quality Bureau (SWQB) has developed a draft plan or “total maximum daily load” (TMDL) document for the Rio Hondo Watershed, defined as South Fork of the Rio Hondo to Lake Fork Creek.

A TMDL is a planning document that establishes specific goals for water quality conditions. It includes current pollution loadings, reduction estimates for pollutants currently exceeding state surface water quality standards, and information on probable sources of pollution that need to be addressed to restore or protect the health of the waterbody. In this case, elevated levels of nutrients associated with increased effluent discharge can have detrimental effects on aquatic ecosystems.

NMED will hold a public meeting to summarize the information and to provide a forum for interested parties to ask questions and provide comments. This meeting will be held in **Taos on Tuesday, March 15, 2005, from 6-7 p.m. at the Juan Gonzales Agricultural Center (Chamisa Rd. off Hwy 68).**

NMED is also accepting public comment on this draft TMDL until March 28, 2005 at 5:00 p.m. MDT. Written comments for inclusion in the public record may be submitted at the meeting or by writing to Shelly Lemon, NMED SWQB, Room N2163, P.O. Box 26110, Santa Fe, NM, 87502; fax number: (505) 827-0160; or e-mail: <[shelly\\_lemon@nmenv.state.nm.us](mailto:shelly_lemon@nmenv.state.nm.us)> (if possible, please submit an electronic copy in addition to paper).

The SWQB will approach the NM Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC) at their regular monthly meeting, tentatively set for May 10, 2005, to request approval of the final draft Rio Hondo TMDL. Following the close of the public comment period, copies of the final revised draft document as amended will be available to the public upon request and on the SWQB website at least 10 days prior to the WQCC meeting referenced above.

For more information, or to request a copy of the TMDL, contact Shelly Lemon, at the address provided above, or by calling (505) 827-2814. The draft TMDLs are also posted on the SWQB’s homepage, which can be found at: <http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/swqb/index.html>

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