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Immediate Release

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Environment Department Proposes Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) and Removal of Several Impairments in the Rio Puerco Watershed

NOTICE OF A 30-DAY PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD AND COMMUNITY MEETING

(Santa Fe, NM) — The New Mexico Environment Department's (NMED) Surface Water Quality Bureau (SWQB) is inviting the public to comment on a draft "total maximum daily load" (TMDL) document for the Rio Puerco watershed, defined as the Rio Puerco (Rio Grande to the headwaters) and its tributaries. Draft TMDLs in this document include: Sedimentation/Siltation - Rio Puerco (Arroyo Chijuilla to Northern Boundary Cuba). This document also includes rationales for the removal of several impairments in the Rio Puerco Watershed from the 2006-2008 Integrated Clean Water Act (CWA) 303(d)/305(b) list including: Sedimentation/Siltation and Nutrients – San Pablo Creek (Rio Puerco to the headwaters), Sedimentation/Siltation and Temperature - Rio Puerco (Northern boundary Cuba to headwaters), and Temperature - Rio Puerco (Arroyo Chijuilla to Northern Boundary Cuba).

A TMDL is a planning document that establishes specific goals to meet water quality standards in water bodies where pollutant limits are exceeded. It includes current pollution loadings, reduction estimates for pollutants, information on probable sources of pollution, and suggestions to restore or protect the health of the waterbody.

The 30-day comment period on this document will open March 17, 2006 and will end April 17, 2006 at 5:00 p.m. MDT. Formal comments for inclusion in the public record must be submitted to the SWQB in writing, to **Jennifer Ickes at mailing address: NMED SWQB, Room N2109, P.O. Box 26110, Santa Fe, NM, 87502; fax number (505) 827-0101; or e-mail: <Jennifer.ickes@state.nm.us>** (if possible, please submit an electronic copy in addition to paper).

The SWQB will approach the New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC) at their regular monthly meeting, tentatively set for May 9, 2006, to request approval of the final draft of the Rio Puerco Watershed TMDL document. 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 Web site at least 10 days prior to the WQCC meeting referenced above. For more information, or to request a copy of the TMDL, contact Jennifer Ickes at the address provided above, or by calling (505) 827-0101. The draft TMDLs are also posted on the Surface Water Quality Bureau's Web site, which can be found at: <http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/swqb>.

A public meeting will be held to summarize the information and to provide a forum for interested parties to ask questions and provide comment. The meeting date is approximately halfway through the comment period to allow the public time to review the document and generate questions or comments. The meeting will be held in Cuba, NM, on April 4, 2006, from 6-7 p.m. at the Senior Citizens Center (on Cordova Rd., off HWY 550). Formal written comments for inclusion in the public record may be submitted at this meeting as well.

Persons having a disability and needing help in being a part of this hearing process should contact Judy Bentley by March 24, 2006, at the New Mexico Environment Department, Personnel Services Bureau, P.O. Box 26110, 1190 St. Francis Drive, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 87502, telephone 505-827-9872. TDY users please access her number via the New Mexico Relay Network at 1-800-659-8331.

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