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Immediate Release

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Environment Department Provides Extension of Public Comment Period for Proposed Revisions to Water Quality Standards

(Santa Fe, NM) — The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED), Surface Water Quality Bureau (SWQB) today announced an extended comment period for its triennial review of surface water quality standards (20.6.4 NMAC – Standards for Interstate and Intrastate Surface Waters). This review is an opportunity for the public to comment on the standards and the State's surface water protection. States are required by the federal Clean Water Act to review surface water quality standards at least once every three years.

A series of public meetings were held throughout the State in recent weeks for public participation in the review. In response to requests provided at the meetings, the public comment period on these draft revisions has been extended for 30 days. **The comment period will now end on May 7, 2003 at 5:00 p.m. MST. Formal comments for inclusion in the public record must be submitted in writing to the SWQB address below, attention John Montgomery** (if possible, please submit an electronic copy as well; the SWQB will provide a confirmation of receipt for electronic mail submissions).

Following this public participation process, the State will hold a public hearing to review applicable standards and, as appropriate, to modify and adopt standards.

Some of the revisions being considered include re-organizing the document to make it easier to read, updating various surface water quality criteria in accordance with newly published U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guidance, and reclassifying and updating other criteria in order to be more protective of the livestock watering, irrigation, and wildlife habitat.

For additional information, contact John Montgomery, Standards Coordinator, SWQB, at (505) 476-3671, john_montgomery@nmenv.state.nm.us; Stephanie Stringer, Outreach Coordinator, SWQB, at (505) 827-0418, stephanie_stringer@nmenv.state.nm.us; or mail either SWQB representative at P. O. Box 26110, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502. The draft revisions to the surface water quality standards are available upon request, free of charge, and can be downloaded from the Surface Water Quality Bureau's website: <http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/swqb/>

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