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Environment Department Receives Plans to Investigate Groundwater Contamination at Bonestroo Dairy near Portales

(Santa Fe, NM) – The New Mexico Environment Department received a Stage 1 Abatement Plan proposal from Bonestroo Dairy north of Portales to investigate soil and groundwater pollution at the facility.

The department's Ground Water Quality Bureau required the dairy, which is four miles north of Portales on N.M. 467, to submit the plan to address that pollution.

“The dairy has submitted a plan to the department to address pollution that has impacted groundwater quality” said Water and Waste Management Division Director Marcy Leavitt. “We recently issued a revised draft of regulations that will govern requirements for the state’s dairies to prevent such pollution from happening in the future.”

Groundwater at the dairy is contaminated with nitrate to a level exceeding New Mexico groundwater quality standards. The state groundwater quality standard for nitrate is 10 milligrams per liter. Current groundwater quality reporting from the Bonestroo Dairy indicates maximum dissolved concentrations of nitrate at 20 mg/L.

Dairy wastewater at the dairy is discharged to two synthetically-lined lagoons and applied to crops north of the dairy through a pivot irrigation system.

The dairy proposes to develop a Site Investigation Work Plan to address the horizontal and vertical extent of contamination. The work plan will be developed from a review of on-site water quality and land application data, mapping of existing wells and water quality within a one-mile radius, mapping of the water table surface and literature review to determine the direction and rate of contaminant flow.

The purpose of a Stage 1 investigation is to define the extent of soil and groundwater pollution at a site where groundwater contamination has been identified. New Mexico’s water quality regulations require responsible parties to remediate groundwater pollution. Once a Stage 1 Abatement Plan has been completed, a proposed Stage 2 Abatement Plan will be submitted to NMED outlining proposed actions to clean up the pollution identified as a result of the Stage 1 investigation. The public will have an opportunity to comment on the Stage

2 Plan and may also request a hearing. The department will seek public comment within 90 days of receiving the plan.

Existing regulations specific to the dairy industry address environmental issues such as, how groundwater is best protected, the lining of wastewater lagoons, and monitoring well requirements. Monitoring data available to the department shows that more than 65 percent of dairies in New Mexico have groundwater contamination associated with their facilities. The department recently issued a revised draft of regulations that will govern requirements for the state's dairies to prevent such pollution.

New regulations, which the dairy industry requested, to provide more certainty in its requirements, have been required as a result of legislation passed in the last session. Senate Bill 206 created changes to the state Water Quality Act and requires the New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission to adopt regulations that identify requirements for the discharge of dairy wastewater, protect groundwater quality, and provide the dairy industry with clearly identified requirements. The regulations, which are available at:

<http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/gwb/documents/RevisedDairyRegs.pdf>

include requirements for protective liners for wastewater storage lagoons and an early warning system of sentry wells to monitor and protect underground aquifers against pollution.

According to the regulation development schedule approved by the WQCC, a public hearing before the WQCC is scheduled to begin on March 9, 2010. Public notice regarding the public hearing and hearing participation is scheduled to be published by Feb. 1, 2010.

A copy of the proposed Stage 1 Abatement Plan is available for review by contacting:

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