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February 29, 2008  
For Immediate Release

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**Environment Department Issues Compliance Order with Proposed Penalty of \$579,750 to Rio Rancho for Violations of State Permit at Chamisa Hills Golf and Country Club**  
*Permit with State Reflects City of Rio Rancho Responsible for Wastewater Discharged at Club*

(Santa Fe, NM) New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry authorized a compliance order with a proposed penalty of \$579,750 issued to the City of Rio Rancho today for violating its state permit by illegally discharging treated wastewater into ponds at Chamisa Hills Country Club.

The order alleges the city violated its discharge permit by failing to inspect liners of ponds at the club, neglecting to submit to the department a corrective action plan detailing damage to pond liners and illegally discharging wastewater from the city to those ponds.

“Rio Rancho – after months of discussions with the Environment Department that offered hope for a resolution to this problem – chose to delay cleaning up ponds at the country club by filing a lawsuit against the state,” said New Mexico Environment Secretary Ron Curry. “Now the city will waste taxpayers’ money on substantial fines and legal fees that could have paid for the cleanup of the ponds.”

The department disagrees with Rio Rancho’s claim that it will cost millions to clean up ponds at the golf course.

The order, citing Rio Rancho’s 25 year old-permit obligations for wastewater effluent discharges to ponds at the club, states the city violated the state Water Quality Act and Water Quality Control Commission regulations. The order requires the city to submit a plan for the removal of sludge in west ponds at the club, investigate the removal of sludge in east and north ponds, submit a plan for the removal of harmful vegetation in all ponds and submit a work plan determining the condition of liners in east and north ponds.

In addition, the order requires that no wastewater from the city be discharged into west ponds unless the city’s permit with the state is modified to include those ponds.

The city has 30 days to respond to corrective actions in the order and request a hearing or it must pay the penalty in the order.

The department issued a notice of violation to the city in January alleging Rio Rancho violated the city’s permit and state laws by illegally discharging treated wastewater to unpermitted ponds at the golf course.

Discharges from the city to the golf course have been permitted by the state since 1982. The city assumed responsibility for that permit in 1995.

The permit requires that the city inspect effluent storage lagoons at the golf course for integrity and if needed, submit a corrective action plan to the department. The city has not fulfilled that responsibility.

The department has been involved in this issue for more than two years because of environmental issues and concerns of citizens. The department also formed a task force composed of city and state governments, homeowners' associations and residents to address problems with the ponds.

For more information, call Marissa Stone at (505) 827-0314 or (505) 231-0475.

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