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Environment Department Issues Compliance Order with \$25,358 Penalty to Owner of Trailer Court near Taos for Violating State Water Quality Regulations

(Santa Fe, N.M.) The New Mexico Environment Department issued an administrative compliance order with proposed penalties of \$25,358 to the owner of a trailer court in Taos for violations of state Water Quality regulations.

The department's Ground Water Quality Bureau issued a penalty of \$15,358 to the owner of Cohnsville Trailer Court Robert Cohn for failing to install a monitoring well and neglecting to submit monitoring reports that detect contamination from wastewater at the location. The bureau also issued a \$10,000 penalty to Cohn for failing to notify the department about discharges at the trailer court that could have posed a threat to the health and welfare of residents in the area.

"We are concerned about the potential effects of discharges from the trailer court on groundwater," said State Environment Secretary Ron Curry. "This business owner violated state laws and state permits that are intended to protect the health of residents and the environment. Groundwater provides the majority of drinking water for our state and we must protect it."

The trailer court, which is located about 1.5 miles west of Ranchos de Taos, has about 12 mobile homes and three other residences. The owner of the facility obtained a permit from the state in 2005 that allows the discharge of up to 4,375 gallons a day of wastewater into two approximately 23,000 gallon septic tanks. That permit requires the permit holder to submit monitoring reports to the bureau that show discharge volumes, septic tank pumping records and analytical results of wastewater sampling periodically during the year. Cohn failed to submit those reports on numerous dates between 2005 and 2008. Bureau inspectors also observed surfacing effluent at the trailer court.

The permit also required the connection of the trailer court's sewage system to El Valle de Los Ranchos Water and Sanitation District or the installation of a monitoring well to ensure discharges from the facility were monitored. That monitoring tracks the effects of discharges and contaminants on groundwater. The owner failed to do either.

The owner of the trailer court can request a hearing or contact NMED to discuss settlement.

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

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