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## **Governor Richardson Breaks Ground on \$25 Million Ruidoso Wastewater Treatment Plant**

*New Plant Will Protect Rio Ruidoso and Downstream Waters from Phosphorus and Nitrogen Discharges*

SANTA FE— Governor Bill Richardson was joined by local, state and federal officials to break ground today on the construction of the \$25 million Ruidoso Wastewater Treatment Plant in Ruidoso Downs.

The project will improve the treatment of wastewater discharged from the facility and protect the Rio Ruidoso.

“Our rivers and streams are the lifeblood of our state and we must ensure discharges into those waters are managed in a responsible manner so future generations can continue to enjoy them,” Governor Richardson said. “The river is not only an important landmark but it also affords economic, ecological and recreational advantages for this area.”

“The Rio Ruidoso is an environmentally sensitive high quality coldwater fishery listed by the State of New Mexico as an impaired waterway due to stream bottom sediments and excessive nutrients,” said New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry. “The construction of the new wastewater treatment plant will use an innovative technology to accomplish the required effluent limits for discharges into the river.”

The quality of the facility’s effluent has been a long-standing problem for the Ruidoso community and its downstream neighbors. Nuisance algae clogged the river, creating adverse impacts for the fish and wildlife habitat.

The project, which has been in planning for nearly a decade, will bring the treatment plant into compliance with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency standards to alleviate the excessive discharge of phosphorus and nitrogen into the Rio Ruidoso. EPA has jurisdiction over the community’s National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit, which is a surface water permit.

The current treatment plant, built in 1978 with a 1993 upgrade, does not meet current EPA requirements limiting Total Maximum Daily Loads for phosphorus and nitrogen. The existing plant is also overloaded and must be expanded to meet current and future needs.

The project financing includes American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Clean Water State Revolving Fund grants for Ruidoso and Ruidoso Downs totaling \$6.1 million, USDA Rural Development funds totaling \$9.75 million, bond funds of \$8 million, state Capital Outlay grants totaling \$1 million and NMED CWSRF loans totaling \$200,000.

The new wastewater treatment plant's use of the innovative membrane bioreactor technology will accomplish the required effluent discharge limits, maximize biological nutrient removal, significantly decrease chemical use requirements, reduce operation costs and conserve energy.

The design approach used in Ruidoso area treatment plant will be a valuable model for facilities across the country as more stringent nutrient effluent requirements are required to address many impaired surface waters across the U.S. The city and village have already made progress on the project by building a sludge drawing facility – a major part of the project.

NMED reached a settlement agreement with the village and the city in May 2007 that paved the way for the project. Community leaders worked with local legislators, the New Mexico congressional delegation and NMED to secure funding for the plant.

New Mexico received \$19.2 million in funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund for investment in wastewater infrastructure.

NMED, which directly administers that fund for New Mexico, received applications from more than eighty communities for over 130 projects totaling \$680 million. The financing made available through the ARRA CWSRF program will protect public health, benefit the environmental sensitivity of surface waters, create employment opportunities and promote the region's economic development.

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