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Environment Department Reaches Settlement with High Lonesome Dairy in Hobbs for Groundwater Violations

(Santa Fe, NM) – The New Mexico Environment Department reached a settlement with High Lonesome Dairy in Hobbs for groundwater quality violations.

The settlement resolves a compliance order the department issued to the owner of the dairy, Eddie Schaap, on Nov. 3. That order alleged that Schaap failed to install a monitoring well that would detect groundwater conditions beneath the dairy, which is located at W. 2515 Stiles Road.

“Dairies must follow state regulations to protect groundwater from contamination,” said New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry. “We issued draft regulations for dairy discharges that will provide specific requirements for dairies to ensure violations like this do not occur. Fortunately, the dairy subsequently installed a well to detect pollution.”

The dairy generates and discharges agricultural wastewater from a milking parlor. The settlement, which includes a penalty of \$3,000, resolves violations of the state Water Quality Act and Water Quality Control Commission regulations.

Schaap began installing the well Nov. 19 and completed that process by Dec. 8. The installation of the well was a requirement of the state permit for the dairy, which lies near several residences with drinking water wells.

The new monitoring well was installed 50 feet hydrologically downgradient of a clay-lined lagoon. Clay-lined lagoons, which are no longer approved by the state, have failed to protect groundwater quality.

State Water Quality Control Commission Regulations require dairy owners to install monitoring wells to detect whether pollution prevention measures at the facility protect public health, groundwater and surface water. The state Water Quality Act and state regulations allow the department to assess civil penalties for violations of those rules.

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