



Bill Richardson
Governor

**NEW MEXICO
ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT**

Office of the Secretary

Harold Runnels Building
1190 Saint Francis Drive (87505)
PO Box 26110, Santa Fe, NM 87502
Phone (505) 827-2855 Fax (505) 827-2836
www.nmenv.state.nm.us



Ron Curry
Secretary
Jon Goldstein
Deputy Secretary

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Contact: Marissa Stone, NMED Communications Director
(505) 827-0314 or (505) 231-0475

Environment Department Receives Plan to Investigate Soil and Groundwater Contamination at Loving Salt Co. in Malaga

(Santa Fe, NM) – The New Mexico Environment Department’s Ground Water Quality Bureau received a Stage 1 Abatement Plan proposal to investigate soil and groundwater contamination at the former Loving Salt Co. in Malaga, N.M.

The former business, at 1624 Pecos Highway in Eddy County, pumped brine water into evaporative ponds and collected the dried salt to deice roads during the winter. Brine is water saturated with salt.

“This plan will help determine the extent of contamination below the surface,” said New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry. “We must do everything possible to protect the state’s groundwater, which is the source of 90 percent of our drinking water.”

Three groundwater monitoring wells have been installed. Those wells show concentrations of chloride in groundwater above the New Mexico groundwater standard of 250 milligrams per liter (mg/L) with a maximum chloride concentration of 14,000 mg/L. Groundwater at the site is approximately 17 feet below the ground and generally flows toward the south.

The Stage 1 Abatement Plan proposal includes the installation of at least one additional monitoring well to help define the extent of groundwater contamination, the excavation of salt residue from the property, the repairing of soil cracks and fissures to prevent the downward migration of salt-contaminated storm water, and the sampling of groundwater every six months.

New Mexico water quality regulations require responsible parties to remediate groundwater pollution. After the Stage 1 plan has been completed, a Stage 2 cleanup proposal will be submitted to the department. Residents will have an opportunity to comment on the Stage 2 plan and request a hearing. The department will seek public comment within 90 days of receiving the cleanup plan.

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

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