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**NMED to Hold Public Meetings in Mora and Reserve on Draft Proposal for Outstanding National Resource Waters in Forest Service Areas**  
*Designation Will Protect Water Quality for Future Generations*

(Santa Fe, NM) The New Mexico Environment Department will hold public meetings in Mora and Reserve, N.M. to provide information to stakeholders on the draft proposal to nominate waters within wilderness areas of the U.S. Forest Service as Outstanding National Resource Waters.

The department released in June the draft proposal on the designation, which will help to protect water quality for activities within the national forests and important downstream uses such as irrigation and public water supplies. The designation will help ensure that those waters remain clean for future generations.

The department held previous meetings this summer around the state and scheduled additional public meetings to provide information and answer questions on the draft proposal:

**Mora**, From 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Monday Sept. 28, Helping Hands, 508 N.M. 518, (peach colored stucco building near Mora San Miguel Electric on opposite side of the road)

**Reserve**, From 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., Wednesday Sept. 30, in the Catron County Commission room, 101 Main St.

The department held meetings this summer on ONRW in Albuquerque, Pecos, Truth or Consequences, Silver City, Ruidoso, Abiquiu, Taos and Jemez Springs.

“These meetings will afford residents an opportunity to ask questions and offer input on the draft proposal,” said New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry. “Residents provided significant input during previous meetings and we want to continue to keep an open dialogue while this process continues. The proposal will strengthen existing measures to keep the state’s headwater streams clean by requiring that water quality is maintained at current levels or improved further.”

Governor Richardson charged NMED with the responsibility of pursuing the designation, which provides the highest level of water quality protection for the state’s surface waters to protect headwaters and upper watershed streams within the national forests. NMED worked with the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, and the Department of Game and Fish to develop the Draft Proposal and sought input from other agencies including the New Mexico Department of Agriculture.

The state's efforts to designate ONRWs will begin with a focus on federally designated wilderness areas within the national forests. That approach complements recently announced plans by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Forest Service to initiate a "timeout" on new road-building and other development in designated roadless areas of national forests. The state's original plan was to nominate all waters within both wilderness and inventoried roadless areas as ONRWs. However, in light of the federal government's recent announcement that it will temporarily restrict development in roadless areas, the agencies will first focus their efforts on waters located within wilderness areas.

The draft is available electronically at [www.nmenv.state.nm.us/swqb/ONRW/](http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/swqb/ONRW/).

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