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For Immediate Release

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Environment Secretary Ron Curry Denies Discharge Permit for Parasol Dairy in Truth or Consequences

(Santa Fe, NM) New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry denied a discharge permit for the proposed ParaSol Dairy in Truth or Consequences because lagoons at the facility would have been located 30 feet from Percha Creek flood plain that ultimately feeds into Rio Grande.

That flood plain feeds into the Rio Grande, which delivers municipal drinking water downstream, provides water for recreational use at Caballo Lake and carries irrigation water to farms in New Mexico, Texas and Mexico.

“The dairy’s proximity to Percha Creek posed too great a threat to surface water that residents rely on for drinking water, irrigation water and recreational uses,” said New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry. “New Mexico has limited surface water and we must protect it.”

Secretary Curry’s decision became final Feb. 27. About 400 citizens wrote letters to the Environment Department expressing opposition to the groundwater discharge permit. In addition, dozens of local residents and a representative of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation attended a November 7 hearing in Truth or Consequences to oppose the permit. Elephant Butte Irrigation District and New Mexico State Parks also raised concerns about the issuance of the permit.

Secretary Curry concurred with Hearing Officer Felicia Orth’s recommendation, which stated the dairy’s proximity to the Creek posed “significant undue risk to property including surface water.”

The applicant, John McCatharn, proposed to discharge up to 8,000 gallons a day of dairy wastewater from the dairy off N.M.187, approximately 5 miles southwest of Caballo and less than two miles from Caballo Lake in Sierra County. Wastewater from the milking parlor would have flowed from a pipeline to a lined lagoon. Groundwater beneath the location is between 32 and 57 feet. McCatharn intended to move an existing dairy he owns on the south side of Albuquerque to the location adjacent to Percha Creek.

McCatharn proposed to discharge green water from dairy operations to fields in the flood plain. In addition, lagoons at the facility would have been 30 feet from the floodplain. Other reasons for denying the permit included frequent and ferocious flooding in the area that could have carried discharges from the facility into the floodplain.

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