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**Environment Department Awards \$25,000 Loan to Water Association near
Alamogordo**

*Low Interest Loan Granted under Governor Richardson's Newly Created Division of Water and
Wastewater Infrastructure*

(Santa Fe, NM) The New Mexico Environment Department recently awarded a \$25,000 Rural Infrastructure Program loan to Rolling Hills Community Water Users Association near Alamogordo for a water disinfection system.

The loan is one of the first granted under the new Division of Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Development that Governor Richardson established by executive order last year.

“The new division granted this loan in record time to help a community in need,” said New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry. “The Environment Department’s Drinking Water Bureau and Construction Programs Bureau — both under the new division — worked together as quickly as possible to assist this community to obtain a loan to fix its water system to protect the health of residents at Rolling Hills.”

The department granted the loan to the association at 3 percent interest for a term of 20 years.

The loan is one of the first offered under the new division, which Governor Richardson created by executive order (http://www.nmrwa.org/resources/water_cabinet.pdf). That order directed Secretary Curry to form the division, which is leading an interagency effort to fund water and wastewater infrastructure projects.

The association, which has 33 water users and is about 10 miles north of Alamogordo, will use the money to buy and install a disinfection system to alleviate problems with *E. coli* and total coliform bacteria in the water. The department placed Rolling Hills on a boil water advisory last year after the association’s water tested positive for *E. coli*. The department also placed the system under an administrative compliance order because Rolling Hills could not meet safe drinking water standards. The new disinfection system funded by this loan will make it possible for Rolling Hills to provide safe drinking water and satisfy the regulatory requirements of the order.

The presence of *E. coli* in drinking water indicates the water may have come in contact with human or animal wastes and could contain disease-causing organisms. Most strains of *E. coli* are harmless and live in the intestines of healthy humans and animals. However, a positive test for *E. coli* in the drinking water supply may indicate the presence of dangerous strains of *E. coli* or other disease-causing organisms, which are sometimes found in sewage or animal wastes. Those types of organisms may cause severe gastrointestinal illness and, in rare cases, even death. Children, the elderly, and immuno-compromised individuals are at an increased risk for illness.

Water at Rolling Hills also tested positive for total coliform bacteria over several months last year. Total coliforms are indicators of bacteriological activity within a water system. These bacteria, while not normally harmful, indicate a possibility that disease causing organisms may be present in the water system.

For more information, call Marissa Stone at (505) 827-0314 or (505) 231-0475.

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