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**Governor Richardson and Environment Department Assist Communities with \$1.53 Million for Water Quality Improvement Projects for Ruidoso, Ruidoso Downs**

(Santa Fe, NM) –Governor Bill Richardson and the New Mexico Environment Department assisted the Village of Ruidoso and Ruidoso Downs with \$1.53 million in legislative capital outlay funding for upgrades to the regional wastewater treatment plant and improvements for the Rio Ruidoso.

The Governor’s capital outlay appropriations include \$750,000 for the Village of Ruidoso for improvements to the Ruidoso Regional Wastewater Treatment plant, the same amount for Ruidoso Downs’ portion of the regional plant and \$30,000 to develop a plan to eliminate excessive nutrients from the Rio Ruidoso. Improvements for those projects are also part of a settlement agreement between the village, Ruidoso Downs and the state.

“Governor Richardson and the department made a commitment to assist Ruidoso in improving water quality conditions that will contribute to the health of the river,” said New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry. “The department worked closely with the communities and EPA to address water quality issues at the plant. This money will help alleviate those problems.”

The money will allow the village and Ruidoso Downs to plan, design and construct improvements to the regional wastewater plant in Ruidoso. Those improvements will help the facility meet its settlement agreement requirements with the state. In addition, the town will be able to determine the most effective means of controlling phosphorus and nitrogen in the Rio Ruidoso. The river has been severely impaired by nuisance algae caused by excessive amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency issued National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit to Ruidoso in 2001 that required the town to comply with phosphorus limits. That permit expired in 2006.

NMED conducted a water quality survey of the Rio Ruidoso/Rio Hondo in 2003 and determined the Ruidoso Waste Water Treatment Plant was a primary source of nitrogen and phosphorous in the river.

NMED, the village and Ruidoso Downs entered into a settlement agreement in May 2007 that called for the building of a new wastewater treatment plant and other requirements to protect the river.

The terms of the settlement agreement were incorporated into a revised National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit for the Waste Water Treatment Plant that EPA issued to the facility in July 2007.

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