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November 16, 2007
For Immediate Release

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Environment Secretary Approves Solid Waste Permit for Southwest Landfill in Bernalillo County

(Santa Fe, N.M.) New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry approved the renewal of a 10-year solid waste permit for Southwest Landfill with several conditions that will protect human health and the environment.

The landfill, which is about 20 years old, is located about 1.5 miles from Albuquerque's southern boundary. The landfill is the only facility in Albuquerque that accepts construction and demolition waste. Hearing Officer Maria Dominguez, who presided over the public hearing for the landfill July 30 in southwest Albuquerque, concluded the landfill is a well-run facility with no serious issues.

A point of contention between the applicant and the department was the amount of land at the landfill covered by the permit. The owners of the landfill contended the permitted waste boundary of the original permit is 120 acres. However, the department's Solid Waste Bureau concluded that boundary is 80 acres, with an additional 40 acres set aside for potential future uses. Hearing Officer Dominguez reviewed those arguments and the administrative record and concluded the amount of land covered in the permit is 80 acres. Secretary Curry agreed with that finding.

The owners of the landfill could have applied to the department for a permit modification rather than a permit renewal to request that the 120 acres be covered under the permit.

At the hearing, about 10 local residents spoke in favor of the granting of the permit. About 15 others stood up to show their support for the granting of the permit.

Secretary Curry attached several conditions to the permit that will ensure the landfill is protective of human health and the environment. Those conditions include notifying the department a month before beginning the construction of a cell liner, spraying water on the escarpment and landfill haul roads to contain dust and collecting debris, including nails and other items that could puncture tires at least three times a week along landfill roads. In addition, the owners of the landfill must increase the amount of their financial assurance to \$1,763,949 and update that assurance by comparing it with the Consumer Price Index and adding other known costs to that amount. That money ensures costs of maintaining the landfill or other unexpected costs are covered after the landfill is closed.

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