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Environment Department Receives Plans to Investigate Groundwater Contamination at Two Dairies near Hobbs

Plans Will Identify Extent of Soil and Groundwater Contamination from Dairy Operations

(Santa Fe, NM) – The New Mexico Environment Department received Stage 1 Abatement Plan proposals to investigate soil and ground water pollution at High Lonesome and Rockview dairies near Hobbs, N.M.

The department's Ground Water Quality Bureau required the dairies to submit Stage 1 Abatement Plans to address soil and groundwater pollution associated with their operations.

“The abatement plans will monitor the quality of drinking water for those who live near the dairies,” said New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry. “The work will help quantify the amount of soil and groundwater pollution at the operations to ensure residents and the environment are protected.”

Dairy wastewater from the facilities, which are located approximately five miles from Hobbs, is discharged to lagoons and applied to crops and has resulted in groundwater pollution. Groundwater in the vicinity of the dairies is contaminated with nitrate, chloride, and total dissolved solids (TDS) at levels above New Mexico groundwater quality standards. State groundwater quality standards are 10 parts per million (mg/L) for nitrate, 250 mg/L for chloride, and 1,000 mg/L for TDS. High Lonesome Dairy is located at 2515 W. Stiles Road and Rockview Dairy is located at 12923 Knowles Road.

The Stage 1 Abatement Plans propose an investigation of groundwater pollution through the installation of one monitoring well and the collection of groundwater samples to define the extent of groundwater pollution. The purpose of a Stage 1 investigation is to define the extent of soil and groundwater pollution at a site where groundwater contamination has been identified. New Mexico's water quality regulations require responsible parties to remediate groundwater

pollution. Once a Stage 1 Abatement Plan has been completed, a proposed Stage 2 Abatement Plan will be submitted to NMED outlining proposed actions to clean-up the pollution identified as a result of the Stage 1 investigation. The public will be able to comment on the Stage 2 Plan and may also request a hearing. The department will seek public comment within 90 days of receiving the plan.

The department's scientific data indicates that more than 65 percent of dairies have polluted groundwater beneath their facilities. The department recently issued draft regulations for dairy discharges to help address that problem and give the dairy industry more certainty in its requirements.

The proposed discharge regulations specific to the dairy industry address issues such as how groundwater is best protected, the lining of wastewater lagoons and monitoring well requirements. New regulations, which the dairy industry requested, are required as a result of legislation passed in the last session. Senate Bill 206 created changes to the state Water Quality Act and requires the state Water Quality Control Commission to adopt regulations to identify requirements for the discharge of dairy wastewater to protect groundwater quality and provide the dairy industry with clearly identified requirements. The department solicited public comment on the regulations and held meetings in Hobbs, Portales, Roswell, Mesquite and Los Lunas last month to discuss the regulations. The department is evaluating information from those meetings and expects stakeholder negotiations on the regulations to begin in the fall.

For more information please contact Marissa Stone Bardino, NMED Communications Director, at (505) 827-0314.

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