



## **NEWS RELEASE**

*The Environment Department's mission is to protect and restore the environment and to foster a healthy and prosperous New Mexico for present and future generations.*

### **For Immediate Release**

January 27, 2025

**Contact:** Drew Goretzka, Director of Communications  
New Mexico Environment Department  
505.670.8911 | drew.goretzka@env.nm.gov

## **PFAS contamination in New Mexico wildlife is highest ever tested** *Health advisory recommends hunters seek blood testing*

**SANTA FE** — Holloman Lake near White Sands National Park has recorded the highest levels of toxic PFAS contamination in wildlife and plants worldwide, according to a report released Monday by the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED).

Holloman Lake near Alamogordo and adjacent to White Sands National Park serves as the wastewater reservoir for Holloman Air Force Base. The report's findings reveal only a portion of the damage that PFAS contamination may be inflicting on New Mexico's fragile ecosystems, which are vital to our state's cultural and economic wellbeing, as well as the health of New Mexicans.

"Today's report is a stark reminder of the need for the U.S. Department of Defense to take full and immediate responsibility for its poisoning of our ecosystems and the state to take decisive action to protect New Mexicans from PFAS contamination," said **Environment Secretary James Kenney**. "We must double down on our demand of the U.S. Air Force to cleanup PFAS in our state while telling manufacturers who pour PFAS-laden consumer goods into New Mexico homes — do better."

In response to these findings, **the New Mexico Department of Health today issued a health advisory to hunters who have consumed waterfowl from Holloman Lake between 2010 and 2024**. While the lake has been closed to hunting since last year, it remains open to camping and birding.

Analysis of animal livers from birds and small mammals showed staggering PFAS levels between 10,000 and 120,000 nanograms per gram (ng/g). The 120,000 ng/g result came from the liver of a Merriam's kangaroo rat — thought to be the highest recorded concentration of PFAS in any wild animal worldwide.

Concentrations found in plants told a similar story. A salt cedar sample in the area showed a concentration of 30,000 ng/g — thought to be a worldwide record for PFAS concentration in a plant.

Multiple symptoms of PFAS contamination were also observed in nearby wildlife. High rates of abnormal growths and ulcers were found among small mammals in and around Holloman Lake. Bird nests were found to be failing to hatch — a sign of deep contamination in waterfowl reproductive systems.



*Merriam's kangaroo rat*

“The extraordinary levels of toxic PFAS contamination at Holloman Lake will harm our waterfowl, wildlife, and other natural resources for generations to come and will prevent New Mexicans, whether they’re hikers, hunters, or birders, from enjoying what is rightfully theirs,” **said New Mexico Natural Resources Trustee**

**Maggie Hart Stebbins**. “Air Force leadership needs to acknowledge the enormity of the injury to our state and take responsibility for restoring those resources as federal law requires.”

As waterfowl found at Holloman Lake are migratory, there is also risk of PFAS-contaminated birds flying into other popular hunting sites throughout New Mexico and the broader West. Although more studies are needed to capture the scope of such routes, NMED is advising all hunters to take precautions when consuming wild game and to not eat any wild game that may be associated with Holloman Lake migratory paths.

A University of New Mexico study released in February 2024 found that the average PFAS concentrations in just one gram of duck meat from Holloman Lake exceeded the lifetime exposure limit recommended for humans.

As previously documented by the Environment Department, PFOS concentrations in Holloman Lake are as high as 5,900 ng/L (equivalent to parts per trillion) and PFHxS concentrations are 7,400 to 16,000 ng/L. The PFAS levels in Holloman Lake are as high as 1,600 times the drinking water standards set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.



*PFAS-laden foams on the shores of Lake Holloman*

The Environment Department has documented PFAS-laden foams on the shoreline of Holloman Lake blowing out of the lake and onto the shoreline by gusts of wind further spreading the contamination, resulting in greater human and wildlife exposure.

NMED is also introducing a two-bill package in the ongoing legislative session aiming to reduce the risk of PFAS and hazardous waste contamination to New Mexicans. The PFAS Protection

Act, a bill proposed by Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, will protect consumers from PFAS exposure to consumer products. Meanwhile a set of amendments to the Hazardous Waste Act will give the state of New Mexico authority to list harmful substances, such as discarded PFAS, as hazardous wastes, leading to quicker cleanup, including around military bases and communities.

To view the full report visit: [Report: Ecological Research on PFAS Contamination of Wildlife at Holloman Lake.](#)

###

NMED does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, age or sex in the administration of its programs or activities, as required by applicable laws and regulations. NMED is responsible for coordination of compliance efforts and receipt of inquiries concerning non-discrimination requirements implemented by 40 C.F.R. Parts 5 and 7, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and Section 13 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972. If you have any questions about this notice or any of NMED's non-discrimination programs, policies or procedures, you may contact: Kate Cardenas, Non-Discrimination Coordinator | NMED | 1190 St. Francis Dr., Suite N4050 | P.O. Box 5469 | Santa Fe, NM 87502 or (505) 827-2855 or [nd.coordinator@env.nm.gov](mailto:nd.coordinator@env.nm.gov). If you believe that you have been discriminated against with respect to a NMED program or activity, you may contact the Non-Discrimination Coordinator.

###