



AMIGOS BRAVOS DEFENDS STATE WATERS ***Industry Lawsuit Threatens Clean Water in New Mexico***

Amigos Bravos, leading an alliance of citizen and faith groups, filed papers in New Mexico Court of Appeals (No. 25,814) on August 17th to intervene in opposition to a lawsuit brought against the New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC) by a number of industry groups. The court quickly accepted our intervention.

Other members of the partnership include NM Trout, the Gila Resources Information Project, the Sierra Club, 1000 Friends of New Mexico, and the New Mexico Acequia Association. The groups are represented by the Western Environmental Law Center in Taos. The Ecology Ministry of the Archdiocese of Santa Fé and the Creation Stewardship Office of the Diocese of Gallup have expressed their support of the partnership's intervention.

"Intervening in this case is one step in protecting God's creation that we are all called to engage in as responsible caretakers," said Sister Joan Brown, Ecology Minister with the Social Justice Office of the Santa Fé Archdiocese. "We in New Mexico know the preciousness, scarcity, and the grave responsibility to care for water in an arid region. The state has acted in the best interest of the common good and future generations by adopting its own definition of surface waters of the state."

The industry groups suing the WQCC include the NM Mining Association, NM Oil and Gas Association, NM Home Builders Association, NM Cattle Growers Association, NM Wool Growers Inc., Chino Mines Company, and Phelps Dodge Tyrone, Inc.

This case is about protecting the quality of New Mexico's limited water resources and defending New Mexico's right to make decisions for New Mexico. The issue is clearcut: does New Mexico have the right to set its own water quality standards, based on our circumstances, or must states follow federal guidelines that can change dramatically at the administration's whim? At stake are waters on as much as 40% of the total area of New Mexico that would lose water quality protection – threatening water used for drinking, irrigation, and for livestock and wildlife.

Weakening the Clean Water Act

Amigos Bravos has used the Clean Water Act (CWA) for 18 years as the most powerful tool available for accomplishing our mission at the grassroots community level. The CWA is the major federal regulatory mechanism for protecting the

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Amigos Bravos, in partnership with KTAO, is proud to announce the
**10th Annual Raffle for the Río Grand Finale and
Drawing for a Trip to Kauai, Hawaii.**

Join us for the drawing as we celebrate with Michael Hearne & Cullen
Winter **Saturday, September 24th, 2-5 pm at the new KTAO Solar Center,**
Hwy 150 - see article on page 4

LANL's Toxic Legacy

Amigos Bravos and its partners have a unique opportunity to begin the long and complex process of confronting Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) with its legacy of hazardous waste disposal. There are five water permits coming up, some for the first time in the lab's history. There are three federal surface water discharge permits. In addition, New Mexico will issue a renewal permit for the Sanitary Waste Water System (DP-857) and a new Discharge Permit (DP-1132) for the Radioactive Liquid Waste Disposal Area (RLWDA) at TA-50 – the location where all of the Lab's radioactive liquid waste gets processed. Amigos Bravos will focus primarily on the TA-50 permit process.

Radioactive and other toxins have been contaminating both ground and surface water systems at LANL since the lab began operation in 1943. In its first 20 years, LANL dumped over 2 million gallons of untreated liquid radioactive waste in the Pueblo Canyon system. High explosives residue is a major concern in Water Canyon. A plume containing nitrates, fluoride, perchlorate, high explosives, and radionuclides is migrating toward the Río Grande and the regional aquifer, which supplies Santa Fé with its drinking water. Some public wells supplying Los Alamos County and White Rock have already been affected, as have several springs in White Rock Canyon.

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Protecting Water Quality in the Upper Red River

Off-Highway Vehicles Impact Water Quality:

Many stretches of the Upper Red River (above MolyCorp and the town of Red River and located predominately in the Carson National Forest) are not meeting water quality standards. Turbidity and stream bottom deposits, listed as two of the most prevalent contaminant problems, are caused by excessive erosion and disturbance in the watershed and are shown to negatively impact fish populations. The New Mexico State Environment Department (NMED) reports that recreation is a major contributor to these water quality problems.

Studies have shown that irresponsible motorized use of our public lands causes degradation of plant and wildlife habitat, erosion of soils, reduction of plant populations and plant diversity, water and air pollution, damage to cultural resources, and interference with other forms of recreation. Wildlife populations are especially sensitive and can experience increased mortality, changes in behavior, and reductions in diversity as a result of irresponsible motorized use of our public lands. This year, Amigos Bravos began a three-year effort to control recreation abuses and reduce erosion in the Upper Red River.



Amigos Bravos' Rachel Conn; MaryAnn Elder, Forest Service; Hal Osburn, volunteer; Michael Scialdone, NM Wilderness Alliance; in front of barriers constructed and installed to block illegal ORV access into Bitter Creek.

Three-Year Effort to Reduce Erosion in Upper Red River:

Amigos Bravos, in collaboration with the Forest Service, received a three-year grant from the state to address impacts to water quality in the Red River from off-road vehicles (ORVs). We are taking a three-pronged approach:

Restoration: Three volunteer restoration weekends each summer in 2005, 2006 and 2007 will be organized to restore areas that have been impacted by illegal ORV use. Two work weekends have been implemented to date. Both weekends were spent in the headwaters of Bitter Creek, a tributary of the Red River, closing off illegal roads, improving drainage on current roads, and fencing off sensitive meadows and wetlands. We have put over 50 volunteers to work so far this summer! The next work weekend is scheduled for October 1 in Pioneer Canyon, adjacent to the Columbine/Hondo Wilderness Study Area, where we will be working with the Wilderness Alliance to block illegal ORV access into the Wilderness Study Area. To learn more about the October project and future work weekends, please contact the

Amigos Bravos office at 758.3874.

Education: Meetings, fact sheets, maps and word-of-mouth are being used to get information out about where it is legal and where it is prohibited to drive ORVs in the Upper Red River Watershed and why it is important for the health of the ecosystem and the community to follow ORV regulations.

Enforcement: A full-time enforcement officer, based out of the Questa Ranger District of the Carson National Forest, was hired with funds from Amigos Bravos' 319 grant. The enforcement officer is patrolling and enforcing responsible, legal ORV use in the Upper Red River. ❖



Eric Schlenker-Goodrich, Western Environmental Law Center; Rachel Conn, volunteers Ethan Timm, Lauren Kawa, Bob MacPhearson, and Allan Pasteris beside the French drain created to protect the Red River from erosion from ORVs

Amigos Bravos Supports Revitalization of Acequia Association in the South Valley

Amigos Bravos supports the environmentally sound, sustainable traditional ways of life of indigenous cultures and holds that environmental justice and social justice go hand in hand. (Amigos Bravos' Mission Statement)

Last winter, Albuquerque Projects Director Lucy Sanchez began meeting routinely with James Maestas of the Indio-Hispano Academy to discuss revitalization of the *acequia* systems in the South Valley. The Hispanic *acequia* irrigation systems in New Mexico date back at least 400 years and follow a prototype developed under Moorish rule in Spain. In the semi-arid desert, culture revolves around water; *acequias* are the cornerstone of the Hispanic culture in New Mexico. However the primarily agricultural area of the South Valley gave way to urban growth and economics, with an ensuing poverty which has challenged the people and the vitality of the *acequia* systems in devastating ways.



Don Gabina Andrade, Lucy Sanchez, and Janes Martinez next to the Don Gabina Acequia

The creation of the Rio Grande Conservancy District in the 1920's absorbed all of the *acequias* in the Middle Río Grande Valley and withdrew *acequia parciantes'* ability to administer their own water delivery systems. The Conservancy District holds agricultural waters in common and decides, among hundreds of users, who gets how much water and when. The result has been an enormous tear in the weave of a culture's fabric and it's relationship to the blood of life. In the old days, a handful or more of farmers would get together to make decisions about sharing the water and cleaning the ditches. Today, a huge infrastructure run by unfamiliar and unseen faces determines what were initially the neighborly human relationships that a culture is founded upon.

Coexisting with issues of culture in relation to water are issues of water as an economic resource. Water accessed from the Río Grande through the *acequia* systems was a resource that was essentially stolen from the people of the South Valley. The return of control over their water to South Valley landowners potentially equals the return of livelihood to a poverty-stricken area.

Traditional land users in the middle stretch of the Río Grande have been fighting for control over their own waters since the 1920s. At the same time, and as a result of the disenfranchisement that has taken place over most of a century, many local people have lost sight of traditional practices or were never made aware of the legal options and processes that might help them maintain their water rights. For example, the people of the South Valley have pre-1907 (meaning, pre-Río Grande Compact) water rights, though many *acequia* systems in the South Valley have collapsed from lack of use.

The long time rule of thumb in New Mexico in relation to water is "use it or lose it." With that in mind, Maestas and Sanchez (on behalf of Amigos Bravos) have

joined a decades-long campaign already in process and being fought by groups such as the New Mexico Acequia Association itself, South West Organizing Project, South West Network for Economic and Environmental Justice, the South Valley Partners for Environmental Justice, the New Mexico Friends Service Committee, and others to revitalize the *acequia* systems in New Mexico, and specifically in the South Valley.

Maestes and Sanchez began by helping to jump-start formation of the Don Gabino Acequia Association in early summer. The *acequia* is called the Don Gabino, because Don Gabino owns the land at the point of diversion from the Breeze Lateral, which is the "mother ditch," (the main ditch off of the Río Grande). That property has been in Don Gabino's family for the past four hundred years. Don Gabino is also the Mayordomo of the new *acequia* association.

The Don Gabino *acequia* is the ditch which Maestas lives alongside, and Don Gabino's wife is a distant relation to Sanchez, so it was a natural starting place for the two organizers to learn the process for their mission. Sanchez explains, "First we needed to identify the *parciantes*, so we went to the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy website and found the names and addresses of property owners up and down the ditch we had chosen. The site also designates whether or not someone has paid his/her Conservancy and property taxes. In order to form an association that can declare water rights, everyone has to have paid their taxes." Then, Sanchez and Maestes made personal visits to the people along the old *acequia* encouraging property owners to fill out the form declaring their water rights.

The second step was to organize a meeting of all of the *parciantes* and arrange for a representative from the

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Win a Trip to Kauai, HI

The **10th annual Raffle for the Río** comes to a celebratory end on September 24 with **KTAO** continuing its 9-year support of the fundraiser. Join Amigos Bravos and KTAO for the **Grand Prize drawing and Grand Finale Fundraiser on Saturday, September 24, 2005 from 2-5pm at the KTAO Solar Center** on Highway 150, featuring live entertainment provided by some of Taos' finest musicians. **Michael Hearne's** incredibly smooth voice and amazing acoustic guitar style combined with **Cullen Winter's** smokin' guitar riffs will get your toes tapping. So bring your appetite for a delicious, reasonably priced meal prepared by Rodrigo of **Natural Accents**, a blanket or some lawn chairs, and get ready to kick up your heels. Tickets are \$15 for singles and \$25 a couple; children 14 and under will be \$5. Please join us for the celebration, dancing, and drawing!

The **Grand Prize** includes airfare and a 5-night stay for two at the majestic **Princeville Hotel**, in a room valued at \$700 per night, next to golden beaches, cascading waterfalls, with panoramic views of emerald island mountains and rivers, and the brilliant turquoise waters of Hanalei Bay.

www.princeville.com

2nd Prize: a one-night stay for two at the extraordinary **Dobson House**, including breakfast, wine and appetizers in the afternoon.

www.newmex.com/dobsonhouse

3rd Prize: a white-water half-day raft trip for two down the Río Grande Gorge racecourse with **Los Rios River Rafters**.

www.losriosriverrunners

4th Prize: an American Classic Trade woolen blanket from **Native Jackets in Santa Fe**.

www.nativejackets.com

5th Prize: a luxurious soak for two in the Sangre de Cristos outside Santa Fe at **Ten Thousand Waves Japanese Health Spa**

www.tenthousandwaves.com

Welcome to Denise Martinez

Amigos Bravos is very happy to introduce Denise Martinez as our new Membership Coordinator. Denise brings to the job ten years of experience in the areas of Human Resource and General Management, having served for eight years as the Chief Financial Officer for The Apple Tree Restaurant (a company of seventy-five employees) and for two as the General Manager for KTAO.

Born and raised in Arroyo Hondo, Denise is the mother of Amigos Bravos volunteer, Adrienne Espinoza, who – with her friend Ariana Reyes – recently spent a full day in the office stamping 1500 envelopes with “Win A Trip!” for our 2005 Raffle for the Río.

Denise grew up on a farm and looks to her grandmother, Ida Martinez, as a role model and for inspiration. In addition to being Denise Martinez's grandmother, Ida Martinez was a participant in the Amigos Bravos Oral History Project in the late '90s. “My grandmother made everything we needed

as kids right from the land. Everything on the farm had a use and all of us were dependent on the river and the acequia.” She goes on to explain how she relates her life in Arroyo Hondo to her work for Amigos Bravos: “All of these years

the people in my family have been sustained by the Río Hondo and by the Acequia Madre. I want my children to be able to enjoy the river and to be sustained by the water that gave me and my ancestors life.”

About Amigos Bravos, Martinez says, “It's great! I like working for a non-profit that

really does what it says it is going to do. It is incredibly impressive what a staff so small is taking on and actually succeeding in accomplishing. I get to take what the rest of the staff is doing and convey that to the membership and general public. It's my job to make sure people know that the challenges we are taking on are enormous and crucial. It's very exciting to contribute to something that is really making a difference in the world.” ❖



Victory for Clean Water in the Río Hondo

Following a number of calls from our members, Amigos Bravos investigated reports of gravel dumping in the Río Hondo. A site inspection by Amigos Bravos confirmed there are ongoing Clean Water Act (CWA) violations occurring on the Lake Fork of the Río Hondo. Snow removal activities by the Village of Taos Ski Valley have pushed gravel into the Río Hondo along Twining Road. We immediately reported these violations to the Village of Taos Ski Valley, which is in charge of road maintenance on Twining Road, and to the Army Corp of Engineers office in Albuquerque, which is in charge of implementing section 404 of the CWA, the section of the Act that the Village of Taos Ski Valley was violating when they pushed the gravel material into the river. The Army Corp of Engineers followed up our complaint with a site visit and subsequently issued a notice of violation of the Clean Water Act to the Village Taos Ski Valley. In the violation notice, the Army Corp directed the Village to remove the gravel from the river and to find alternative locations to stockpile snow and gravel removed from the road during winter road maintenance activities. The Army Corp of Engineers reported back to us that the Village has been very responsive to the complaints and has agreed to immediately move forward with removing the gravel and pursuing methods for avoiding the problem in the future. Amigos Bravos will continue to monitor the situation to ensure protection for the Río Hondo. ❖

Calendar of Events:

Sept. 12-13 (Sun.-Mon.) **American Rivers** is hosting the **2nd annual River Lobby Day in 2005**. For more information, contact Jamie Mierau at jmierau@americanrivers.org or (202) 347-7550.

Sept. 24 (Saturday) **Raffle for the Río Grande Prize Drawing & Grand Finale**, KTAO Solar Center, Hwy 150, 2-5 pm.

Oct. 1-2 (Sat.-Sun.) Third volunteer work session to reduce impacts to the Upper Red River from illegal off-highway vehicle(OHV) use. Columbine Hondo, south of Red River. Amigos Bravos is helping **NM Wilderness Alliance** with this project. Contact Clean Water Circuit Rider Rachel Conn at the office for details or rconn@amigosbravos.org.

Oct. 18-20 (Tues.-Thurs.) **50th Annual New Mexico Water Conference** See www.wrii.nmse.edu/conf/conf05.html for details.

Oct. 27-28 (Thurs.-Fri.) **People's Oil & Gas Summit**, focusing on **Public Health & Toxic Issues Associated with Oil & Gas Development, Farmington, NM**. To register, contact Jennifer Goldman, jennifergoldman@ogap.org

Amigos Bravos' Cash Reserve Fund was opened in March 1998 with a \$15,000 grant from the Ruth Mott Fund. Thanks to the \$5,082 proceeds of *Brian Shields, Unframed*, and generous donations from Charmay B Allred, Rudolfo & Patricia Anaya, Ann G. Ash, Ezra Bayles, Jean Bergeron, Larry Bernard, John Blancy, Cid's Food Market, John Clem, Dr. Karen Cohen and Robert Templeton, Virginia & William Cowles, Alice Dadian & Richard Bowditch, James Davidson, Marjorie F. Day, Robert & Clarice Day, The Dobson House, Patrick Dunbar Antiques, Paul & Dawn Fleischer, Leo & Judy Follmar, Lisa Fox, Elizabeth Fuller, Percyne Gardner & Kim Kirkpatrick, Arifa Goodman, Lumina Greenway, Marian Gurewitz, William & Linda Hardy, Harriett & Wendell Harris, Madeleine Herrmann, Hirschi Investments, Douglas Jones, Anna Katherine, Barbara Kohl, Diane Konechney, Robert Lagasse, Douglas Large, Thomas Lincoln, Annette Lippincott & John Clark, Mario Manzo, Victor & Patricia Marsh, William & Mary Jane McCafferty, Carey Moore, Pat Munoz & Dorcas Adkins, Robert & Shirley Myers, Dwaine & Barbara Nelson, Claiborne & John O'Connor, Barbara Pearlman, Jeanell Pelsor, Allen & Mary Anne Sanborn, Merry & John Schroeder, Jessica Schwarzenbach, William & Dudley Slade, Walter Sondheim, Ruth & William Stamm, Richard Stibolt & Catherine Kingston, Ann Sudlow, Jacqueline Swap, Douglas & Jane Swift, Kenneth & Janet Taht, Walter Teilmann, John Tapertek, Raymond Trompler & Helen Zagona, Deb Ungar, Meil & Emily Uptegrove, Mary Utsinger, Patti & Mark Veteto, Keith Woloshon & Katherine Nydes, and Ann & Chris Wyndham, we have added \$4,965 to the interest bearing account. Our goal is to have \$150,00 in the account by the end of 2007. Please consider making a contribution to the Cash Reserve Fund. ❖



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Molycorp Mine Update

Amigos Bravos developed Molycorp Watch as an extension and expansion of its 1995 Clean Water Act lawsuit against Molycorp. Over the years, we have made steady progress in forcing the mine to clean up its operations, while the mine makes every effort to drag its feet. In early July, evidence provided by EPA showed that Molycorp's pollution is by-passing interception barriers and extraction wells at its tailings facility. This report and a pending USGS study of pre-mine water quality provide Amigos Bravos with strong new ammunition to advocate that Molycorp build a treatment facility and recycle its water.

Two important permitting processes have just begun. The New Mexico Environment Department will issue a new groundwater discharge plan for the tailings facility. Amigos Bravos will advocate for a new water treatment facility that can recycle tailings water and pump it into the Red River above the mine, thus offering additional mitigation through increased river flow. The Mining and Minerals Department has issued a draft mining permit revision to address whether Molycorp is capable of reclaiming the mine's subsidence areas, as it is required to in order to operate the mine. While Amigos Bravos is not interested in creating a climate in which mine closure is central to the debate, we wish to make it clear that the mine should not be allowed to operate at the expense of the natural environment and the public health of the community.

Amigos Bravos' long campaign for mine operations that ensure environmental and public health has served as a bellwether for how the state deals with mining activities; our successes have been reflected in mining reform across the region. We believe the upcoming permits offer us a tremendous opportunity to affect real change at the mine and with key state agencies. ❖

LANL's Toxic Legacy

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Under pressure from our coalition, Governor Richardson, and the New Mexico Environment Department, LANL has finally begun assessing its hazardous waste legacy. However, LANL's efforts at monitoring and remediation have a long way to go. There are over 2000 solid waste dump sites at the lab; LANL has studied about half. Of the sites studied, LANL rates about 1/3 (around 350) as having "high potential" for discharge. In fact, LANL admits that some of these sites are already leaking. Of those high potential sites, LANL has installed pollution control measures on about 1/2 and monitoring reveals that some indeterminate number of these sites are still releasing toxins.

Confronting LANL with both its legacy of toxic dumping and inadequacies with its current monitoring and remediation efforts is complicated by several facts. LANL operates as almost a law unto itself; the lab and the DOE contend that any waste containing radioactive materials is outside the scope of the EPA or the state; and the lab has a budget of nearly \$1.5 billion dollars.

Amigos Bravos' effort is fourfold: to ensure that no additional pollutants are discharged; to advocate for clean up of historic spills; to use the permitting processes as a way to educate and mobilize the public around the legacy of LANL's dumping; and to use the process as a way to elicit more information from LANL, get this information into the record, and continue to press for independent analyses of all relevant issues. Given the lab's budget, its regulatory isolation, and its proven ability to withhold information and manipulate analyses, the fight to hold the lab accountable and protect the Río Grande watershed will be protracted and difficult. ❖

Acequia Association

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New Mexico *Acequia* Association to attend the meeting, oversee the election of officers, and confirm/authorize membership of the new *acequia* association in the larger New Mexico *Acequia* Association. In this case, the New Mexico *Acequia* Association representative who arrived at the meeting was past Amigos Bravos Mining Reform Campaign Coordinator, Janice Varela.

As a result of the efforts of Sanchez, Maestas, and Varela, there are now eight *parciantes* in the Don Gavino *Acequia* Association. This means that as of July 2005, eight more families living in the Río Grande watershed are committed to maintaining the water quality and quantity of an *acequia*. The wonderful thing about the *acequia* system is that whatever water is not used by the *parciantes* is returned to the river, and in the case of a fully functioning and healthy *acequia* association, that water is going to be clean. In the semi-arid desert of New Mexico, water is precious; the closer a person's relationship to an *acequia* and by extension to the river, the more committed they are going to be to the health of both those waterways.

About the revitalization process Sanchez says, "To me it is a great opportunity to help the people of the South Valley in relation to water issues, and it was a way to introduce Amigos Bravos and the work that we do. It is difficult for people in the South Valley to trust other people, especially people they don't know. I can relate to them and they can relate to me because they know I know the Valley. I'm from here. It is worth the effort to build trust because underneath the defenses these are poor people who have serious water problems and need help." Maestas and Sanchez are currently at work on the formation of another *acequia* association – the Vicente Garcia *Acequia* Association – also in the South Valley. ❖

Industry Lawsuit Threatens Clean Water in New Mexico

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without amending its scope. The federal government sets minimum standards and in general has left it to states to set their own standards, although states have tended to follow federal guidelines.

In January 2003, the Bush administration attempted through Congress to adopt a new regulatory category of "isolated" waters that would no longer be protected by the CWA. Isolated waters include intermittent streams, playa lakes, and waters within closed basins, thus withdrawing protection from many of the nation's waters against unregulated discharges, dredging and filling, sediment loading, and other degradation.

Overwhelming opposition from the public, state agencies, members of Congress, and many public interest groups forced the Bush administration to give up that attempt. However, the administration left in place a policy guidance issued at the same time by the EPA and the Corps. The policy guidance has the effect of changing the regulations *without going through the normal procedures involving public notice and comment*. In other words, it is an arbitrary decision by the Bush administration, undefended by Congress, the Department of Justice, or the federal courts. Based on that guidance, the Albuquerque District Court declared waters in the closed basins of New Mexico to be outside the scope of the Clean Water Act because the state's old definition of waters of the state closely followed the federal definition.

Setting New Mexico Standards

After the District Court decision, Amigos Bravos discussed its concerns on this issue with the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) and urged state intervention. The Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC) was beginning its Triennial Review of state Water Quality Standards, which are meant to protect public health and enhance water quality. NMED, with strong support from Governor Richardson, petitioned the WQCC to redefine "waters of the state" during this process.

"Amigos Bravos relies on effective water quality standards to protect New Mexico's water resources," said Rachel Conn, Clean Water Circuit Rider for Amigos Bravos. "Leaving our waters unprotected will create an enormous social and economic cost to the state in the form of health care and environmental cleanup."

In February 2005, the WQCC, following recommendations developed by Amigos Bravos, unanimously decided to de-link the state definition of surface waters from the federal definition and allows the state to set water quality standards for all waters in New Mexico.

Industry Opposition

Opponents of this common sense decision for our arid and semi arid state filed suit in June seeking to limit the state's ability to protect our waters. Ironically, one of their main claims is that the state's effort to establish water quality standards in the face of federal withdrawal of protection is "arbitrary." The same industrial interests first tried to stop the new definition by introducing legislation to prohibit the WQCC from adopting water quality standards for surface waters and from defining protected waters that differed from federal standards. Through the combined efforts of Amigos Bravos and its partners, the bills were stopped in both chambers.

Waters of the State

If industry and the Bush administration are successful, up to 40% of the total land area of New Mexico might not be covered by any water quality standards. This means that an industry could locate in these areas and discharge contaminated water without concern for public health and safety. In fact, the Bush administration, under

its energy bill, has already exempted oil and gas companies from reclamation requirements and also exempted them from regulations on the use of toxic chemicals (the focus of our campaign to protect the Valle Vidal from coalbed methane drilling).

Closed basins include the Mimbres, Tularosa, and Estancia basins, the Sacramento watershed, and the Plains of San Augustine. More than 80% of stream miles in New Mexico are considered non-perennial and are at risk. New Mexico has numerous playa lakes and other isolated waters and wetlands that help to recharge groundwater, store irrigation return flows, and provide habitat and cover for wildlife and livestock.

Tourism, including hunting and fishing, depends on the pristine quality and beauty of our river systems. 11% of species that use isolated waters are game animals. Ranchers and farmers depend on water in closed basins to irrigate orchards, alfalfa and hay fields, and other crops. At least 9% of species located in closed basins are culturally important to Native Americans.

The significance of clean water to irrigate crops and water livestock cannot be understated; a large proportion of New Mexicans are dependant upon agriculture for their livelihoods and their cultural survival. Reducing the quality of any of New Mexico's waters would affect the quantity of water that is useable. In a state where water is at a premium, the loss of even a small portion of usable water has far-reaching repercussions.

Amigos Bravos and its partners are defending the right of New Mexico to protect our waters. In an arid state like New Mexico, we must be able to protect and preserve our limited water resources. Clean, healthy water is essential for ensuring the health and future of New Mexico's communities, cultures, and economy. *New Mexico has the duty and the right to protect New Mexico's waters.* ❖



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Fiesta de San Isidro in Albuquerque's South Valley



Mayordomos Maria Elena and Hector Capistran of Holy Family Parish receive the bulto of San Isidro during the May 15th Fiesta de San Isidro in Albuquerque's South Valley. The event was organized by Amigos Bravos, The Committee on the Future of Agriculture in the South Valley, The Ecology Ministry of the Social Justice Office of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, Holy Family Parish, the Indio-Hispano Academy, Kalpulli Izkalli., the Pueblo of Isleta, Rio Grande Community Development Corporation, South Valley Partners for Environmental Justice, and Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice as a way to help bring the diverse communities of the South Valley together around the issue of water.