



*Friends of the Wild Rivers*

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## **ACTION ALERT: Protect New Mexico's Waters!**

### **Talking Points for the 2009 Triennial Review Hearing December 8 through 11, 2009**

The New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission will hold a public hearing about the adequacy of the state's water quality standards, beginning on Tuesday, December 8. The federal Clean Water Act requires each state to review the adequacy of their water quality standards at least once every three years. Thus, the title of the hearing is the Triennial Review.

The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) Surface Water Quality Bureau has proposed changes to the existing regulations. We support some of the proposed changes. We also support making the proposed changes even more protective of human health and the environment.

The hearing will be held at the State Capitol in Santa Fe in Room 308. The hearing could last several days. During the first week of the hearing, public comment will be heard after lunch and Wednesday evening.

### **Make Your Voice Heard! Attend the Hearing & Testify!**

**Public Comment:** December 8 through 11: After lunch (please arrive around 12:30 pm)  
Room 308 of the New Mexico State Capitol  
Corner of Paseo de Peralta and Old Santa Fe Trail

**Evening Public Comment:** Wednesday December 9 beginning at 6:30 pm  
New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources  
1220 South St. Francis Drive, Santa Fe, NM

### **Talking Points**

**1. We need more protective standards for radionuclides in the Rio Grande below Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL).** The City of Santa Fe and the County of Santa Fe plan to divert San Juan-Chama water from the Rio Grande at the Buckman Direct Diversion Project to supplement our drinking water supply. The Diversion Project is located directly east of LANL and three miles downstream from where historic contaminants from the Manhattan Project flow through the canyons to the Rio Grande (near the Otowi Bridge).

The NMED proposal establishes standards for radionuclides associated with nuclear weapons research, development and manufacturing for the reach of the Rio Grande that flows next to LANL. The radionuclides are plutonium, americium, strontium, cesium and tritium. The NMED proposed standard is based on a risk of one person in 100,000 dying of cancer from drinking two liters of water a day with one of the radioactive contaminants in it for 70 years. It is a public policy issue about how many people could die.

Amigos Bravos is leading the effort, along with Dr. Arjun Makhijani, to challenge the public policy. We believe that the proposed standards should be more protective of human health. We support the radionuclide standards be based on the risk of one person in 1,000,000 dying of cancer from a lifetime exposure. It seems counterintuitive, but a ten-fold increase the in number of people who may die of cancer results in lower concentrations of the radioactive contaminants in the Rio Grande.

*Please support the more protective standards for radionuclides in the Rio Grande as proposed by Amigos Bravos.*

**2. Protect all New Mexico Waters, including Ephemeral Waters.** Ephemeral waters are waters that flow only during some parts of the year, such as in streambeds, at springs or other water sources, and are sometimes called “non-permanent” sources.

Amigos Bravos is working to make all waters - not just permanently flowing streams - designated as Primary Contact, meaning that humans use them to swim, fish, drink, etc. It is important to protect these ephemeral waters because they feed into our main rivers like the Rio Grande, carrying any contaminants with them. The NMED and several industry groups are attempting to weaken protections for ephemeral waters.

*Please come to the hearing and speak about how you use (wading, swimming, fishing, irrigation etc.) these waters in order to demonstrate the need for strong protections.*

**3. Maintain Strong Protections for Outstanding National Resource Waters.** Several industry groups are proposing to weaken protections for New Mexico’s most special waters, also know as our Outstanding National Resource Waters (ONRWs).

*Please attend the hearing and speak in support of maintaining strong protections for ONRWs.*

**4. Eliminate Mixing Zones for Pollutants.** Currently our state water quality standards allow for pollutants to be discharged into our rivers and streams at levels above water quality standards. This practice creates zones of pollution called mixing zones where the polluted water mixes with clean water. Amigos Bravos has proposed to eliminate this practice and at the very least limit the pollution that is allowed in these toxic zones.

*Please come and testify in support of our Amigos Bravos’ proposal to eliminate mixing zones from New Mexico.*

For more information about the Triennial Review, visit the New Mexico Environment Department, Surface Water Quality Bureau at <http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/Oots/HearingOfficer/TR2009/index.html>

Please submit your written comments to: [Joyce Medina](#) - **Board Administrator**  
Water Quality Control Commission  
1190 St. Francis Drive, N2153  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502

December 4, 2009