

**AMIGOS BRAVOS ♦ CABALLO CONCERNED CITIZENS ♦ CITIZENS FOR DAIRY REFORM
♦ RIO GRANDE CHAPTER SIERRA CLUB ♦ RIO VALLE CONCERNED CITIZENS ♦ FOOD
AND WATER WATCH ♦ NEW MEXICO ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CENTER**

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WATER QUALITY COMMISSION APPROVES NEW DAIRY REGULATIONS

SANTA FE, N.M. – The Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC) today passed New Mexico’s first industry-specific regulations for the dairy industry. The new regulations will govern dairy waste pollution in ground water. The decision marks the end of a two-year process begun by the dairy industry itself, which asked for industry-specific regulations during the 2009 New Mexico legislative session.

“These regulations are way overdue”, said Jerry Nivens of Caballo Concerned Citizens. “This is a victory for clean water.”

The new regulations came after several public meetings in dairy country, numerous drafts of proposed regulations by the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED), several months of stakeholder meetings involving the NMED, representatives of the dairy industry, and members of the Citizens’ Coalition, and several weeks of hearings before the WQCC.

“These new regulations are really about getting control over the tremendous amount of waste that is generated by large dairies,” said Rachel Conn of Amigos Bravos. “Industry needs to be held accountable for the widespread contamination it causes and the harm that is done to our waters and our communities.”

U.S. Department of Agriculture data reveal that there are 325,000 mature cows on dairy operations in New Mexico. The average industrial dairy in the state has 2,400 cows, a higher average than any other state in the nation. According to the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED), sixty three percent of the dairies in New Mexico are operating in violation of existing regulations.

“Dairy cows in Chavez County alone produce as much waste as the human populations of Los Angeles and Philadelphia combined,” noted Dan Lorimier of the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club. “This amount of waste is alarming because 90 percent of New Mexico’s population relies on groundwater for drinking water.”

The new regulations will require a plastic liner for manure filled wastewater impoundments, minimum setbacks from important water resources such as drinking water wells, and that dairies provide notice to property owners within a mile radius of a proposed dairy that includes a map so the public can see where the dairy will be located in relation to residences and natural resources.

“Clean, safe water is the foundation for healthy families and prosperous communities in New Mexico. Given that the water around the majority of dairies across the state is unsafe to drink, these regulations are an essential first step to protecting New Mexico’s drinking water from dairy contamination.” said Sam Schabacker of Food and Water Watch.