



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FINAL ARGUMENTS PRESENTED ON NEW INDUSTRIAL DAIRY REGULATIONS

SANTA FE, N.M.— Speaking for the thousands of New Mexicans they represent, on Monday, the Citizens Coalition of natural resource, consumer protection advocacy and public health advocacy groups filed final summary of reasons why New Mexico’s Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC) should adopt stringent regulations for industrial dairy operations.

After a months long hearing process, the Commission now considers the testimony and summaries from the New Mexico dairy industry, the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) and the Citizens Coalition. The Commission will then decide on the new rules and may adopt the rules later this year. These would be the first regulations ever enacted to govern dairy waste pollution in state waters.

“With two-thirds of our dairies in serious non-compliance with their discharge permits due to groundwater contamination, the Citizens Coalition is asking the WQCC to strengthen the rules proposed to them by the NMED,” states Jonathan Block, New Mexico Environmental Law Center staff attorney representing the Coalition. “We request better public notice requirements for proposed dairies; greater setbacks from residences and populated areas, food crops, state parks, wells and water sources; financial assurances that disasters and/or closure will be responsibly addressed, and a more comprehensive list of pollutants that must be monitored by dairies.”

“The recent egg callback – amounting to at least 500 million eggs potentially contaminated with salmonella – is just one of many recent indicators that the food industry needs better regulation,” adds Rachel Conn, Clean Water Policy Analyst and Circuit Rider for Amigos Bravos.

“Given the magnitude of the pollution problems New Mexico’s industrial dairy operations have created, only by enacting a strong set of regulations can we ensure that public health and safety, private property and water quality of the state will be protected,” says Jerry Nivens, Spokesperson for Caballo Concerned Citizens.

Coalition Members: Amigos Bravos, Caballo Concerned Citizens, Citizens for Dairy Reform, Food & Water Watch and Rio Grande Chapter, Sierra Club.

INTERVIEWS AND IMAGES ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

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The mission of the New Mexico Environmental Law Center is to protect New Mexico's natural environment and achieve environmental justice for New Mexico's communities through legal representation, policy advocacy and public education. The New Mexico Environmental Law Center's attorneys have handled over 100 critical cases in low-income and minority communities fighting pollution and environmental degradation. The NMELC charges few, if any, fees to its clients, most of who are from Hispanic and Native American communities. The NMELC celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2008. Membership and gifts help New Mexico communities protect their natural environment and their health from toxic pollution, the degrading effects of growth and liabilities created by irresponsible mining. Contact: Sebia Hawkins, Director of Development 505-989-9022, ext. 27.

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