



State of New Mexico
OFFICE OF NATURAL RESOURCES TRUSTEE

Bill Richardson
Governor

Ron Curry
Trustee

Rebecca de Neri Zagal
Executive Director

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For Immediate Release (505) 827-0314 or (505) 231-0475

State to Begin Project to Flush Out Failing Septic Systems

(Santa Fe, NM) — The Office of the Natural Resource Trustee and the New Mexico Environment Department are launching a project within the Middle Rio Grande Basin to eliminate illegal cesspools or substandard household septic systems that threaten water quality and public health.

The project will allow indigent households to replace illegal cesspools or improper septic systems with a modern liquid waste system or connect the household to public sewer. The project area includes Sandoval, Valencia and Socorro Counties. Bernalillo County already has an indigent assistance program in place. NMED will administer the program by recruiting and screening indigent households, issuing price agreements with licensed construction contractors, and by permitting, overseeing and inspecting the construction work.

“Improper septic systems create public health hazards by polluting water supply wells and by allowing sewage to pond on the ground’s surface,” said Environment Secretary and Natural Resource Trustee Ron Curry. “This project will make a dent in the number of improper septic systems that threaten the health of our citizens. The project will also provide work to the construction contractors who will be selected through a competitive bidding process.”

NMED estimates that there are approximately 5,300 indigent households with on-site septic systems in Sandoval, Socorro and Valencia counties. While it is unknown how many of these 5,300 septic systems are substandard, funding should be sufficient to assist 25 to 30 households. ONRT will pay for the project with \$230,000 from natural resource damage settlements for hazardous substance contamination sites in the MRGB.

Applicants who are within 150 percent of the 2009 Poverty Guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,

<http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/09poverty.shtml>, will qualify as indigent and will be eligible for assistance. Eligible applicants will be provided with assistance on a first-come, first-serve basis until depletion of the funds. Application forms for this project can be found on the NMED website at this location:

<http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/fod/LiquidWaste/documents/MRGB.Indigent.Program.pdf>.

The work will be authorized on a site-by-site basis by work orders issued by NMED to construction contractors. Funds will not be transferred to homeowners, and homeowners who have had work done on their own will not be eligible for reimbursement. Funds also

will not be used to install liquid waste systems for new homes being constructed or at existing homes to accommodate increases in design flow.

NMED and ONRT Additional information about the ONRT Liquid Waste Groundwater Protection Project can be found at:

<http://onrt.state.nm.us/SouthValleySuperfundSite.html#liquidwastegwprotectionproject>.

ONRT and NMED will hold public meetings in Sandoval, Valencia and Socorro Counties.

For news media inquiries, contact Marissa Stone Bardino, NMED Communications Director, marissa.bardino@state.nm.us, 505-827-0314.

For additional technical information contact:

- Dennis McQuillan, NMED Liquid Waste Program Manager, dennis.mcquillan@state.nm.us, 505-476-8607; or

- William Fetner, ONRT Environmental Scientist, william.fetner@state.nm.us, 505-243-8087.

4910-A Alameda Blvd. NE • Albuquerque, NM 87113
(505)243-8087 • (505)243-6644 fax • www.onrt.state.nm.us