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NEWS RELEASE

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Dirty-Water Move by Trump Administration Threatens New Mexico Waters

Washington - Today the Trump Administration started the process to repeal the Clean Water Rule, putting the sources of drinking water for more than 117 million Americans at risk and increasing threats to streams and wetlands that filter pollution and provide habitat for wildlife.

"The Trump Administration has once again proved it only cares about one thing - putting polluters first. Repealing the Clean Water Rule puts the drinking water for hundreds of thousands of New Mexicans at risk" said Rachel Conn, Projects Director for Amigos Bravos, a New Mexico water protection organization. "The Clean Water Rule is a commonsense safeguard for the streams that New Mexico communities rely on to irrigate our fields, provide clean water to drink, and create vital wildlife habitat. We should be doing more, not less to protect clean water."

The federal Clean Water Act, passed in 1972, has guided the transition from rivers that literally caught on fire to healthy watersheds where species like the bald eagle and river otter once again thrive. This is the legislation that requires wastewater and industrial facilities to clean water before discharging into the nation's rivers. Supreme Court decisions in 2001 and 2006 made Clean Water Act protections for some waters that historically had been covered under the law, such as waters that flow intermittently or are isolated, uncertain. Because more than 90% of rivers and streams in New Mexico are classified as ephemeral or intermittent, many New Mexico waterways lost Clean Water Act protection. The Clean Water Rule, finalized by EPA in August 2015, clarifies that some of the rivers, streams, and wetlands that fell through the cracks in the post-2001 confusion are indeed protected. Today the Trump Administration started the process to repeal these essential protections, putting these smaller waters once again at risk.

"This rulemaking is especially harmful to New Mexico because, unlike other states, New Mexico does not have a state regulatory structure in place to control discharges into our rivers and streams, so when federal protections are removed, New Mexico's waters are left high and dry," added Conn.

Twenty percent of animal species in New Mexico utilize ephemeral and/or intermittent waters, including 24 species that have been identified by the state as “Species of Greatest Conservation Need.” EPA estimates that at least 280,000 people in the state receive drinking water from ephemeral and/or intermittent sources.

“Protecting water quality in small drainages in New Mexico is critically important for New Mexico’s communities and wildlife,” Conn said.

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