



# THE TAOS NEWS

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## My Turn

### Who is protecting New Mexico's waters?

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For the past decade, rivers and streams in New Mexico have been threatened by unregulated dumping due to the loss of Clean Water Act Protections. This spring the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized a Clean Water Rule that would restore historic protections to many of these waters. Governor Martinez has filed a lawsuit against this Clean Water Rule. This recent lawsuit is one more action in a long line of dirty water efforts by the Martinez Administration to reduce clean water protections across the state. From allowing massive industrial dairies to bypass groundwater protections to proposing weaker water quality standards for New Mexico's rivers and streams, this administration has opened up the floodgates of water pollution.

The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED), the state agency that is charged with protecting our land, air, and water, is spending more time and energy dismantling and opposing protections than ensuring that our environment is safe and clean. This is the agency that wrote the Copper Rules that overturned historic New Mexico groundwater protections and allowed massive sacrifice zones of groundwater pollution.

It is also the agency that opposed last month new protections to control toxic urban storm water discharges from Los Alamos and last fall wrote detailed comments against the EPA Clean Water Rule. This is in direct opposition to the clean water position that New Mexico has historically held.

Under previous administrations, NMED has supported the restoration of Clean Water Act jurisdiction, at one time even going to Congress to testify in support of steps to restore these protections. Now, instead of protecting our water, the Martinez Administration is spending precious state resources on gutting state environmental protections and pursuing dirty water lawsuits.

Water is precious in New Mexico. Without clean water our way of life is threatened and our communities suffer. While the Clean Water Rule does not restore all the protections that were lost after Supreme Court decisions in 2001 and 2006, it is a good first step to restoring some of the protections that were in place for almost 30 years.

It is these protections that 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. Unfortunately here in New Mexico this progress is being reversed and our waters are suffering.

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