

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: James Hallinan

May 12, 2015

(505) 660-2216

Attorney General Balderas Announces Landmark Agreement Among the Dairy Industry, Regulatory Agencies and Environmental Groups

Santa Fe, NM – This afternoon, the Office of the Attorney General along with a coalition of environmental organizations (Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter, Amigos Bravos, Caballo Concerned Citizens, Lea County Concerned Citizens, Mesquite Community Action Committee, Rio Valle Concerned Citizens), the Dairy Industry Group for a Clean Environment, and the New Mexico Environment Department have reached an agreement on proposed changes to the Dairy Rule, a rule passed by the state Water Quality Control Commission that governs protection of ground water from dairy operations.

“Today’s landmark agreement is critical to southern New Mexico’s economy and water quality, but also to the state as a whole given the dairy industry’s \$1.4 billion economic impact,” said Attorney General Hector Balderas. “This agreement -- among the Office of the Attorney General, environmentalists, industry, and the executive branch -- is a model of how different partners in our state can work together to find tangible solutions for the people of New Mexico. I applaud the efforts of all parties in reaching this agreement that protects our environment, human health and supports a critical industry in New Mexico.”

The agreement reached by the Office of the Attorney General, environmentalists, the dairy industry and the state environment department continues strong protection for ground water while providing the dairy industry certain flexibility for its operations. The agreement:

1. Ensures a sufficient number of monitoring wells will be placed near potential contamination sources so that there will be early detection and clean-up of any pollution.
2. Allows dairies to line their waste impoundments with clay liners so long as those liners meet stringent EPA engineering requirements that, according to EPA, result in equal protection as the installation of synthetic liners. If clay liners result in contamination, which should be detected early, a synthetic liner will be required.

###