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City of Santa Fe Fights for Clean Water

Council Passes Resolution in Opposition to Federal Dirty Water Rule

On Wednesday March 27th, the City of Santa Fe Council voted to adopt a resolution in opposition to Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) and US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) draft Waters of the US (WOTUS) rule. The resolution which was sponsored by Mayor Webber, Councilor Rivera, Councilor Villarreal, Council Ives, Councilor Romero-Wirth, and Councilor Lindell passed by a unanimous consent agenda vote during the Council's evening meeting.

"We applaud the City of Santa Fe for standing up for clean water and speaking out in opposition to this dangerous rule which would have devastating impacts on the Santa Fe River along with thousands of other miles of rivers and streams in New Mexico", said Rachel Conn, Projects Director for Amigos Bravos, a statewide water protection organization.

The City of Santa Fe resolution expressed opposition to the draft EPA rule and encouraged City of Santa Fe residents to submit similar public comments. The resolution which states that the "Santa Fe River and its watershed, including all ephemeral tributaries and arroyos, Nichols and McClure reservoirs, its groundwater, its wastewater treatment facility,...would lose federal protections with the proposed changes, including certain limits on pollutant and sediment loads," lists the threats that the proposed WOTUS Rule poses to Santa Fe and calls on EPA and USACE to expand waters that are protected by the Clean Water Act.

"We have all done so much work for our Santa Fe River and its watershed over the past twenty years and it would be a shame that with one rule change, we would no longer have the recognized protections that have helped give us the water quality standards, the 2007 Most Endangered River acknowledgement, and a Living River," said Andy Otto, Executive Director with Santa Fe Watershed Association. "Thank you to the City of Santa Fe Governing Body for their stance against this EPA rule change."

On February 14th the EPA and USACE released a draft WOTUS rule that, according to the New Mexico Environment Department, will leave 96% of New Mexico's waters without protection under the federal Clean Water Act. The proposed rule removes protections from ephemeral streams (waters that don't flow year-round) and from many streams that do flow year-round but have downstream segments that are dry for part of the year. Many wetlands in New Mexico will also lose protections. The comment period on the draft rule ends on April 15th.