

Press Statement for 9/9/23 Release

Statement on EPA's Preliminary Determination of Water Quality Violations in Los Alamos County

On November 8th, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a preliminary decision that stormwater discharges from Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) and Los Alamos County are contributing to violations of water quality standards and that these discharges require a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit under the federal Clean Water Act. This action comes as a result of 10 years of advocacy and legal challenges brought by Amigos Bravos, represented by Western Environmental Law Center, to force the agency to address extremely high urban stormwater pollution in Los Alamos County. There will be a 90-day comment period after the decision is published in the federal register and a public meeting in January 2024.

“After almost a decade of advocacy we are pleased that EPA has responded to our petition and determined, at least preliminarily, that toxic storm water discharges to tributaries to the Rio Grande on the Pajarito Plateau must be more strictly regulated,” said **Rachel Conn, deputy director of Amigos Bravos**. EPA has taken an important step in regulating the waters of the Pajarito Plateau to protect the communities that depend on clean water from the Pajarito plateau for drinking, recreation, and ceremonial purposes.”

“While EPA took an important step forward today in regulating these small waterways on the Pajarito Plateau, there is more work to do at the state and federal level to ensure downstream communities are protected from the impacts of unregulated discharge of pollutants to our waters,” said **Andrew Hawley, senior attorney for the Western Environmental Law Center**. EPA's designation of so many miles of streams as merely conveyances, reducing them to nothing more than pipes that carry pollutants downstream, shows the need for strong state action to protect these important waterbodies and a complete rethinking at a national level of how we protect water quality, and the communities, fish, and wildlife that depend on clean, healthy waterbodies.”

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