



For immediate release:

August 20, 2004

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State Engineer Issues Breach Order for Dam Created by Hazard Roadway in Las Cruces

(LAS CRUCES, New Mexico) – New Mexico State Engineer John D’Antonio issued a **controlled breach order** today in the interest of public safety, to drain a hazardous roadway dam created by sand and gravel mining in **Las Cruces, New Mexico**.

Recent intense rains in the Tortugas Arroyo watershed above the roadway caused the area upstream to fill with water and begin to spill over.

“The roadway is acting as a dam and is unsafe in its current condition,” said State Engineer John D’Antonio. “Although temporary measures have been taken by property owners to prevent overtopping and failure, I am recommending that the dam be removed or modified so that water will not continue to be impounded.”

The roadway dam, located southeast of the City of Las Cruces, is positioned at the A-Mountain Road crossing at Tortugas Arroyo, just east of the *Bruce King Farm and Ranch Museum*.

“Pumping is ongoing today to attempt to lower water levels,” said D’Antonio. “I appreciate the cooperation of the Elephant Butte Irrigation District, New Mexico State University, and the City of Las Cruces, Doña Ana County Flood Control Commission for assisting with this effort to reduce water levels quickly.”

The order issued today mandates that a breach plan to release the water from the roadway dam be submitted for review and approval to the Office of the State Engineer’s Dam Safety Bureau in conjunction with property owners and in accordance with the agency’s Dam Safety Design and Operation Criteria by September 17, 2004. A projected date for completion of construction of the breach is set for October 18, 2004.

(MORE)

"The Office of the State Engineer's Dam Safety Bureau will be working with property owners and local authorities to ensure that the construction and draining of the breach is conducted in a manner that will not endanger lives or damage property downstream," said Dam Safety Bureau Chief Elaine Pacheco.

The Dam Safety Design and Operation Criteria Guidelines can be downloaded on the Office of the State Engineer website at: www.ose.state.us

The Office of the State Engineer is charged with administering the state's water resources. The State Engineer has power over the supervision, measurement, appropriation, and distribution of all surface and groundwater in New Mexico, including streams and rivers that cross state boundaries. The State Engineer is also Secretary of the Interstate Stream Commission and oversees its staff.

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