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Environment Department Pioneers “In-Place” Remediation of Pollutants

(Santa Fe, NM) – The New Mexico Environment Department has lead a team to develop a guidance document for deciding when and how to use “in situ remediation,” or in-place cleanup of contaminants in groundwater. And on December 5, New Mexico Environment Secretary John R. D’Antonio, Jr. signed a letter of concurrence, agreeing to use the guidance document as a decision-making tool.

The Interstate Technology and Regulatory Council released the guidance document to improve decisions about the use of naturally occurring bacteria for in-place treatment of contaminated groundwater. *A Systematic Approach to In Situ Bioremediation in Groundwater* defines when and how to use in situ bioremediation, and includes specific information on using the technique to biologically treat nitrate, carbon tetrachloride, and perchlorate contamination. Nitrate is often associated with contamination caused by dairies and over fertilization. Perchlorate contamination is most often caused by inappropriate handling and disposal by manufacturers and users. Perchlorate is typically used as solid fuels for rockets and missiles, fireworks, blasting agents, and matches. Carbon tetrachloride historically has been used as a cleaning solvent, a grain fumigant at silos, and in the production of plutonium during the cold war.

The Council’s In Situ Bioremediation Team of developed this technical and regulatory guidance, which can be used by any company performing remediation. The document presents the primary decision points for determining if natural processes can be effective in achieving remediation goals in a reasonable time frame or if engineered approaches should be implemented to accelerate bioremediation.

By signing a letter of concurrence for the guidance document, the Environment Department agrees that there are no regulatory barriers preventing the use of in situ bioremediation, specifically to remediate nitrate, carbon tetrachloride, and perchlorate, thus making it easier for local governments or companies to get Department approval.

The leader of the In Situ Bioremediation Team is Bart Faris of the New Mexico Environment Department's Ground Water Quality Bureau. Faris headed the team of 25 scientists, academics, consultants and regulators in developing the guidance document. The application of in situ bioremediation has been an increasingly promising clean up process that has needed a consistent systematic approach. This document provides that.

The In Situ Bioremediation Guidelines can be found online at the Interstate Technology and Regulatory Council Web site at www.itrcweb.org under "Guidance Documents" and then "In Situ Bioremediation." The ISB Team is one of 15 currently producing guidance documents and conducting training on the deployment of innovative environmental technologies. Council technical teams have produced more than 40 guidance documents, all of which are available online at the ITRC Web site.

ITRC is a state-led group that works to overcome regulatory barriers to the deployment of innovative environmental technologies. ITRC participants come from the ranks of state regulatory agencies, federal agencies concerned with environmental cleanup, environmental consulting firms, and technology vendors.

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