

FACT SHEET

PETITION FOR DESIGNATION AS SOLE SOURCE AQUIFER
ESPAÑOLA BASIN AQUIFER SYSTEM
SANTA FE AREA, NEW MEXICO
January 23, 2008

General

- The petition was prepared by La Cienega Valley Citizens for Environmental Safeguards and submitted by Elaine Cimino, Director. The petition was received by EPA on June 2, 2006.
- Notice of Determination of the Sole Source Aquifer petition was announced in the Federal Register on January 22, 2008.

Specific

- The effect of designation would be to allow EPA to review projects with Federal financial assistance (Federal loans, loan guarantees, grants, etc) that might contaminate the aquifer. Upon finding that a project might contaminate the aquifer, EPA could prevent Federal financial assistance if the project were not properly modified.
- The area requested for designation covers approximately 3,000 square miles, and includes the cities of Santa Fe, Los Alamos, and Española. The area also includes the Pueblos of San Juan, Santa Clara, Pojoaque, San Ildefonso, Nambe, Tesque, Picuris, and Cochiti (see accompanying map).
- The area proposed for designation contains the following principal aquifer elements: “Tesuque and Ancha formations of the Santa Fe group and in some arroyo channels and fringe areas, Quaternary sediments.” The proposed designation also includes recharge and stream-flow source areas.
- The aquifer is highly vulnerable to contamination, and contamination of the aquifer would result in a significant hazard to public health because a number of public water supply systems, as well as private wells, depend on the aquifer as a source of drinking water.
- The EPA has determined that the aquifer system meets the sole source aquifer program requirement for providing at least 50% of the drinking water for the area.
- No alternative water sources have been developed that might replace the aquifer system as the principal source of drinking water in the near future.