
Objections to Story

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Elaine,
Greetings from Kirtland AFB,

Wednesday evening a story by Ed Williams , "Small Tribe, Big River: Isleta Eyes Pollution In the Rio Grande," ran on KUNM and was posted on your website. This story, and the last paragraph in particular, has created a lot of consternation among leadership here.

We have four majors concerns with the story.

First, including Kirtland in the last paragraph is not necessary or even appropriate. The story's about pollution of the Rio Grande and focuses on violation of environmental law and EPA standards. The text references "eight facilities upstream from the tribe have been in violation of the Clean Water Act" - which remain unnamed - and specifically mentions Albuquerque's Southside Wastewater Reclamation Plant, and Rio Rancho's wastewater treatment plant, The City of Albuquerque, and Kirtland Air Force Base as "nearby sources of pollution." The problem is that Kirtland is NOT in violation of the EPA storm runoff standards and has NEVER been found in violation. Including Kirtland in the story in with well-documented violators, implies that Kirtland is also in violation of the law and a major polluter of the river, conclusions that are not supported by fact.

Second, there is no context given for the amount of lead coming from Kirtland. Seven hundred pounds seems like a lot but when placed in context with the size of the base, it's not as impressive. Considering that Kirtland covers 52,000 acres, about the size of the District of Columbia, of which only about 8,000 are developed, 700lbs of lead, a naturally occurring metal in the area, over ten years is not significant. Furthermore, Ed doesn't provide information on how Kirtland compares to other potential sources of lead along the Rio Grande such as the eight unnamed violators or even UNM or Isleta Pueblo itself. Finally, Ed does not acknowledge that given the size of the base, even 700lbs is well within the EPA's safe drinking water standards.

Third, Ed implies that all 700lbs of lead made it to the Rio Grande. This is simply not the case. Most of the runoff over the last decade never left the immediate area of discharge, miles from the Rio Grande.

Finally, and most disturbing from our perspective, Ed knew better. We spent several hours with him on Wednesday. We assembled e-our environmental specialists and gave Ed a tour of base facilities and provided detailed responses and context to his questions regarding discharge from Kirtland, our testing protocol, equipment, outflow mitigation and containment. We explained that Kirtland is not in violation and has never received a notice of violation of clean water standards, we provided context for the amount of lead in runoff and explained that this is within EPA standards and we showed him outfalls in the arroyo which is usually as far as the runoff goes. We

invited any question and gave him the access and the time he needed for his story.


This is the crux of the situation, because of this story, I will have a hard time convincing my leadership to once again devote any significant time of efforts to KUNM queries if all we can expect is an unwarranted cheap-shot in return. And, regrettably, it seems Ed has burned bridges and many of our people will be loath to deal with him again, primarily because of the gratuitous slam at Kirtland in his final paragraph.

We've always worked closely with KUNM and it's unfortunate that I needed to send this note. Please give some thought to these concerns and I'd appreciate any feedback you can provide,

All the best,

Eric

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