



STATE OF NEW MEXICO

Environment Department

SUSANA MARTINEZ, GOVERNOR

Ryan Flynn, *Cabinet Secretary-Designate*

Butch Tongate, *Deputy Secretary*

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Jim Winchester
New Mexico Environment Department
(505)231-8800 / jim.winchester@state.nm.us

Kirtland Air Force Base Completes First Significant Aquifer Test

Albuquerque – New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) Secretary Ryan Flynn was joined by Kirtland Air Force Base (KAFB) Installation Commander Colonel Tom Miller and Bernalillo County Commissioner Maggie Hart Stebbins on Wednesday to witness the first significant well test that pumped liquid fuel contaminants from the underground fuel plume.

“We are pleased Kirtland Air Force Base has completed another step in the overall clean-up process by concluding this 6-hour long Aquifer Step Test,” said Secretary Flynn. “This test marks the first time actual liquid fuel contaminants have been pulled from the underground aquifer. Results from today’s test and additional tests on the aquifer in the weeks ahead will help determine an interim measure to directly attack the fuel plume.”

The Aquifer Step Test pumped approximately 70,000 gallons of contaminated water to nearby mobile tanks. The stored water will be filtered for treatment to drinking water standards and safely dispersed on Kirtland Air Force Base in the weeks ahead. None of the extracted, contaminated water pumped out from today’s test will be put back in the aquifer.

“The aquifer step test conducted today is important because it gets us one significant step closer to achieving final remedy, and achieving the Air Force commitment to remediating the fuel plume,” said Colonel Tom Miller, Installation Commander at Kirtland Air Force Base.

Kirtland Air Force Base has committed to the clean-up of the underground fuel, which likely began leaking from underground fuel pipe on the base sometime in the 1950s.

The New Mexico Environment Department is the regulator overseeing clean-up of the underground fuel spill. This past summer, NMED Secretary Ryan Flynn opened up discussions with the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority to assist as partners in the clean-up effort.

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“Although no drinking water has been affected as of yet, this fuel spill is of great concern to the Water Authority and to the citizens of this community,” said Bernalillo County Commissioner Maggie Hart Stebbins, who serves on the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority Governing Board. “Today’s test is an important step in a long process that we trust will lead to the complete restoration of the contaminated aquifer in this area.”

The pumping conducted Wednesday is expected to reveal the effect of significant groundwater pumping on the character of the aquifer, to assist with developing an interim measure to address the fuel plume, and to aid in the development a final remedy. The Aquifer Step Test meets a performance deadline given to Kirtland Air Force Base this past summer. The Air Force will now move forward on an Aquifer Constant Rate Test before an interim measure is selected to attack the fuel plume.

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