



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Thursday, September 25, 2008

**NEW MEXICO ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CENTER AND CITIZENS DEFEAT WATER GRAB**

*SANTA FE, N.M.*— On September 17, 2008, Broe Land and Acquisitions, Inc. LLC (Broe) filed a notice to withdraw all of its applications for water rights that are currently pending before the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer. Broe, a Denver corporation specializing in real estate speculation, had filed a total of 16 water rights applications to appropriate thousands of acre-feet of groundwater per year from the Gallup underground water basin in Catron County.

Broe's decision to withdraw resulted from a motion filed by New Mexico Environmental Law Center staff attorney Bruce Frederick on behalf of its clients, including Thomas Davis, who owns water rights in the area. Frederick argued that the appropriation would violate state law requiring water rights and land to be owned by the same entity. Broe's applications to the State Engineer attempted to purchase water rights to land owned by the State of New Mexico.

"Broe's plans to pump thousands of acre-feet from the aquifer would have impaired our wells and threatened our community, which depends on that groundwater," says Davis.

"This is a major victory for New Mexico communities working to protect their scarce water resources," said Frederick. "This appeared to be an effort to speculate in water rights by obtaining and developing water reserves in the same way that oil companies develop oil and gas reserves, a practice that could devastate communities that depend upon the water involved."

According to Frederick, out of state water speculators see profit-making opportunities in New Mexico and are intent on converting what's left of New Mexico's free unappropriated groundwater into their private reserves.

Frederick and the New Mexico Environmental Law Center are also representing individuals opposing the applications filed by the San Augustin Plains Ranch to appropriate 54,000 acre feet of water annually from the San Augustin plains area near Datil, NM.

[www.nmenvirolaw.org](http://www.nmenvirolaw.org)

The mission of the New Mexico Environmental Law Center is to protect New Mexico's natural environment and communities through legal and policy advocacy, and public education. The New Mexico Environmental Law Center's attorneys have handled over 100 critical cases in low-income and minority communities fighting pollution and environmental degradation. The Law Center charges few, if any, fees to its clients, most of whom are from Hispanic and Native American communities. The NMELC is celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2008. Membership and gifts help New Mexico communities protect their natural environment and their health from toxic pollution, the degrading effects of growth and liabilities created by irresponsible mining. Contact: Sebia Hawkins, Director of Development 505-989-9022.

**INTERVIEWS AND IMAGES ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**

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