

State of New Mexico
ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

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TO: Darwin Pattengale
FROM: James D. Smith
SUBJECT: Videotape from Ron Price City of Lovington.
DATE: 4/5/2001

Received 4/10/01
Jay Kunk

Mr. Price is very concerned that parts of this videotape that reveal its source be kept confidential if possible. That is, his recorded voice in certain narration, pictures of Mr. Price himself, and his vehicle are requested to be kept confidential if possible.

The first 5 minutes are pictures of the Portales Waste Water Treatment Plant for comparison. After that you see various views of the sewer line between the cheese plant and the Lovington WWTP. Many manholes in the area are constantly leaking from hydraulic overload. A manhole behind and just a little north of the cheese plant often has geyser like properties, and has created a lake in the area from constant overflow. One view is of overflow that backed up into a church daycare center restroom and out on the nearby carpet.

Other pictures show cattle that graze on the farm that is irrigated by the effluent from the Lovington WWTP, most of which have diarrhea.

Various views of the plant show the bar screen that is constantly clogged with cheesy foam and by products. The primary clarifier is overloaded with organic residue. Caustic organic products and chemicals have eaten up the secondary clarifier. The trickling filter beds are dead (gray) and there appears to be little organic activity. The organic overload has essentially shut down any biological treatment in the plant. The water comes in milky and goes out milky. The stench from the plant and the associated irrigation, especially in the summer, is awful. Persons living within miles of the plant cannot open their windows or operate air conditioning when the wind blows from the plant direction (prevailing winds are from the southeast toward town).

Mr. Price has an extensive collection of additional photographs depicting hives on his body from working in the manholes and being in contact with the effluent.

For a specific narrative of each thing depicted on the videotape you need to speak to Mr. Price.

Another concern is that the irrigation wells on the farm down stream of the WWTP are directly connected to the effluent pipe from the sewer plant. Since these are not drinking water wells I don't know if we have any say in their construction or connection, but there is a potential here for serious groundwater contamination. One of the photos I took shows such a connection, with only a check valve to keep sewer plant effluent from going down the well when it is not pumping.

The other five pictures I took show the area behind and north of the cheese plant. The overflowing manhole cover is shown, one picture uses sunlight reflection to highlight the flow coming out the lid. Mr. Price said this was a very low flow time when the picture was taken. The last three pictures show the 'lake' northeast of the cheese plant as created by this overflowing manhole.

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