

Criminal charges could come over Four Corners water problems

Devin Neeley / March 13, 2017 6:57 PM

EAST OF BLOOMFIELD – A major water crisis plaguing a Four Corners community is now leading to possible criminal charges.

“Smells like fish water and it was on the brownish side this morning,” said Michelle Warner, who has lived in the Harvest Gold subdivision for a dozen years.

Warner said she never had confidence in how clean the water proved by Animas Valley Water was. The water is so bad that Warner said her dogs won’t even go near it. It’s been that way for almost a year.

For clean water, residents have to boil it or buy bottled water just to get by.

“I don’t understand why; this is something you put in our bodies. We depend on good, clean water to live a decent life,” Warner said.

In a March 1 letter, Public Regulation Commission chair Sandy Jones asked the New Mexico attorney general to step in.

“What we have asked is for him to foreclose on the fines that are there and also to go to court to enforce actions that PRC has instituted against the company,” Jones said.

The current fine tally for Animas Valley water is \$2.2 million with an extra \$7,450 per day for every day the boil order remains in effect. But the PRC needs help collecting.

“We don’t have the legal authority to enforce the orders, we issue them and it takes the AG, or the AG to give us permission to enforce orders,” Jones said.

The letter also references a criminal investigation into AV Water, which the AG confirms. NMAG’s office says they are looking into the other two requests by the PRC. But, it’s little solace for people living a water nightmare every day.

“It makes me feel like they are looking into it, but things need to actually happen,” Warner said. “I would like to see some things happen, I want some clean water.”