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### **Ditches are Deadly: Play it safe and avoid swimming or playing in irrigation channels**

As water begins flowing in San Juan County irrigation ditches, children and adults may be tempted to jump in.

Most of the ditches in our community are mud lined and since the annual clean out of sediment, may be deeper than they appear. The purpose of these waterways is to transport irrigation water to crops and gardens, not for recreational activities such as swimming or inertubing.

The water in ditches can move up to 20 miles an hour and some ditches have undertows, according to the Ditch the Ditches web site <http://ditchesaredeadly.com/>.

According to the New Mexico Indicator-Based Information System (NM-IBIS), San Juan County had the third highest number of drownings in 2014, Bernalillo County and McKinley County were 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> respectively.

#### Ditch Dangers:

- ☠ The average irrigation canal depth is 7 – 10 feet deep.
- ☠ Canals may have undertows and turbulence that could drag a swimmer under water.
- ☠ Dry canals are not safe because there is no way to know when water may be released.
- ☠ Canals have grates, culverts, and spillways. Falling into a water-filled ditch or canal could cause you to become caught up in or strike an object or structure.
- ☠ Canal temperatures can be cold enough to cause hypothermia.

There are many water based recreational opportunities in San Juan County, including community pools and parks. Be safe this summer. Avoid ditches and Canals.