



## **2009 State Water Plan Update Public Outreach**

**Region: Southwest New Mexico  
Mimbres Valley Event Center  
Deming, NM  
April 15, 2009**

### **Summary of Discussion**

**Facilitator/Recorder:** Bruce Poster

### **Welcome and Introductions**

Estevan López, Interstate Stream Commission Director, welcomed the group of 20 to this public forum sponsored jointly by the Office of the State Engineer and the Interstate Stream Commission (OSE/ISC). He introduced agency staff and contractors:

Gretel Follingstad, State Water Planner  
Martha Franks, Legal Counsel (contracted)  
Craig Roepke, ISC Special Projects Bureau Chief  
Karin Stangl, Planning and Communications Director  
Maureen Haney, Communications Specialist  
Charles Jackson, District III Supervisor

### **Presentation**

Follingstad presented an overview of the New Mexico's state and regional water planning process to date, including data on population, water supply and demands, and an overview of the Southwest New Mexico Regional Water Plan.

### **Questions and Comments on Presentation**

Bruce Poster, contracted facilitator, took questions and comments from the audience on the presentation and other related water issues.

#### **Data and population projections**

Question: Participants asked staff to explain what in-stream flow means for the Gila River.  
Answer: Staff explained it is the amount of water in the Gila River, when the river is actually flowing.

Question: Another person wanted to know if the University of New Mexico Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER) projections adjusted for the recent economic down turn.

Answer: No, the BBER report was completed and published in August of 2008, just prior to the September 15, 2008 national economic downturn.

Question: One participant asked what the source for the water demand projections for 2040 was.

Answer: The staff explained that these are from the Southwest Regional Water Plan.

#### Agriculture conservation

Question: One person asked if it is true that underground drip systems don't necessarily decrease water use.

Answer: Staff answered that it may not; the water that is actually used may be the same. The productivity of the crop will certainly increase with the same amount of water used with drip irrigation verses flood irrigation.

Question: People wanted to know if there has been a decrease in irrigated acreage.

Answer: Yes, there has been a decrease since 1993.

#### Water rights and legal issues

Question: Participants inquired about deep well aquifers and who has the jurisdiction over them.

Answer: ISC staff explained that the State Engineer has jurisdiction over newly declared deep water basins, however those basins still need to be declared.

Question: As to deep well jurisdiction participants were curious about why the San Agustin applications were different.

Answer: Staff explained that these applications weren't below 2,500 feet.

Question: One participant wanted to know if someone would be able to appropriate deep water for interstate compact delivery.

Answer: Staff explained that theoretically this would be allowed, but it would be prohibitively expensive.

Comment: There is an effect on the water levels in Luna County due to wells pumping significant amounts of water in Mexico, because the underground aquifer drains toward Mexico.

### **Responses to the Four Focus Questions**

The group considered the four focus questions for public input on the State Water Plan Update.

#### ***1. What should your region and the state as a whole do to assure water for a growing population?***

- We can't create more water, so we need to conserve.
- There needs to be more attention put on ground water flows and available supply.

- We need to quantify the amount of water taken out of the aquifer within Mexico.
- Urban areas are looking to rural areas for more water; so we need to understand usage in the Middle Rio Grande and other urban areas. Adjudication would help with this problem.
- Since the state is fully appropriated, then all we can do is change the way the water is used. There could also be some “new” deep water and “new” Central Arizona Project water.
- We should find out if the deep and shallow aquifers are interconnected.
- More emphasis on the importance of watershed restoration programs and improvements to this approach.
- There should be more resources allocated to hydrographic surveys, e.g. on the Mimbres.
- Distribute the locations of wells to minimize cones of depression. There needs to be higher efficiency.
- More coordinated water management within regions is needed and necessary.
- Protect rural areas from losing their water to exports. Answer: There is a new law that prevents cities from condemning rural water rights.
- Speed up implementation of the Arizona Water Settlement Act, we don’t want to run out of time and loose the option of using that water.
- Place rivers in conduits to reduce evaporation. Answer: This would create problems in the ecosystem and diminish the quality of life along riparian corridors.
- Educate the public on the longevity of our water resources and what is available for use.
- Protect water that is within a region from export and allow only limited growth within regions.

**2. *What water conservation strategies would help meet increased constraints (population growth, climate variability) on water in your region and the state as a whole?***

- Require urinals in private bathrooms.
- Allow reuse of wastewater via recharge credits.
- Focus on irrigation efficiency, e.g. drip irrigation.
- Don’t allow water that is conserved to be exported elsewhere.
- The water market is effective in creating higher priced water, which can move water from agriculture to higher value uses.
- Need a good water re-use program.
- Water rates structuring: charge more for greater usage of water (two comments on this)

- Provide incentives for conservation, e.g. for rainwater harvesting and outdoor water use meters. Answer: There are some legal impediments to doing this.
- Storm water management should be used for groundwater recharge. Answer: Need to address return flow credits as well.
- More water conservation public education and outreach, e.g. water festivals, especially for youth.
- Increase cost of water to encourage conservative water use, rate structuring.
- Make progress with Mexico on joint management of water. Answer: Governor Richardson has been working on this.
- Make water use statistics more readily available, e.g. on the State Engineer's website.

**3. *Have you observed climate variability (e.g. drought, flooding, severe storms) in your region? What should be done to prepare for these extreme circumstances in your region and the state as a whole?***

- I have seen variability, but there is evidence of even greater variability in historical tree ring data.
- Avoid making bar ditches along rural roads. Instead, try to direct water to prevent flooding and increase ground cover and soil moisture.
- Keep vegetation along rivers.
- Eradicate invasive species like salt cedar.
- Protect groundwater supplies from non-point source pollutants, e.g. septic tanks.
- Encourage toilets that have different flush mechanisms for solid vs. liquid waste.
- Incorporate climate variability scenarios into updates of regional water plans.
- The monsoons may be moving north, which calls for drought preparedness planning.

**4. *What water projects are needed in your region? How should these projects be prioritized for funding?***

- Don't allow metro area infrastructure and development needs to monopolize the water out of rural areas.
- Use the most cost-effective strategies, e.g. we need conservation programs for municipal and agricultural water use statewide.
- Start planning for long-term projects, now to ensure they are on the ground when necessary.
- Need for better basin-wide management.

- Maintain the Water Rights Research and Accounting System (formerly WATERS) and GEO data bases.
- Fund updates to the regional water plans, which need better data.
- Don't use the critical management areas, water rights program as a means to manage water. Instead, gain a better understanding of the hydrogeology.
- Provide comprehensive and integrated water education in junior and senior high schools.
- Look at efficiency of water use through drip irrigation programs; save agriculture in New Mexico by increasing its water use efficiency.
- Don't sacrifice agriculture to meet other water needs. We need to protect local cultures and food sources. (two comments on this)
- Minimize water use in energy production. Make the 'water-energy nexus' more of a statewide priority.
- Repair check dams to mitigate flooding.
- Provide for in-stream flow to ensure healthy rivers.
- See what can be learned from other states like California that are dealing with drought.
- Storage and recovery projects for municipal wells and aquifer recharge.
- Agricultural conservation must be a priority for the state as a whole.
- Redistribute water rights from mining companies to communities.
- Provide water rights for community gardens.

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