

Jemez y Sangre Water Planning Council Meeting Notes
May 10, 2004

Attendees: Bob Vocke, Amy Lewis, Roy Stoesz, Bill LeMay, Alan Jager, Sigmond Silber, Gavin Strathdee, Rick Carpenter, Jeffrey Lyon, Jason Garcia, Maxine Ewankow, and Edith Pierpont attended the JyS Water Planning Council monthly meeting. Estevan Lopez (ISC Director), Mary Helen Follingstad (ISC), Charlie Nylander (LANL Water Research Technical Assistance Office), and Tracy Williams also attended the meeting.

The next JyS monthly meeting will be June 14, 2004 in Santa Fe.

Estevan Lopez covered the New Mexico State Water Plan (December 2003) Priorities, Goals, and Objectives with the Council. (A short summary from the SWP is provided for those that have not read the plan.)

The Office of State Engineer and Interstate Stream Commission developed the following list of fundamental statewide common priorities, goals, and objectives. This list is not presented in any order or priority; the relative priority of these will vary in different areas of the state given the specific issues that are applicable to each area.

Ensuring that water is available for the continued and future economic vitality of the State

The availability of water has always been and will continue to be inextricably linked to the economic vitality of New Mexico's diverse communities. Water suppliers include municipal; community water systems including mutual domestic water consumer associations, water cooperative associations, water and sanitation districts, and privately owned public utilities; acequias; irrigation districts; and conservancy districts. New Mexico's continued economic vitality is also crucially dependent on its ability to preserve its pristine environment, including its spectacularly scenic will rivers and wilderness watersheds.

Ensuring a safe and adequate drinking water supply for all New Mexicans

The availability of safe and adequate drinking water supplies for all New Mexicans is of paramount importance to the health and safety of the State's citizens. The provision of adequate safe drinking water supplies for their citizens is primarily the responsibility of local agencies and entities, while the State's role is to support local agencies through the combined efforts of the Environment Department, OSE/ISC, and Water Trust Board. In addition, a significant number of New Mexicans obtain their drinking water from domestic wells.

Developing water resources to expand the available supply

New Mexico's surface waters in many parts of the State have been fully appropriated since the early to middle 1900s. Most of the municipal and community water supplies developed since then have relied on the State's substantial potable ground water reserves. However, much of that ground water is in storage in aquifers that are hydrologically connected to the State's rivers and is not available for use because the pumping of that

ground water would reduce river flows and impair senior surface rights. Some alternatives that have been identified include:

- Developing the State's limited remaining unappropriated surface water in those basins where it is practical to do so.
- Developing potable ground water in basins where ground water is not closely connected to river flow.
- Characterizing the State's brackish and saline ground water resources to determine where their development is economically feasible.
- Removing accumulated sediment to increase storage capacity in reservoirs with low evaporation losses.
- Constructing new water storage facilities in areas with low evaporation losses where economically and environmentally feasible.
- Implementing aquifer storage and recovery projects where hydrologically and economically feasible.

Promoting conservation and the efficient use of water

At present, even during periods of average water supply, demand in many parts of the State would exceed supply if all water rights and permits were fully exercised. As New Mexico's population grows and demands for water increase, conservation and efficient use of water will be increasingly necessary to meet the State's present and future needs for water.

Promoting drought planning

Drought is a cyclic climate pattern in semiarid New Mexico. In times of drought the State's water resources cannot meet even the current needs of water users throughout the state, much less accommodate new and increasing demands such as federal environmental mandates. The increase in New Mexico's population over the past several decades has further increased our vulnerability to drought. Given these challenges, it is critical to plan for drought and educate New Mexico residents about drought conditions and the threats posed by drought to the environment, to our economy, and to the public welfare.

Protecting, maintaining, and enhancing the quality of the State's waters

This common priority recognizes that protecting, maintaining, and enhancing the quality of the State's water is critical to sustaining the State's residential population, businesses, and agriculture for present and future generations of New Mexicans. Once water becomes contaminated, it is extremely expensive to restore to its original quality, and in many cases restoration is not possible at any cost.

Providing for fish and wildlife habitat preservation and maintenance and for river restoration

Protection of fish and wildlife habitat and river restoration and maintenance are important goals of the State. The State must manage its water in ways that allow the U.S. to meet Endangered Species Act obligations within confines of State law.

Protecting senior water rights

New Mexico water law and administration is based on the concept of prior appropriation. Ultimately, in order to protect senior water rights, there is no alternative to administration of the State's waters. Quantification of senior water rights is important to provide certainty to all water rights holders, to facilitate the active management of the State's waters, and to enable the State to maintain administrative authority over its waters

Maintaining and enforcing interstate stream compact compliance

Interstate stream compacts are agreements developed between states and ratified by those states and the U.S. Congress that apportion between the signatory states the surface waters of selected streams that cross state borders. New Mexico's ability to administer its water will be threatened if New Mexico fails to meet its interstate compact obligations.

Preserving state administrative authority over the State's waters

The fundamental common priorities and objectives identified here require the State to actively manage its water resources for the benefit of the people of New Mexico.

Completing water rights adjudications

In order to accomplish effective administration of water rights, the rights must be quantified and ranked. The legal process that establishes this quantification and ranking is called adjudication of water rights.

Estevan covered OSE/ISC active water resource management and made the following points:

- Real-time flow management is needed (metering, monitoring, and regulating SW and GW diverting);
- Senior water rights must be protected (in general most to least senior: most senior – Pueblos, acequias, original farmers and ranches, M&I, recreational – least senior);
- Alternatives must be provided for less senior M&I during periods of drought (e.g., leasing);
- Options for managing water during drought include shortage sharing (e.g., San Juan Basin), rotation (e.g., City of Santa Fe and Rio Jemez), and water banking;
- Water districts are being formalized, general & basin-specific guidelines are being developed, and water masters being hired for stream systems potentially facing critical shortages during the summer of 2004 (Rio Gallinas, San Juan River, Rio Chama, Rio Pojoaque, and Lower Rio Grande);
- Water masters already exist on some stream systems (e.g., Cimarron, Rio Costilla, and Rio Chama);
- Active water resource management education/public involvement is very important; and
- NM must preserve its administrative authority over water.

Sig provided a Cloud Seeding Project report, which will be posted at <http://eweb.lanl.gov/jemezysangre.htm> under scheduled meetings.

Charlie Nylander provided a brief report on the Los Alamos National Laboratory Water Research Technical Assistance Office and made the following points:

- The Office will foster collaboration to fill the sustainable water supply science gaps in the Espanola Basin;
- The County of Santa Fe is discussing space for the office, which may be available soon (a County resolution is pending);
- The Office will be an advocate for federal funding;
- The Office will participate on the EBTAG;
- The Office supported the Northern New Mexico Regional Water Meeting (Northern NM Community College, April 10, 2004);
- The Office is currently working on a water education video; and
- The Office will provide Internet access to information (e.g., Jemez y Sangre data base).

Subcommittee Reports:

- Education – Bob Vocke presented the JyS Water Plan recommendations at the April 20th Northern New Mexico Regional Water Meeting. Sig presented for the New and Expanded Water Technologies subcommittee at the "Technological and Regional Water Stewardship: A Conference Series Aimed at Identifying Priorities in Technologies for Improving Water Management Along the Rio Grande Corridor" will be held in Albuquerque on April 21-22 (<http://research.unm.edu/opst/> - go to "Events"). Sig will present at a Water Pot-Luck at 6:30 pm Saturday at the Cristo Rey Church, 606 Alto Street. Estevan will also be speaking there as well as some Santa Fe County Commissioners.
- State Water Plan @ <http://www.seo.state.nm.us/water-info/NMWaterPlanning/NMWP-index.html> - no report.
- New and Expanded Water Technologies – The subcommittee will meet on May 19th and is currently investigating desalination and water harvesting.
- Measuring Status – no report.
- Governor's Blue Ribbon Water Task Force – no report.