

Los Alamos County

A Unique Blend of Science and Scenery

San Juan Chama Project Water Utilization Study



Test Drilling in White Rock Canyon - Fall 2002

Project Description:

In an effort to conserve Los Alamos County's groundwater - water drawn from the aquifer under the Pajarito Plateau - investigations have been underway to supplement the County's drinking water with surface water. Specifically the Department of Public Utilities has been examining whether or not it is feasible to divert 1200 acre-feet from the Rio Grande under the San Juan/Chama Project.

Background:

A portion of New Mexico's share of the Colorado river is delivered to users along the Rio Grande by the San Juan/Chama Project. Water is released from the Colorado River, into the San Juan/Chama Rivers, and subsequently released into the Rio Grande River.

The County has a contract with the Bureau of Reclamation for annual delivery of 1200 acre-feet of San Juan/Chama project water. However, before the County can use the water it must be lifted from the Rio Grande up onto the mesa that overlooks White Rock Canyon.

Contacts:

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Project Schedule:

Studies conducted in 2002 and 03 by Boyle Engineering Corporation under a contract with the Utilities Department, determined that it would be feasible for the county to construct a collector system that would allow the diversion of water from the layer of gravel beneath the Rio Grande. This would allow the county to either:

- Pump and pipe water from the Rio Grande up the side of White Rock canyon at a cost of \$10.4 million, or
- Construct a tunnel under the mesa and drill a well on top of Overlook Park to intercept the water flowing in the tunnel at a cost of \$17.2 million.

Prior to conducting an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the county has been pursuing a more secure contract with the Bureau of Reclamation. If a secure contract can be attained with the Bureau, and it is determined that there are no significant environmental impacts, the Utilities Department will take the project to the Utilities Board and County Council for a decision as to whether or not to proceed with construction.

updated 10/20/04 by JWilliams