

12.2. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM

12.2.1. Introduction

Water quality, conservation, and participation, awareness and involvement of the people of the region are the keys to protecting and preserving our water supply. According to the ISC, “Water is a fragile and finite resource . . . It is important that the planning process encourage local people to express local concerns and discuss difficult decisions faced by every community in New Mexico.”

The Regional Water Planning Handbook provides guidance as to what should be included in the regional water planning process, particularly with regard to public involvement. As is noted in the Handbook, "a critical element of the regional water plan is public participation in the planning process. Planners must demonstrate that reasonable and diligent efforts have been made to reach the public so as to invite, value, and reflect public comment."

Throughout the water planning process the Río Puerco and Río Jemez (RP and RJ) Steering Committee worked diligently to fulfill this mandate, and to involve local residents as stakeholders in all aspects of the water planning effort. Since January 2000 residents from the communities of San Ysidro, Cañon, Jemez Springs, Ponderosa, La Cueva, Cuba, La Jara, and Regina, and the Pueblos of Jemez and Zia attended meetings and workshops to learn about, and participate in, subregional water planning. Also, Steering Committee members met twice with the Torreon Chapter’s Land Use Planning Board, Navajo Nation.

This section documents the public involvement program and process in Phase I and II and summarizes the results. These results reflect input by area residents who gave their time and energy to ensure the plan represents the values and visions of the majority of residents of the Río Puerco and Río Jemez subregions.

Included in the Public Involvement Appendix are the RP and RJ Steering Committee’s meeting notes, Workshop reports, La Jara GPA (Geographical Priority Area) proposal, outreach notes and presentations, newspaper articles, progress reports, Río Puerco and Río Jemez sequence of scenarios, participation lists 2000 – 2003, Cooperative Agreement for the Río Puerco and Río Jemez Watershed Planning Steering Committee, and the Río Puerco and Río Jemez Watershed Planning Steering Committee Bylaws. Complete copies of the Phase I and II reports are located in the offices of the Cuba Soil & Water Conservation District and the Mid-Region Council of Governments.

12.2.2. The Phase I Public Involvement Process

Phase I of the planning process in the Río Jemez and Río Puerco Subregion began in January 2000 and ended in December 2002. Approximately 25 RP and RJ Steering Committee meetings and two workshops were held either in Cuba or Cañon to identify issues, concerns, values, and problems. Interim mission, goals, alternatives and objectives related to developing sub-regional water plans were developed. The Río Jemez and Río Puerco Joint Watershed Steering Committee, as well as a set of Bylaws, was created. A total of 125 people participated in public meetings during Phase I. A report

prepared by Mike Wirtz, dated January 2003, documented the public involvement program and process and summarized the interim results for Phase I, is summarized below while the full report is found in the Appendix.

Throughout the meetings, certain themes kept being raised, which included managing and restoring the watersheds for water production, how to keep the water within the watersheds, and that planning should begin at the top of the watershed and address erosion control issues. On July 28, 2001, the Steering Committee developed the following interim Mission Statement:

The Río Puerco y Río Jemez Steering Committee promotes the enhancement of watershed restoration efforts that will benefit communities and it's residents by increasing water production and improving water quality.

Two workshops were held in 2002 - January 19 in Cañon and February 23 in Cuba. Flyers were included in the electric cooperative's bills, to ensure that everyone received notice. The workshops were designed to update participants in the planning efforts to date, and to allow participants to describe what they valued concerning available water and to formulate a process for working together to overcome obstacles during the planning process.

Based upon the meetings held in 2000 and 2001, the steering committee created six separate categories of previously identified water related issues:

1. Agriculture/ranching
2. Acequia/cultural
3. Development/growth
4. Watershed management
5. Community involvement
6. Other

These categories were first explained at the Workshops. Then participants were asked to expand on the list. Finally, they formed small sub-committees and discussed a desired state for their communities within the next 40 years. Participants were asked to list their concerns and values on flip charts under the six different categories. In Cañon, small groups were formed and each group reported back to the entire group with their concerns and recommended actions to be taken to reach the desired goals. In Cuba, there was a recap of issues and concerns from the Jemez public meeting were discussed. Participants were asked to list their visions and values and begin listing alternative management strategies. The summary of concerns and suggestions from both of the Workshops are included in the Appendix.

As more fully discussed in Section 3, the Steering Committee developed a consolidated set of interim goals, based upon the input, reflecting the comments and concerns from both watersheds. The list was submitted for review, amendment and acceptance in the Phase II Workshops in 2003.

12.2.3. The Phase II Public Involvement Process

Phase II began in January 2003 and ended in December 2003. Twenty-two RP and RJ Steering Committee meetings were held in Cuba, Cañon and San Ysidro. Monthly memos were sent out by the

project coordinator to the Steering Committee outlining upcoming events and homework assignments. Two sets of workshops were held. A total of 98 people participated in public meetings during Phase II. The RP and RJ Steering Committee meeting notes, as well as participation lists and addresses, can be found in the appendices. A report, prepared by Jennifer Johnson documented the public involvement program and process and summarized the interim results for Phase II, is summarized below while the full report can be found at the offices of Cuba Soil & Water Conservation District and Mid-Region Council of Governments.

Tasks Completed by the RP and RJ Steering Committee

The Steering Committee completed the following specific tasks in this second phase of the public involvement program:

- Prepared for the February and May workshops, and November Open Houses.
- Mailed out approximately 2,000 and 5,000 notices, respectively, for the two workshops, and approximately 150 notices to previous water planning attendees, and other entities for the Open Houses.
- Finalized the mission and goals.
- Reviewed the Middle Rio Grande Water Assembly Alternatives for relevancy to the Río Puerco and Río Jemez subregions.
- Worked on visions and scenarios for presentation at the May workshops.
- Discussed objectives (elaborations of the goals that describe types of management or actions, and which are quantifiable where possible).
- Worked on finalizing the scenarios and objectives after public input at the May workshops.
- Finalized the Public Input - Phase II report for submission to Cuba Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Mid Region Council of Governments.
- Finalized a set of vision statements for the two subregions.
- Finalized a Combined Subregional Scenario which will serve as the “Fifty Year Water Plan for the Río Puerco and Río Jemez Subregions.”
- Developed an Endorsement Resolution for local and pueblo governments and other interested organizations and agencies.
- Developed, finalized and accepted a Public Welfare Statement.
- Reviewed and addressed, where possible, the comments and concerns received from the public.
- Submitted the final “Draft Río Puerco and Río Jemez Water Plan” to the MRCOG.

- Prepared the subregional plan for submission to the Interstate Stream Commission.

Workshops

Two workshops were held in each subregion in 2003, with a professional facilitator. These workshops were designed to (a) reach public consensus on the mission and goals, and prioritize alternative actions, and (b) discuss the feasibility of the alternatives (actions), and create scenarios (in order to attain the goals of the subregions, and provide suitable project ideas for funding from various sources). The workshop mailers, agendas, handouts, and reports, along with participation lists and addresses, can be found in the appendices.

February 22, 2003 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM, Cañon, NM

February 22, 2003 2:00 PM to 5:00 PM, Cuba, NM

The first of two workshops for each of the subregions was held on Saturday morning or afternoon. Participants reviewed the interim mission statement and goals, worked towards finalizing them, but left the final wording to the Steering Committees. The final products were revised and accepted by the Steering Committees of both subregions. Participants also reviewed and prioritized a list of alternatives (actions).

May 3, 2003, 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM, Cañon, NM

May 10, 2003, 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM, Cuba, NM

The second of two workshops for the Río Jemez subregion was held on a Saturday morning, and for the Río Puerco subregion the following week. A member from each Scenario Team presented their Vision Statement and Scenario. Attendees reviewed and commented on the visions/scenarios and discussed the content of a final combined scenario for their subregion. Additionally, children from the Cuba sixth grade class of teacher Vicki McBride prepared posters on the subject of water conservation. The posters were displayed at the May workshop in Cuba. Workshop participants enjoyed the posters, and the class received items donated by the New Mexico Rural Water Association.

Public Welfare Statement

The Steering Committee considered a public welfare statement, and the draft that was circulated appears in the appendices. Comments were solicited at subsequent Steering Committee meetings and at the open houses described below. After consideration of the public comments, the draft Public Welfare Statement was amended, and a version was adopted by the Steering Committee at its meeting on December 8, 2003.

Endorsement Workshops and Open Houses

Public officials were invited to meetings on October 21 at the Jemez Valley Community Center in Cañon and October 22 at the Senior Center in Cuba to receive information about the draft subregional water plan as a prelude to endorsement. The project coordinator presented an overview of the plan and the process and responded to questions. A sample endorsement resolution was prepared and

distributed, not only at the meetings but via mail or in person to municipalities, tribes, federal and state land management agencies, acequias, and other governmental entities in the two subregions. The sample endorsement appears in the appendices.

Eighteen people attended the Río Jemez Open House, and 22 people attended the Río Puerco Open House. The agenda at both meetings included an ongoing poster display and distribution of a brochure summarizing the plan. Steering Committee members were present to answer questions. Posters displayed the planning process, mission, goals and objectives, prioritized alternatives, a condensed version of the combined Río Puerco and Río Jemez Water Plan and the draft public welfare statement. Flyers, invitations, and comments from the public open houses are included in the appendices.

Public Outreach Efforts

Efforts to inform others about the process and broaden participation in RP and RJ Steering Committee activities were undertaken by meeting and talking with community representatives as follows:

Cuba Village Council
March 27- Jennifer Johnson
May 29- Peggy Ohler
June 26- Robert Cordova

Torreon Land Use Board
April 16- Jennifer Johnson
April 23- Jennifer Johnson & Elaine Hebard

In addition to the active outreach noted above, a questionnaire regarding water usage was sent to all the domestic water user associations in the Río Puerco and Río Jemez subregions and listed with the NM Rural Water Association. The outreach notes, presentations, the questionnaire and responses can be found in the appendices.

Five news articles were printed in the Cuba News newspaper, and three news articles were printed in the Jemez Thunder newspaper. Newspaper articles can be found in the appendices.

<u>Cuba News</u>	
March 2003	“Water Use Planning Workshops Continue”
April 2003	“Final Water Use Planning Workshop”
May 2003	“Envisioning the Future”
June 2003	“Regional Water Planning, Where We’ve Been and Where We’re Going”
Sept. 2003	“Regional Water Planning”
<u>Jemez Thunder</u>	
February 2003	“Jemez Valley Input for State Water Plan Needed at Workshop on Saturday, February 22, 2003”
November 2003	“Public Invited to Water Planning Open House”
December 2003	“Public Welfare Statement Adopted for Water Plan”

Activities and draft documents of the subregional water planning effort were included on the Water Assembly Web Page, www.waterassembly.org. A brochure was produced describing Río Puerco and Río Jemez water planning activities. A sample web page and the brochure can be found in the appendices.

Progress Reports

Middle Rio Grande Water Assembly

June 7, 2003 - Report on the Public Involvement Program “Where We’ve Been and Where We’re Going”. Additionally, the Water Assembly has received monthly updates.

Sandoval County Board of Commissioners

June 19, 2003 - Report on the Public Involvement Program (“Where We’ve Been and Where We’re Going”). Additionally, the RP and RJ Steering Committee requested funding from the County Commissioners for future public involvement activities (including implementation of the subregional portions of the Rio Grande Regional Water Plan).

Cuba Village Council

July 25, 2003 - Project Update.

San Ysidro Village Council

August 12, 2003 - Project Update.

Jemez Springs Village Council

August 13, 2003 - Project Update.

The progress reports can be found in the appendices.

Additional public outreach

Besides the workshops provided by the RP and RJ Steering Committee, several workshops were initiated through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), for residents of the La Jara Community. The USDA-NRCS is responsible for management of the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). Anselmo Gutierrez and Jennifer Johnson first met with Danny Branch, who works for the USDA- NRCS, in Cuba on April 4, 2002. Mr. Branch thought that La Jara could be very competitive if there was enough interest among the landowners to pursue and use the funding, and felt there was enough interest to warrant applying for federal grant money. The ensuing workshops were a prerequisite for submission of a grant proposal under the NRCS, Geographical Priority Area (GPA) program. The La Jara GPA proposal and the names and addresses of those attending these workshops can be found in the appendices.

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