

Supporting Document C-3

Roadshows

**Middle Rio Grande Water Planning
Roadshow Script
March, 2000**

Just imagine we are all on a journey into the future. Optional: We're each carrying a sack of food and water and we believe that there will be additional supplies of food and water along the way. (Walkers with sacks heading down a road that disappears into the distance)

But some news reports are saying water supplies are getting low. We're using our water faster than it is being renewed. So we decide that we need to stop and confer, to make a water plan so we'll be assured that we'll have enough water for our needs as we travel into the future. (collage of newspaper headlines clipped from actual recent water stories)

This is not just a fable! You have all read those news reports about our water supply and the need to conserve and hopefully you have wondered what can be done. Well, in the summer of 1997, a group of people who share this concern gathered to share ideas and information about the region's water future. Since then, much has been accomplished and we decided to let folks know about the Middle Rio Grande Water Planning Initiative. That's why we're here today.

Origins of Regional Water Planning

It's safe to say that water has defined life in the Middle Valley, our region, since that day, 11,000 years ago, when a small group of people stood at the top of Nine-Mile Hill, looking over the Rio Grande as it meandered across its broad flood plain. (Historic view from Nine-Mile Hill)

Over the centuries, as the human population increased, water use increased, too. By the 1880's American enthusiasm for developing irrigated farm lands along the river began to take its toll. By 1920, irrigation caused former fields to turn to swamps and salt flats. (The famous photo of water logged fields)

Enter the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District which built a system of drains and ditches to provide proper drainage and the farm lands in the Middle Valley were returned to productivity. With increased irrigation that this allowed, the diversion of water from Colorado to Texas was drying up the river more frequently and downstream users complained. Negotiations took place which resulted in the Rio Grande Compact, a monumental agreement that divided the river's annual flows between Colorado, New Mexico and Texas. In addition, we have a treaty obligation to deliver an allotment of water to Mexico each year. (four water glasses labeled CO, NM, TX and Mexico)

For all of us water users of the Middle Rio Grande region, this means there is an allotment of water that we can use, as well as an obligation to deliver a specific quantity of water to the users downstream. We'll talk more about this later.

Let's flash forward to 1980. The thirsty city of El Paso is looking for more water and decides to drill wells across the border in New Mexico nearby. New Mexico's State Engineer says NO! and the Texans go to court.

Three years later, a US District Court judge rules that New Mexico can not ban the export of its water to Texas (or any other state) unless that water is clearly needed to serve the needs of New Mexicans.

What to do? One hundred years ago, this disagreement might have been settled by a gun fight. But in 1980, our differences are settled with laws and lawyers. (lawyers dueling with pens for swords and paper shields)

New Mexico's legislature considered this situation with care and passed several important laws to enable New Mexicans within a region to plan for their water future by answering these essential questions: (The 5 Essential Questions)

What is the region's water supply?

How much water is needed now and how much will be needed in the future?

What alternatives can we consider to balance supply and demand?

Do these alternatives reflect the region's values?

What strategies will enable us to make the best alternatives become realities?

The process of seeking answers to these questions is the essence of regional water planning. In 1986, the state was divided into 16 regions and most of the regions got going on their water plans at that time. After an initial effort, the Middle Rio Grande Region waited a few years and then in 1997, we began again in earnest. Now, we're making definite progress to catch up.

Why does the MRG need a regional water plan?

As we said a moment ago, the primary reason for us to develop a water plan is to demonstrate that we will need every drop we own, so we can retain our water here within the region! But just as important, we need to really know the answers to these five essential questions, for only then can we make that journey into the future with the assurance that there will be enough water for all the people and other critters who will live in our region.

What's the Situation Now?

Here in the Middle Rio Grande, the water system is complex and interconnected. Many smart people have done solid research to understand how the system works and the way we use the water. The region's water comes from two major sources - the aquifer (the reservoir of water underground) and the surface water that runs through our region in the Rio Grande, its watershed and tributaries. (Water cycle graphic)

Let's look at the inflows of water first. Near the northern boundary of the MRG region, above Cochiti Reservoir, the natural flow of the Rio Grande is measured at a gaging station called Otowi. As the river flows south through the region water comes in from these sources (Water In-flow graphic):

x Colorado Basin through the San Juan/Chama project

- x Tributaries - primarily the Rio Puerco and Rio Jemez
- x Aquifer discharge to surface water (marshlands and high water table areas)
- x Waste water from municipal systems
- x Water captured by storm drain systems

Now, let's look at the out-flows. Some of the region's water is consumed as it is pumped from the aquifer to serve municipal users and people with wells. Surface water gives life to the cottonwood and willow bosque and the many species that live there. Some of it is diverted for crops, orchards and livestock; some evaporates; some seeps into the ground to slowly percolate down to replenish our source of drinking water supplies. The rest flows south to other users downstream. (Water out-flow graphic)

Once we thought the aquifer was like an underground Lake Superior. Everyone said "Don't worry, Be happy!" and used plenty of water. Then, in the early 90's, more accurate studies showed the aquifer is actually much smaller than we thought. We now know that we are pumping water at a rate that is higher than the rate of replenishment; and we are gradually using up our aquifer. (aquifer, past and present graphic)

If we consider all the ways that water is used, including both surface water use and water pumped from the aquifer and consumed, the major components are:

- x Irrigated agriculture
- x Open water evaporation
- x Riparian evapotranspiration
- x Urban consumption

If we think of these components as our water pie, we create a picture of the region. Nature changes the size of the whole pie - it is larger when we have a wet year and smaller when we have a dry year - and the sizes of the pieces change with natural variability from year to year. We can change the way it looks, too. If we change the size of any piece, we will change the way our region looks.

Then there is another "use" - evaporation from Elephant Butte Reservoir - which is figured as a debit to the region under the Rio Grande Compact. This sixty year old agreement with Texas and Colorado, and a treaty with Mexico require that we deliver specified quantities of water to users downstream. Most recent calculations indicate that the total surface water actually used in the Middle Rio Grande region is greater than the amount we are entitled to under the Rio Grande Compact even considering additions from storm water runoff, and transfers into the Rio Grande river system from the San Juan/Chama project. This means that wastewater return flows of water pumped from the aquifer are needed to meet our water delivery obligations. In other words, we are using the aquifer, our savings account, to keep us out of debt.

To further complicate this situation, as the population grows, demand for water will increase. At a rate of 1.55%/year, the present population of 690,000 to expand to over 1.5 million by 2050. Of course, we cannot know what the actual population growth will be but we can be sure that it will grow. (graph of population growth projections)

What Does All This Mean?

We are confronted with 5 hard facts:

w The Middle Rio Grande region's water supply is limited and we are currently using all that we have.

w The aquifer, our water savings account, is being used up.

w We have a legal responsibility under federal law to leave adequate water in the river to provide a habitat. As water flow falls below specified levels, water must be taken from other uses to fulfill this requirement.

w We have a legal responsibility to send a specific amount of water to users downstream. If we cannot meet these obligations, water must be taken from other uses to fulfill this requirement.

w As the population grows, we must make hard decisions about how we allocate our scarce water resources.

What must we do?

The challenge we all face is to work together to make a plan to manage our water resources based on what we know and the values we all hold. Then we must implement this plan and stick to it. Only then will our children and grandchildren be able to enjoy life here in the Middle Rio Grande region.

What is the MRG Water Planning Action Committee?

We are pleased to report that by the summer of 1997, more folks were realizing that the MRG region had better get to it and do it! In August, 1997, 200 people came to the first Assembly for Water Planning. A second Water Assembly meeting was held in November, and participants selected an Action Committee to represent them and to devise a process to create a Water Plan. A third Water Assembly was held in March, 1999 and the fourth will be held on March 25.

Each of the members of the Action Committee represents a specific group of stakeholders; the major categories are Advocates, Managers, Specialists or Pueblo. (Group of people)

Advocates include irrigators, environmental and wildlife interests, domestic well owners, residential, industrial, commercial & institutional water users, development interests, young people, neighborhoods and acequia associations,

Managers are representatives of the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, federal agencies, county and municipal water systems, mutual domestic water systems, private water companies, and flood control districts, and

Specialists are bosque and ecosystem experts, geologists, hydrologists, water quality, quantity and surface flow specialists.

Pueblo could include representatives from the eleven tribes in the region.

We adopted this mission for the planning process:

Through an open, inclusive and participatory process, to develop a plan of sustainable water management strategies for the Middle Rio Grande Region and establish a process to implement the plan.

The MRG Water Planning Action Committee has met each month since November, 1997 and has formed Working Groups to focus on specific tasks. Some of the tasks are process oriented - figuring out how to organize the water planning initiative and how to involve more people. Others are product oriented - identifying the issues we face and identifying what it will take to make a plan.

There is now a non-profit corporation, the Middle Rio Grande Water Assembly, which has established a partnership agreement with the MRG Council of Governments. Through this partnership, we submitted a successful proposal to the Interstate Stream Commission that resulted in an award of \$150,000 for the planning effort. We are on the way!

What are the issues and problems we should be addressing?

Now that you all understand a bit about the water planning initiative, we'd like to ask you to help us. Using input from the 1st and 2nd Assembly meetings, the Water Planning Action Committee developed a long list of the water related issues we face. They all fall under those 5 Essential Questions that we talked about earlier. (distribute Issues Fact Sheets)

We'd like you to take several minutes to look over the list of issues. (Pause)

Now we invite you to share your thoughts about the region's water future. Please introduce yourself, state the issue you are addressing, and let us know your ideas for resolving it. (Record ideas on flip charts)

How to get involved....

The members of the Action Committee have been working hard and we need your help! Here are some ways you can get involved:

Attend MRG Action Committee meetings
Join a Working Group
Join the EMail discussion list
Write a story for your newsletter
Conserve water!
Participate at the next Water Planning Assembly meeting

MRG Water Roadshow Performances
January thru September, 1999

Organization	Location	Date	Participants	Comments
1000 Friends of NM	Albuquerque	07/17/99	35	
Albuquerque Academy	Albuquerque	05/03/99	200	
Albuquerque Rotary	Albuquerque	07/12/99	200	
City of ABQ/Water Resources	Albuquerque	08/30/99	15	Display
Cuba S&W Cons. Dist.	Canon	02/11/99	17	
East Mntr. Chamber of Com.	Tijeras	11/11/99	15	
League of W. Voters	Albuquerque	04/13/99	9	No Report
League of W. Voters	Albuquerque	04/14/99	14	No Report
MRG Water Assembly	Albuquerque	03/17/99	200	No Report
NM APA Conference	Taos	10/28/99	2	
North Valley Coalition	Albuquerque	11/04/99	18	
Old Town Optimists Club	Albuquerque	03/31/99	20	Am Studies - Env. Conflk
Peralta Methodist Church	Peralta	10/21/99	15	
Rio Puerco Watershed Com.	Cuba	08/03/99	18	
Rio Rancho Rotary	Rio Rancho	07/20/99	200	No Report
Rio Rancho Util. Com.	Rio Rancho	01/19/99	10	No Report
Rodey Law Firm	Albuquerque	07/20/99	16	ABQ Growing Smarter
Rotary Business Fair	Albuquerque	02/22/99		
Sandoval County	LaJara	07/14/99	7	No Report
Sandoval County	Algodones	06/08/99	8	No Report
Sandoval County	Pena Blanca	06/09/99	3	
Sandoval County	Canon	06/30/99	5	
Sandoval County	Placitas	06/23/99	12	
Sierra Club Central NM Group	Albuquerque	09/20/99	15	
Socorro Rotary Club	Socorro	07/21/99	20	
UNM	Albuquerque	06/11/99	20	
Valencia S&W Cons. Dist.	Los Lunas	02/01/99	10	
			27	
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