



**Comments from New Mexico State Water Plan Public Meeting; Española
County Chamber Room, 1122 Industrial Park Road
Wednesday, July 16, 2003; 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.**

Following is a summary of the questions, comments, and issues raised during the discussion that followed the formal presentation on the purpose and objectives of the facilitated listening sessions for the 2003 State Water Plan, at the public meeting in Española, New Mexico. This was the 4th of 29 scheduled public meetings seeking input on the State Water Plan.

Introduction:

Estevan Lopez, Director of the Interstate Stream Commission, and Commissioners Patricio Garcia and Blane Sanchez welcomed more than 50 people of Española and the surrounding areas. He said the ISC wants to hear from residents and to hear what their values are and what they consider important. New Mexico is growing and needs to plan, and needs ideas on how to administer water and arrange funding for projects.

Planning and Communication Division Director Rhea Graham presented an overview of the State Water Plan and selected technical information to set the context for the meetings. The public meetings are “listening meetings,” since the purpose is to hear what is of concern to New Mexico communities. The ISC has organized 29 meetings, four of them on Indian tribal lands.

The ISC and the Office of the State Engineer identified five major topic areas that should be the primary areas of discussion during the public meetings, all seeking to determine what the public’s values are regarding them. The discussion also sought public input on mechanisms that would be possible to address the topic areas and the public’s values about them.

The five areas for discussion are:

- Stewardship

- Balancing Supply and Demand
- Drought
- Water Administration
- Funding sources

Stewardship:

- Water should always be there when I need it
- Water is life
- Water is not exclusively for human use, some should be left for nature
- Enough water for everyone to drink at least
- Water for the future
- Traditional uses have value; We need to, as a state, be aware of the history and tradition that we have and not sacrifice them for economic development or growth
- We should have some kind of a plan to monitor growth
- Conserve water, fix all the leaky faucets, re-use gray water for landscaping, xeriscape, short showers, improved delivery systems
- We need to think about clean water
- Tax the new industry and tax the ones that are new here at a higher rate than others
- Water harvesting; harvest the rain, and get multiple uses out of one drop of water
- Help from the state to put meters on the wells so that we know how much we are using
- Swamp coolers use a lot of water; water evaporates into the air; technology should be better so that we can move folks away from heavy water use
- Adobe homes make life cooler
- Spend less money on lawyers and more on infrastructure
- Quit drinking water and drink whisky
- State should partner with the Forest Service for better upland management of forests
- Every person in the state has to take responsibility of all the water not just theirs, its all one pot of water
- Media campaigns that can really deliver a message that can reach the people of the state; compelling and hard hitting about the reality of our water
- Better way to dispose of sewer water
- Municipalities need to ensure that the pipes of the infrastructure are in good shape, we lose a lot of water because of leaky infrastructure

- Limit amount of dairy farms, golf courses, and other major uses of water
- System that can be using recycling water in municipalities
- Limit growth
- A lot of the water lost to evaporation when the surface (reservoir) water could be stored in underground aquifers
- If a resident lives in certain proximity of a community water or sewer system municipalities must make them hook up
- Keep aquifers from drying out
- Import water from other areas
- There is a point where stewardship needs to relate to regulation and enforcement. People polluting acequia, state agencies need to step in and enforce
- Water agreements to Texas, is there going to be less water to go to Texas? People before the minnows
- There is a personal, community and government part to stewardship
- Seeking funding to help rural communities to set up water systems
- Helping to develop the acequia and farming communities more; the cities need help with funding; More support to traditional communities and cultures from the state
- Renegotiate the Rio Grande Compact
- Encourage industry that uses less water, rather than those that use up all the water

Balancing Supply and Demand:

- Legislation that does not allow for the impounding of storage water in lakes for recreation; More specific restrictions than currently are in place
- Use Priority Administration as a baseline; It's the law of the state, so we need to follow what we have
- Provide good protection for small farmers, irrigated and acequia from being raided by lots of money
- Increasing the capacity for storage for water
- Existing law should be followed; A specific issue that I am concerned about is that rural areas are going to be sacrificed at the whim of the cities; urban and rural areas should be treated equally
- Survival of people should be first, the survival of animals second, and the protection of landscaping third
- No matter how much we save, as long as the population of the state grows we are in a problem; We need to learn how to share the water that we have, then make

sure that this solves the problem with the growth of population, because if we don't, all our efforts will fail

- One thing that bothers me is that the data used says that agriculture uses 75% of the water; let's get real data to see if this is the case; it is an absurd notion; let's get real data
- I don't think that this is real data; we should not accept this type of information
- Even if it is a high quantity of use, agriculture is a beneficial use; there is a big value to the state and a human value, historical and cultural value
- As far as beneficial use, agricultural uses are as efficient as other uses of water; is the technology there? Water is like land; it's an asset; but how the land is used has a lot to do with it, if you have cows on it you pay less taxes than if you do not; water should be taxed for those uses that you do not need; If you do not need it, then you get taxed; Government should come in and make sure that this happens; people can still hold water as long as it goes back to the river
- Return flow should be credited for agriculture uses and should be encouraged
- More efficient management of forests
- There is a lot more value in the acequias than just water and farming
- Why should I give you my water just so Texans can get more? That's not going to happen
- Acequia systems are pretty efficient and by doing more efficiency, such as concrete lining, it will ruin the traditional and natural function of an acequia to regenerate the water table; Agriculture is also using laser leveling to become efficient in its use of water
- Compensation instead of taxation for not using the water and for the efficient use of water
- Middle Rio Grande planning region, where there is a lot of agriculture, the consumptive use of agriculture is equal to the municipal and industrial uses; when you get near a municipal government, cities are taking more and more water, increasing the consumptive uses; to say 75% may be a statewide figure, consider all the loss that occurs from the river to the plant
- We need to get real about golf courses; one million gallons of water a day for watering and then it evaporates and goes into the clouds that give Louisiana swamps rain...it does not rain here
- Public use of water should be monitored; the use of grass should be discouraged
- I support golf courses on Pueblos, they have a right to that water
- Is there any data on industry use and pollution of water? We have a lot of water that is polluted by industry
- How is water pollution going to be a part of the water plan?

- Question about data, not what has gone out and what is actually ruined with other uses; Agriculture would look a lot better when you evaluate destructive use vs. consumptive use

Drought:

- Let the acequias manage metering of their own water; Hundreds of years of history of managing their own water; Should be allowed to do so without the State
- We need to have a reasonable definition of drought; It is not just an extreme period; Drought needs to be related to the control of population growth
- Use desalination only during periods of drought, rather than all of the time
- The 50's drought may look "average", but compared to population growth now, it is a changed situation
- Drought covers a lot of definitions; Last year we were thrown out of our allotment by the United States Forest Service, but it wasn't locally a drought where we were; Even though entire western United States is in a drought, there are areas that aren't in drought conditions; We should have ways of defining it locally
- I think the State has to recognize that there may not be anything they can do; where I live, the only thing that we can hope for is the National Guard water truck shows up, but the developers don't want them there; my community, Placitas, has been abandoned twice due to drought
- Plan growth on history of and prediction of drought, not on the maximum possible moisture
- We need a policy on the real estate industry, to prevent breaking up of parcels and it must address its impact on water
- Store more surface water at higher elevations to reduce evaporation
- Water availability would be greater with more storage higher upstream; if they had storage, then it would recharge the aquifer for those downstream
- Educational curricula to teach how to respond conservatively to drought conditions
- Capture some of that arroyo water coming out of the national forests
- What impact will global warming have on future supply? We have to understand that the last 2000 years may not tell us much about the future
- Need to completely eradicate Bosque of water-sucking phreatophytes once and for all
- However much water we have or don't have, we need to recognize the rights of the rivers to be alive and have water reserved for them

Water Administration:

- A lot of the invasive vegetation is on private property; the State should encourage using a taxation relief plan or giving of credits if conservation was implemented; Incentives should be used
- The delta at the confluence of the Rio Chama and Rio Grande had elm trees introduced by the Forest Service in 1940's; Natural Resource Conservation Service won't fund their eradication; Feds should spend funds for undoing what they did wrong
- It is hard to understand why we are giving ideas to the government; When we tried to put in a pipe to save leaking, we had to drill holes in the pipe; That's the government for you; Yes, we put the holes in the pipe; Regulations should make some common sense
- Regional acequia associations should be self-regulating and supported by the state
- A good example is the water sharing agreement on the Rio Jemez, which was sharing of shortage during drought, as well as administration of water; If folks look at this agreement, there are ways to get around drought and administer water; It should be used as a model
- I have heard that it will take 600 years to fully adjudicate the water rights; We need a system to accelerate and fully adjudicate water rights in the state; 600 years is too long
- More money should be spent on pre-suit settlement; It takes too long, I agree; Spend more money on pre-settlement of water rights adjudication
- As a priority, Native American water rights should be first, as they control how we quantify other water rights
- Mutual domestic water systems need more consistent guidance from the state; are a major provider of domestic water to rural folks; more efficiency would be valuable
- Make sure acequias are recognized as a form of local governments
- Rights of acequias established under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo should be honored
- Soil and Water Conservation Districts – we need more of them available to come out to our places (by invitation), to give us ideas of making water conservation more efficient
- I don't think that you can learn irrigation conservation in school
- Set up funding to help local farmers put in better irrigation systems, underground pipes, etc; low interest loans

- People aren't lacking in ideas; We are lacking in funding; Native Americans have known water conservation for a long time; The state should find ways to assist farmers in developing conservation measures for use by farmers
- Regional Water Plan meetings are too far apart, this prevents getting progress made; We spend too much time regrouping with meeting so infrequently
- Some of the regional planning sessions were held during working hours at the convenience of staff, and acequias and regular people couldn't attend
- Ensure that we don't over pump our aquifers in times of drought; Strict controls, as it will take longer to recover after drought; Recharge aquifers during times of surplus
- Chamita Acequia flood irrigates 700 acres for 400 years; the evaporation from open ditches makes rain on the other side of the land, and return flow irrigates the Bosque; Administratively, you can't have a better system
- Including water budgets for the state is not realistic, because the regional water plan for Jemez y Sangre has realistic options; Would establishment of budgets on this level preempt the regional water plans? We can't do a water budget for a municipality, let alone for the state
- Prior appropriation in terms of priority administration must be addressed; There is a lesson to be learned from the Pecos Basin; priority administration can be applied there but hasn't been enforced yet; are we willing to forego the balance of economic impacts in agreeing to apply priority administration? There is a lesson there with respect to the pitfalls of enforcing prior appropriation
- I came to listen but I can't help myself for commenting; Pueblos have prior and paramount use of water, which puts us in a different category; We had a meeting on Friday with good discussions, but concern as to where we fit in; Good comments made by people here; some comments and concerns are same as ours; People are beginning to think about how precious our water is here, particularly in a drought; we have conserved our water for 100's of years; we can't survive without water; we need a little bit of quantity but the important thing is the quality; Santa Clara Pueblo has water quality standards on the Rio Grande and its tributaries; What kind of monitoring does the state do on water quality? In order to have water to use, we have to go this route, and ensure that we have good, clean water; we have been trying to conserve and limit our use of water for hundreds of years; the Spaniards came and learned the same thing; it's a unique situation where we take care of the land, and the land takes care of us; we try to service our people with our developments, but we try to use water in a manner where we don't take too much
- It's nothing new to us, ever since the olden days we have learned that water is special; It's a unique situation to have to protect our land and rights and people

Funding:

- Need more of it
- The only way I know is the severance tax fund; we are mining our water too, and it would be good to use the severance tax fund to pay for phreatophyte removal, etc.; Water emergency is threatening our future economy; therefore this would be a good investment; Need to ask the legislature to seriously consider
- Taxes on irrigated lands, a portion should be allocated to regional acequia (or water associations)
- Sell a few [military] tanks
- The Irrigation Works Construction Fund should continue to be made available to acequias for improvements, and the priority of the Water Trust Board should be agricultural infrastructure
- Do not add funding for administration, but take out of existing agency budgets, and get agencies to work together better
- Why don't we just privatize it? It's a commodity
- The problems with lack of water are not just New Mexico, the entire western United States; Agriculture will need a lot of help; just have federal funding do it, just like the highway system; Farmers grow our food, so don't nickel and dime it
- The golden rule, he who has the gold makes the rules; if the drought continues, the Native Americans and the State will control and own all of the water, because the state will tax us to buy up as much land as they are doing in the Pecos Valley; what are they going to do, sell the land without water?
- The Governor campaigned on a water plan for New Mexico to propose a fund to create a scholarship fund to train New Mexicans (\$100K per year) to work on water rights and water administration; what happened to it? We want to encourage that effort
- The federal and state government have provided a lot of money for acequias; \$2 million from State and \$90 million from federal government; not only do you have to ask for the funding, you need to make sure that it gets down to the acequia
- Federal funding for the water systems should be encouraged
- Market place and privatization is an answer; word of caution, however; the system isn't necessarily improved, and the cost for water to be made available actually increases; Even though there are aspects of a solution with privatization, there may be costs that we aren't paying for
- Tax newcomers and industry at a higher rate
- Legislation for impact fees

Other Comments:

- ISC staff was asked about the time frame for public comment after the document is written, based on the Town Hall on September 23-25, 2003; Staff committed to recommending that the ISC provide for such a public review of the document prior to meeting to adopt the plan, as required in the Act; given this requirement, and the requirement that the plan be presented to the Interim Legislative Committee on Water and Natural Resources, it was recognized that the timeframe is very compressed

Q. There was a template established for this SWP?

A. Yes, the Act sets out what the Plan must contain, and can be found at:

<http://www.legis.state.nm.us/Sessions/03%20Regular/FinalVersions/senate/SB0195COS.pdf>.

- Process is going too quick; give us a chance for us to articulate our issues