



**Comments from New Mexico State Water Plan Public Meeting:  
Jemez Pueblo  
Walatowa Visitors Center  
Monday, July 21, 2003; 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.**

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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 Jemez Pueblo. This was the 6<sup>th</sup> of 29 public meetings scheduled to gather public input on the initial phase of the State Water Plan.

**Introduction:**

Planning and Communications Division Director Rhea Graham, Interstate Stream Commissioner Blane Sanchez, and William Toribio, Tribal Liaison to the Office of the State Engineer, welcomed 9 people who attended the public meeting from areas in and around Jemez Pueblo. Rhea 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 Interstate Stream Commission has organized 29 meetings, and this one was the first of four meetings on Tribal lands.

**Stewardship:**

Facilitator: *The first question is around stewardship—what do you value around water and what does your community value around water and what would you or your family do to ensure that there is enough water for future generations?*

- I'd be willing to stand by my gate with my rifle and protect my water for my family to keep the ditch flowing and to hell with future generations

- I'd be keeping the ditch flowing—that's what I'd be protecting
- Education in whatever forms it needs to be put into to make them and their families understand how interdependent water is to our lives; And I don't mean just the adults I mean from kindergarten on...maybe community outreach door-to-door or whatever it takes
- But outside of municipalities, they do not have any type of water containment system, so if we had some type of water containment system, we could regionalize! The financial benefits of a large reservoir or water systems are great...and it seems like there are some laws that prohibit our systems from regionalizing...now the Canyon is going dry and the Jemez is going dry; You might listen to more of us...what's keeping us from that is not community sharing...it's "my" water attitude, but there comes a point when we need to step back and look at how we can put our water to best use for the community
- Question to clarify...would this be better for a private system or a public system? Those in the drinking water bureau will not allow a tank for specific uses; institutional barriers and there are a lot of them
- Who is the steward? Who is being the steward? There are a lot of unincorporated areas in the state that just go by the wayside; in the same manner we get a lot of individuals who do not know how the water is used, but they want to drive the train on this issue; we must recognize that it is not how you use water in the arid Southwest, but who is going to spend the money to take the stand? I guess the current thought is that without some recognized type of government, you don't have a leg to stand on. One last comment is that you get individuals that come into the state w/ideas about what they did in Branson, Missouri; and they interrupt the way of life, and then point the finger and say...oh look, they are the outlaws
- This individual here...we have water experts here, there isn't one individual on the MRGCOG and you talk about input...it's a façade because we don't have any votes in our area, it's a bogus planning process; It's not democratic; it's a dressed-up tyranny for planners to lord it over you; There is no fairness or virtue in it; I don't see any virtue in it -- do we have a vote? No, my only value is that maybe it will get worse before it gets better...Tierra de la Libertad
- Well -- Item 12 of the State Water Plan Act says regional water plans will be considered...so we'll submit our own plan; and hopefully it will be incorporated
- I don't know if this applies to the way you're asking it, but MRGCOG has given me the wrong impression that they are the end-all and be-all in water policy; Sometimes in order to fulfill requirements for a grant or something they do outreach, but I don't know if there is any value to it...

- Well, you know what she is talking about are the sub-regions; in all fairness to the water resources board they decided to pat us on the head and give each of the villages a vote...we get one vote; their position on this is that the commissioner sits on the board and has the vote; Now...if that's the case, then we are going to run into some problems because we won't have public acceptance -- it will be a hard sell. They give lip service to it, but it's glossed over; The local level is the best steward; we have acequias that are efficient and we need assistance, and otherwise leave us alone; When they put the sub-regional plans w/the regional plans, then it will be edited; Rural concerns were not addressed; I went at it from a different perspective and tried to figure how we could have more influence as cooperative, regional mutual domestics
- For instance in La Cueva they took our water rights and they took all of our water rights and they sent my entire family to the hospital; there is a group at the SEO that gets high off their power, and I have to say that it's probably the lawyers

### **Balancing Supply and Demand**

*What would you have guide the decision makers? What would you say to them if demand was too high?*

- Leave state statutes alone; if it is not broke don't fix it; To ensure that there is an adequate supply for some trout bait out there, is not good use of supply; you have San Juan Chama for the metro Albuquerque – that water cannot be used for drinking or survival because of a fish; That means that you need to get your water from somewhere else; then the developer takes a subdivision up in an aquifer-depleted area, you are not going to get a 40-year sustainable; you take 19 instead of 20 units and you can with you get 19 five-dollar straws into the ground; the State Engineer does not keep folks from drilling domestic wells
- 6000 domestic wells were granted last year; in aquifer-depleted areas, is it the supply of water, or the deepness of the pockets?
- By theory, when supply is depleted and demand increases, the cost increases – price goes up; Minnow, environmental groups do not go out and buy water; they can play the game without having to buy a ticket; Why? Because there are federal laws
- Has anyone defied the ESA? Did they go to prison in Klamath Basin in Washington?
- If enough people fought the system, then you would have a change because of civil disobedience

*If you were a decision maker what would you do?*

- Think out of the box, what if we became part of Texas? Would Texas do this? I wish that I were a Texan right now...I can't believe I am saying this, they are getting our water
- Urban sprawl is causing demand to exceed supply; Johnson administration had no water system controls; at the same time everyone was turning the Rio Grande into a big steel pipe to move the water; they would like to turn the water into the pipes and away from nature; if you punch a hole in the bucket, and it runs out; how much is going to be in the top of the bucket...none
- I would put the breaks on the developer; if the developers cannot show a 50-year source, then they cannot develop; pro-development as long as they are responsible
- Fifty acres of grass so that they can mow it is an absurdity – before they develop new areas, they should require the old houses to be upgraded; there is a market for it
- Revitalize the city before they keep expanding the city
- Education is where you should know that conservation is not just something that you do when you are living in your mobile home; back in the 70's San Francisco residents were able to put restrictions on themselves without regulations
- This is the first time that I have heard these issues; I used to work for the City of Albuquerque for 13 years; There is a great demand for housing in Albuquerque and the surrounding areas; It is getting crowded and the demand for rural housing is great; There has been a lot of the young people moving into the downtown again; Planning and education are main factors in the usage of water; Water is a prime factor in life; Everyone needs water and everyone needs to plan for it
- If demand keeps increasing; then the development should be less; the higher cost of water would keep it leveled out and price them out of the market; it's the natural way that when demand increases and the supply decreases - the cost increases
- Is it illegal for someone from La Jara to sell their water to Rio Rancho? No, you can sell it all; if the price keeps going up then you will have fewer buyers
- There was a point made for water planning 40-50 years ago; we are getting past the definition of sustainability; will it sustain the population or will it determine the population that it can supply? 100-year supply in Arizona; Arizona has more water from pipes but still it is working on a longer supply; we only go 40 years; we should look for longer term planning

## **Drought:**

*What happens if there is a Drought? What would change when the ante goes up around Drought time? What would be the values that would change from times of plenty?*

- Urban drought is a lot different than it is in the country; we can and do live through a drought, but can the cities? They have never lived through a drought; it has never gotten that bad for them

*How would the drought be real for everyone?*

- That is the only time that you get real...when the faucet does not turn on, that is when you get crazy – go after the neighbor...then you wake up and realize that you need to work together; Once we had water and no one else had water and they came and got it; on the top of the mountain there are people that do not have flower gardens; only rural communities turn on the water and have nothing...there is a real impact; cities do not know this

*Are there any mechanisms that you would do?*

- Priority call
- How do you do a priority call in Santa Fe? The yellow drop, the red drop, it is funny
- There should be fines and regulations
- Don't know how you can do this, but Albuquerque wastes more in two days than an alfalfa farmer uses in a year; there is no accountability in the municipal system; Albuquerque Public Schools, how much do you think they lose off the athletic fields that run onto the street? There is no accountability about this loss; nor is there any accountability to how much they should save; rules should apply to everyone – waste should be fined no matter who is wasting
- The water leakage out of some of the pipes was reported in the *Albuquerque Journal*, and it said that there were huge amounts – the rules are different for cities; the regional planning entity should not be part of the rural areas; Raton is the only city that really takes care of their water
- Education – requirement in the schools that the water process is understood; at a function, a woman from the city was seated to my left, and the other person to my right was rural; the lady from the city said that she could never haul water; my rural friends and I looked at each other and we both knew we had; Rural folks make more efforts to conserve, because we know what it is, to turn on the faucet and have nothing come out

## **Water Administration:**

- There is no place where the true people that deal with water sit down and talk about how to cooperate; at what point do the feds and the state, local people, fire departments, county fire marshals come together? They would realize that everyone has the same problem; everyone was so busy fighting for their space to realize that they all want the same thing; if everyone sat together, it could work
- Water administration may need to be worked at the local level; not all of these can be done, but some should definitely be allowed
- If you look at the acequia; we administer in a true democratic process; there are administrators at the local level, and this is the essence of a pure system; Then there are the would-be administrators (Middle Rio Grande Council of Governments), they were talking about how to keep storm water in the area – It sounded like they are talking about stock ponds; they did not know that there was a law available that folks could stock water for livestock; they did not know this...and we don't even have a vote there; if we were included, then we would be able to educate them
- Education would be a great way for everyone to learn; a system for giving the knowledge to the communities and passing it on, then you have given the power to the communities; unless it is at the community level, it will not be sustainable
- *Hage vs. U.S.* lawsuit; the land has to be tied to the water and vice versa, especially in the Southwest; one of the pivotal keys in the decision was the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo; water is a property right; anything that goes against this is a taking; it does not matter where you are from, policies have to be applied across the board fairly; this is an international crisis
- We see conflicts when political lines are drawn, but watershed boundaries remain the same; concern that Middle Rio Grande planning region is too big, and encompasses too much to make water decisions at the local level; water administration may work better on a smaller scale, a watershed basis
- We petitioned for our own region, but the Interstate Stream Commission rejected it; we don't see any fairness, because decision-making is skewed towards an urban frame of reference; maybe it needs to get worse for things to get better?

## **Funding:**

- As the water moves, it must meet the needs of the overall infrastructure; every drop of water should have equal importance – gray water, drinking water, stream water, irrigation water; all must be used to maximum potential; if everyone cooperates, it will be successful; analogy to algebra: you start on simple problems, and at the end

of the class you solve complex equations; I'm not sure that funding is the answer; acequias need elbow grease – no one pays me or thanks me for cleaning it; only way is to charge people in the cities more for water; everyone asks why our monthly payment is only \$25.00 a month; it is because there is no maintenance needed; our system didn't cost us anything, but we have to participate in our community; it makes you crazy after awhile knowing how many millions that cities have for fixing leaks, but community systems fix leaks; maybe it wouldn't hurt cities to have to participate in the fixing of their leaks

- Personal behavior and responsibility to community is a value along with funding
- Metropolitan areas put a certain value on things; industrial revenue bonds mean that you don't pay property taxes; metropolitan areas allow industry to come in, yet we pay more ditch dues and property taxes than they do – Industry is getting water for nothing; We are always waiting in line for agencies to fund us; acequias wait in line and often don't get money; that's O.K, we live off sweat equity and a strong back
- There has never been an attempt to do an economic analysis on the impact of changing the rules on taxation of rural areas with respect to water; for instance, higher tax rate for irrigated land than pasture land; no one cares if a rule change affects rural areas; there is fiscal oppression in rural areas
- We go through all these agencies that say “we are here to help”, but when we put a proposal together, they say, “we don't protect a political subdivision of the state”; States give Constitutional rights, and federal government is supposed to guarantee, but we are not recognized
- I think that we are going to have to start looking at a permanent fund that deals with just water; the Water Trust Board is limited; we can't go from year-to-year appropriations; Pecos is just one part of the state
- Somehow folks pretend that fire and water don't go together; poor volunteer fire departments don't have a right to water, yet a good fire system can get all of the funds they want; think of water like a heart, and the arteries go to folks most immediately impacted by a water source; when folks lose their home insurance, then the fire departments don't get paid, because the revenues that pay them come from the homeowner's insurance premiums

### **Other Comments:**

- We love the pueblos, they are our protectors; you have to involve people who are impacted by water
- We have some of the worst drinking water in the state, yet folks don't think it is important enough to teach our kids; Jemez kids at TVI continue to be top students in environmental studies; these pueblos kids know much more than the cities about

behavior and management around water; herefore, a water institute at our school would get more teaching of water responsibility

- What would be the State Engineer or the Attorney General's opinion on the *Hage* case? How does that opinion play into the planning process? Is the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo more important than the State water planning process? I think that it is – will it take a court case on takings?
- In the city no one cares about how much water they use; if they run out, take it from the mountain people, that is logic to them
- At a regional planning meeting, they said, “We have found this water in the San Juan basin and we plan to bring it down to Albuquerque”; the comment was that if you have money enough, then you can have some of it; concern that Navajo easements weren't discussed; impacts to others weren't acknowledged in this proposal
- I don't care if I am, or if you are famous, but ego plays a tremendous role with folks at the top of state government; there is tremendous power with water, and those at the top hungry for power, don't care who gets hurt
- Education doesn't just happen in the classroom; it is also sharing what you know; a lot of the smaller publications are more likely to print what we want and need for people to know; The editors in Albuquerque read our publications, and they get on their reporters if they don't cover these exciting things
- What's so politically charged about water planning? Some newspapers don't recognize the importance of water planning