



**Comments from New Mexico State Water Plan Public Meeting: Truth
or Consequences
Town Civic Center, 400 West 4th Street**

Monday, July 14, 2003; 7:00 – 9:00 pm

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 Truth or Consequences, New Mexico.

Introduction:

Planning and Communication Division Director Rhea Graham of the Interstate Stream Commission welcomed more than over 50 people who attended the meeting from Truth or Consequences and surrounding areas. She said the Interstate Stream Commission 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.

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, four of them on Indian tribal lands.

The Interstate Stream Commission 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:

- I read in the paper that the Commissioners should be here, our state gave up 217,000 acre feet and we lost the water credits accumulating...the Interstate Stream Commission is asking us how we can conserve water, well here's your chance to conserve water. How can we lose water and water credits all at the same time? What are we going to do next year?
- You want to give a percentage; to set up an agreement w/Texas is stupid and not good stewardship; I want to nullify the treaty
- No law...it would be better to go down to the ditch with a 30/30 (gun) to protect your water right than the laws that we have
- I think anytime you put a fish over people there's a problem; the other issue is the stewardship issue, we take care of the land and the land takes care of the people
- My other point is w/EBID, if you check w/EBID they haven't conserved any water, then why should the taxpayer pay to bail out EBID?
- Healthy watersheds, maintaining healthy watershed, before we divvy up the water we need to think about how the water comes here, how it moves through the system and how it stays here
- I grew up in the 1930's during the drought and I know all about the drought; when the wind got so bad it blew the dirt through the Okies went to California; we built wind breaks from trees, we also recycled water, now they tell us we should do that (use gray water), also when I was in the East a man from Germany talked about conserving the Black Forest and that forest hasn't burned; we could do all of that here; there is so much waste - even sprinklers here in town and it's all a waste, especially when it runs down the street; we have to use common sense and recycle
- What about the concept that if you don't use the water you lose the water? That doesn't make us want to conserve the water
- I'd like to add on to his comment that if you don't use it you lose it; the irrigators were pouring water onto the road because that was their fear; the laws don't encourage good conservation, or stewardship

- I'd like to add on...there are as many values as there are people in the room; traditionally we've gone through our legislators, so we need to get our legislators to change those laws
- What about golf course in this desert, that is not stewardship
- Another point, we want input so that these deals aren't cut behind our back
- Also as far as private contracts, honor them; do not abrogate them; change the compacts
- Gather as much wood as you want...we need to go back to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and honor it, where we were able to gather what we needed to sustain ourselves
- Still a small state only a couple of million people...our biggest problem is the treaties delivering a set amount of water rather than a percentage
- Needs to be a sensible management of the forests to protect our watersheds
- One big cottonwood tree consumes 500 gallons of water/day; and if you would add in the middle savannas, the invasive plants and the junipers, we are losing a lot of water
- One more comment, can we get some management of water to get rid of the tree huggers, because they really don't have our interests at heart? We want management that affects the common good
- Non-profits don't have a vested interest; they should be seen as a conspiracy; have their assets pulled and put them behind bars
- Well, it might be an environmental issue they might consider what's important, but in fact they don't have a real interest
- We are the stewards of the land, we take care of the land and the land takes care of us
- Well, as much as I agree w/the basic tenants, I have to say that it is an open society and everyone is entitled to their opinion; we have a system in place and everyone is entitled to their opinion, and it certainly is a lot better than, say in China

Balancing Supply and Demand:

- According the State Engineer – it's beneficial use; if your going to use the water, then use it, if not lose it; that's the way the system is set up and that's the way it should stay
- We have one of the best water systems in the state, but when you can move your water right downstream to someone who will use the water for a mobile home park then there is something wrong...we are using agricultural water for some other use... they are actually using more water
- I mostly in agreement with the gentleman in the back; if it's your property right then it's your property right

- I think that if your demand is higher than your supply then you should increase your supply; improve the health of the watershed -- our watersheds are in terrible shape
- How come it is that if you purchase water, then the state can take your water and tell you that if you don't use it, then they take it?
- The law encourages waste; if you have a water right that is three acre feet but they grow a crop that uses two acre feet then, why would that farmer use less? The state has built-in disincentives for conservation; New Mexico Tech is watering the streets while it waters the golf course
- I'd like to rebut that a little; I don't have a ditch; I have a pump and I use every drop of it
- There comes a problem when the state comes to meter your well, you're good at irrigating, and they will still take the right away
- I can show you places up and down the canyon where people are sitting on their water rights, and I will give anyone a war if they mess w/my water right
- We are talking about supply and demand, and water is a finite water resource; we should limit the number of permits; It's an unwritten law of the west that water flows uphill to money, two points 1) water is finite, 2) level the playing field
- I just want to make the point that this country was built on individualism and the individual should prevail
- If you can't put the water to use, then what about just compensation, we should be able to put the water to use regardless; there should be some sort of pool to water rights into so they are not lost

Mechanisms:

- Basically it's the same you want to bank the water in the aquifer, because then it's there for your beneficial use, maybe some sort of credit
- These water rights have been established, historically and everything else, in times when he is not using them, then we should be able to build up credits or something else for times of drought
- I think the secret here is beneficial use, don't send it down the highway, use it for the crop
- Do you want the politically correct answer, or the real answer? Some people want the water used for agricultural use, some want it for municipal; the state is growing, and the demand and the money is going to the cities; again, we need to legislate, that is where the locals have control
- Absolutely no meters in New Mexico

- In the matter of supply, the long-term solution is to bring water from the Great Lakes to the Southwest; It would probably take millions of dollars and a long time, but let's get the Governor to look at this
- One thing that bothers me about the water uses in New Mexico, we have too many people; again it's beneficial use, we need to produce food, instead we're using it for toys
- There are not any dollars available for local assistance, get more help for people to convert a pecan farm to drip irrigation
- Mechanism – government assistance to use conservation

Drought:

- Someone mentioned a while ago, everyone should have a percentage to meet all of the demands
- What about our water table...if we continue uncontrolled drilling of wells, then we will run out of water; increase knowledge about the water tables
- Quality of life, green things are important, of course drinking is important too
- Any time a study is done on water professionals should do the study; it should be objective. For instance the time when the State Engineer hired some local guy to do the study, and he said that there was lake under Albuquerque with unlimited water
- If you have a family, you will consume 100 gallons/day; we've already maximized conservation to the limit; People have already done that; Rates are raised when use decreases
- If everyone would cut just a small amount, then we would increase the supply
- Conservation – Walk past urinals and they all flush- government buildings and landscaping for them have to be part of conservation
- New Mexico is the 3rd driest state in United States; High percentage of some part of New Mexico is in drought at all times; what should we do if we are not in a drought? Perhaps state agencies could come out with campaign, "if you move here we will not have golf courses, we have xeriscape
- Could use renewables; pay more for the hook up for the quantity of gas; we have a lot of natural gas in New Mexico; give them incentives to put them in production; They could have a system to get water clean that uses these gasses; non-profits have crippled us; plenty of energy in the state could be used to run desalination
- New Mexico State University – 1983 had worked out the solar, yet the regulations would not allow the use of it; within three years it did not work anymore; we come up with great ideas, yet are not allowed to use them

Water Administration:

- We have people moving from the bottomland of the Rio Grande up higher, if we continue to develop land that was never developed before, then we will eventually run out of water; another thing is that I took some paper work to the State Engineer's Office and they said that my water rights are lost because we did not use them
- Is the purpose of metering to see over-use, or is it to take away the water that you are not using? It is for the purpose of seeing how much usage there is in the system for good information; metering can educate people about what behavior uses what amount of water; so there are several reasons for metering
- It's my understanding that the Pecos has already metered all their wells, and are fined and kept from water until they correct their water usage; Used to be that junior users lost water rights, not losing across the board; anyone that puts in a new well, they get a meter put on it
- Build a lot of farm tanks; a lot cannot afford them on their own; projects that can conserve; people that did not have jobs can be hired to do this as with Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930's.
- (Problem) with the state owning it (water)
- 8 months to a year ago...land grants can prove that they had ownership at one time of this land; it is the problem that the system does not work, because it's you that are causing the problem; I understand that you are trying to make it better but it's the system that is faulty
- Popular sovereignty is gained from the people; initiated for their good
- We decide what is good...not a legislature
- I know that you cannot legislate to keep people out, but it does not work but should be thought about; we are getting too many people moving here given our limited amount of water; government cannot take water from you as long as you keep putting it to your use; we need to do something to reduce the population and keep from allowing people in, without concern over water availability

Funding:

- Always happens that they appropriate a lot of money; the person who is known by the legislatures gets the contract; the money gets spent on people that do not do the good work; we need practical projects that can conserve the water, not more studies
- Too much administration
- I think that we should continue with the Regional Water Plan; I think that rather than putting them in a file, we should actually use the water; get it used

- Fund and finish regional water plans
- Once we get a few good years of water we forget about it; don't back off the issue of water, even if the drought subsides a little
- We have the money, there is a budget, \$65 trillion of ownership in the states; \$12 billion in the permanent funds that are owned by the states; but we are not allowed to spend it; all they need is \$4 billion for the retirees, that leaves \$8 billion for the residents
- If you own a water right, then you should be able to maintain the water right, and you are able to market it and not lose it
- I just read in the paper that \$30 million was invested in business in Albuquerque and Santa Fe; \$30 million from people that have not paid their taxes; that means that we have a problem; Six billion proposed by the Governor for education and I don't think that it is really getting there, or I would support it; this will help the Albuquerque area and not us down here
- When the big dams were built around the country, recreation pool was protected; in Elephant Butte this was not the case, due to its construction before this was common; we need to look into ways to allow the feds to give us money for this to be the case for the Butte
- Some people say that they do not like government; yet we also have others that really like the services that it provides for agriculture
- If you get federal government programs, they have strings attached
- Forest Guardians held a meeting, and half of them were lawyers; at the meeting I found out that if they sued and won, that the Feds would have to pay for the attorneys fees; all of this money that we were spending, we could train our youth on conservation practices; 80 % of our children are involved in information now – a hundred years ago they were involved in farming
- You can get elected if you claim to cut taxes and promise everything
- A lot of the information used and programs developed, needs to be made on good science
- 40% of land is federal land in New Mexico; Feds should manage these lands correctly; Congress needs to address issues on upland watersheds; they have devastated these lands out here; New Mexico needs to sue to get feds to pay attention to these issues and fund projects that are based on good science
- Method for not paying to restore upper wilderness, reduce fuel loads, remove invasive species, get rid of invasive plants through goats; convert land that is full of goat food to a land that is health and full of more water; if you have two goats, then you have yourself a sustainable system
- Go back to 1910 and get rid of all the treaties

- The next meeting of the Regional Water planning committee is Aug 19th
- State water plan act should be amended to reflect that people should be guiding the plan by deleting all from page 1 through 8 to letter I. Then add the language to J “ all water rights holders.”