



## 2009 State Water Plan Update Public Outreach

**Region: Estancia Basin  
Moriarty Civic Center  
Moriarty, NM  
April 23, 2009**

### **Summary of Discussion**

**Facilitator/Recorder:** Rosemary Romero

### **Welcome and Introductions**

Angela Bordegaray, State Water Planner with the Interstate Stream Commission, welcomed the group of 25 to this public forum sponsored jointly by the Office of the State Engineer and the Interstate Stream Commission (OSE/ISC). She introduced OSE/ISC staff and contractors:

Karin Stangl, Planning and Communications Director  
Maureen Haney, Communications Specialist  
Julie Maas, Communications Specialist  
Jess Ward, OSE District 1 (Albuquerque) Supervisor  
Jack Frost, Hydrologist, OSE  
Hilary Lamberton, Managing Attorney, OSE Administrative Litigation Unit  
Martha Franks, Legal Counsel (contracted)

### **Presentation**

Bordegaray presented an overview of New Mexico's state and regional water planning process to date, including data on population, water supply and demands, and an overview of the Estancia Basin Regional Water Plan. The Estancia Basin Regional Water Plan was accepted by the ISC in 1999.

### **Questions and Comments on Presentation**

Rosemary Romero, contracted facilitator, took questions and comments from the audience on the presentation and other related water issues. ISC district, hydrology, and legal staff were available to answer specific questions as they related to hydrology, legal issues, or other concerns.

### **Water use data and percentages**

Question: One participant asked what the status was of metering in the area specific to irrigation or multiple households.

Answer: Staff responded that metering is driven by permit and unless people are creating changes in older permits where metering was not required, it is hard to implement metering. Participants noted that much of the water in the area is used as follows: 94% for irrigated agriculture, 4% for public water supply, 1% for livestock and 1% for commercial, industrial, mining and power.

Question: Another participant noted that on the pie charts in the presentation only reservoir evaporation was shown. He asked if there was consideration of evapotranspiration by vegetation in the loss of water. Another participant asked if there was any new information about additional water that could be gained from removal of non-native trees.

#### Out-of-basin uses

Question: A participant asked if water leaves the basin.

Answer: Staff noted that a local utility company pumps water into adjoining areas.

### **Responses to the Four Focus Questions**

The group considered the four focus questions for public input on the State Water Plan Update.

#### ***1. What should your region and the state as a whole do to assure water for a growing population?***

- Improve irrigation efficiency by through new technology
- Altering water sources (e.g. explore use of brackish water)
- Developing genetically-modified and drought tolerant crops (new technology being developed to be ready within five years)
- Water harvesting
- Banking saved water
- Don't penalize farmers for saving water; work on changing the state wide policy of "use it or lose it"
- The state should acknowledge the importance of agriculture through planning, regulation, and policy
- It might be useful to look at the state strategically and target the most viable areas for agriculture and provide those areas with the resources to produce the best crops. Get municipalities to recognize the value of agriculture, "growing farmers for the next generation"
- Regionalize utility systems – work together (e.g. Estancia Basin Resource Association (EBRA) working with a water utility; similar to gas company having easements that are used by other entities)
- Resources to study the underground basin – harder to measure groundwater than study it
- Need more resources to study both the hydrology and geology of the area for clearer picture about the amount of water available, as well as to determine and clarify water rights and the amount of water for each right. A local water committee that continues to meet on a regular basis

spearheads the regional water planning effort for the Estancia Basin. Committee members noted that the committee does not know how much water they actually have. Staff noted that it is difficult to study the basin because there is no river and all water for the basin comes from groundwater.

- The counties could develop more stringent subdivision regulations to prevent development from “double dipping” (e.g. allowing subdivision of land where there are already wells). The Estancia Basin Resource Association and others are working together to develop options to address the issue of double dipping.

**2. *What water conservation strategies would help meet increased constraints (population growth, climate variability) on water in your region and the state as a whole?***

- Regions are struggling to implement their plans and need more support for implementation.
- Conservation needs to be defined and clarified at the state level.
- The issue of permits created much discussion.
  - Currently any change of water use requires a permit. This change also requires proof of beneficial use and purpose.
  - The regional water planning committee expressed concern about how proof of beneficial use is actually conducted and the impact on the regional water supply. Staff noted that permits are good for four years but can be extended to three more years. Permits are then good for a total of ten years and by 2012, no new permits will be issued.
  - Participants wanted to better understand how extensions are denied and if determinations are made as a whole or case-by-case. Staff noted that the Estancia Basin will be “abstracted” in the next five years. Abstracts refer to the water rights file database. Every situation will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Estancia Basin has not been abstracted, but OSE has guidelines for it.
- Modeling could be used to determine legitimate uses of irrigation.
- The state should work with local entities to limit the use of brackish water to emergency use only. For example, the use of brackish water for the forest fires seemed to work well. The County was involved in alerting mountain communities about where water would come from to address the fires.
- It will be important to continue to educate people about the importance of water quality and contamination of wells.

**3. Have you observed climate variability (e.g. drought, flooding, severe storms) in your region? What should be done to prepare for these extreme circumstances in your region and the state as a whole?**

- Participants reminded the group of last year's Trigo fire, in which the forest-thinning was validated.
- Torrance County has formed a committee of mountain communities for emergency preparedness.

**4. What water projects are needed in your region? How should these projects be prioritized for funding?**

- Monitoring – well and recharge flows
- Develop regional pipeline system to get water from one area to another, such as wholesale pipeline through the middle valley for Moriarty and Edgewood. This could be done through the local water company and help with economic growth
- Education, education, education (and education about erosion projects)
- Land management programs – thinning, recharge, erosion control
- De-silting dams
- Money for implementation and development of projects

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