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For more information, contact:

Karin Stangl, (505) 827-6139

Rebecca King, (505) 827-4077

New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission Receives Update on Land and Water Purchases in the Pecos River Basin

(SANTA FE, New Mexico) – The New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission has received bids from landowners offering to sell more than 27,000 acres of land and associated water rights in the lower Pecos River Basin under the state's water and farmland acquisition program.

Commissioners were updated on the status of the acquisition program at a meeting held in Santa Fe, on August 5.

The acquisition program was authorized by House Bill 417, which was approved during the 2002 State Legislative Session. The legislation authorizes the Interstate Stream Commission to purchase up to 6,000 acres of land and water rights in Carlsbad Irrigation District (CID) and up to 12,000 acres of land and water rights above Brantley Dam, which includes the Pecos Valley Artesian Conservancy District (PVACD) and the Ft. Sumner Irrigation District (FSID).

Landowners interested in selling their land and water rights were required to submit bids to the Interstate Stream Commission. The Interstate Stream Commission request for bids was issued on December 18, 2002, and the deadline for submitting bids was July 31, 2003. The Interstate Stream Commission is now in the process of completing its evaluation of the offers and developing a purchasing strategy.

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The total amount of acreage submitted for sale to the Interstate Stream Commission as of the July 31st deadline is as follows: about 7,300 acres within the Carlsbad Irrigation District; about 18,900 acres within the Pecos Valley Artesian Conservancy District; and about 800 acres from within the Ft. Sumner Irrigation District.

The acquisition program was first proposed in 2002 by the Lower Pecos River Basin Committee, an organization comprised of local stakeholders along the lower Pecos River, including irrigation districts, county and municipal governments, and business representatives. The acquisition program is one component of a long-term Consensus Plan devised by the Lower Pecos River Basin Committee as a means of insuring that New Mexico meets its interstate delivery obligation to the State of Texas under the Pecos River Compact.

The nine-member Interstate Stream Commission is responsible for investigating, conserving, protecting, and developing the water resources and stream systems of New Mexico as well as carrying out plans and programs for beneficial uses in the state. The commission has water planning responsibility for the state.

The Office of the State Engineer and the Interstate Stream Commission are separate but companion agencies charged with administering the state's water resources. The agencies have power over the supervision, measurement, appropriation and distribution of almost all surface and ground water in New Mexico, including streams and rivers that cross state boundaries.

The State Engineer is also Secretary of the Interstate Stream Commission and oversees the staff of both agencies.

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