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State Engineer Announces New Water District in San Miguel County

(SANTA FE, New Mexico) – New Mexico State Engineer John D’Antonio announced today that a new water district will be created for the Rio Gallinas in San Miguel County.

The State Engineer declared the special water district in response to requests by water right users in the area to actively manage and administer the diversions and use of water from the Rio Gallinas on a day-to-day basis. The declaration also gives the State Engineer the authority to create a position and appoint a water master, who will be based in Las Vegas, New Mexico.

Water masters are people who actively administer water on a stream system in New Mexico. They monitor the diversion and use of the waters of a stream system on a daily basis, especially during irrigation season.

“Water masters serve an important function for the Office of the State Engineer because they are our people in the field who can make sure that water is equitably distributed to water users in a particular area,” said State Engineer John D’Antonio.

In coming months, the Office of the State Engineer will be working with water users to develop a water master manual that will fit the Rio Gallinas, since active management of surface water has proven challenging for the State Engineer in this area, even in the best of water supply years.

(MORE)

The State Engineer views this request by the Gallinas water rights owners as a solution to avoiding conflict during this lengthy period of drought.

The Office of the State Engineer is charged with administering the state's water resources. The State Engineer has power over the supervision, measurement, appropriation, and distribution of 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 its staff.

The Interstate Stream Commission is charged with separate duties including protecting New Mexico's right to water under eight interstate stream compacts, ensuring the state complies with each of those compacts, as well as water planning.

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