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## **New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission Accepts Northwest New Mexico Regional Water Plan**

**(SANTA FE, New Mexico)** – In an effort to assure an adequate water supply in relation to projected demand in a specific region of the state -- as well as to plan for drought conditions that are predicted to continue in future years across the State of New Mexico -- the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission today announced the acceptance of the completed **Northwest New Mexico Regional Water Plan**.

Although Governor Bill Richardson's Office directed the Interstate Stream Commission to have a comprehensive statewide water plan in place by the end of 2003, the Interstate Stream Commission has worked for many years with all regions of the state to prepare their own regional water plans. Once regional water plans are completed, they must be reviewed by the Interstate Stream Commission staff and must be accepted by the Interstate Stream Commission.

"It is important that completion of regional water plans continue to involve the public in water management, water development, and water conservation strategies around our state," said New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission Director Estevan López. "New Mexico has been in a drought for the past four years, and conditions may continue for several years to come. We must work together as a state to prepare for that. It is important to balance the needs of all water users in the state. It is equally important that communities, businesses, and interested citizens have input into their regional plans."

**(MORE)**

To date, regional water plans were accepted for the Colfax County Region, Jemez y Sangre Area, Lower Pecos Valley, Lea County, Tularosa-Sacramento and Salt Basins, and the Estancia Basin. Other regional plans accepted today by the Interstate Stream Commission included the Socorro-Sierra Regional Water Plan and the San Juan Basin Regional Water Plan.

The Northwest New Mexico Region includes all of Cibola County and most of McKinley County. The region is mostly a rural area that is both diverse and complex, which includes part of the Rio Puerco watershed on the eastern side and the upper watershed of the Puerco River on the western side.

Water users in the region traditionally have depended on finite groundwater supplies and will need to find ways to extend the life of those supplies or acquire new sources of supply for long-term stability. In addition, many of the region's current and potential water supplies are the subject of unresolved Tribal and federally reserved water rights claims.

The plan addresses water reuse and conservation, continued groundwater development, successful construction of renewable water supply projects such as the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project, and adjudication or settlement of unresolved water rights claims.

The plan resulted from a series of public meetings and focus groups. It was funded by \$162,500 in grants from the Interstate Stream Commission and contributions from member entities of the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments.

The plan will be posted on the Office of the State Engineer's website located at:  
[www.ose.state.nm.us](http://www.ose.state.nm.us)

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 groundwater 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 nine-member 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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