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New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission Accepts the Socorro-Sierra 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 **Socorro-Sierra 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."

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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 are the San Juan River Basin Regional Water Plan and the Northwest New Mexico Regional Water Plan.

The Socorro-Sierra water-planning region is located on the Rio Grande in south central New Mexico. Most of the water in the region is used for agriculture along the Rio Grande Valley. Use of the Rio Grande and stream-connected groundwater is limited by the Rio Grande Compact, a multi-state agreement that requires delivery of a certain amount of water to each signatory state as the river flows downstream.

The plan addresses conservation, reduction of urban and agricultural water demands, improving water-use efficiency and management, improving water quality, and plans for future growth.

The planning committee was comprised of a group of diverse professionals and public participants representing a wide variety of water interests within Socorro and Sierra Counties.

Development of the plan was funded by \$375,000 in grants from the Interstate Stream Commission as well as other contributions.

The plan will be posted on the Office of the State Engineer's website located at:
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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