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Public Comment Sought on Proposed Rules and Regulations for Priority Administration on the Rio Gallinas

(LAS VEGAS, New Mexico) – Proposed rules and regulations for water administration on the Rio Gallinas will be presented to the Las Vegas City Council for review on **Wednesday, April 7, 2004**.

"The Rio Gallinas stream system is a priority area in our state," said State Engineer John D'Antonio. "Since drought conditions are expected to continue, water administration to maximize water supply and prevent waste is critical in this area. If priority administration becomes necessary, we want to make sure we have public input into these proposed rules and regulations."

The proposed rules and regulations apply to water administration by a water master appointed by the State Engineer for the Rio Gallinas, a tributary to the Pecos River, in San Miguel County. The water master rules are interim, until final adjudication of all water rights within the stream system are completed. Adjudications determine who owns what water and in what amount.

"Because there is no completed adjudication and little field experience of water administration in this area, the rules contemplate that initial efforts at administration will be refined and improved over time, with experience and cooperation among water users and the water master we recently hired for the area," D'Antonio said.

A water master who was hired for the Rio Gallinas will assume his position on April 12. Water masters actively administer the distribution of water from stream systems on a daily basis. The State Engineer has the authority to create special water districts and hire water masters as he determines is necessary for the administration of water rights. Water masters serve an important function because they ensure that water is distributed fairly in accordance with water rights.

A public meeting will be held on **April 26** from **7:00 to 9:00 p.m.** (at the **Highland University Ballroom**, located at **9th Street and Baca Avenue**, in Las Vegas) to give area water users an opportunity to comment on the draft rules and regulations.

(MORE)

The proposed rules and regulations can be reviewed by downloading them from the Office of the State Engineer's website 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 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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