



**For immediate release:**

August 19, 2004

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## **New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission Accepts the Middle Rio Grande Regional Water Plan**

**(SANTA FE, New Mexico)** – In an effort to plan for 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 yesterday accepted the completed **Middle Rio Grande Regional Water Plan**.

Governor Bill Richardson's Office directed the Interstate Stream Commission to have a comprehensive statewide water plan in place by the end of 2003. In addition, the 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.

"Even though the State Water Plan already is completed, it is important to finish individual regional water plans. These regional water plans provide an opportunity to involve the public in developing water management, development, and conservation strategies within their regions," said New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission Director Estevan López. "New Mexico has been in a drought for the past four years, and such conditions may continue for several years to come. The state must work with water users and interested citizens within a region to develop mechanisms for managing limited water resources. The state's regional water planning process provides a forum for water users, local governments, businesses, and interested citizens to have input into the development of the regional plan."

To date, the Interstate Stream Commission has accepted regional water plans for the Colfax County Region, Jemez y Sangre Area, Lower Pecos Valley, Lea County, Tularosa-Sacramento and Salt Basins,

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and the Estancia Basin, the Socorro-Sierra Regional Water Plan, the San Juan Basin Regional Water Plan, and the Northwest New Mexico Regional Water Plan.

The Middle Rio Grande Region includes the counties of Valencia, Bernalillo, and Sandoval. It also includes the Pueblos of Jemez, Zia, San Felipe, Santa Ana, Sandia, and Isleta as well as portions of the Pueblos of Santa Clara, Cochiti, Santo Domingo, and Laguna. In addition, it covers a portion of the Jicarilla Nation and a portion of the Tohajiilee Chapter of the Navajo Nation. Also included are the municipalities of Albuquerque, Rio Rancho, Jemez Springs, Cuba, San Isidro, Bernalillo, Corrales, Los Ranchos de Albuquerque, Bosque Farms, Los Lunas, and Belen. Other entities such as the Albuquerque Metropolitan Arroyo Flood Control Authority, the Southern Sandoval County Flood control Authority, and the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District also are included in the plan.

The Mid Region Council of Governments Water Resources Board and the Middle Rio Grande Water Assembly evaluated water management alternatives based upon the goals of assuring a sufficient and sustainable water supply to the region at an economically feasible price. They evaluated the future water needs of the region and considered the need to protect the environment and regional public welfare and developed plans to support reasonable growth in the region through development of new supplies, watershed rehabilitation and management, as well as conservation.

The water available in the region is supplied from both ground and surface sources including the Rio Grande and its tributaries. Principal uses of water in the region are for irrigated agriculture, municipal, industrial, and domestic consumptive uses, riparian evapotranspiration, and evaporative losses from conservation and recreation storage.

The plan addresses future challenges to managing water resources in the region including drought conditions, Rio Grande Compact constraints, unadjudicated water rights, federal Endangered Species Act issues, and projected population growth.

Development of the plan cost more than \$1.3 million provided by grants from the Interstate Stream Commission, the Mid Rio Grande Council of Governments as well as contributions from local governments and the Middle Rio Grande Water Assembly.

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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