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Deming Office Develops New Tool to Increase Information Access and Improve Customer Service

(SANTA FE, New Mexico) — A new state-of-the-art tool, developed by the District III Office of the State Engineer in Deming, could help eliminate the need for paper files on water rights. It will also improve administrative efficiency and customer access to information.

The computer pilot project, called Virden Valley Enterprise-Geographical Information System (E-GIS), provides a template to allow quick access to information from the agency's WATERS database via a GIS interface. All historical information on water-right ownership, location of wells, site photos, and access to people who administer the basin one day could be merged into a computer file.

"For the first time, users will be able to view a graphic image from desktop computers, and with one click of the mouse be able to access the complete history of any water right," said State Engineer John D'Antonio.

The Virden Valley E-GIS is the brainchild of District III Supervisor for the Gila/San Francisco Basin Tink Jackson and Assistant Supervisor Tim Farmer. They developed the tool to delineate groundwater uses in the Virden Valley Underground Water Basin in southwestern New Mexico.

The Office of the State Engineer was responsible for the administration of groundwater in the Virden Valley and did not have records of numerous wells that were drilled for domestic use prior to the declaration of the basin in 1938. The original project was to find all existing wells and determine the ownership of those wells. The rest evolved from there.

(MORE)

District III staff members assisted by compiling well data in the field, and entering that data into the GIS. The GIS data then was compared against agency records, Globe Equity Decree No. 59, and historical maps.

"The original groundwater project proved extremely beneficial," said Farmer. "With this success, the scope of the project was enlarged to include surface water data."

Additional data added within the last two years includes Global Positioning Systems (GPS) files for ditches, roads, gauging stations, sluices, and flumes in the Virden Valley. The scope of the Virden Valley Project was expanded in 2003 to include WATERS data and linking the two databases into the E-GIS.

"We hope the Virden Valley E-GIS will provide a workable template for merging files for all areas of the state," said Jackson. "Having all key information about an area in one place and not having to dig through the paper files has dramatically improved our administrative efficiency and customer service."

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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To see a demonstration of the water-right tool contact, Karin Stangl, Public Information Officer at: (505) 827-6139, Santa Fe