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State Engineer to Begin Meter Inspections in Lower Rio Grande on March 6, 2006

(LAS CRUCES, New Mexico) – State Engineer John D’Antonio and more than 30 employees from the Office of the State Engineer will begin meter inspections in the Lower Rio Grande on Monday, March 6, 2006.

The deadline for installing meters on wells in the Lower Rio Grande Water Master District ended today, March 1, 2006.

“We are beginning the meter inspections immediately after the deadline to get an idea of how many people are in compliance with the order,” said State Engineer John D’Antonio. “During inspections, if a well is not metered or if it is incorrectly metered, well owners will be notified. We will also send well owners a report on every well we inspect.”

In December 2004, the State Engineer issued the metering order for groundwater wells in the Lower Rio Grande to curtail illegal diversions and over-diversions and to enforce water right priorities, if necessary. In addition, the metering requirements will help the State Engineer manage and administer the stream system, promote the expedited leasing and marketing of water, conserve water, and prevent over-appropriation.

“The meter inspections will take place for two weeks in the Rincon area,” said Lower Rio Grande Water Master Sheldon Dorman. “We chose to inspect this area first because the adjudication is almost finished in that region.”

The metering order is part of a long-term effort to allow New Mexico to control its own water destiny.

“Well metering is one of several tools the I am putting in place so that we can better manage our water,” said the State Engineer. “Our water rights can be protected only if we measure our use.”

(MORE)

For questions regarding the meter inspections or the metering requirements, please contact the Lower Rio Grande Water Master Sheldon Dorman, at (505) 524-6161 or (505) 649-1480. You can also visit the Office of the State Engineer website at www.ose.state.nm.us, where metering information can be accessed by clicking the link on the front page under "hot topics."

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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