



**For Immediate Release:**

June 22, 2006

**For more information, contact:**

Karin Stangl, Planning and Communication Director  
Office of the State Engineer  
(505) 827-6139

Benson Hendrix, Public Relations Specialist  
Office of the State Engineer  
(505) 765-2057

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

**(SANTA FE, New Mexico)** – In an effort to assure an adequate water supply in relation to projected demands in a specific region of the state – as well as 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 **Rio Chama Regional Water Plan**.

The **Rio Chama water planning region** is located in northcentral New Mexico, comprising of the Rio Chama watershed in Rio Arriba County. The region is bordered by the San Juan Water Basin on the west, the Jemez y Sangre water planning region to the south, the State of Colorado to the north, and the Taos basin on the east. Almost 50 percent of the land affected by the regional water plan is held by the Santa Fe and Carson National Forests.

About 95 percent of the water diverted in the region is from surface water and most of the water supply is used by agriculture. The **Rio Chama plan** addresses conservation, reduction of urban and agricultural water demands, improving water-use efficiency and management, improving water quality and plans for future growth.

“Regional water plans give the public a voice in developing 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 and conditions may continue for several years to come. We must continue to work together as a state to prepare for that.”

**(MORE)**

The goals of the **Rio Chama Water Plan** include: preserving the acequia system and strengthening its role in community life; enhancing growing season steamflows (by increasing storage or other means) so that agriculture is less limited by low peak-season flows; developing local agriculture with information, marketing and financial support; providing reliable water supplies to community water systems; protecting water quality; conserving and reusing water resources where appropriate; protecting and restoring upper watershed areas.

The planning committee was comprised of a group of diverse professionals and public participants representing a wide variety of water interests within Rio Arriba County.

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.

To date, regional water plans were accepted for the Southwest New Mexico Area, Mora-San Miguel Region, Colfax County Region, Jemez y Sangre Area, Lower Pecos Valley, Lea County, Tularosa-Sacramento and Salt Basins, the Estancia Basin, Socorro-Sierra, San Juan Basin, Northwest New Mexico Region, Middle Rio Grande and Lower Rio Grande.

Development of the plan was funded by about \$154,000 in grants from the Interstate Stream Commission.

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.

# # #