



For immediate release:

August 18, 2006

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Office of the State Engineer Releases Report on the Impact of Climate Change on the State's Water Supply

(SANTA FE, New Mexico) – Climate change will have a significant impact on the availability of, and demand for, New Mexico's water during the next century according to a recently titled, "The Impact of Climate Change on New Mexico's Water Supply and Ability to Manage Water Resources," which was produced by the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer.

The report warns that the impacts to New Mexico are expected to be significant for water managers and users in future years, with changes to both supply and demand. The report discusses how little modeling is available that is specific to New Mexico with respect to global warming and climate change.

Governor Bill Richardson directed the Office of the State Engineer to work with other state agencies, with local and federal agencies, and with the state's research institutions to prepare an analysis of the impact of climate change on the state's water supply.

"The State Water Plan provides a good framework for managing climate change in New Mexico," said State Engineer John D'Antonio. "Initiatives like Active Water Resource Management will help our agency put the tools in place to effectively manage our state's variable water supply associated with any climate change scenario.

Some of the key points mentioned in report include:

- Temperatures have already risen in New Mexico and are predicted to continue to increase.
- There have been changes in snowpack elevations in recent years.
- There have been changes in available water volumes and in the timing of water availability.
- Precipitation has increased in the form of rain rather than snow due to increasing temperatures.
- Smaller spring runoff volumes and/or earlier runoff will impact water availability for irrigation and for ecological and species needs.
- Milder winters and hotter summers will result in longer growing seasons and increased plant and human water use.
- We can expect increased evaporative losses from reservoirs, streamflows and soils due to hotter, drier conditions.
- We can expect an increase in extreme events, including both droughts and floods.

(MORE)

"Governor Richardson's climate change initiative, both the emissions reduction strategies currently under development and his emphasis on its impact on water resources, has placed New Mexico in the forefront of states that are beginning to investigate adaptation strategies," said Special Assistant to the State Engineer Anne Watkins. "We will need to assess the State's vulnerabilities, generate public awareness and dialogue about the issue, and create appropriate adaptation strategies at every level to incorporate into the State Water Plan to guide water resource management."

To obtain a copy of the report, it can be downloaded from the Office of the State Engineer website located at www.ose.state.nm.us. Click on the link under Hot Topics titled Current Drought Status, Water Levels and Climate Conditions.

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 the Secretary of the Interstate Stream Commission and oversees its staff.

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