



**For immediate release:**

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## **Metering is an Essential Water Management Tool**

**by John D'Antonio, PE, New Mexico State Engineer**

**(SANTA FE, New Mexico)** – Your editorial *“To Manage Water, We Must Measure Water,”* which appeared in the *Las Cruces Sun-News* on July 27, 2006, clearly summarizes the thinking behind my recent order requiring installation of meters on all wells in the lower Rio Grande. I consider this effort to be a priority for my agency.

EBID General Manager Gary Esslinger’s letter, titled *“Meter Order Flaws,”* dated August 29, 2006, responding to your editorial, mischaracterizes my agency’s efforts to help EBID farmers comply with my order to meter and report the amount of water they pump from wells.

The State of New Mexico has provided substantial grants and loans to EBID to implement improved water management, including grants to improve measurement of water in the river, canals and drains. State funding this year includes \$1.95 million for loan to EBID and the Caballo and Sierra County soil and water conservation districts—this is 97 percent of the money the State has available for such projects statewide. In turn, these entities can “reloan” this money to farmers at 1.75 percent interest to pay for purchase and installation of meters. The application process for a farmer to obtain one of these low-interest loans is short and simple. The application form is one page and can be downloaded off the Office of the State Engineer website at [www.ose.state.nm.us](http://www.ose.state.nm.us). There is no “mandate that a farmer mortgage his farm” as Mr. Esslinger incorrectly claimed. Approval of a properly completed loan application to pay for a meter will take no more than a few business days.

**(MORE)**

Contrary to Mr. Esslinger's letter, a farmer in the Lower Rio Grande can use one of these low-interest loans to purchase well meters and pay for all the associated labor and material costs for installation. We estimate a typical meter installation to be in the range of \$1,000 to \$2,000. EBID's desired telemetry equipment would add an additional \$3,000 to the cost of metering each well. Cost is one of several reasons that I decided not to require telemetry in my metering order so as to keep individual farmer's costs of compliance to a minimum

My office has been working closely with EBID for many years and has assisted in funding many of EBID's programs for improved water measurement and management. We hope to continue this mutually beneficial relationship for many years to come.

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*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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