



**For Immediate Release:**

September 18, 2006

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## **Governor Richardson's Strategic Water Reserve Makes First Acquisition**

### ***Water Rights Purchase a Historic Step Toward Sustainable Water Future***

**(SANTA FE, New Mexico)** -- The New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission has approved the first acquisition of water rights for the New Mexico Strategic Water Reserve. The sellers were present along with Interstate Stream Commission staff as the Commission approved the sale on August 2, and the sale closed on September 15, 2006. This historic purchase will provide numerous benefits to the State of New Mexico.

"The Strategic Water Reserve is a powerful tool," said Governor Bill Richardson. "The water reserve will help us create a sustainable water future by balancing water use between cities, industry, agriculture, and our rivers. This acquisition is the first, but it won't be the last."

The first Strategic Water Reserve purchase was of more than 1,790 acre-feet of adjudicated groundwater rights within the Fort Sumner Groundwater Basin. Located just over two miles from the Pecos River, these water rights offer tremendous benefit to the health of the river.

An acre-foot of water is the amount of water needed to cover an acre of land with one foot of water. One acre-foot is approximately 325,000 gallons.

In 2005, the legislature passed a law proposed by Governor Richardson and THINK New Mexico creating the Strategic Water Reserve. This enables the state to acquire water rights through lease or purchase or donation to help comply with interstate stream compacts or to assist with water management efforts for the benefit of threatened or endangered species. The Commission adopted rules and regulations in December 2005 to implement the new law. In February 2006, they established priority areas throughout the state for acquisitions, including the Pecos River Basin.

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This purchase provides many benefits to the State, including the opportunity to further the cooperation between State and Federal agencies, providing water to help with Endangered Species Act issues on the Pecos River without impairing the State's ability to comply with the Pecos River Compact, and credit towards the 18,000 acres of land and appurtenant water rights the state is directed to purchase under the Pecos River Settlement Agreement.

"This acquisition will be enormously valuable in the effort to protect the Pecos bluntnose shiner," said Interstate Stream Commission Director Estevan Lopez. "This water will be available for lease to the Bureau of Reclamation for direct delivery to the river roughly five miles upstream of the area designated under the Endangered Species Act as a critical habitat for the shiner."

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Vaughan represented their family at the Interstate Stream Commission meeting on August 2, 2006. Their family has owned land in the Fort Sumner area for three generations. Richard Vaughan is a board member of the New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau, and is also an original member of the Lower Pecos River Basin Committee formed in 2001. This Committee developed the Consensus Plan, now the heart of the Pecos River Settlement Agreement. The sale closed on September 15, 2006.

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