



For immediate release:

November 8, 2006

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Office of the State Engineer Announces Metering Program Success in the Lower Rio Grande

(SANTA FE, New Mexico) – New Mexico State Engineer John D’Antonio announced today that of the 811 permitted active wells in the Lower Rio Grande within Sierra and Doña Ana County, only three are out of compliance with the conditions of their permit.

“The level of compliance in the Lower Rio Grande basin is even better than we expected,” said State Engineer John D’Antonio. “We attribute this success story to effectively getting out the information to Lower Rio Grande water right owners last year and working with them to get their meters installed. It was important for all water right owners to understand how important metering is to protecting the water supply.”

The State Engineer issued an order in November of 2005 requiring wells to be metered in the Lower Rio Grande by March 1, 2006. More than 10,000 informational brochures were mailed to area water right owners to inform them about the rules and regulations and to provide information on meter vendors and installation. Numerous stories were carried by the area news media regarding the metering order.

The metering inspection that took place in March of 2006, allowed the State Engineer and his staff to check all wells for compliance. Owners not found to be in compliance were notified as to how they could become compliant and were encouraged to work with the Las Cruces District Office and the Lower Rio Grande Water Master to discuss their compliance.

The metering program is part of the Active Water Resource Management initiative, which was launched by the State Engineer in January 2004. The groundwater metering order will help the Office of the State Engineer to manage and administer waters of the Lower Rio Grande stream system by putting in place the tools to effectively manage our state’s variable water supply.

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The State Engineer's metering order required that all wells within the Lower Rio Grande Water Master District be metered except stock wells and domestic wells serving a single household by March of 2006.

Metering is essential in order to truly maximize the beneficial use of our water supply, which includes preventing illegal and wasteful pumping. Metering also enables the water user to accurately measure and monitor water diversions for more efficient, cost-effective water management.

Metering was previously implemented successfully in the Roswell, Cimarron, Gila-San Francisco, and Carlsbad basins, where it has led to more efficient water management practices and maximized the beneficial use of water supply in those areas.

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.

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