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Interstate Stream Commission Celebrates the First Completed Project for the Strategic Water Reserve

(FORT SUMNER, New Mexico) – The Interstate Stream Commission celebrated the first splash of water from the Vaughan Pipeline on Wednesday, July 25 2007, which marks the completion of the first project for the Strategic Water Reserve.

The Strategic Water Reserve legislation has enabled collaboration between the federal and state water management agencies for the benefit of the environment and the public to enhance and protect our natural resources without increasing the demand on those resources. Creative programs, like the Strategic Water Reserve, make possible the implementation of solutions with great promise, such as the Vaughan Pipeline project. This two-mile long pipeline will help meet Endangered Species Act needs, thus protecting other water rights in the process.

"This pipeline is an example of successful collaboration between state and federal agencies toward a common goal," said New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission Director Estevan López. "This project will make water available to the Bureau of Reclamation for environmental purposes while protecting other water rights and still allowing us to meet our compact obligations."

Interstate Stream Commission Director Estevan López as well as representatives from Governor Bill Richardson's Office, US Bureau of Reclamation, US Senator Pete Domenici's office, US Senator Jeff Bingaman's office, local dignitaries and others participated in a ribbon cutting and ceremonial bucket brigade to deliver water to the Lower Pecos River.

"This is our first partnership project with the state undertaken as part of New Mexico's strategic water initiative. This project and the agreement to lease water is a great example of the state of New Mexico and the Bureau of Reclamation working together to improve conditions along the Pecos River without harming the water users who rely on the river," said Albuquerque Area Manager Connie Rupp.

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The pipeline project started on April 2, 2007 and took nearly four months to complete. The cost was just over \$824,000. However, by leasing water to the Bureau of Reclamation, the Interstate Stream Commission will, over time, recover the capital outlay costs incurred during acquisition of the water rights and construction of the pipeline infrastructure; and have a source of funding to support operations and maintenance. In return Reclamation has an important water resource available to them to remain in compliance with their Biological Opinion. The overall result is an arrangement that enhances the environment, and protects privately owned water rights in the Pecos River Basin.

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.

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