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State Engineer Hires New Water Master in the Lower Rio Grande

(SANTA FE, New Mexico) – New Mexico State Engineer John D’Antonio announced that an additional water master has been hired for the Lower Rio Grande Water Master District in Doña Ana and Sierra Counties.

Craig Cathey began working for the Office of the State Engineer as a Water Resource Specialist in Water Rights Administration of the District IV office in Las Cruces in 2002. For three years prior to working at the Office of the State Engineer Cathey worked at the White Sands Test Facility near Las Cruces where he was the Lead Project Engineer in charge of the repair of space shuttle thrusters.

Cathey began his duties as Water Master in the Lower Rio Grande Water Master District *Northern Section* on November 5, which includes the Northern portion of the Lower Rio Grande Underground Water Basin, Hot Springs Underground Water Basin and the Las Animas Creek Underground Water Basin. The areas Cathey will be working in includes the cities of Truth or Consequences, Hatch, Garfield, and Rincon.

Water Master Sheldon Dorman will continue to be charged with all water master duties in the Lower Rio Grande District *Southern Section*. The jurisdictional divide exists approximately in the area where the Rio Grande narrows to a channel with no irrigation and is located between Rincon and Radium Springs.

Water Masters actively administer the distribution of water from stream systems on a daily basis. The State Engineer has the authority to create special water districts and hire Water Masters as he determines in necessary for the administration of water rights.

(MORE)

In December 2004, the State Engineer declared the Lower Rio Grande Underground Water Basin, Hot Springs Underground Water Basin and the Las Animas Creek Underground Water Basin as a special water district in response to drought conditions which created a water shortage crisis in the Lower Rio Grande Stream System. Appointing of Water Masters is necessary to ensure the public safety of water users in the District and to ensure protection of existing water rights in the District from impairment.

In coming months, the Office of the State Engineer will be working with water users to develop a water master manual that will address specific needs of water users on the Lower Rio Grande.

The State Engineer views the declaration of the special water district as a means to a solution for avoiding conflict over water in the event of a lengthy period of drought.

"Water masters serve an important function for the Office of the State Engineer because they work in the field and make sure that water is equitably distributed to water users in a particular area," said State Engineer John D'Antonio. "Cathey's experience working as a Water Resource Specialist in the Lower Rio Grande has helped familiarize him with the entire basin and get acquainted with local water right owners. His experience will be an asset to our agency in the Water Master capacity."

Cathey earned his Bachelor of Science degree in agricultural engineering from New Mexico State University in Las Cruces in 1996.

Cathey's interests include spending time with his family, as well as spending time in the outdoors. He is also a sports fan and enjoys watching college and professional football.

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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