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For more information, contact:

Julie Maas, Public Relations Specialist
Office of the State Engineer
(505) 765-2011

Karin Stangl, Planning and Communication Director
Office of the State Engineer
(505) 827-6139

State Engineer's Rio Gallinas Water Master Retires As New Water Master Gets His Feet Wet

(SANTA FE, New Mexico) – **Larry H. Vigil**, the Rio Gallinas Water Master for the last two years for the Office of the State Engineer, retired in December after 28 years of state service.

In retirement, Vigil's plans include coaching girls youth soccer and continuing his work with the Adaptive Ski Program for people with disabilities.

Vigil began with the Office of the State Engineer as a Student Aide in July of 1979 and advanced through the Water Resource Aide, Technician, and Specialist positions in the 80's and 90's. In 2001, he became a surveyor and then engineer, and retired as the Rio Gallinas water master at the end of 2007.

Luis Aguirre was hired as the new Rio Gallinas Water Master in October of 2007. He co-filled the position with Larry Vigil and has been meeting with area water users and agencies ever since.

(MORE)

"One-on-one involvement with Rio Gallinas water users is key to building trust," said Aguirre. "I plan to meet with acequia members with the assistance of Rio Gallinas Acequia Association President Joseph Padilla and Acequia Liaison Officer Hilario Rubio. I intend to set up meetings between agency staff and Rio Gallinas water users on a continuous basis to allow people to address their water rights concerns with me in an informal setting. We will also tour diversion points and places of use."

"Hilario Rubio was hired by the Office of the State Engineer in 1999 as an Acequia Liaison Officer to help acequias with the adjudication of water rights. As a long-time resident of Las Vegas, he knows this area and knows about area water issues," said Aguirre. "His assistance will be invaluable to me since he has experience working in many areas, including Chama, Jemez, Santa Cruz, Aamodt, Taos, Red River and Gallinas."

Aguirre has met with the New Mexico Game and Fish Department and with the Natural Resource Conservation Service. He is scheduling meetings with the Tierra y Montes Soil and Water Conservation District, and the San Miguel County Extension Service, as well as with City of Las Vegas officials to see how the Office of the State Engineer can better collaborate with the local agriculture agencies on water issues. He's also coordinating closely with other Office of the State Engineer employees involved in Rio Gallinas management.

Aguirre said the agency is planning to host special field office hours in San Miguel County that would be open as needed to the public to make access to water rights information more convenient for local water users.

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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(NOTE: jpeg photos of Larry H. Vigil and Luis Aguirre are available)