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Public Forum on Water Management Issues In the Rio Gallinas Draws a Crowd in Las Vegas

(LAS VEGAS, New Mexico) – More than 60 people attended a public forum sponsored by the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for everyone to learn of the water needs in the Rio Gallinas Basin, as well as the engineering and funding assistance available from federal and other governmental agencies related to water management. “Managing Water on the Rio Gallinas for 2008” was held on Monday, March 31 in Las Vegas at the Luna Community College.

The agenda featured the following presenters:

- **Mike Ahlm**, District Wildlife Officer for the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish who spoke on maintaining a balance between protecting beavers and their habitats while protecting landowners from damage.
- **Hilario Rubio**, Acequia Liaison for the Office of the State Engineer, welcomed the audience and presenters that attended the 6:00-8:30 pm meeting.
- **Ray Acosta**, Acequia Program Manager for the Interstate Stream Commission, which helps acequia associations build or restore diversion structures and ditches used for irrigation.
- **Michael Jones**, District Conservationist from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, which provides preliminary review, cost estimates, and project recommendations for acequias.
- **Frances Martinez**, District Manager, and **Steve Reichert**, Project Coordinator, for the Tierra & Montes Soil and Water Conservation District, who talked about several projects completed within the Gallinas watershed with respect to water management.

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- **George DuFour**, Utilities Director of the City of Las Vegas, who discussed surface water diversions, groundwater, wells, storage capacity, and conservation for the city.
- **Joseph Padilla**, President, and **William Gonzales**, Board Member, of the Rio Gallinas Acequias Association, who talked about the importance of fostering good relationships between all participants who are working to move the adjudication forward as well as about acequia governance and bylaws.
- **Luis Aguirre**, Rio Gallinas Water Master for the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer, who talked about temporary gages, meters, measurement, and metering agreements as well as the goals of the agency with respect to water management in 2008. **Linda Gordan**, Water Rights District VI Supervisor, guided the audience through information available to the public on the Office of the State Engineer website at www.ose.state.nm.us.
- **Richard Trujillo**, Community Liaison for Office of the State Engineer, who discussed ongoing outreach efforts to the communities in the Rio Gallinas area and spoke of the office available for use by the Office of the State Engineer at the Luna Community College.

Following the presentations, questions were fielded from the audience by members of the group. The forum was moderated by Water Resources and Allocation Program Director John Romero, for the Office of the State Engineer, who grew up in Mora, New Mexico.

For more information about the presentations, or to receive a copy of handout materials distributed at the meeting, please contact **Julie Maas**, at **(505) 765-2011**.

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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