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State Engineer Hires Two Water Masters in the Lower Rio Grande

(SANTA FE, New Mexico) – New Mexico State Engineer John D’Antonio announced that two assistant water masters were hired for the Las Cruces District in the Lower Rio Grande basin area. The primary area they are focusing on is north of Radium Springs to the southern portion of Truth or Consequences.

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 is necessary for the administration of water rights.

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.

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. “The varied and complimentary experience that these two individuals bring to their positions as Assistant Water Masters is an asset to the Lower Rio Grande area.”

Robin Pirtle earned her Bachelor of Business Administration degree in management from New Mexico State University (NMSU) in Las Cruces in 2004.

(MORE)

For over nine years, she worked as an Engineering Technician with the City of Las Cruces mapping the City's utility systems utilizing geographic information and global positioning systems. She worked cooperatively with the New Mexico Department of Transportation, Elephant Butte Irrigation District, and the Bureau of Land Management to obtain permits for the City's utility installations. Pirtle also taught civil related drafting classes for two years at the Community College.

Pirtle's interests include playing softball, attending Southern New Mexico Speedway races, and working on her house. She has one son who enjoys playing basketball and video games.

David Mercer earned his Bachelor of Science degree in geology from the University of Missouri-Kansas City in 1995 and a Masters of Science degree in geology from New Mexico State University in 2002.

Prior to joining the Office of the State Engineer, Mercer worked for a year in geology and environmental compliance for North Wind, Inc at the NASA White Sands Test Facility near Las Cruces. From 2003-2007, Mercer worked for the Ground Water and Surface Water Bureaus at the New Mexico Environment Department. He also has approximately four years environmental science experience during residence in Las Cruces for Souder Miller and Associates, in Denver for New Horizons Environmental Consultants, Inc., and in Kansas City for Maxim Technologies, Inc.

Mercer's interests include listening to music, reading military history, playing guitar, watching movies, hiking and following NMSU and University of Kansas basketball.

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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