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Interstate Stream Commission Approves Plan For Disposition of Land Associated with Water Rights Acquisition

(SANTA FE, New Mexico) – The New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission has approved a plan to dispose of lands acquired in connection with the water rights acquisition program to implement the Pecos Settlement Agreement.

Legislation was passed and signed into law in 2008 allowing water rights to be purchased independently of land and authorizing the Commission to sell lands already purchased. The plan approved by the Commission is in compliance with the new state law, which requires that the land be sold back subject to deed restrictions to ensure that no new water development or use, including the drilling of domestic wells, occurs on the land without transfer of valid, existing water rights.

"The Interstate Stream Commission will be sending out a letter to the original owner of the property asking if they wish to repurchase the land," said Interstate Stream Commission Director Estevan López. . . "The original owners must respond within 60 days or the repurchase option will be deemed rejected and the property will be made available to third parties through a competitive sealed bidding process."

The Commission will begin by offering for sale the properties in the Pecos Valley Artesian Conservancy District (PVACD), starting with the northern properties working south. The Commission will offer land for sale in the Carlsbad Irrigation District (CID) after beginning in PVACD and upon federal authorization.

"The Pecos Land and Water Rights Acquisition Program has been a success," said López. "About 95 percent of the land and water rights needed for settlement implementation has been acquired. All the augmentation well capacity needed for the settlement has been completed."

(MORE)

In 2002, the State Legislature authorized the Commission to purchase a minimum of 7,500 acres in PVACD and 4,500 acres in CID.

To date 4,498 acres have been purchased in CID and 6,905 acres have been purchased in PVACD for a total of 11,403 total acres.

Efforts continue to implement the Pecos Settlement by acquiring the additional water rights needed to bring the basin into hydrologic balance.

The New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission is an eight-member board appointed by the Governor, which is charged with 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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