



For immediate release:

April 13, 2009

For more information, contact:

Julie Maas, Public Relations Specialist
(505) 765-2011

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

(LAS VEGAS, New Mexico) – More than 80 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 some 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.

“Water Use in the Rio Gallinas for 2009” was held on Monday, March 31 from 6:00-8:30 pm in Las Vegas at the Luna Community College.

The agenda featured the following presenters:

- **Dr Peter Skelton**, Assistant Professor and Director, Memorial Middle School Agriculture Science Center spoke of their irrigation conservation efforts.
- **Ray Acosta**, Acequia Program Manager for the Interstate Stream Commission spoke on financial aid and technical assistance for the restoration and preservation of community acequia irrigation systems.
- **Samantha Ortiz**, Agriculture and 4-H Agent, San Miguel County Extension Service, presented information on the importance of water as a nutrient for livestock.
- **Andrew McClay**, Mora District Conservation Officer for New Mexico State Game and Fish Department spoke about the habits of wildlife such as beavers and muskrats and gave alternative suggestions for minimizing their damage to acequias.
- **Rob Larrañaga**, Wildlife Refuge Manager, Las Vegas National Wildlife Refuge, discussed conservation, management, and restoration of the fish, wildlife and plant resources and their habitats. Mr. Larrañaga spoke of the federal mandates that established the wildlife refuge. Stating that the created wetlands helped to replace historical wetlands and flight patterns, and that the small grains grown for feed in the refuge helped to protect local farm crops from migrating fowl and wildlife damage.

(MORE)

- **Ann Carter**, Special Assistant Attorney General, Office of the State Engineer, spoke about the water rights adjudication process.
- **Alan Cuddy**, Hydrologist, Hydrology Bureau of the Office of the State Engineer explained how staff gage readings convert to monthly water use.
- **Luis Aguirre**, Rio Gallinas Water Master, Office of the State Engineer, requested that acequia representatives let him know when they are opening or closing their headgates so that he can work to be sure everyone gets the water they are entitled to.
- **Linda Gordan**, Water Rights District VI Supervisor, Office of the State Engineer guided the audience through information available to the public on the Office of the State Engineer website at www.ose.state.nm.us, Hot Topics, Rio Gallinas Public Outreach.

A variety of topics were addressed during the question and answer period including the 2008 Water Master Report, the status of the adjudication packets, and staff gages.

The audience was encouraged to attend the upcoming State Water Plan Update meeting for the Mora/San Miguel Guadalupe Region on Tuesday, May 12 from 6:30-8:30 at Highlands University Leveo Sanchez Lecture Hall, Las Vegas. Input is being requested regarding population growth/water demand, conservation, climate variability, and water projects needed in the region in order to update the plan.

For more information, 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.

The nine-member 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 investigating, conserving and protecting the waters of the State, in addition to water planning.

#