



For immediate release:

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State Water Plan Update Meeting in Gallup

(GALLUP, New Mexico) – Interested Northwest New Mexico area residents attended a public meeting at the University of Gallup on the evening of April 27 to learn about future water projections in their area and the State Water Plan Update. The meeting was sponsored by the Planning and Communication Division of the Interstate Stream Commission.

Similar meetings are being held in a total of 21 communities around the state to update New Mexico's State Water Plan. The State Water Plan was published in 2003. State statute requires an update of the plan every five years according to need.

Since 2003, a variety of factors have emerged that have made updating the plan necessary including New Mexico's population hitting the 2-million mark, increasing demand for water, continued evidence of drought and climate variability, new court decisions, and the need for increased conservation.

The public forums provided an opportunity for interested citizens to help shape water policy for the state by participating in discussions on topics such as increased growth and demand, conservation, climate variability, and prioritizing water programs and projects for this region based on four questions posed to the audience by the meeting facilitator.

Concern was voiced about Gallup's finite water supply, which will be helped by President Obama's recent signing of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act. Passage of the Omnibus bill will benefit New Mexico for several reasons. Authorization of the settlement agreement between the Navajo Nation and the State of New Mexico will complete one of the most important stepping-stones necessary to resolve the Navajo Nation's water rights claims in the San Juan Basin in New Mexico. The water supply project authorized by the legislation will include a pipeline to transport clean, safe drinking water to Navajo and non-Indian communities such as the City of Gallup that currently do not have a reliable source of water and to individuals who currently rely on hauling water to their homes after purchasing it from coin-operated machines located several miles away.

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Improvements to the quality of life for the Navajo people and other citizens of northwestern New Mexico will benefit all New Mexicans, as will providing certainty with respect to the Navajo Nation's water rights claims in the San Juan Basin.

The meeting began with a presentation that explained how New Mexico spends a fraction of what surrounding states like Texas, Colorado, and Arizona spend on water planning.

Public outreach efforts for the State Water Plan Update will continue through mid June.

If you were unable to attend the meeting, but would still like to voice your opinion, the four questions are posted on the Interstate Stream Commission website at www.ose.state.nm.us on the front page under "hot topics." You can also contact Maureen Haney at 505-764-3864 for more information.

The Office of the State Engineer is charged with administering the state's water resources. The State Engineer has the responsibility to allocate, measure, administer, and oversee the 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.

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 water planning.

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