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Pecos Settlement Parties Announce Signing of Pecos Settlement Implementation

(CARLSBAD, New Mexico) – The four parties to the Pecos Settlement gathered at a news conference today to announce that they have jointly declared the Settlement should be implemented. Implementation of the Settlement is a huge step forward for water management in the Pecos River Basin.

Officials in attendance included: Governor Bill Richardson, State Engineer John D'Antonio, Interstate Stream Commission Director Estevan López, Interstate Stream Commissioners, the Carlsbad Irrigation District, the Pecos Valley Artesian Conservancy District and the US Bureau of Reclamation.

Recently, the 5th Judicial District Court, Pecos Settlement Parties jointly declared: "The Conditions Precedent required for implementation of the Settlement Agreement have been sufficiently satisfied such that the Settlement Parties agree that the settlement terms should now be implemented." Settlement implementation provides numerous benefits to the Carlsbad Irrigation District, The Pecos Valley Artesian Conservancy District and the State of New Mexico as a whole.

"New Mexico faced a water crisis of statewide proportions -- and New Mexico solved it with a unified solution," said Governor Bill Richardson. "A big cloud has been removed from the future of the Pecos Valley in New Mexico."

"The implementation of the Pecos Settlement is a significant milestone on our way to a sustainable water future in the Pecos River in New Mexico," said State Engineer John D'Antonio. "Additionally, the settlement will help the state comply with its obligations under the Pecos River Compact as decreed by the United States Supreme Court in 1988."

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"CID is extremely pleased that the various parties involved in the Settlement Agreement have reached a final accord stabilizing the availability of Pecos River water throughout the basin," said President of Carlsbad Irrigation District Board of Directors Charles Jurva.

"The Pecos Valley Artesian Conservancy District looks forward to full implementation of the Settlement Agreement," said Pecos Valley Artesian Conservancy District Chairman of the Board Bill Netherlin. "We see the implementation as having a stabilizing affect on South Eastern New Mexico's economy by greatly reducing the risk of priority calls. All water users, including agriculture, municipal, oil and gas and mining interests will see benefits from the Settlement Agreement for years to come."

The Pecos Settlement was signed in 2003. The four parties have since been working toward meeting the conditions set forth in the agreement. A copy of the Pecos Settlement is available on the Office of the State Engineer website at: www.ose.state.nm.us/isc_pecos_carlsbad_project.html.

The Pecos Settlement and its implementation would not have been possible except for the support of Governor Bill Richardson and the New Mexico State Legislature. The cooperation of the area legislators, the settlement parties and numerous contractors has been crucial.

The New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission had certain obligations to fulfill before the settlement could be implemented. The Commission had to acquire a minimum of 4500 water right acres in the Carlsbad Irrigation District, and a minimum of 7,500 acres in the Roswell Artesian Basin. The Commission also had to develop a minimum of 15,750 acre-feet per year of augmentation pumping capacity to supplement Pecos River flows. As of July 2009 the Interstate Stream Commission had acquired 4,498 of water-right acres in Carlsbad Irrigation District and 7,247 of water-right acres in the Roswell Artesian Basin. The Commission is now in negotiations to acquire the remaining water right acreage to meet Settlement minimums. Finally, the Interstate Stream Commission has fully developed the Settlement-prescribed 15,750 acre-feet per year of augmentation pumping capacity.

Augmentation pumping sites have been developed at three locations, including the primary site in the Seven Rivers area. The Seven Rivers well field has 10 artesian wells that were drilled and tested during the period of March 2005 to June 2006. These wells and an additional three private wells can produce about 20,000 gallons of water per minute and that water is delivered through a 12-mile pipeline network directly to Brantley Reservoir.

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