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Bill to Create a Regional Water Utility Authority In Eastern New Mexico Awaits the Governor's Signature

(SANTA FE, New Mexico) – A bill that creates a regional water utility district in eastern New Mexico has passed through both the New Mexico House and Senate and is now on its way to the Governor's desk waiting to be signed into law.

House Bill 15, sponsored by Representative Anna Crook (R-Clovis), passed through the Senate yesterday by a unanimous vote of 35 to 0 after clearing the House of Representatives on February 4.

The proposed water utility district within the boundaries of Curry and Roosevelt counties would benefit Curry County, the cities of Clovis, Portales, and Texico, the towns of Melrose and Elida, and the Village of Grady. The Authority would be a political subdivision of the State of New Mexico and have the power of eminent domain as well as the ability to establish rates and issue revenue bonds.

A seven-member board would be created to administer the Authority and powers and duties of the board would be established. Bonds authorized by the board are exempt from all state taxation, and revenue bonds may be issued by a supermajority of five members of the board.

"This is a good bill that proposes to help eastern New Mexico communities find a long-term solution to a sustainable source of water," said State Engineer John D'Antonio. "Currently this area relies on the Ogallala Aquifer, which will not meet the future demand for water because of the region's diminishing groundwater supply. Eastern New Mexico communities have come up with a cooperative solution to meet their future needs that would be supplied by the renewable Ute Reservoir supply. The passage of this Act gets them a step closer to building the pipeline project that will transport water from the reservoir."

(MORE)

The board for the Authority would consist of three members from Clovis, two members from Portales, one member for Curry County, and one member – on a rotating basis – from Texico, Melrose, Elida, or Grady.

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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