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## **State Water Agency Wins Achievement Awards For Public Relations Excellence**

**(SANTA FE, New Mexico)** – The Planning and Communication Division of the Office of the State Engineer/Interstate Stream Commission received three Awards of excellence from the New Mexico Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America (NMPRSA) at the annual awards presentation last night.

In addition, the coveted **“2009 Best Public Relations Campaign of Show”** award was received for the agency’s public outreach, which was part of the extensive effort to update New Mexico’s State Water Plan. This award is given to the most outstanding public relations campaign chosen among all categories of the competition.

The **State Water Plan Campaign** also received a **First-Place Gold Cumbre Award**. The agency held 22 public meetings around the state from April to June 2009 as part of the state water plan update public outreach effort. The first State Water Plan was published in 2003, and state statute requires a review of the plan every five years and updates according to need. Since 2003, a variety of factors have made updating the plan necessary including New Mexico’s population hitting the 2-million mark and the related increasing demand for water, heightened awareness and concern about drought and climate variability, new water related court decisions, and the need for increased water 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 prioritization of water programs and projects. More than 750 participants from 95 communities attended the public meetings.

In addition, the agency won a **Second-Place Silver Cumbre Award** for the **“Pecos Settlement Celebration.”** This event celebrated the Interstate Stream Commission having reached a milestone in the implementation of the Pecos River Settlement Agreement when all parties to the Settlement agreed that conditions for Settlement implementation were met. The Settlement will help ensure long-term compliance with the Pecos River Compact, provides additional water supplies to senior water right holders along the river, and protects junior groundwater rights from the threat of a priority call. A media event coupled with a celebration dinner for involved parties was held in Carlsbad to mark the occasion in September of 2009.

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Also, the agency won a **Second-Place Silver Cumbre Award** for the **“Los Lunas Silvery Minnow Refugium Grand Opening Event.”** The event celebrated a unique facility built by the Interstate Stream Commission to keep the endangered Rio Grande Silvery Minnow alive and thriving. The May 2009 event drew media attention to the efforts of the Interstate Stream Commission and the Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program to save the minnow. A Native American ground blessing ceremony and involvement of school children from Los Lunas and the Pueblo of San Felipe attracted more interest than a typical ribbon cutting for a new facility.

“These awards are significant because they reflect our agency’s creativity and success in solving water problems. The events that led to the awards reflect our efforts to clearly communicate our priorities and initiatives to the public,” said State Engineer John D’Antonio. “Effective communication with the public about our initiatives and processes to meet our goals and objectives always has been one of my top priorities.”

The Cumbre Awards is an annual competition in the State of New Mexico, which recognizes public relations professionals and their respective organizations for their excellence in producing communication campaigns and tactics. The Cumbre Campaign Awards recognize outstanding achievement in a comprehensive public relations campaign for writing, design production, and management of materials consisting of more than one communication tool, program or component. The campaign must also include planning and evaluation activities.

*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.*

*The Interstate Stream Commission is charged with separate duties including the protection, conservation, development and investigation of New Mexico’s water, 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.*