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New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission Discontinues Action on Water Agreement with Intel

(SANTA FE, New Mexico) – The New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission and Intel Corporation have jointly decided to discontinue activities toward a water agreement, proposed in the summer of 2010, which would have provided water and funds to the Commission’s Strategic Water Reserve as well as to aid the federal government and water users in addressing Endangered Species Act issues in the middle valley.

“I still believe this proposed agreement between the Interstate Stream Commission and Intel would have been an excellent public-private partnership that would have greatly benefited our community while protecting senior water users and our environment. However, it was not prudent to pursue the agreement when those who would directly benefit from it were expressing opposition to it,” said Interstate Stream Commission Director Estevan Lopez.

Under the proposed agreement the Interstate Stream Commission would have received water rights and funds from Intel in exchange for assuming part of Intel’s obligation to offset Rio Grande depletion impacts that result from Intel’s ground water pumping. The Interstate Stream Commission would have met that obligation using water that it has available to it, including water rights Intel will convey to them, and other sources available to the Interstate Stream Commission.

“For more than four years, Intel and the ISC staff worked diligently together to complete an innovative draft agreement,” said John Painter, Intel New Mexico’s Corporate Services Site Manager. “Although we will not pursue this agreement, we remain committed to reduce our environmental footprint through our aggressive ongoing water conservation program focused on improvements in the design and operation of our manufacturing facility.”

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The proposed agreement would have cut down transfer of water rights out of agriculture while providing water and money to help with protection and insulation from potential endangered species act threats to water users. The state would have received about 741 acre-feet of senior water rights that would ultimately be placed in the Strategic Water Reserve for ecological projects aimed at solving endangered species issues in the Middle Rio Grande. In addition, Intel also would have provided \$1 million a year for 10 years, adjusted for inflation, for the Strategic Water Reserve and to provide non-federal cost share to the Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program, including dealing with endangered species issues on the Middle Rio Grande.

The Interstate Stream Commission is charged with doing any and all things necessary to protect, conserve and develop the waters of the state including managing New Mexico's rights and obligations under eight interstate stream compacts and planning for future water uses.

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