



## **2. Public Participation**

Public participation has been an important component of the Northeast Region planning effort. This section describes the public participation process used in developing the regional water plan and provides the public welfare statement that was developed as part of the public process.

### **2.1 Public Involvement in the Planning Process**

Water planning efforts in the region have been overseen by a steering committee that has representation from:

- County governments
- Municipalities
- Community water systems
- Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- Arch Hurley Conservancy District
- State and federal agricultural agency representatives
- Several representatives from the public, including agricultural and watershed interests

The Northeast New Mexico Regional Water Planning Steering Committee has overseen all aspects of the regional water planning process and has been active in the development of this document. A total of nine steering committee meetings have been held approximately quarterly since this phase of water planning was initiated in the fall of 2004. All steering committee meetings have been advertised and open to the public, and members of the public who attended any of the meetings were added to the mailing list so that they would receive advance notice of all future water meetings.

In addition to the steering committee meetings, public meetings were held throughout the region (in Clovis, Portales, Tucumcari, Logan, Clayton, and Mosquero) to present water planning information and to solicit input on strategies. All public meetings have been advertised. A



media contact list, example meeting notices, and minutes for each of the meetings are provided in Appendix B.

Public involvement in the regional water planning process is further facilitated by providing access to the draft water plan in public locations, including libraries and/or government offices in each county and on the internet (at [www.dbstephens.com](http://www.dbstephens.com)). Fact sheets on the regional water planning process, population projections, water supply, water demand, legal issues, water budgets, and selected strategies were also prepared and distributed at public meetings and steering committee meetings and are available on the DBS&A web site.

## **2.2 Public Welfare**

In 1987, the New Mexico legislature amended a number of water statutes to give the State Engineer the authority to deny an application for a new water right or a water right transfer if it is contrary to conservation of water or detrimental to the public welfare of the State. The legislature did not define public welfare, nor have the OSE or the ISC. Nonetheless, adoption of a public welfare statement by a region could provide guidance to the OSE when processing water rights applications. Should a proposed water right application appear to be contrary to a regionally defined public welfare criterion, the OSE could potentially rely on this criterion to deny or place a condition on the application. Regional public welfare statements are thus potential mechanisms for protecting regional values.

The steering committee has adopted the following public welfare statement:

The Northeast New Mexico Regional Water Planning Steering Committee has drafted the following statement defining public welfare in Northeast New Mexico, based on input from several steering committee and public meetings.

Public welfare in Union, Harding, Quay, Curry, and Roosevelt Counties can be defined by the regional vision, goals, and strategies for protecting water resources, as expressed by our Regional Water Plan and other local ordinances, regulations, and policies. In regards to public welfare, water managers should consider the impact of water projects and policies on existing water uses and the local economy, while protecting the rights of senior water rights holders.



The steering committee identified the following specific public welfare values that are important to the region:

- Working together to manage surface water and groundwater resources (individual citizens, community organizations, local governments, regional entities, state and federal agencies)
- Encouraging rural economic development by providing sufficient water supply and discouraging water waste
- Planning for sustainability and growth
- Protecting water rights and ensuring that all current and anticipated future needs are satisfied prior to considering any out of state or out of planning region water transfers
- Evaluating the impacts of water projects and policies on existing water users and the local economy
- Adjudicating all water rights and preventing abuse of eminent domain
- Protecting water quality
- Managing watersheds for agricultural sustainability and rangeland health

## **2.3 Vision and Goals**

Early in the planning process, the Steering Committee developed a vision for the regional water planning process. The vision and goals were developed by starting with the vision and goals established by the 2000 Regional Water Plan (EPCOG, 2000). The Steering Committee, with input from other stakeholders, then made minor adjustments, resulting in the following vision:

To promote conservation and beneficial use of all available surface and groundwater within the region to meet current demands and the projected needs of future generations.

The 2000 goals (EPCOG, 2000) were also slightly adjusted to the following:

- Goal A Protect all existing water rights.



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- Goal B Ensure that all current and anticipated future needs within the region are satisfied prior to considering any outside transfers of water.
- Goal C Encourage individual citizens, community organizations, local governments, and regional entities to work together with state and federal agencies to manage water resources.
- Goal D Promote the development and implementation of local water security plans by municipalities, counties, commercial and industrial enterprises, and public utilities to conserve, protect and extend available water supplies.
- Goal E Support adequate funding and development of the programs and authorities of special districts (for example, water and sanitation districts, the Ute Water Commission, conservancy districts, and not-for-profit organizations).
- Goal F Encourage citizen awareness, education, participation, and support about water issues.
- Goal G Continue promotion of quality development and protection of land and water resources in and around Ute Reservoir.
- Goal H Where feasible, assure the availability for future generations of a dependable water supply source other than groundwater aquifers.
- Goal I Ensure sufficient funding for financing necessary infrastructure improvements.
- Goal J Ensure that sufficient technical assistance and funding is available to farmers to make infrastructure improvements.
- Goal K Ensure that sufficient quality and quantity of water is supplied to unincorporated rural areas.



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- Goal L Promote serious efforts to conserve and re-use groundwater and surface water.
- Goal M Increase public support and acceptance of voluntary water conservation as an essential element for the continued social and economic growth of the region.
- Goal N Preserve and enhance water quality in the region.

These goals were used to help the steering committee prioritize strategies for meeting future water demand. These strategies, discussed in Section 8, consist of actions that the region plans to pursue to ensure that the goals are realized. Additional discussion of the public process used to define the strategies is provided in Section 8.1.