



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**State Engineer Issues Temporary Order to Protect Groundwater  
in Southeast New Mexico**

**Santa Fe, NM** –State Engineer John D’Antonio Jr., P.E., signed a temporary order to protect groundwater resources in portions of three declared basins in Southeastern New Mexico. The order temporarily closes portions of the Lea, Capitan, and Carlsbad Underground Water Basins to applications for permits for new appropriations of groundwater under Section 72-12-3 of the New Mexico water code. The State Engineer took this action upon a recommendation from the OSE’s Hydrology Bureau that portions of these basins be temporarily closed to allow the Bureau to assess impacts of pending applications. The order will also allow the Bureau to collect and review data and develop a hydrologic model to better evaluate the effects of future applications.

While this order bars new appropriations under NMSA 72-12-3, it does not affect the permitting of new domestic wells under NMSA 72-12-1.1 or new livestock wells under NMSA 72-12-1.2, and does not bar the permitting of changes to or transfers of existing water rights. The order also does not restrict new appropriations of groundwater from undeclared non-potable deep aquifers as described under Sections 72-12-25 through 72-12-28. The closure order will remain in effect for an indefinite period, until superseded by further order.

“We need to better understand the degree of hydraulic connection between the aquifer formations within these underground water basins given the large amount of pending applications for new appropriations and our concern to protect exiting water right owners and their access to a sustainable water supply,” said State Engineer D’Antonio.

“We are pleased to see the State Engineer take this pause and pragmatic approach to evaluate growing water rights demand, existing groundwater supply, and rates of decline in each of the affected aquifers and our groundwater basin. This temporary closure adds to our confidence that the Office of the State Engineer continues to be thoughtfully engaged in the oversight and stewardship of the stressed water resources in New Mexico,” said Mayor Stephen Aldridge, City of Jal.

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*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 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 investigating, conserving and protecting the waters of the State, in addition to water planning.*