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## **Protecting New Mexico's Water in the Lower Rio Grande**

**(LAS CRUCES, New Mexico)** – While pending litigation with Texas over water availability in the Lower Rio Grande works its way through the courts, there is no question that New Mexicans need to work together to maintain productive aquifers in the Mesilla and Rincon Valleys, especially in light of low reservoir levels and lingering drought.

“The Interstate Stream Commission has implemented a Groundwater Conservation Pilot Program to help our state and water right owners to better understand the physical impacts of reduced groundwater pumping. This Program is essential for the future management of the aquifers in the Lower Rio Grande at sustainable levels,” said New Mexico State Engineer John R. D’Antonio.

The Office of the State Engineer (NMOSE) and the Interstate Stream Commission (NMISC) are being proactive trying to resolve these critical water issues, so New Mexico farmers have an adequate supply of water in future years.

To this end, the State of New Mexico, representatives from the agricultural community, municipal water users, the Public Service Company of New Mexico and New Mexico State University are pursuing a groundwater conservation effort where volunteer participants are compensated for direct groundwater conservation by not pumping or diverting groundwater.

The NMISC, in conjunction with the Office of the State Engineer’s Las Cruces District IV Regional Office, will hold a series of online public outreach meetings to inform Lower Rio Grande area farmers about how to apply for grants that will compensate them for electively choosing to fallow lands and not pump groundwater.

**These session dates and times are:**

**Thursday, July 29, 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.**

**Tuesday, August 3, 5:30-7:00 p.m.**

**Thursday, August 5, 1:00-2:30 p.m.**

**(MORE)**

A website in support is at <https://www.ose.state.nm.us/LRGPilot/index.php>  
Similar sessions were held in the fall of 2020, which resulted in 24 grant applications and a total of 1,272 acres.

In addition to this program, New Mexico will strive to assist in the development of a local governance structure that incorporates the diverse nature of water users in the Lower Rio Grande. The Office of the State Engineer and Interstate Stream Commission also wants to begin to evaluate the potential for direct groundwater recharge.

*The Office of the State Engineer is charged with the 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.*

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