

New Mexico  
Office of the State Engineer  
Lower Rio Grande  
Water Master District  
2007 Report

January 18, 2008

District IV  
Las Cruces, New Mexico

## INTRODUCTION

The Lower Rio Grande Water Master District was created by order of the State Engineer signed on December 3, 2004. The LRG Water Master District encompasses the Hot Springs, Las Animas Creek and Lower Rio Grande administrative groundwater basins. The District begins in the north near the town of T or C and runs south to the border of Texas and Mexico.

The State Engineer imposed metering requirements on wells in the LRG Water Master District by order signed on December 3, 2004. The metering order requires that all wells in the LRG Water Master District be metered by March 1, 2006, except for those wells that serve one household or livestock. The metering order does not make mention or distinction for wells that are declared for single household/livestock or those that are permitted under NMSA 72-12-1. The Water Master retains the ability to meter any wells that are suspected of having water diverted for a purpose other than those listed as being exempt. The Water Master retains the ability to determine that a well need not be metered due to any reason deemed acceptable after field investigation of well. The primary purpose for the creation of the Water Master position is to administer the proper metering of groundwater withdrawal within the Water Master District.

The Water Master is working toward having a unified database in which a person may obtain several types of useful information. The database is not complete and as of this date, the data is housed within several different data structures. The different data structures are the WATERS database, the WRATS database, the Water Master spreadsheet and there is an access database currently being developed that will encompass the spreadsheet and allow the Water Master to perform several tasks that the WATERS database is not equipped to perform. The WRATS database is only queried when necessary through correct request procedures.

The Water Master and staff have been conducting field investigations throughout the calendar year within the entire Water Master District. Most field investigations have been a result of meter installations. Other investigations have been conducted as a result of enforcement actions, proof of completion of well or reports that an investigation was necessary.

At the middle of the 2007 irrigation season staff from this office have searched throughout the LRG Basin for wells that are not metered and have found few working wells that are not equipped with a meter. Most of the wells that were not equipped with a meter were listed under the loan program and not listed as non-compliant.

Many of the wells in the district are domestic wells and are not covered under the metering order. It has been found that a significant number of tracts of land that are less than 2 acres are supplementing surface water with domestic wells. There will be a heavy push to learn who the owners of these wells are and they will be advised that they may be required to install meters on their wells. Many of the small tracts in question are watering multiple pecan trees with their domestic wells.

Total LRG wells as per WRATS	11237
LRG wells metered as per inspection	1883
LRG wells inoperable for some reason	453
Percent in compliance for the LRG	86.2
Number of wells in spreadsheet that do not have LRG #	829
Number of wells sent to ALU for compliance issues	80
Number of well owners that have gone to injunction from compliance orders	0

Number of wells in EBID loan program	353
Number of wells in loan program for totalizing meter only	unknown
Number of wells withdrawn from loan program	18
Number of wells metered under loan program	unknown

Number of well numbers in the HS Basin as per WATERS	1191
Number of wells metered in the HS Basin	33
Number of wells in the LA Basin as per WATERS.	382
Number of wells metered in the LA Basin	8

Several situations have evolved over the last year including the following:

Most of the work in the district has focused in the LRG Basin except for educational meetings that have occurred all over the district. In 2007 the Water Master was split in two at the east west line between Township 20 South and Township 21 South. At about the same time a second Water Master was hired to focus on work in the northern part of the District including the Hot Springs and Las Animas Creek Basins.

The Water Master is no longer looking at permit conditions for wells since all wells must be metered under metering order except for single household or livestock wells.

The Elephant Butte Irrigation District has indicated that all wells on the loan list should be in compliance by the 2008 irrigation season thus there will be no further grace period for those wells covered under the loan list.

One formal meter variance requests was granted in the District.

The variance was for PNM for a well that is only turned on for a limited time and diverts less than a quarter acre-foot for cleaning or flushing purposes. No other formal variance requests have been granted, as there is no recognizable reason to not meter a well that is covered by the meter order.

The meter vendor list has been updated to help eliminate confusion when a well owner is researching companies that sell and/or install meters. The vendor list is updated whenever a new company is found that can supply meters or to help solve meter installation problems. The Netafim USU meter company was added to the meter list because of their claim to have low cost meters that would work with the hot mineral water.

The Water Master staff has taken a specific look at many of the big water users in the district such as the City of Las Cruces, the wells belonging to Stahman Farms and the Salopek family and other large groups. Many well owners that have multiple wells are not aware of the change in the well number policy and this has resulted in confusion with the public as the correct number for their wells especially with CLW permits. The Water Master Staff has been putting well number labels on well meters to alleviate confusion and has been working closely with multiple well owners so that meter readings are associated with the correct well.

The WATERS staff has been apprised of the limitations encountered with the database so that eventually the WATERS database will be programmed to accommodate the meter requirements of the district and the state as a whole.

The Water Master staff has taken steps to help remind the public of plugging requirements on permits including notifying well owners verbally or by letter that permit conditions require that a replaced well be plugged.

The Water Master has begun enforcement against water right owners that exceed permitted quantities of water.

The first action was to order a well for the City of Las Cruces be shut down for exceeding permit quantities and that the over-diversion be repaid during calendar year 2008.

The second action was to require the owner of well LRG-5974, James Crosswhite to file paperwork to make his water usage legal, including CLW and to meter all wells used.

The third action was to have Dona Ana County fix a leaking water pipe on well LRG-3440-S, to make sure there was no over-diversions and to report meter readings in a timely manner.

EBID did not begin installing meters on wells under the loan program until the end of the 2007 irrigation season.

EBID staff have stated they will perform work under the loan program according to their district priorities. During the last conversation with the EBID after January 1, 2008, we requested weekly reports of activity from them.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sheldon Dorman".

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Sheldon Dorman  
Lower Rio Grande Water Master