



Water Wise Community Brief



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Drought Conditions Result in Water Management Guidelines for the Rio Gallinas Stream System

About 50 people representing the City of Las Vegas, acequia parciantes, Storrie Water Project Users, and others attended a public meeting in Las Vegas, New Mexico on April 26 to give their comments on the proposed guidelines for water management for the Rio Gallinas Stream System.

"Since drought conditions are expected to continue, water administration to maximize water supply and prevent waste is critical in this area," said State Engineer John D'Antonio. "If priority administration becomes necessary, we wanted to make sure we have public input into these proposed guidelines."

The proposed guidelines provide for water administration by a Water Master appointed by the State Engineer for the Rio Gallinas, a tributary of the Pecos River, in San Miguel County.

The Water Master rules are interim



State Engineer John D'Antonio discusses the agency's water management plan for the Rio Gallinas Stream System.



Paul Saavedra of the Water Rights Division explains the Rio Gallinas Stream System Guidelines.

until final adjudication of all water rights within the stream system are completed.

"The proposed guidelines contemplate that initial efforts at administration will be refined and improved over time with cooperation among water users and the Water Master recently hired for the area," said Water Rights Division Director Paul Saavedra.

The proposed guidelines for the Rio Gallinas Stream System can be reviewed by downloading them from the Office of the State Engineer's website at: www.ose.state.nm.us

Aamodt Case Proposed Settlement Agreement Presented at Public Meeting

A public meeting regarding a proposed settlement agreement for the Aamodt water rights case – one of the longest water rights cases on the books in New Mexico – was held on April 18.

State Engineer John D'Antonio, Settlement Judge Michael Nelson, and attorneys representing non-Pueblo water users attended the meeting.

An agreement between parties of the Aamodt Case, filed in 1966 naming 2,500 defendants, would resolve the claims of the Pueblos of Nambe, Pojoaque, Tesuque, and San Ildefonso, as well as non-Pueblo



Local residents at the gym in Jacona, New Mexico gather for a public meeting on the proposed Aamodt Case settlement.

water users including Santa Fe County, for the use of waters of the Rio Pojoaque in northcentral New Mexico.

The proposed settlement agreement is intended to adjudicate the four Pueblos' water rights and provide



State Engineer John D'Antonio answers questions about the proposed settlement.

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What is Active Water Resource Management?

Priority administration refers to the temporary curtailment of junior water rights in times of shortage so that senior water rights can be served by the available water supply. Having senior water rights means the first water users to "put the water to beneficial use" in our state. Under the state constitution, the senior water rights have priority.

In New Mexico, the senior water right holders typically include Native Americans, acequias, and agricultural water users. Junior water right holders typically include municipal, industrial, residential, and recreational water users.

All water users need to be actively involved in the problem-solving process during periods of shortages and to identify other options in response to drought. A "priority call" — the mechanism for priority administration — should be a measure of last resort.

Voluntary agreements among water users such as — shortage sharing, rotation, water banking, or other forms of voluntary agreements — are encouraged by the State Engineer. Full priority administration currently is done only on the Cimarron River and on Costilla Creek in northeastern New Mexico. Priority administration is the tool for water rights administration within the state in times of shortage.

A "Water Master" hired by the State Engineer assures that water is fairly distributed in accordance with available water supply and the priority dates of existing water rights.

The State Engineer has chosen four basins in New Mexico in the coming months for Active Water Resource Management, or AWRM: San Juan River, Rio Gallinas, Rio Pojoaque, and the Rio Chama Stream Systems.

The State Engineer has organized teams to implement AWRM in the areas of critical concern across the state. To implement AWRM, the State Engineer will:

- Designate basin managers
- Develop and implement schedules for creating Water Master guidelines
- Establish a realistic budget of metering costs, guidelines, and field implementation and enforcement
- Develop a plan for communication with the public
- Hire a Water Master for each area of critical concern
- Provide training for Water Masters and other personnel
- Administer water in area of critical concern
- Set feasible short-term and long-term objectives

"Our hope is that there will be a break in the drought," said State Engineer John D'Anonio. "However, we are committed to taking proactive steps toward the management of all New Mexico rivers. Steps taken this year to develop AWRM into a state-wide program will help provide services for active administration that will apply to future drought cycles as well as during wet cycles in our state." 💧

Water Master Profile: Rio Gallinas



Max Chavez was hired in April as the Water Master for the Rio Gallinas.

As a Water Master in the region, Chavez will actively manage and administer the diversions and use of water from the Rio Gallinas on a day-to-day basis.

Prior to accepting the Water Master position, Chavez was an engineer in the Office of the State Engineer's Litigation and Adjudication Program.

Before that, he was a project manager in the agency's Adjudication Bureau in Las Cruces from 1996 to 2001 and a unit supervisor for the agency's Hydrographic Survey Bureau in Santa Fe from 1990 to 1996. From 1979 to 1985, Chavez held the position of a Water Master for the Costilla Creek from New Mexico to Colorado.

Prior to joining the agency, Chavez worked for the United States Geological Survey as a hydrologic technician from 1968 to 1979.

In 1971, he received a bachelor of arts degree from Highlands University in Las Vegas, New Mexico.

In his spare time, Chavez enjoys training colts and roping on his ranch. 💧



Waterwise Guide to Planting Trees

Managing tree care with the state's semi-arid drought conditions is the subject of the Office of the State Engineer's

recent publication, *A Waterwise Guide to Trees*.

The brochure, developed by the agency's Water Use and Conservation Bureau, begins with basic information about the beauty and benefits of trees and includes a step-by-

step guide on how to properly plant a tree. The heart of the brochure shows a diagram of a mature tree and offers advice about how to best provide irrigation to keep a tree healthy.

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Water Master Profile: San Juan Basin



Shawn Williams began his position as the Water Master for the San Juan Basin in May.

Williams will actively work in cooperation with local ditch organizations, municipalities, industries, and other entities that divert surface and groundwater to ensure that the water is diverted and distributed in accordance with applicable court decrees, permits, licenses, and approved agreements.

Before this position, Williams was employed by the City of Farmington's Water Resource Division as a water resource specialist. Before that, he worked from 2002 to 2003, as a senior water resource specialist for the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission's Colorado River Basin. From 2000 to 2002, he worked as a water resource specialist for the Office of the State Engineer in the Water Rights Division.

In 1999, Williams received a bachelor of science degree in environmental science with an emphasis in hydrology and geology from New Mexico Tech in Socorro.

Williams' hobbies include kayaking, mountain biking, hiking, and snowboarding. He is also active in the San Juan Watershed Group. 💧

What is a "Water Master?"

Water Masters actively administer the distribution of water from stream systems on a daily basis during irrigation season.

The State Engineer has the authority to create special water districts and appoint Water Masters for specified stream systems as the State Engineer determines is necessary for the administration of water rights.

Why are "Water Masters" necessary?

Water Masters serve an important function for the Office of the State Engineer because they are in the field to ensure that water is distributed to users equitably, if not by priority.

How are "Water Masters" funded?

If not funded directly by the legislature, state law provides a means for funding of Water Masters. The law gives the State Engineer the authority to provide a budget for Water Masters to the county or counties involved. The counties then add a tax to those on tax rolls to provide the funds necessary to pay for a Water Master and the costs related to his/her administration of water rights.



Cimarron River



Rio Chama



Pecos River



Rio Costilla

(Water Wise Guide -- continued from page 2)

Common questions about trees are answered in the brochure, and a short list of waterwise trees for New Mexico's three basic climate zones (northern/mountain, central, and southern) are provided.

The handy brochure ends with

interesting "Fast Facts About Watering Trees," and lists website sources for additional information about trees and tree care.

The New Mexico Office of the State Engineer offers other free water conservation publications.

Copies of conservation brochures are available by calling the Office of the State Engineer's Water Conservation Program toll-free at 1-800-WATER-NM or by sending an e-mail to: waternm@ose.state.nm.us. 💧

for the development of a regional water system to serve all parties in the Aamodt adjudication. For centuries, Pueblo and non-Pueblo water users have used the stream flows of the Rios Nambe, Pojoaque, and Tesuque for irrigation.

Benefits of the settlement for non-Pueblo water users include the following:

- 1) Years of uncertainty with respect to Rios Nambe, Pojoaque, and Tesuque water rights will now be settled. Since the Pueblos' water rights will be quantified, non-Pueblo water users can better plan their future.
- 2) Imported water will decrease pressures on the existing aquifer.
- 3) Economic development among non-Pueblo water users can proceed with more certainty.
- 4) Non-Pueblo water users are free from the expense of state lawsuits associated with settling water rights claims.

The proposed settlement agreement is also intended to provide a regional water supply to the Pueblos of Nambe, Pojoaque, Tesuque, and San Ildefonso in exchange for relinquishing claims to water that could otherwise potentially displace existing non-Pueblo water users in the Rio Pojoaque Basin. The Pueblos will have a secure water supply well into the 21st Century.

"This agreement benefits the State of New Mexico in that water rights claims that have been languishing in court for decades will now be settled ending the financial drain on the state personnel and legal resources," said State Engineer John D'Antonio. "We're trying to protect the interests of everyone involved when we settle these issues."

In addition, the proposed agreement will help the County of Santa Fe supply water to its residents. At times, heated discussions

ensued between non-Pueblo water users and members of the panel. Audience members were assured by members of the panel that signing on to the agreement would be a voluntary decision.

The proposed cost of the Aamodt settlement, if approved, would be about \$280 million. Most of the money would come from the federal government to fund construction of the regional water system. People who agree to the settlement and transfer their permit to the County Water Utility will be charged for services provided, not water. Under the agreement, the state proposes to establish a fund to cover the cost of connection to the water utility, so that there will be no cost to individual owners. 💧

**Water Wise
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Brief**



Make every drop count!

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