



Water Wise Community Brief

Make every drop count!



Fall/Winter 2006

Volume IV, Issue 1

a publication of the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer and Interstate Stream Commission

Governor Bill Richardson Announces Far-Reaching "Year of Water" Agenda

Governor Bill Richardson unveiled his 2007 legislative agenda for the "Year of Water" at a news conference on October 11th along a recently restored stretch of the Santa Fe River, south of the airport. This agenda is designed to ensure that New Mexico remains well equipped to meet future water needs.

"The Year of Water isn't a one-time project. It is an opportunity to make tremendous progress toward a sustainable water future for New Mexico," said Governor Richardson. "Our economy, our citizens and the health of our rivers and streams depend on a continued supply of good, clean water."

Governor Richardson's Year of Water legislative agenda includes:

- \$25 million to create a permanent revenue source through the Water Trust Fund to help pay for major infrastructure water systems that develop wet water projects for use of New Mexico's water



Governor Bill Richardson, State Engineer John D'Antonio, and Lieutenant Governor Diane Denish at the "Year of Water" press conference

by New Mexicans;

- \$15.3 million to extend water pipes among eight eastern Navajo Nation communities and extend the water system in an area where about 40 percent of residents lack running water;
- \$12 million for a down payment on settlement of three Indian water rights settlements in the Pojoaque Valley, at Taos, and in the San Juan Basin. The amount represents a small percentage of the total estimated funds needed for the three settlements, but state officials

hope the commitment will help secure federal funds;

- \$10 million to create a statewide leak detection and repair program;
- \$7.5 million for projects to restore river ecosystems;
- \$5 million for the long-planned Ute pipeline to provide water to communities in Curry and Roosevelt counties;
- \$2.2 million to assess and recommend development of the aquifer in the Salt Basin, which lies beneath Otero Mesa in southern New Mexico;
- \$1 million for purchase of conservation easements to help farmers protect their land and water;
- \$500,000 for technical assistance to acequias for repairing ditches and diversion dams

"These infrastructure, agriculture, ecological and conservation projects are vital to helping a growing state protect its most precious resource," said Governor Richardson. "These are the major initiatives I have determined to include in my Year of Water agenda." 💧

San Juan Chama Project Contracts Are Signed

Long-term contracts were signed at the Roundhouse between the US Bureau of Reclamation and seven contractors to secure San Juan-Chama Project water for future generations of New Mexicans on September 19.

The San Juan-Chama project provides a total of 96,200 acre-feet of water to New Mexico annually. The contract conversions will provide long-term certainty for the delivery of 8,620 acre-feet of that

water each year to the seven contractors. The contracts do not have an expiration date.

The signing of these contracts is an effort to assure secure and long-lasting water supplies for the respective communities. The US Bureau of Reclamation converted the original limited term water service contracts for San Juan-Chama Project water into repayment contracts with no expiration dates. This change comes at the



David Coss, Estevan López and Governor Bill Richardson at the signing of the San Juan-Chama contracts in September, 2006

request of the seven San Juan-Chama Project contractors: Santa Fe, Taos, Española, Santa Fe County, Los Alamos County, Los Lunas, and Taos Ski Valley. 💧

Climate Change Report Released

Climate change will have a significant impact on the availability of, and demand for, New Mexico's water during the next century according to a recently titled, *The Impact of Climate Change on New Mexico's Water Supply and Ability to Manage Water Resources*, which was produced by the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer and principally authored by Anne Watkins.

The report warns of significant challenges to New Mexico's water managers and users in future years, with changes to both supply and demand expected. The report discusses how little modeling is available that is specific to New Mexico with respect to global warming and climate change.

Governor Bill Richardson directed the Office of the State Engineer to work with other state agencies, with local and federal agencies, and with the state's research institutions to prepare an analysis of the impact of climate change on the state's water supply.

"The State Water Plan provides a good framework for managing climate change in New Mexico," said State Engineer John D'Antonio. "Initiatives like Active Water Resource Management will help our agency put the tools in place to effectively manage our state's variable water supply associated with any climate change scenario."

Some of the key points include:

- Temperatures have already risen in New Mexico and are predicted to continue to increase.
- Changes in snowpack elevations in recent years.
- Changes in available water volumes and in the timing of water availability.
- Precipitation in the form of rain rather than snow due to increasing temperatures.
- Smaller spring runoff volumes and/or earlier runoff will impact water availability for irrigation and for ecological and species needs.
- Milder winters and hotter summers will result in longer growing seasons and increased plant and

human water use.

- We can expect increased evaporative losses from reservoirs, streamflows and soils due to hotter, drier conditions.
- We can expect an increase in extreme events, including both droughts and floods.

Download a copy from the Office of the State Engineer website at www.ose.state.nm.us/ClimateChangeImpact/completeREPORTfinal.pdf ♪

4th Annual Drought Summit Focuses on Climate Change

Climate change is in the news almost daily, with reports of increasing temperatures, changing water cycles, rising ocean levels, flooding, and extreme drought conditions, which may be linked to global warming. The theme of the 4th Annual Drought Summit, organized by Anne Watkins, was *Climate Change: What Does It Mean for New Mexico?*

The summit, held on October 18, 2006 in Albuquerque, included several speakers who are internationally known for their work on climate change. Dr. Jonathan Overpeck, one of the coordinating lead authors for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Fourth Assessment, discussed the worldwide impacts of climate change. Jacques DuBois,

Chair and CEO of Swiss Re, an international reinsurance company which is taking the lead role in encouraging the business community to become actively involved in solutions, addressed the economic consequences of climate change. Additional speakers addressed the challenges of adapting our legal and institutional water management structures and our watershed, forest management, and agricultural management practices to meet the challenges of climate change.

To download Summit presentations visit the state's website at www.nmdrought.state.nm.us/NMDSummit-2006/Summit2006-menu.html. ♪

Conservation Pamphlets in Spanish



In order to make water conservation information available to more New Mexicans, two pamphlets on conservation topics were translated

into Spanish. These pamphlets are:

- *Agua Action (Accion Para El Agua)* - A one-page guide to indoor and outdoor steps that can be taken to conserve water.
- *A Waterwise Guide to Rainwater Harvesting (Guia Para La Persona Educada de Como Cosechar Agua de Lluvia)* - A guide on how to collect rainwater and use it for your landscaping needs.

The brochures were funded in part through a Water Conservation Field Service grant provided by the Bureau of Reclamation. In addition, the translation for the guide to rainwater harvesting was provided by the Latin American Studies program at the University of New Mexico.

For a complete listing or to download conservation materials, visit the agencies website at www.ose.state.nm.us/water-info/conservation, or for more information, call 1-800-WATERNM. ♪

First Acquisition Made for Strategic Water Reserve

by Maureen Haney



Mr. and Mrs. Richard Vaughan were in attendance at the Interstate Stream Commission meeting in August.

The New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission approved the first acquisition of water rights made for the Strategic Water Reserve on August 2, 2006. The sellers were present along with Interstate Stream Commission staff as the Commission approved the sale that will provide numerous benefits to the State of New Mexico.

The first purchase was of more than 1,790 acre-feet of adjudicated groundwater rights within the Fort Sumner Groundwater Basin. Located just over two miles from the Pecos River, these water rights offer tremendous benefit to the health of the river.

An acre-foot of water is the amount of water needed to cover an acre of land with one foot of water. One acre-foot is about 325,000 gallons.

In 2005, the legislature passed a law creating the Strategic Water Reserve. This enables the state to acquire water rights through lease or purchase or donation in order to help comply with interstate stream compacts or to assist with water management efforts for the benefit of threatened or endangered species. The Commission adopted rules and regulations in December 2005 to implement the new law. In February 2006, they established priority acquisition areas throughout the state, including the Pecos, Rio Grande and Canadian Rivers.

The purchase provides many benefits to the state, including the opportunity to further the cooperation between state and federal agencies, providing a source of water to help with Endangered Species Act issues on the Pecos River without impairing the state's ability to comply with the Pecos River Compact. The purchase also counts toward the 18,000 acres of land and appurtenant water rights the state is directed to purchase under the Pecos River Settlement Agreement.

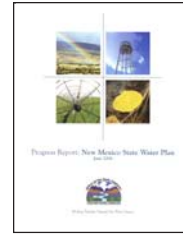
"This acquisition will be enormously valuable in the effort to protect the Pecos bluntnose shiner," said Interstate Stream Commission Director Estevan López. "This water will be available for lease to the Bureau of Reclamation for direct delivery to the river roughly five miles upstream of the area designated under the Endangered Species Act as a critical habitat for the shiner."

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Vaughan were present at the Interstate Stream Commission meeting in August when the purchase was approved. Their family has owned land in the Fort Sumner area for three generations. Richard Vaughan is a board member of the New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau, and is also an original member of the Lower Pecos River Basin Committee formed in 2001. The Committee developed the Consensus Plan that is the heart of the Pecos River Settlement Agreement. The sale closed on September 15, 2006. ♦



The Interstate Stream Commission is shown together with Mr. and Mrs. Richard Vaughan following the approval of the first acquisition of water rights made for the Strategic Water Reserve.

State Water Plan Progress Reports



Copies of the 2006 Progress Report on the New Mexico State Water Plan are now available to the general public. The 2006 Progress Report indicates significant strides have been made with implementation of New Mexico's First State Water Plan, which was completed in 2003.

"This agency has made tremendous progress on implementing the 98 strategies outlined in the State Water Plan," said State Engineer John D'Antonio. "Progress can be measured in terms of milestones, deliverables, and service provided. Much of that progress is related on our Active Water Resource Management (AWRM) initiative. Progress has also been made in adjudications and settlements, in protecting our state's waters, in updating our rules, regulations, and safety measures, in public outreach, and in wildlife, habitat, and river protection measures."

The State Water Plan provides a policy framework for the state to manage water issues and prioritize funding needs around the state. Applicable portions have become the strategic planning document for the Office of the State Engineer and Interstate Stream Commission.

The State Legislature mandated that the State Water Plan be updated every five years. Funding will be requested by the agency of the 2007 State Legislature for the Interstate Stream Commission to update the plan in 2008, as required. *The 2006 Progress Report* is an interim step in the process.

For more information or to receive a free copy, call Julie Maas at (505)765-2011 or download from www.ose.state.nm.us. ♦

Voters Will Be Asked to Decide on Whether the Water Trust Fund Becomes a Permanent Fund

In November, voters will be asked to choose whether to pass a Constitutional Amendment to make the current Water Trust Fund a constitutionally protected permanent fund.

The 2006 State Legislature set aside \$40 million to put financial strength behind this initiative. By passage of this amendment, the fund will gain the added protection of constitutional status.

The fund will consist of money appropriated, donated, or otherwise accrued to the fund. Money will be invested by the State Investment Officer as land grant permanent funds are invested, and there will be strict accountability and oversight measures as provided by the State Investment Council to ensure appropriate safety of and return on investments. Earnings from investment of the fund will be credited to

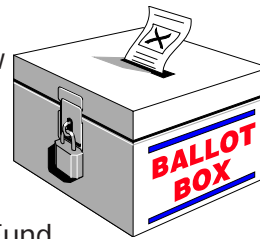
the fund.

"The fund will be used to support critically needed projects that preserve and protect New Mexico's water supply. An annual distribution will be made from the Trust Fund proceeds to the Water Project Fund and the distribution will be appropriated by the legislature for water projects consistent with a state water plan." said New Mexico State Engineer John D'Antonio, who is chairman of the Water Trust Board.

"A healthy Water Trust Fund, protected by constitutional status, is one of the most powerful legacies we could leave behind during the Year of Water," said D'Antonio. "It is important that people know that this issue will come up on the ballot in November."

Over the past five years, the

State Legislature has taken steps to secure a stable source of funding for water projects by providing an annual allocation of Severance Tax Bond proceeds to the Water Project Fund. The Water Project Fund, through the Water Trust Board, recommended more than \$21 million in funding in May of 2006 for 25 water projects across the state. Eligible projects from this fund include: large infrastructure water supply projects, restoration and management of watersheds, conservation projects, Endangered Species Act collaborative programs, as well as flood control projects. The investment return of the growing Water Trust Fund endowment will provide a further continuing revenue stream to fund these needed water projects across the state. ♠



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