

**11th Annual MRG Water Assembly
Growth, Ecology & Traditions: Not Enough Water For All !**

Saturday, June 9, 2007
Dane Smith Hall, UNM

**11TH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY PLENARY DISCUSSION
*We Can't Have It All !
What Can We Do Without?***

**1:00 We Can't Have It All !
What Can We Do Without?**

- 1:00 Introduction – Previous Public Opinion Surveys
John Brown, Water Assembly Volunteer
- 1:10 Keeping it Real - Bounding the Discussion
Frank Titus, geohydrologist
- 1:20 Viewpoint Panel: Growth, Ecology and Traditions
Growth: Michelle Henrie
Environmental: Steve Harris
Residential: Jean Witherspoon
Agricultural: Janet Jarratt
Cultural: Peter Pino
- 2:00 Plenary Discussion
Now, What Can We Do Without?
Getting Real With the Shortfall
- 2:45 Themes and Outcomes

INTRODUCTION

The Annual Assembly

The Water Assembly has always initiated dialogues on difficult subjects. After completing the Regional Water Plan -- with lots of community input -- recent annual gatherings tackled tough topics such as the Urgent Shortfall Reality (§10.1.2 of the Plan), over-allocation of our water, and adjudication as a curse or salvation. This year we will consider what it really takes to tighten our belts enough to balance the water budget.

Background

One of the Assembly's first products was the Water Budget, published in 1999. A concurrence among numerous hydrologists showed a substantial gap -- about 20% -- between renewable supply and demands in Sandoval, Bernalillo and Valencia Counties. With an extensive public process, the Budget guided the development of the alternatives contained in the Regional Water Plan, accepted by the local governments and the state of New Mexico.

While conservation actions have been taken, we still have the gap. Since 1999, we added 80,000 new residents. Plans exist for several large new communities, with estimations that population will double by 2050. While agricultural land has been paved over in places, water consumption often still continues. Multiple promises have been made to users for the same water. Not included in the Plan were the needs of the Rio Grande itself and its inhabitants. While we knew the gap was based upon an unusually wet quarter century, climate change may mean less water or a change as to when it comes. Not enough water exists to cover all of the current uses, much less new ones.

Trade-offs Needed

When asked, people say they value certain water uses over others. High on the desired list is water to keep the bosque vibrant, to keep farmers active, and for clean water to serve indoor uses. Given the water deficit, all of these desires can not be concurrently satisfied.

Saying what's preferable is easy. We need to ask the tough question: what will we agree to give up? The water resource is limited. To satisfy one use, we have to reduce or eliminate others.

From the viewpoint of each of the Assembly's diverse advocacy groups, panelists will identify tradeoffs to reduce their water consumption. They will speak to the pro's, con's, and impacts of choices to close the gap. Attendees will then try to converge on a recommended set of value-based priorities, trade-offs and consequences inherent in those selections.

The discussions by the attendees at the Tenth Annual Water Assembly included many recommendations and advisory comments. The transcription of the discussion (still to come) and then the facilitator's notes are included below.

Transcribed Flip Chart Notes (by Lucy Moore)

How can "the screws be tightened" in your interest area? (Panel)

Michelle Henrie (growth):

- Economic development means enabling young people to find a good job here and not have to leave
- Need to establish criteria for development/industry – the biggest bang for the buck, to encourage business that brings good jobs, least impact on environment, etc.
- Need to counter the trend of more people in fewer homes – minimize the footprint, retrofit older homes – every person doesn't have to have his/her own new home
- Need to give up comfort zones, move toward a culture of conservation

Steve Harris (environment):

- Danger of ecosystem collapse – need to be proactive
 - Connect ecology and economics
 - Understand that we cannot control or produce water
 - There is a public interest in water – both ecology and agriculture
 - Need to be fair to each other
 - Need demand-side solutions – difference between need and want
- What can environment "give"? – pave the river, remove phreatophytes

Jean Witherspoon (residential):

- Can build conservation into new homes (30% less water used in new home)
- Need to move toward more common space, and less personal outdoor space
- 10% of people use 27% of water
- Can use better equipment and fixtures
- Outdoor use:
 - Eliminate high water use plants
 - Harvest rain water
 - Irrigate in coordination with weather information
 - Cover pools
- Metering and rating systems for new homes
- Building code updates – eventually double plumb
- Need more federal support
- Don't put water second to energy in priority
- Considerable good news:
 - OSE meters wells
 - Water sense labeling
 - UNAR regs for fixtures
 - 30% reduction in 12 years in Alb.
 - Conservation ordinances for Bernalillo Co.
 - Public and officials are paying attention to shortage issues

Janet Jarratt (agriculture):

- Economic development means you have more disposable income
- Problem with current land use mentality – use rural resources to support urban areas, to meet compact needs, to fulfill ESA needs
- Ag. Improves water quality -- (alfalfa consumes nitrates, etc.)
- Ag. Provides habitat and recharges aquifer
- Need to have a conscience about what we're leaving behind us
- What "screws to tighten"? –
 - line and cap everything...but at what cost?
 - Parcel rotation
 - Ditch rider enforcement

Peter Pino (culture):

- Young people are staying and farming at Zia Pueblo – key is teaching everyone how to farm, young and old, farmers and non-farmers
- Farming is for the family – whole pueblo is extended family
- Digging sticks – for making the hole for the seed – handed down, *shipap* = *sipapu*, hole in mother earth – "still doing it" – still making digging sticks
- Water comes from nature – money won't save us
- We need to care for the land, so it will care for us – if you're in step with nature, you will survive
- Planting corn will teach you about life – the need to tend and nurture – the need for spiritual power and prayers, to combat the hatred in the world today
- What more can be done to conserve water?
 - At Zia, no car washes, lawns, shade trees

- Limited pasture
- Saving water is up to each of us – we have no control over the others
- Trust and respect must be earned – go and visit pueblos, learn and appreciate

Questions and Discussion:

Deep wells, desalination and reuse of water:

What is the actual cost to the consumer of desalination and water reuse? In Eldorado, water users pay \$ 29/1,000 gallons, if over 29,000 gallons. Participants discussed how much would be too much, and will growth be limited by the cost of the water.

Will the results of deep well exploration for water be public? Yes. Are environmental studies needed for deep well drilling? Wells are cased in concrete down to 3,000 feet; below that there is less control.

How can you deal with sulfate concentration in Estancia Basin? The more you are willing to pay, the more water you can extract and clean. At costs that are feasible today, 10-30% may be recoverable.

What is done with the residue from desalination and treatment of deep groundwater? Ocean water salt goes back into the sea. Inland, there may be calcium carbonate and other salts. Not thought to be a problem.

Needs of ESA in Rio Grande: In an average year, the endangered species need 50,000 additional acre feet in the river. In a drought year (Article 7 year) the number may be 90,000 to 100,000 acre feet. Low snowpacks, diminished monsoons could increase that amount.

Keeping farmers on the land: Following a presentation by Peter Pino, Zia Pueblo, group talked about how to encourage farmers to stay on the land, not sell water rights.

- Water rights need to be visible and public through OSE – should be on line. OSE planning to make sale prices of water rights available at district offices.
- Many farmers feel a stigma if sell water rights.
- Farmers need to be appreciated, recognized for staying in agriculture.
- OSE needs to enforce "no water on land" if water rights have been sold – no double dipping.

Tying water to land use:

- Need data on where water is available – developer needs to prove water exists
- Santa Fe model – developer must show no net loss
- AWRA meeting in Alb. in November 2007 on tying water to land use
- Legislature to limit municipal eminent domain
- Lesson from sheep and overgrazing
- Live within our means

Children's Water Festival: For the past four years, every fourth grader in Albuquerque has participated in the Children's Water Festival, gaining awareness and information about water issues, and being empowered to make a difference.

Themes from the day:

- Importance of transparency in making good decisions
- Groundrules for behavior, inclusion, transparency, equity, etc. are good, but not observed – need to emphasize? Or new groundrules?
- Pueblos are reaching out – we need to respond
- State must legislate water conservation for consistency throughout state
- It all starts with individuals
- There is a lot of joy and fulfillment in doing what is right – more than the pain of doing without
- Panel spoke beyond a place of self-interest – thank you
- Challenge to get people involved – too few are doing the work; need to mentor and nurture others, especially younger generation
- Pay attention to spiritual, cultural and ethical concerns and constraints