

## **Coping with the Urgent Shortfall Reality**

### **Introduction - Bob Wessely, Chair - Middle Rio Grande Water Assembly**

Seven years ago, residents of the region gathered to determine how best to plan for our water future. From that beginning, the Water Assembly was born. Over the years, and true to our roots, we have sought your advice as we moved through the planning process. At last we have a plan! We are now ready to turn to implement it.

The Urgent Shortfall Reality (USR) seemed an obvious first step to take. As defined in §9.3.2 of the Plan, it reads:

The initial scheduling of actions in the scenario may leave us with a Rio Grande Compact shortfall for ten to twenty years. Consequently, we would need to accelerate the implementation of our water planning actions. We would need to eliminate any projected short-term deficits in our compliance with the Rio Grande Compact until the plan's actions have had time to take effect. All users, municipal and rural, should share in the substantial contributions to the effort. The state and the region should work openly and cooperatively to address this issue. Specific urgent actions should be identified, studied, evaluated and implemented that are focused on increasing river flow to avoid defaulting on the Rio Grande Compact. These actions will have urban and rural economic impacts, but such impacts should be temporary. Unless there is a priority call, water right holders must be fairly compensated for any temporary loss of use rights when water is reallocated to meet compact delivery requirements.

The issue is the likely potential for the State of New Mexico to have ongoing difficulty in meeting its downstream obligations. Many within the Region feel that it is not our Region's responsibility to consider the Compact's constrictions as it is up to the State to ensure Compact compliance. Others feel that we in the Region should make or guide the most palatable approaches, rather than wait until the US Supreme Court steps in and imposes compliance.

Given that, the Water Assembly thought it would be good to have an educational session, followed by panels of local governmental and non-governmental entities discussing how we might actually manage this. For the educational session, experts covered such topics as:

- (1) The Compact
- (2) The Current Situation
- (3) The Sandia Model
- (4) Experience on the Pecos
- (5) Economic Consequences of USR
- (6) Environmental Consequences of USR
- (7) Agricultural Consequences of USR

These were briefly summarized the following day for those who missed the earlier forum. That morning's agenda, in addition to a presentation of the Regional Water Plan, included two panels addressing the USR.

Bob Wessely, Chair  
Middle Rio Grande Water Assembly