

**Community Workshop #2
Placitas Area Watershed Planning
October 23, 1999**

Another 50 Years of Water
Del Agua Institute

**Prepared for:
Del Agua Institute
Placitas, New Mexico**

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Overview

Over forty people gathered at the Presbyterian Church for the second workshop on development of a Placitas area watershed plan, which the Del Agua Institute sponsored on Saturday, October 23rd. During the morning, Peggy Johnson (New Mexico Bureau of Mines) presented the findings of an extensive, two-year study she conducted on water supply and quality, and Mary Helen Follingstad (New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission) described the "template" established by the Interstate Stream Commission to be used as a guide for regional water plans. During the afternoon, workshop participants joined one of three discussion groups focused on the following topics: 1) watershed boundaries and key institutions within the planning area; 2) water planning data and information needs; and 3) the process for developing a plan for the Placitas watershed. At the conclusion of the workshop, several participants volunteered to form a core group to develop a Placitas area watershed plan during the next year.

Watershed Boundaries and Institutional Jurisdictions

The participants in this discussion group felt that initially natural boundaries should define the water plan boundaries. (Within the area, there are three watersheds—Las Huertas, San Francisco, and Agua Sarca.) The Town of Tejon and the Diamond Head area should also be included within the boundaries.

Then the group identified the institutions that have jurisdiction in this area. They noted the following organizations and agencies:

<u>Type of Institution</u>	<u>Institution</u>
Pueblos	San Felipe, Santa Ana, Sandia pueblos
Counties	Sandoval County
Municipalities	City of Albuquerque (open space); Town of Bernalillo (extraterritorial powers) BPSS
Federal govt.	Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Forest Service
State of NM	State Lands (program), MRGCD, land grants
Acequias	NM Acequia Association, Las Acequias de Placitas, Las Huertas, Rosa de Castillo
Future	Future flood control entities
Additional interests	Individual property owners, subdivisions (about 9 water associations in Placitas), homeowner associations

These institutions could take a primary role in the development of the water plan, take a secondary or coordinating role or provide information. The following chart outlines the stake each institution has in Placitas watershed planning.

<u>Type of Institution</u>	<u>Service</u>	<u>Role in Water Planning</u>
Pueblos	Observers/participants	Reaction to proposals
Sandoval County	Local government entity	Participant Govt. approval Zoning Planning Regulation authority of "new" wells Support of water planning
Albuquerque	Owns/manages open space	Coordination/review/ Input
Town of Bernalillo	Extraterritorial zoning	Major player in implementation
Bernalillo Public Schools	Youth	Education programs Coordination
Federal Land managers	Water rights, control Stream flow (headwater) Land use control	Consultative/coordination Information providers (technical experts, i.e., GIS)
State land managers	Similar to federal land mgrs	Consultative/coordination
San Antonio de Las Huertas Land Grant	Control large portions of land	Participant
Acequias	Allocate irrigation water	Participants
Water associations	Meter residential water	Participants
Village water system	Allocate and meter village water	Participant

Since none of these institutions are likely to drive the planning process, the discussion group developed a list of institutions that are critical to the watershed planning process. The list of influential institutions is as follows: 1) Interstate Stream Commission (ISC); 2) Water Assembly, also known as the Water Planning Action Committee; 3) Middle Rio Grande Council of Governments (MRCOG); 4) individual homeowners; 5) local businesses; 6) local land owners; and 6) irrigators.

Data and Information Gaps

The discussion group that talked about planning data requirements identified the following questions related to water supply data: 1) How can we continue the data gathering effort so that our data spans a long period of time?; 2) *How much* water is in any given place?; 3) What is the water budget for the area?; 4) What level of information do we need to make good recommendations about water regulation and conservation?

On the demand side, the group noted that planning for the water needs of Placitas will require data on present consumption as well as future consumption. The data should be disaggregated by type of use:

<u>Type</u>	<u>Direct Consumption</u>	<u>Future Consumption</u>
Domestic		
Acequia/irrigation		
Business		
Riparian habitat		

The group felt that the best approach to collecting and analyzing the data is to develop a "simplistic" model. Initially, the model could be structured by overlaying information from Peggy Johnson's supply study with information on subdivisions and land use. The use of Sandoval County's geographic information system (GIS)—which contains land use data—along with the GIS Peggy Johnson used to produce the water supply study will facilitate creation of the model. The group noted that the County has mapped existing subdivision lots and existing buildings. Once the model is in place, different scenarios could be tested and the model could be refined.

Since current building permits and subdivision approvals allow 3 acre feet of water per lot, the initial model could estimate water use at 3 acre feet for each lot approved for development. To improve on the accuracy of the 3-acre foot assumption, data could be collected and added to the model by gathering information from existing metered water systems in subdivisions and from the main meter for the village water system. Additional sources of information to estimate water demand include rates of use from SEO literature on domestic water use and known rates from the village water system, and subdivision systems.

In projecting future consumption, we would need to identify growth within sub-areas, taking into account the difference between the supply of water and existing use and projected growth. Because of the "shoe box" geologic structure of the area, it will be necessary to prepare separate projections for each area (current and future development). Historic supply data can inform the estimates, although we also should develop supply data for both high and low water years. Other sources of information on growth trends and estimates include: 1) approved septic permits for new development; 2) "official" studies of growth rates, such as the COG 2050 study and research by the Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER); 3) the 2000 census; and 4) Highway Department road improvement plans.

The model should consider the following possibilities: 1) potential to pipe water from one area to another within Placitas; and 2) the effect of pumping at nearby gravel mining operations. The goal for the model should be to develop several scenarios of future community growth and estimate demand now and in the future for each of the scenarios.

Process

The Interstate Stream Commission has provided a "template" that establishes not only the recommended content for a regional water plan but also guidelines for the process to develop it. While the ISC promotes regional water planning, it has no enforcement powers—local governments are responsible for implementing plans. The ISC is responsible for connecting area plans into regional plans, which will lead to development of a state water plan. The Placitas area watershed plan, for example, will be incorporated into the Middle Rio Grande regional plan, which will eventually become part of the state plan.

Among the many players in creation of a local water plan, the residents of a community are the most basic and may be considered the "grassroots." The group noted that it is crucial to have extensive public input. The objective for public involvement is to articulate a full and fair picture of what stakeholders are saying and to make sure all the issues are heard.

It is critical for Sandoval County to support and be recruited as an active member of the planning process. Placitas residents should also work to build the political support for County Commissioners to take action. The state Engineer and Sandoval County will eventually codify the content of the water plan.

The participants pinpointed the following key elements in the process to prepare the Placitas area watershed plan:

- Formal notice of planning meetings
- Definition of what is to be accomplished
- Public participation and outreach
- Representation by every segment of the community
- Education about the process, content, and importance of the Placitas area watershed plan
- Compilation and evaluation of data
- Use of technology to expand access to our work (cable, web, etc.)
- Coordination with other planning groups
- Stakeholder insights to understand what is important (like Santa Fe's statement on "things we cannot bear to lose")
- Understanding of points of convergence and divergence
- Financial support
- Good legal advice and legal framework for the plan
- Enactment of local legislation and regulations to implement and enforce the watershed plan

The participants anticipated the following challenges to the planning process:

- During the process someone will object, "Nobody told me."
- Some people will deny the community has a water problem.
- Some groups won't want to participate. (One example is the pueblos, and part of the solution may be to meet with tribal leadership.)
- Sandoval County will be a force, and some people don't trust county government.

- It will be a challenge to deal with conflicting rights among groups and individuals.
- The analysis of water use is likely to be challenging. The water planning process for the Middle Rio Grande will provide a portion of the data.
- Changes in federal and state water law might affect the plan.
- Water standards enacted by the tribes could increase the requirements for Placitas, just as the standards set by Isleta Pueblo increased requirements for the City of Albuquerque.

Finally, the discussion group outlined the next steps that should be taken to organize for development of the water plan. The steps are as follows:

- Define the composition of the coalition—is it a citizen action group or a coalition of organizations?
- Give the core group a name, and state that it is actively listening to and serving the community.
- Create a navigational map that outlines the planning process in detail. It should include a mission statement, goals, and timelines.
- Design methods for gathering opinions from people not participating directly in development of the plan. These methods could include: 1) development of a survey; 2) inclusion of question(s) on the Middle Rio Grande survey; 3) focus groups composed of people from different areas in the community; or 4) dissemination of fliers through bills sent to customers by the community water systems.