

MIDDLE RIO GRANDE WATER ASSEMBLY

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Submission to the Steering Committee for the Middle Rio Grande Regional Water Plan Update

June 9, 2015

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Part One

Submission Cover Letter

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June 9, 2015

Ron Brown, Chair
Steering Committee for
The Middle Rio Grande
Regional Water Plan Update

Dear Mr. Brown:

At their Annual Business Meeting on June 3, 2015, the Middle Rio Grande Water Assembly Board of Directors asked me to submit this package of documents to you. It is their recommendation that the package be included as a part of the Steering Committee's official report package to the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission at the end of June, 2015.

The package consists of four parts:

This submission cover letter is the **first part** of the package and contains a very brief indication of what's included in the package.

The **second part** of the package contains a set of ten guiding principles for the Regional Water Plan Update that was presented by the Water Assembly. I understand that the Steering Committee concurred with these guiding principles during one of its very early meetings.

The **third part** of the package is a detailed explanation of several Middle Rio Grande water-related issues and problems that have not but should be addressed through coming months/years of the Regional Water Plan update process. These were circulated to the Steering Committee some weeks ago. Since then we have inserted a cover sheet that summarizes the issues.

The **fourth part** of the package is a six-page summary of the Sixteenth Water Assembly. Because climate disruptions are observable, the Assembly held a public convocation to discuss five different consequences. The meeting topic was "Climate Disruption and Our Water Future: Mitigate Adapt or Suffer – A Call for New Strategies". Speakers focused on addressing where more adaptive capacity is needed, whether current policies facilitate or impede adaptation, what types of system changes we might devise, and what types of lifestyle or social changes might be needed. That public meeting convocation on March 21, 2015 was attended by nearly 100 people.

Going forward - As the Regional Water Plan Update process continues in the coming months, the Water Assembly intends to map the content of these documents and the recorded Sixteenth Water Assembly audience notes into a recommended family of policies and associated actions that, if implemented, should go a long way in improving the Middle Rio Grande Region's water future.

As background, the Water Assembly is an all-volunteer non-profit 501(c)3 corporation established in 1997 to promote and perform regional water planning through an open, inclusive and participatory process. Our region is the complex three county area surrounding Albuquerque, New Mexico (Sandoval, Bernalillo and Valencia Counties). We maintain our diversity of interest, beyond that of the Steering Committee, by organizing ourselves into six advocacy groups: Agricultural Business and Production; Cultural and Historic Water Use; Environmental Preservation and Improvement; Industrial, Institutional and Business; Residential Water Use; and Technical Specialties.

In partnership with the Middle Rio Grande Council of Governments (now called MRCOG), we led the seven year effort leading to the 2004 Regional Water Plan for the three-county area. With volunteer expert hydrologists and others, we developed a regional water budget that showed a substantial annual deficit in our spending of water (consumptive uses far exceeding renewable supplies). With the water budget as a firm technical basis, the water planning included conduct of more than 100 public meetings across the 4000 square mile region, 100 briefings to public agencies, 500 Water Assembly team meetings and 60 meetings with the MRGCOG Water Resources Board. It included over 30,000 Water Assembly volunteer hours, managing \$1.2 million in state, local government and private funds for extensive analysis studies and computer modeling. The publicly developed Regional Water Plan was accepted by all 20 local governments in the region and by the New Mexico State's Interstate Stream Commission.

In the years since the Plan was accepted, we have been working to encourage effective implementation of its 43 recommendations. We've conducted annual public convocations regarding sensitive and controversial water issues. We have also conducted public informational water forums on current topics such as desalination, aquifer storage and retrieval, and climate adaptation

In Summary - We appreciate the work being done by the Steering Committee, and its consideration of ongoing inputs from the Water Assembly, including this package. While not being an official member of the Steering Committee, the Assembly has participated in every Steering Committee meeting, preparing notes, presenting information, and answering questions. Over the years we have learned that effective regional water planning is a tough challenge. Our water issues are large, multi-faceted, and deeply rooted. We believe it is important to acknowledge the difficulties and address them head-on.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bob Wessely, President