

MRGWA/MRGCOG
Some Statistics on Attitudes and Preferences of
Residents of the Middle Rio Grande Water Planning
Region Regarding Water Issues.

In December 1999, the Middle Rio Grande Water Assembly (MRGWA) in conjunction with the Middle Rio Grande Council of Governments (MRGCOG) recognized that a public opinion survey could be an effective means of determining public views on pertinent water issues. The MRGWA Action Committee believed that such views could be used, in part, to help shape a regional water plan. In turn, in order to achieve this objective, the MRGCOG contracted with the University of New Mexico Institute for Public Policy (UNM/IPP) to survey an “oversample” of residents in the Middle Rio Grande (MRG) water planning region as part of a broader statewide survey. Between March 21 and May 15, 2000, UNM/IPP conducted its semiannual statewide *Public Opinion Profile* survey of New Mexico Residents. Its major focus was water issues, and its results included responses from individuals in 1156 households randomly drawn from throughout the three counties in the MRG region.

To pinpoint what water issues people find important, the UNM/IPP asked respondents to rate seven potential issues on a one-to-seven scale, where one meant “not an important problem” and seven meant “an extremely important problem.” Table 1 presents the results in order of MRG respondents’ evaluation of their importance.

Table 1
Relative Importance of Specific Listed “Water Issues”
(1 = “not an important problem”; 7 = “extremely important problem”)
 (All results reported are “means,” i.e. average responses)

	MRG	Statewide
The quality of the water that my family and I drink and bathe in.	6.19	6.09
Having enough water in our rivers to protect endangered fish and to keep the trees, vegetation, and other wildlife along the riverbanks healthy.	5.8	5.74
The rate at which we are using up the underground water supply.	5.67	5.67
Whether population and economic growth are out of balance with the limited water resources of the state.	5.14	5.23
Whether New Mexico can meet its legal obligations to Texas and Mexico, and still have enough water to meet the needs of New Mexicans.	4.96	4.98
Making enough water available to attract and keep high-tech industries that offer good-paying jobs in the region.	4.88	4.97
Whether there is enough water to maintain residential lawns and gardens.	4.14	4.27

Another section of the survey required respondents to make implicit choices among competing demands for a limited supply of water by rating the importance of various uses. The wording of the set-up question was as follows:

As you probably know, there are many competing demands for the water found underground and in New Mexico’s rivers, lakes, and streams. These demands come from cities, households, agriculture, industry, and from the environment. I will read you a list of possible uses of water. Using a scale from **zero** to **ten** where **zero means that you do not care whether water is available for that use** and **ten means that you want to be sure that water is available for that use**, please rate the value you personally place on each of the following uses of water. In table 2, we summarize the results from thirteen possible water uses. The neutral or midpoint on this 0 to 10 scale is 5. Results are presented in order of the value as signed byMRG respondents.

Table 2
Values Assigned to Various Uses of Water
 (Scale: 0 = “don’t care whether water is available for that use;
 10 = “want to be sure water is available for that use”)
 (All results reported are “means,” i.e. average responses)

	MRG	Statewide
Indoor use in existing homes	8.17	8.32
Preserving the native cottonwood forest and vegetation along river banks known as the bosque, that creates habitat for a variety of different animal species	7.69	7.5
Irrigation for farms	7.59	7.99
Providing food and refuge for fish, birds, and other animals	7.54	7.56
Indoor use in new housing developments	6.62	6.94
Cultural and religious uses in some villages and pueblos	6.38	6.34
Recreation, such as fishing and rafting	6.14	6.4
Community parks and sports fields	5.66	5.52
New industrial uses, such as manufacturing processes	5.29	5.41
Watering existing yards and landscaping	4.4	4.57
Use for yards and landscaping in new developments	3.82	4.14
Watering golf courses	3.18	2.93
Swimming pools for individuals homes	2.68	2.58

Reference: **Attitudes and Preferences of Residents of the Middle Rio Grande Water Planning Region Regarding Water issues: Summary Report to the Action Committee of the Middle Rio Grande Water Assembly and the Middle Rio Grande Council of Governments** (UNM Institute for Public Policy/The University of New Mexico; Albuquerque, New Mexico, June 2000).

<<http://www.waterassembly.org/Chap5pdfs/G-Rio%20Grande%20Supporting%20Documents/SH%201-11%20Third%20Party%20Documents-Reports-Etc/SH-7%20IPP%202000.pdf>>