

Good morning

I'm Eileen Dodds, Secretary/ Treasurer of the New Mexico Water Dialogue, and I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to address this committee.

On July 28th, the Water Dialogue had the pleasure of hosting a workshop at the Sevilleta National Wildlife Reserve conference center. We met to discuss the ongoing regional water planning activities occurring throughout the state that hopefully will lead to 16 updated regional water plans by this time next year.

We met to discuss the successes, challenges, and concerns with the process, and the format being used in updating the regional water plans. Thirteen of the 16 state planning regions were represented, as was the Interstate Stream Commission, including its Director, Ms. Dixon.

The day provided candid but objective discussions by each region, and by the ISC, as to the technical, administrative, and fiscal challenges in updating the regional water plans and meeting the Legislative deadline.

You have been presented with a summary of our discussion. I'd like to review some of the major points that came out of the workshop.

We agreed to a list of 5 major issues:

1. Dissatisfaction with the DATA because the common technical platform figures represent the "lowest common denominator", and are generalized across the state where regional conditions vary greatly. With additional time and effort, more complete information for each region could be included to enhance the crucial understanding between the supply and demand gap.
2. There seems to be no good process for PRIORTIZING THE PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS that each region has presented to the ISC. There is a great inequity between very large and very small planning entities. Additional work is needed to establish a framework to assist the regions with submission of projects that can succeed in being implemented.
3. PARTICIPATION in the planning process has been somewhat lacking, with little involvement by the pueblos and other tribes, as well as many other stakeholders. We believe that participation can be increased through continued outreach within the regions.

4. The need to consider the issue of GOVERNANCE led us to agree to form a joint working group consisting of representatives from the ISC, regional water planners and steering committee members, and the Dialogue. The working group will look at models from other states and consider ways to make regional water planning groups more effective both legally and administratively. We will also explore ways the regions can be brought together to address conflicts.
5. LEGISLATIVE FUNDING has decreased. We discussed the need for funding using a “cost-benefit” approach in regards to legal issues, reducing the supply/demand gap, and building relationships, as well as implementing policies, programs, and projects to justify the legislative funding requests.

Ms. Dixon’s presentation pointed out that the first round of regional water planning took 11 years, and each region was responsible for its own process and plan completion.

We no longer have that leisure. But the fundamental point today is that the current approach is dramatically under-funded to conform to the ambitious schedule. While the ISC has done what it could within those constraints, the resulting product will most likely meet only a fraction of each region’s water planning needs. Much more work will be needed... most particularly a focus on how to deal with declining water supplies in these changing conditions.

All that being said, however, good work has been accomplished. Comments from those representing the individual regions are summarized in handouts you have been given. Many concerns have been heard and each region will see a draft plan come out of the ISC by the end of this year.

Although this process is different than last time (then being “bottom-up” and this being “top-down”), we have to wait until we have new plans for the regions before judging the merits of the two approaches. Then, together, we will be able to decide on our next steps and see how our concerns have been addressed before plans are finalized. The Dialogue is willing to work with the ISC and others to plan for the use of the State’s most valuable resource. We believe Ms. Dixon will offer us a seat at the table.

Thank you for your time.

