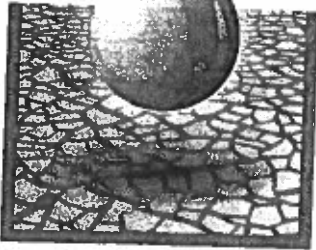


ADVANCING NEW MEXICO'S FUTURE:

# A Town Hall on Water Planning, Development & Use



**FINAL REPORT**

- April 15-16, 2014
- Albuquerque, NM

**CONVENER**

**New Mexico First**



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*People. Ideas. Progress.*

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

New Mexicans want a balanced water policy that plans for future shortages, expands water storage and reuse, addresses legal issues and protects environmental resources. They want to explore new water sources, including potential of cleaning up brackish water in our aquifers. They also want to improve the ways the state finances water projects.

These recommendations and others resulted from the *Town Hall on Water Planning, Development & Use*, held April 15-16, 2014 in Albuquerque. The town hall produced a platform of 15 consensus recommendations, garnering support from a strong majority of the participants. Almost all the recommendations achieved 85 percent support or higher.

## Who Came?

Attended by over 300 people, the town hall brought together citizens from 31 New Mexico counties. Participants came from urban, rural and tribal communities, and included business leaders, industrial water users, environmental advocates, researchers, municipal water planners, farmers and ranchers, government professionals, elected officials and students.

## Town Hall Process

The event opened with guest speakers, including U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich, a video presentation from U.S. Senator Tom Udall, NM State Engineer Scott Verhines and NM Senator Joseph Cervantes. A panel of experts in tribal issues, water use, conservation and development provided a context for the small group discussions which followed.

Participants then divided into small groups, during which they assessed New Mexico's opportunities and barriers for effective water policy. They prioritized those issues into discreet recommendations. All participants reviewed and refined the work of the other groups.

## Background Report

Prior to the town hall, all participants received a background report, which outlined the state's water situation, barriers to making progress and key policy issues. It was informed by a statewide committee of experts and is available at [nmfirst.org](http://nmfirst.org).

## Recommendation Summary

The recommendations fell into five major themes. The list below offers a high-level summary. Additional details, including concrete strategies for advancing each theme, are provided in the complete report that follows.

### Really Plan for the Future

- Rec 1: Improve state and regional water plans.
- Rec 2: Make our water supply resilient and flexible.
- Rec 3: Plan for extreme droughts.

### Keep Watersheds and Ecosystems Healthy

- Rec 4: Restore watersheds.
- Rec 5: Protect against wildfire and water source loss.
- Rec 6: Reduce endangered species conflicts.

### Address Legal and Management Issues

- Rec 7: Advance shortage-sharing agreements.
- Rec 8: Improve water rights management.
- Rec 9: Improve adjudication process.

### Pursue New Sources of Water

- Rec 10: Capture precipitation.
- Rec 11: Assess brackish water sources.
- Rec 12: Clarify brackish/produced water process.

### Improve Water Funding Practices

- Rec 13: Invest water dollars wisely.
- Rec 14: Expand water funding sources.

### Protect Water Quantity and Quality

- Rec 15: Conserve water and protect against contamination.

## Implementation

New Mexico First will organize an implementation team to advance the town hall's priorities. The effort will run for 12-18 months. The process will be chaired by John D'Antonio, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He and the New Mexico First staff will lead the effort to advance the recommendations with federal, tribal, state and local leaders. A former state engineer, D'Antonio has served under three governors: Gary Johnson, Bill Richardson and Susana Martinez.

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# INTRODUCTION

## Purpose of the Town Hall

With record drought and extremely dry conditions in much of the state, water is perhaps the most critical policy issue in New Mexico. Our economy, health, environment and overall population suffer without enough clean, available water. The April 2014 town hall harvested the wisdom of our citizens, inviting them to focus on outlining a balanced water policy for our unique state.

During this two-day town hall, participants explored the state's opportunities and barriers in several policy areas:

- Regional and state water planning
- Conservation and use
- Watersheds and the environment
- Brackish and produced water
- Water funding
- Water shortages
- Water rights
- Water compacts

The town hall recommendations will be advocated to federal, tribal, state and local policymakers as well as private sector leaders by an implementation team comprised of volunteers from the event. The team will be led by Former State Engineer John D'Antonio.

## Attendees

Over 300 people from 31 New Mexico counties took part. They represented urban, rural and tribal communities, and included business leaders, industrial water users, environmental advocates, researchers, municipal water planners, farmers and ranchers, government professionals, elected officials and students.

About 20 percent of the participants attended the event on scholarship, paying no fee. The remainder paid a voluntary \$100 registration fee that helped cover meals and snack breaks during the two-day deliberation.

## About New Mexico First

New Mexico First engages people in important issues facing their state or community. Established in 1986, the

public policy organization offers unique town halls and forums that bring people together to develop recommendations for policymakers and the public. New Mexico First also produces nonpartisan policy reports on critical issues facing the state. These reports – on topics like water, education, healthcare, the economy and energy – are available at [nmfirst.org](http://nmfirst.org).

Our state's two U.S. Senators – Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich – serve as New Mexico First's honorary co-chairs. The organization was co-founded in 1986 by Senators Jeff Bingaman and Pete Domenici.

## Town Hall Background Report

Prior to the town hall, participants received a comprehensive background report that outlines current water use, planning and management, summarizes legal matters, addresses environmental issues and overviews future technology options including desalination. The report was designed to broaden the understanding of citizens and lawmakers about the water policy issues facing New Mexico. It was informed by a statewide committee of experts and is available in the online library at [nmfirst.org](http://nmfirst.org).

## RESEARCH COMMITTEE

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Tom Blaine, New Mexico Environment Department  
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Jennifer Salisbury, Attorney  
John Stomp, Albuquerque Bernalillo Water Utility Authority  
Bruce Thomson, University of New Mexico  
Pei Xu, New Mexico State University

# RECOMMENDATIONS

*Policy recommendations were drafted in small groups and approved by the entire town hall. (See Appendix A for information on the process.) All of the following reforms were supported by a strong majority of town hall attendees. The implementation team will place highest priority on those that received 85% support or higher.<sup>1</sup> There is some overlap between recommendations. Almost all contain collaboration, education and funding components.*

## **Really Plan for the Future**

Town hall participants are deeply concerned about water shortages and future droughts. They see long-term, common sense water planning as a key tool, so they strongly champion existing state and regional planning efforts. However, they want a planning process that does not sit on a shelf. Integration of economic development, agriculture, land-use and transportation plans are seen as essential to smart water policy. Participants believe our water supply must be resilient – even in emergencies. To achieve that resiliency, communities must adapt in the face of crisis. They need tools and education to do that hard work in advance. Lastly, communities, regions or tribes cannot solve water supply problems on their own. Everyone must collaborate more.

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### **RECOMMENDATION 1: IMPROVE STATE AND REGIONAL WATER PLANS**

**ACTION:** Strengthen the regional and state water planning and implementation process to promote long-term planning, while maintaining short-term adaptability.

**STRATEGIES:**

1. Achieve consistent, dedicated funding for water planning.
2. Revise regional water plans so they are internally consistent and integrated into the state water plan.
3. Utilize best available science to improve water supply forecasts.
4. Create the necessary mechanism to ensure successful implementation of regional water plans.
5. Integrate public water supply and sanitation planning with the separate planning processes for agriculture/ land use, transportation and economic development. Promote water conservation and healthy ecosystems within all those efforts.

*Level of support: 97%*

### **RECOMMENDATION 2: MAKE OUR WATER SUPPLY RESILIENT AND FLEXIBLE**

**ACTION:** Ensure that water supply systems are resilient and flexible, adapting to short-term and long-term water shortages.

**STRATEGIES:**

1. Create emergency action plans and tools capable of rapid response to a water supply crisis.
2. Use the regional water plans to prioritize water initiative funding.
3. Prioritize financing for water initiatives that provide flexibility, quantifiable impacts and accountability.
4. Develop and fund planning tools, such as data, interactive water budgets, as well as aquifer characterization and modeling for water planning purposes.
5. Build community capacity for long-term resiliency by providing essential resources to people in local governance and water management (leadership training, technical support, access to experts, etc.).

*Level of support: 95%*

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<sup>1</sup> All recommendations were edited after the town hall for clarity and consistency. One recommendation did not receive support from a majority of attendees and is listed in the appendix.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3: PLAN FOR EXTREME DROUGHTS**

**ACTION:** Plan for extreme variations in precipitation, recognizing that water is precious, supplies are highly variable, and that our current drought situation may not be temporary.

#### **STRATEGIES:**

1. Convene representatives from tribes, land grants and 16 water plan regions annually to discuss their water situation and needs. This information will help New Mexico balance overall usage and avoid overextending water resources.
2. Create statewide expert panels to inform regions on costs, benefits, legal limitations and implementation considerations on specific issues that are common to many regions (i.e., agriculture and municipal conservation, watersheds, etc.).
3. Ensure that aquifer contamination and depletion are addressed in water planning.
4. Develop a K-12 curriculum and smart phone app that engages students in thinking about short and long-term water planning.
5. Advance public acceptance of the need to balance renewable water supply and demand.
6. Address the problem of planning for continued growth planning; consider a no-growth scenario.

*Level of support: 91%*

### **Keep Watersheds and Ecosystems Healthy**

Healthy watersheds are essential to more than plants and animals; well-functioning eco-systems affect water supply, agriculture and economic vitality. The town hall agrees that watershed-scale restoration is essential, which will require major coordination at all levels – particularly federally since Washington owns over 35 percent of the land in New Mexico. Part of that restoration is sensible forestry so that catastrophic wildfires are prevented. Restoration will also address erosion, invasive plant species and habitat. There is no need to start from scratch, however. Well-researched plans already exist; build on them, says the town hall. And while people recognize the need to protect plants and animals, participants acknowledge past conflicts between water users and the Endangered Species Act. Proactive efforts can balance the needs of both, including habitat projects that prevent new species from being listed.

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### **RECOMMENDATION 4: RESTORE WATERSHEDS**

**ACTION:** Fund and implement long term, collaborative, comprehensive watershed-scale restoration projects to foster healthy ecosystem function and resilience.

#### **STRATEGIES:**

1. Thin forests to reduce catastrophic fires and increase water supply.
2. Include all interested parties (e.g., land owners, communities and regional, state or federal agencies), and increase coordination between those stakeholders and funders.
3. Use the New Mexico Forest and Watershed Health Plan as a resource for communicating to policymakers.
4. Promote land management policies that retain access to public lands for purposes of restoration of forests and watersheds (i.e., access to road-less areas, keeping existing roads available, or federal activities that would prevent access).
5. Integrate efforts with the current U.S. Forest Service Rule Revision process.
6. Expand state water planning to specifically include protecting and improving watersheds.<sup>2</sup>
7. Develop a system to evaluate and track overall progress on watershed restoration.

*Level of support: 97%*

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<sup>2</sup> This strategy was originally drafted by the town hall as part of Recommendation 2 on water supply resiliency.

**RECOMMENDATION 5: PROTECT AGAINST WILDFIRE AND WATER SOURCE LOSS**

**ACTION:** Create a 20-year wildfire and water source protection plan, and establish sustainable funding that leverages federal, local and private resources for watershed-scale restoration.

**STRATEGIES:**

1. Produce and publicize an annual watershed report card that:
  - a. Offers achievable goals
  - b. Assesses the acreage at risk in key watersheds for loss due to catastrophic fire over a 20-year period
  - c. Documents and promotes water management success stories
2. Provide incentives to leverage resources for watershed scale implementation (e.g., tax incentive for projects that use NM forestry products, fund research on low quality wood, tax credits for National Environmental Policy Act analyses by firms).
3. Base the relationship between the NM Office of the State Engineer and the U.S. Forest Service on the Organic Administration Act, and implement its intent through the NM State Water Plan and the NM Watershed Health Plan.<sup>3</sup>
4. Take legislative action to promote prescribed fires, change policy to permit fires to burn and give private landowners indemnity from liability if they follow prescribed burn prescriptions.
5. Emphasize that water is a driving economic force.

*Level of support: 83%*

**RECOMMENDATION 6: REDUCE ENDANGERED SPECIES CONFLICTS**

**ACTION:** Reduce the incidence and impact of conflicts between endangered species and water users by proactively solving Endangered Species Act (ESA) issues.

**STRATEGIES:**

1. Balance actions that result in habitat improvement so that they benefit both the endangered species and other users.
2. Advance projects that reduce likelihood of future ESA listings.
3. Ensure peer review of the science, methodology and data.
4. Increase community consultation to find and implement regional solutions.
5. Develop and fund recovery programs.

*Level of support: 78%*

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<sup>3</sup> The U.S. Forest Service Organic Administration Act is a foundational law governing the administration of national forest lands. Additional information is available at <http://www.fs.fed.us/forestmanagement/aboutus/histperspective.shtml>.

## Address Legal and Management Issues

A third of New Mexico's water rights are unsettled, and many will likely remain so for many years. Even where water rights are firmly settled, communities often look for creative ways to meet everyone's basic needs. Town hall participants agree that we need a range of ways to manage water shortages. Shortage-sharing is one promising avenue, so we need to provide education, incentives and templates on these types of agreements. The town hall also calls for stronger and more coordinated state management of water supplies, including priority administration and Active Water Resource Management. People believe the roll-out of AWRM will require plenty of local input. Another way to guard against water shortages, says the town hall, is to advance a fair and efficient market for water rights transfers. And, like past town halls, people want a host of reforms to streamline the adjudication process, including target dates for completion.

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### RECOMMENDATION 7: ADVANCE SHORTAGE-SHARING AGREEMENTS

**ACTION:** Promote, develop and implement water shortage-sharing agreements among water right owners at the local level to facilitate water allocations during times of shortage.

#### STRATEGIES:

1. Require and fund water-use measuring or metering to inform and implement agreements.
2. Provide educational outreach regarding sharing agreements including use of the acequia model of "repartimiento" or sharing.<sup>4</sup>
3. Develop a template for sharing agreements.
4. Create incentives for entities to enter into sharing agreement negotiations.
5. Provide resources to implement Active Water Resource Management Initiatives in seven priority basins, and involve broad, local input into decision-making.

*Level of support: 94%*

### RECOMMENDATION 8: IMPROVE WATER RIGHTS MANAGEMENT

**ACTION:** Strengthen, coordinate and fund administration and management of surface and groundwater (both fresh and brackish).

#### STRATEGIES:

1. Incentivize conservation as well as negotiation on water sharing by building capacity for priority administration, evaluating the impact of priority administration and implementing Active Water Resource Management.
2. Review and revise groundwater management rules and regulations to improve long-term viability of the resource and reduce depletion.
3. Task and fund an appropriate entity to work with government agencies and academic partners to develop a knowledge-base of best available science and management practices for water shortage response and mitigation.
4. Utilize the market, a fair and efficient water transfer process as well as other incentives to mitigate against shortage.
5. Encourage the licensing of water rights.<sup>5</sup>

*Level of support: 88%*

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<sup>4</sup> The term "repartimiento" refers to the customary and cultural practice of sharing water. It is based on creating a culture of interdependence, particularly during times of shortage. In the New Mexico acequia community, the term refers specifically to the practice of sharing water between irrigators who share an acequia and also to the practice of sharing water between acequias who share a common source of water such as a stream or river.

<sup>5</sup> This strategy was originally drafted by the town hall as part of Recommendation 9 on the adjudication process.



**RECOMMENDATION 9: IMPROVE ADJUDICATION PROCESS**

**ACTION:** Increase the efficiency, timeliness and fairness of the adjudication process.

**STRATEGIES:**

1. Set target dates to promote settlements and completion of adjudications.
2. Streamline procedures that cause delays in the adjudication process. (Build on 2009 Senate Joint Memorial 3 report.)<sup>6</sup>
3. Create incentives that make water right holders eager to be fully adjudicated.
4. Promote negotiations to resolve differences during the hydrographic survey process.
5. Increase state funding for the adjudication process overall, including for:
  - a. NM Office of the State Engineer hydrographic survey staff, paralegals, attorneys and information dissemination
  - b. Community water organizations and local governments to participate in the adjudication process
  - c. Local water organizations to support and conduct hydrographic studies
  - d. Adjudication courts
6. Funding must be stable. Options include:
  - a. A statewide water bond measure
  - b. A return to general operations funds (rather than irrigation works construction funds)
  - c. Allowing private funds to be used to complete adjudications
7. Ensure that the state water plan update includes an assessment of funds required to complete adjudications.

*Level of support: 80%*

**Pursue New Sources of Water**

New Mexico currently uses more water than we take in. Our freshwater aquifers are depleting, and surface waters are also reduced due to prolonged drought. The town hall recommends exploring at least three new sources of water: precipitation capture, non-potable brackish water and “produced water” brought to the surface through oil and gas mining. The viability of these options varies, and some solutions might be used only for grey-water or agriculture. All three options require considerable legal and scientific research, regulatory change and potential legislation.

**RECOMMENDATION 10: CAPTURE PRECIPITATION**

**ACTION:** Capture and use precipitation to provide more water for beneficial use to offset natural losses and within existing compact limits.

**STRATEGIES:**

1. Initiate and fund new water supply and storage projects such as aquifer storage and recovery, reclaimed wastewater, brackish water, surface water storage, storm water capture and water delivery enhancement.<sup>7</sup>
2. Increase water harvesting through more efficient storm water management.
3. Capture and channel water to recharge aquifers.
4. Make more efficient use of existing dams, including berms.
5. Apply rain capture practices to range management.

*Level of support: 90%*

<sup>6</sup> The report, *Assessing Potential Changes to the New Mexico Water Rights Adjudication Process*, was prepared in 2009 by the UNM law school.

<sup>7</sup> This strategy was originally drafted by the town hall as part of Recommendation 2 on water resilience and supply.

**RECOMMENDATION 11: ASSESS BRACKISH WATER SOURCES**

**ACTION:** Evaluate the characteristics of brackish water sources (i.e., quality, quantity and locations throughout the state).

**STRATEGIES:**

1. Rank brackish water basins based on development potential according to state and regional water plans in order to expedite exploration and characterization plans.
2. Fund statewide studies, programs and/or pilot projects coordinated by universities, national laboratories, the private sector and government agencies (e.g., U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, NM Office of the State Engineer and NM Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department - Bureau of Geology) to:
  - a. Identify locations of brackish water aquifers
  - b. Evaluate their hydrogeological and geochemical characteristics
  - c. Evaluate discharge opportunities
  - d. Evaluate the impacts of development, treatment or use based on their established rankings
3. Establish a long-term educational component that includes the following:
  - a. Fund collegiate water internships in state agencies
  - b. Integrate university students in characterization and monitoring
  - c. Expand Youth Conservation Corps participation in water projects
  - d. Expand existing water educational opportunities
  - e. Enhance the K12 curriculum on water issues

*Level of support: 91%*

**RECOMMENDATION 12: CLARIFY BRACKISH/PRODUCED WATER PROCESS**

**ACTION:** Clarify or create consistent processes among appropriate regulatory agencies for: 1) use of brackish water and 2) use and re-use of produced water generated by oil and gas development.

**STRATEGIES:**

1. Review existing statutes, regulations and policies with public and private stakeholders to determine needed changes and to identify a one-stop-shop permitting approval process.
2. Establish a coordinated process between state and federal entities to facilitate the development and use of brackish water.
3. Allow extended temporary permitting of pilot brackish water supply developments.
4. Evaluate the economic costs and benefits and environmental impacts of desalinated water to increase water resources.
5. Allow development to increase the use and re-use of produced water.

*Level of support: 86%*

## Improve Water Funding Policies

There are many competing needs for water funding in New Mexico. Given the state's limited dollars, town hall participants want money spent as efficiently as possible. Existing funding structures appear to overlap and underutilize federal and private sources. The town hall urges increased integration and planning among funders, plus research on how to create a more unified funding system. In addition to *how* the state funds projects, the town hall focused on *what* should be prioritized. Investments in water resources and supply are a top priority. Furthermore, we must make sure that once new water projects are built, public investments are not squandered through poor management or lack of maintenance.

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### RECOMMENDATION 13: INVEST WATER DOLLARS WISELY

**ACTION:** Maximize investments in water resources, supply and related concerns.

#### STRATEGIES:

1. Increase investments in water source protection and restoration.
2. Identify or create an entity to research and develop new funding mechanisms and sources and coordinate funding programs.
3. Use assessment and development processes such as LEAP (Lifecycle, Effective Use of Public Funds, Appropriateness, Prioritize) to identify projects for public and private investment within a unified funding system.
4. Improve the investment process to coordinate, publicize and provide technical, financial or managerial support for managing assets. (Examples of assets include dams, irrigation canals, water supply or treatment systems).
5. Improve public-private partnerships to maximize investment in and funding for water-related projects.

*Level of support: 88%*

### RECOMMENDATION 14: EXPAND WATER FUNDING SOURCES

**ACTION:** Develop more sophisticated and diverse funding sources for vetted water projects that leverage public and private resources and expertise.

#### STRATEGIES:

1. Investigate and/or move forward with public-private partnerships, as well as pass enabling legislation or guiding principles for public-private partnerships.
2. Identify and review use of new funding sources. (e.g., leveraging the market, general obligation bonds, irrigation works construction fund, Federal Emergency Management Agency fund, State Investment Council, etc.).
3. Identify, establish and commit to an initial dollar amount for funding water projects (e.g., \$250 million/year for five-years) and then, establish the recurring amount needed to fund the life of the projects (i.e., needs should be specifically outlined).
4. Review and reform the funding process to ensure sustainable funding for the life of water projects including use of revolving loan programs, grants, user fees and leveraging federal funds.
5. Monitor and evaluate funded water projects.

*Level of support: 88%*

## Protect Water Quantity and Quality

Water conservation is essential, particularly in a desert state. It is equally important, says the town hall, to guard against groundwater contamination and other sources of water pollution. Advancing these goals will require education, research and engagement by a wide range of stakeholders. From farmers to urban homeowners – as well as businesses, municipalities and policymakers – New Mexicans will have to collaborate in order to achieve water conservation and protection goals.

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### RECOMMENDATION 15: CONSERVE WATER AND PROTECT AGAINST CONTAMINATION

**ACTION:** Protect water resources (supply and quality) through research-based conservation and reuse, policy change and collaboration.

#### STRATEGIES:

1. Create education for business, industry, agriculture, municipalities and residential water users that:
  - Promotes water conservation
  - Gives consideration to ethical management of water resources
  - Promotes wastewater reuse
  - Explores new water supplies
  - Protects water quality
2. Advance change in legislative and regulatory policy that:
  - Promotes conservation by incentivizing and maximizing the efficient use of funding and public resources
  - Ensures the statewide water plan maximizes economic opportunities, protects the environment, prevents pollution, gives consideration to future generations and simplifies public policy (while adhering to federal and state regulations as well as compact obligations).
  - Protects local and regional water supplies

*Level of support: 88%*

## TOWN HALL IMPLEMENTATION

The recommendations will not sit on a shelf. **New Mexico First** will organize an implementation team to advance the town hall's priorities. Implementation efforts often run for 12-18 months. The process will be chaired by John D'Antonio. He and the New Mexico First staff will lead the effort to advance the recommendations with federal, tribal, state and local leaders.



**John D'Antonio** is Deputy District Engineer for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Albuquerque District. A former New Mexico State Engineer and Cabinet Secretary for the New Mexico Environment Department, D'Antonio has experience in hydraulic design, acequia rehabilitation, water resource management, water policy development and project management for both civil works and military construction. He received a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from the University of New Mexico. He has served under three governors: Gary Johnson, Bill Richardson and Susana Martinez.

# APPENDIX A: TOWN HALL PROCESS

Using **New Mexico First's** proven consensus-building process, the two-day event asked participants to share their best ideas for making progress as a state on water planning, development and use. During the town hall, participants were divided into small groups to discuss policy options, as well as develop and refine recommendations for addressing the critical issues.

## **Step 1: Learn the Issues**

### **Background Report**

Review report before attending the town hall.



### **Context Setting and Shared Learning**

Listen to guest speakers and ask questions.



## **Step 2: Explore Possibilities**

### **Small Group Discussions**

Consider promising opportunities or crucial issues that need to be addressed.



## **Step 3: Develop Common Ground**

### **Draft Recommendations**

Create recommendations that will impact the state's future progress.



### **Amend Recommendations**

Refine recommendations for consideration by full group.



### **Agree on Final Recommendations**

Reach consensus on final recommendations in the full group.



## **Step 4: Advance Change**

A final report will be sent to all stakeholders, including community and business leaders, policymakers, media and all town hall registrants. The Implementation Team will work to advance the recommendations agreed to by town hall participants.

# APPENDIX B:

## RECOMMENDATION GROUPINGS

### Recommendations By Level of Support

TOPIC	PERCENT SUPPORT
REC 1: Improve state and regional water plans	97%
REC 4: Restore watersheds	97%
REC 2: Make our water supply resilient and flexible	95%
REC 7: Advance shortage-sharing agreements	94%
REC 3: Plan for extreme droughts	91%
REC 11: Assess brackish water sources	91%
REC 10: Capture precipitation	90%
REC 13: Invest water dollars wisely	88%
REC 14: Expand water funding sources	88%
REC 15: Conserve water and protect against contamination	88%
REC 8: Improve water rights management	88%
REC 12: Clarify brackish/produced water processes	86%
REC 13: Protect against wildfire and water source loss	83%
REC 9: Improve adjudication process	80%
REC 6: Reduce endangered species conflicts	78%

### Recommendations Requiring Education or Outreach

Most of New Mexico First's implementation efforts will focus on the public policy process. However, many of the recommendations point to the need for a comprehensive education or outreach campaign. These items are presented together so that organizations or universities may consider these ideas as a collective effort.

- Rec 15, strategy 1: Create education for business, industry, agriculture, municipalities and residential water users that:
  - Promotes water conservation
  - Gives consideration to ethical management of water resources
  - Promotes wastewater reuse
  - Explores new water supplies
  - Protects water quality
- Rec 2, strategy 5: Build community capacity for long-term resiliency by providing essential resources to people in local governance and water management (leadership training, technical support, access to experts, etc.).
- Rec 3, strategy 2: Create statewide expert panels to inform regions on costs, benefits, legal limitations and implementation considerations on specific issues that are common to many regions (i.e., agriculture and municipal conservation, watersheds, etc.).
- Rec 7, strategy 2: Provide educational outreach regarding sharing agreements including use of the acequia model of "repartimiento" or sharing.
- Rec 8, strategies 4 and 5: Education will be needed to utilize water markets and encourage licensing of water rights.

# APPENDIX C: TOWN HALL LEADERS

## Speakers

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U.S. Senator Tom Udall (video)

State Engineer Scott Verhines

New Mexico Senator Joseph Cervantes

Secretary Ryan Flynn, NM Environment Department

Governor Richard Luarkie, Pueblo of Laguna

Secretary David Martin, NM Energy, Minerals and  
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Laura McCarthy, The Nature Conservancy in New Mexico

Secretary Jeff Witte, NM Department of Agriculture

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Pamela Blackwell

JD Bullington

Genevieve Chavez Mitchell

Philip Crump

Amy Duggan

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# APPENDIX E: ADDITIONAL IDEAS

One group's recommendation was determined to be valuable but not yet fully developed. It did not receive support from a majority of the town hall and thus is included for reference only. However, many of the strategies align to recommendations that were approved.

## **RECOMMENDATION: CHANGE WATER POLICIES**

**ACTION:** Leave a positive legacy by creating goals, continuing to address water challenges, developing solutions and continually identifying problematic and conflicting barriers in implementation.

### **STRATEGIES:**

1. Establish or designate a single-source agency to approve or certify all waste water treatment and infrastructure projects for feasibility and funding from start to finish.
2. Develop realistic financial and need-based regulations dictating the use of capital outlay funds.
3. Establish a new, permanent revenue source dedicated to water projects and planning.
4. Maximize storage capacities of dams and catchments.
5. Allow pooling of water rights locally into a commons to facilitate water sharing where appropriate.
6. Develop an interstate transmission system to import potable water.
7. Expand opportunities to augment water supplies.
8. Take an intergenerational approach to education beginning with Pre-K to create better understanding and behaviors about water issues and the overall health and wellbeing of all New Mexicans.
9. Develop a Southwestern Regional Water Policy for conservation, reuse and capture.