

**MINUTES  
of the  
SECOND MEETING  
of the  
WATER AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**July 10-11, 2023  
Luna Community College  
Media Education Center  
355 Luna Drive  
Las Vegas**

The second meeting of the Water and Natural Resources Committee was called to order by Senator Elizabeth "Liz" Stefanics, chair, on July 10, 2023 at 9:45 a.m. in the Media Education Center of Luna Community College in Las Vegas.

**Present**

Sen. Elizabeth "Liz" Stefanics, Chair  
Rep. Matthew McQueen, Vice Chair  
Sen. Pete Campos  
Rep. Kathleen Cates  
Sen. Joseph Cervantes  
Rep. Miguel P. García (7/11)  
Rep. Susan K. Herrera  
Sen. Stuart Ingle (7/10)  
Rep. T. Ryan Lane (7/10)  
Rep. Tara L. Lujan  
Rep. Kristina Ortez (7/10)  
Sen. Cliff R. Pirtle  
Rep. Debra M. Sariñana  
Rep. Larry R. Scott  
Sen. Pat Woods

**Advisory Members**

Rep. Christine Chandler  
Sen. Linda M. Lopez (7/10)  
Sen. Shannon D. Pinto (7/11)  
Rep. William "Bill" R. Rehm  
Sen. Antoinette Sedillo Lopez  
Rep. Nathan P. Small

**Absent**

Rep. Gail Armstrong  
Rep. Joanne J. Ferrary  
Rep. Marian Matthews  
Rep. Andrea Romero  
Sen. Benny Shendo, Jr.  
Sen. Jeff Steinborn  
Rep. Martin R. Zamora

Rep. Jack Chatfield  
Sen. Crystal R. Diamond  
Rep. Candy Spence Ezzell  
Rep. Jenifer Jones  
Rep. Rod Montoya  
Rep. Greg Nibert  
Sen. Gerald Ortiz y Pino  
Rep. G. Andrés Romero  
Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero  
Sen. Mimi Stewart  
Sen. Peter Wirth

(Attendance dates are noted for members not present for the entire meeting.)

## **Staff**

Sara Wiedmaier, Researcher, Legislative Council Service (LCS)

Sheila Keleher, Researcher, LCS

Tom Kricka, Staff Attorney, LCS

Ian Carillo, Intern, LCS

## **Guests**

The guest list is in the meeting file.

## **Handouts**

Handouts and other written testimony are in the meeting file and posted on the legislature's website.

## **References to Webcast**

The time reference noted next to each agenda item in this document is cross-referenced to the webcast of the committee meeting, which can be found at [www.nmlegis.gov](http://www.nmlegis.gov), under the "Webcast" tab. The presentations made and committee discussions for agenda items can be found on the recorded webcast for this meeting.

## **Monday, July 10**

### **Welcome and Introductions (9:45 a.m.)**

Senator Stefanics welcomed committee members and staff and asked members and staff to introduce themselves.

### **Welcome and Updates on Luna Community College and the City of Las Vegas Forest and Watershed Restoration Efforts (9:51 a.m.)**

Edward A. Martinez, Ph.D., president, Luna Community College, and Louie Trujillo, mayor, City of Las Vegas, welcomed the committee to Las Vegas and discussed forest and watershed restoration efforts in the area. Dr. Martinez talked about legislative appropriations to the City of Las Vegas, provided an update on the state of Luna Community College and discussed the activities of the Wildfire Resiliency Training Center. Mr. Trujillo discussed the impact of the 2022 wildfires on the City of Las Vegas and recovery efforts. The presentation can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/handouts/WNR%20071023%20Item%201%20LCC.pdf>.

### **Approval of Minutes (10:59 a.m.)**

Upon a motion made by Representative Lujan and seconded by Representative Cates, the committee approved the minutes of the June 13, 2023 meeting.

### **Regional Transmission Organization 101 and Renewable Transmission Buildout in New Mexico (11:05 a.m.)**

Fernando Martinez, executive director, New Mexico Renewable Energy Transmission Authority; Rikki Seguin, executive director, Interwest Energy Alliance; Kathleen Staks,

executive director, Western Freedom; and Luis A. Reyes Jr., chief executive officer, Kit Carson Electric Cooperative, gave a presentation on regional transmission and renewable transmission buildout in the state. Ms. Seguin discussed regional transmission organizations and the challenges facing the electrical grid in the west. Ms. Staks talked about Western Freedom and the challenges and opportunities involved in creating a western regional transmission organization. Mr. Martinez provided an update on the Renewable Energy Transmission Authority's projects. Mr. Reyes discussed the Kit Carson Electric Cooperative and its projects in renewable energy transmission. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=WNR&Date=7/10/2023&ItemNumber=2>.

**Public Comment (1:04 p.m.)**

A list of individuals making public comment is available in the meeting file.

**Cimarron Dam Condition and Cimarroncito Reservoir Update (1:25 p.m.)**

Matthew E. Gonzales, mayor, Village of Cimarron, discussed the Cimarron Dam and Cimarroncito Reservoir and the impact of the 2022 wildfires on the water system.

**State Environmental Tax Incentive Programs (2:04 p.m.)**

Jeremy Lewis, acting director, Energy Conservation and Management Division, Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD), and Michelle Miano, director, Environmental Protection Division, Department of Environment (NMED), talked about state environmental tax incentive programs, including the new solar market development income tax credit, renewable energy production tax credits, sustainable building tax credits, agricultural biomass tax credits and the biodiesel blending facility tax credit. The presentation can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/handouts/WNR%20071023%20Item%204%20EMNRD%20Tax%20Incentives.pdf>.

**Rio Grande Trail: Stakeholder Engagement, Trail Implementation and Commission Update (2:45 p.m.)**

Toby Velasquez, director, State Parks Division, EMNRD, and Katrina Arndt, A.I.C.P., associate planner, Pland Collaborative, presented an update on the Rio Grande Trail, including ongoing work implementing the 2018 Rio Grande Trail Master Plan, plans for a single state entity to manage the entirety of the trail and some next steps, including community outreach and funding and staffing needs. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=WNR&Date=7/10/2023&ItemNumber=5>.

### **Statewide Forest Management: Wildfire Recovery, Prescribed Burn Practices and an Update on the Rio Grande Water Fund Projects (3:33 p.m.)**

Laura McCarthy, state forester, Forestry Division, EMNRD; Steve Bassett, director of conservation programs, New Mexico Chapter, The Nature Conservancy; Zander Evans, executive director, Forest Stewards Guild; and Joshua L. Sloan, Ph.D., C.F., associate vice president of academic affairs: forestry and the reforestation center, New Mexico Highlands University (NMHU), provided a presentation on issues involving forest management and an update on Rio Grande Water Fund projects. Ms. McCarthy discussed ongoing projects and strategies to restore forest and watershed health and resilience, including fire management, stewarding of private lands and reforesting burned areas. Mr. Bassett talked about the Rio Grande Water Fund and how to protect water supplies from the risk of wildfire. Mr. Evans discussed collaborative restoration and resilience projects and the restoration economy. Mr. Sloan talked about the work of NMHU to support forest and watershed health and restoration. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=WNR&Date=7/10/2023&ItemNumber=6>.

### **Recess**

The meeting recessed at 4:46 p.m.

### **Tuesday, July 11**

### **Local, State and Federal Collaboration on Disaster Recovery Efforts and Updates to the Acequia Community Ditch Infrastructure Fund (9:02 a.m.)**

Paula Garcia, executive director, New Mexico Acequia Association; Jonathan Martinez, Interstate Stream Commission (ISC); John Romero, director, Highway Operations Support Division, Department of Transportation (DOT); Kenneth J. Branch, assistant state conservationist, United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS); and Kenneth Alcon, state resource conservationist, USDA-NRCS, discussed intergovernmental collaboration on disaster recovery and provided an update on the Acequia Community Ditch Infrastructure Fund. Ms. Garcia talked about acequia infrastructure challenges, including the need to stabilize the Irrigation Works Construction Fund, develop capacity of the newly formed Acequia Bureau of the ISC and provide technical assistance for infrastructure planning, governance and financial compliance. Mr. Martinez discussed the activities of the Acequia Bureau of the ISC. Mr. Romero discussed the DOT's disaster recovery efforts. Mr. Branch and Mr. Alcon explained the role of the USDA-NRCS in assisting acequias affected by the 2022 wildfires. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=WNR&Date=7/10/2023&ItemNumber=7>.

### **Water Policy and Infrastructure Task Force: Progress and Priorities (10:25 a.m.)**

Mike Hamman, state engineer, Office of the State Engineer; Hannah Riseley-White, director, ISC; and Patrick McCarthy, water policy officer, Thornburg Foundation, presented the

progress and priorities of the Water Policy and Infrastructure Task Force, including a review of legislation from the 2023 regular legislative session and, looking ahead, developing funding mechanisms for water infrastructure, ensuring the state takes full advantage of available federal funding, strengthening water rights enforcement, growing the water workforce, assessing and improving ground water policy and management, expanding shortage-sharing agreements, investing in green and natural infrastructure and building state and local capacity for water projects, planning and operations. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=WNR&Date=7/10/2023&ItemNumber=8>.

#### **Water Leaders Education Program Update (11:34 a.m.)**

Stacy Timmons, associate director, Hydrogeology, Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, provided an update on the opportunities provided by the Water Leaders Education Program and discussed funding goals to support the water education program, the water data initiative and aquifer mapping and monitoring. The presentation can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/handouts/WNR%20071023%20Item%209%20Water%20Education%20Program.pdf>.

#### **City of Las Vegas Water Source Protection and Treatment and the Impacts of Wildfires, Flooding and Burn Scar Runoff on Watersheds (11:45 a.m.)**

Mr. Hamman; John Rhoderick, director, Water Protection Division, NMED; and Maria Gilvarry, utilities director, City of Las Vegas, discussed the protection and treatment of the City of Las Vegas' water sources and recovery from the 2022 wildfires. Mr. Hamman talked about water rights in the Gallinas system, the City of Las Vegas' fire disaster response and projects on Storrie Lake. Mr. Rhoderick discussed the operational challenges of water management in the City of Las Vegas, current projects and issues and options moving forward. Ms. Gilvarry provided more detail on water management issues facing the City of Las Vegas. The presentation materials can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Committee/Handouts?CommitteeCode=WNR&Date=7/10/2023&ItemNumber=10>.

#### **Public Comment (12:40 p.m.)**

A list of individuals making public comment is available in the meeting file.

#### **Tour of Forest and Watershed Restoration Sites (1:00 p.m.)**

#### **Adjournment**

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 12:46 p.m.