

New Mexico Water Dialogue Looking Back and Looking Forward

Lucy's Reflections

What will carry us

- Honesty
- Willingness to listen
- Common ground
- Energy and passion
- Patience, good humor....affection

In the beginning...

- 1987 Regional Water Planning is born
- Regions are told to form planning committees and develop a water plan:
 - Where and why
 - Who and how???
- Ford Foundation to the rescue, \$ to Western Network and UNM Natural Resources Center
 - To enhance the preservation and wise use of precious water resources in NM
 - To empower regions to play a significant role in determining their futures

Pecos River Roundtable 1992

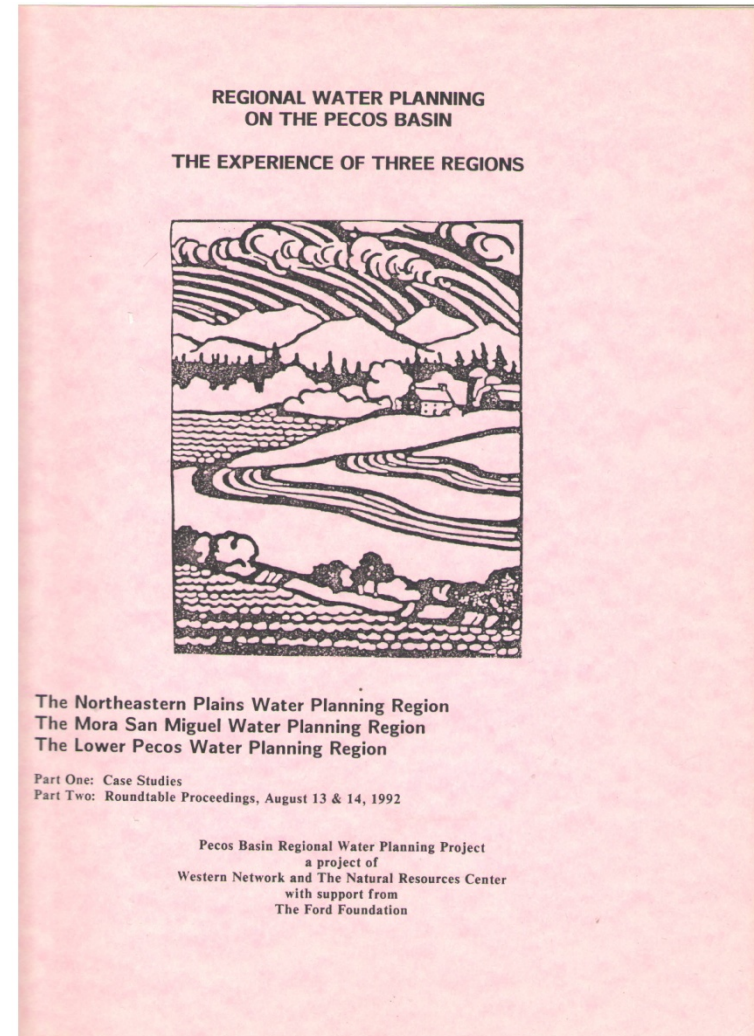
Our assumptions:

--expertise lies with those on the ground, they have much to teach each other

--the right of all voices to be heard, the value of each voice

Participants:

- Northeastern Plains
- Mora-San Miguel
- Lower Pecos



Messages from the Pecos River Roundtable

- Frustration – “we are orphans”
- Confusion – “what is a plan?” “who is a planner?”
- Relief – “so much to share, learn from each other”
- Common ground – “we de-demonized each other”
- This should happen statewide

Exploratory Meeting Hotel Santa Fe 1993

- Statewide gathering to exchange information and ideas about water planning in New Mexico
- All the main players...OSE, ISC, Albuquerque, federal and state agencies, acequias, environmental organizations, industry
- A voice that made the difference

Taste of Empowerment Riding High

- Board formed – we are the glue!
- Foundation funding
 - Executive director
 - Committees – executive, legislative, fundraising
 - Held first New Mexico Water Dialogue Annual Meeting, Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, 1994

Early Statewide meetings =Fireworks

- Interests clashing
- General paranoia
- Civility on shaky ground

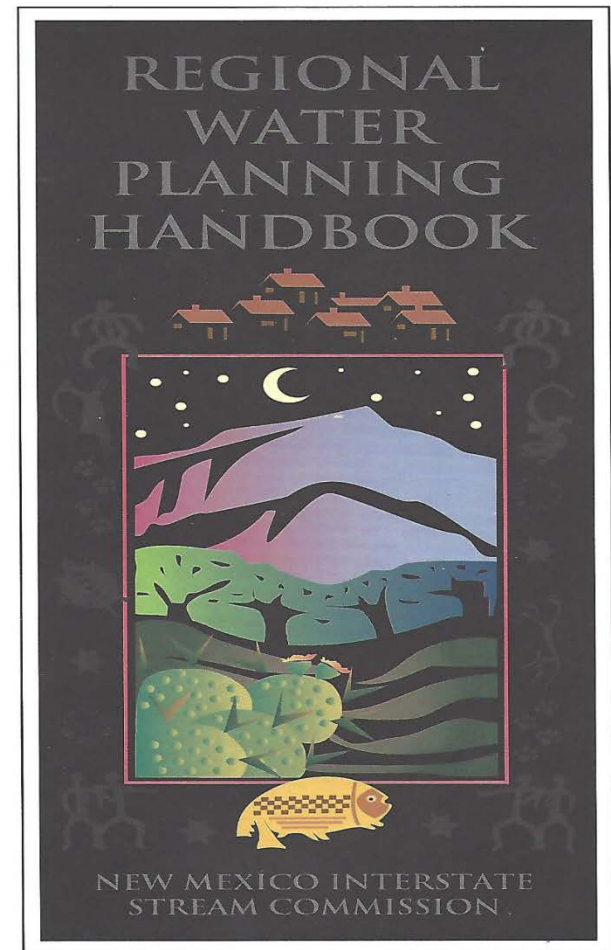
- Board minutes: “Lucy said that she wrote to Speaker Sanchez following the statewide meeting, thanking him for his time, and appreciating his willingness to participate in Dialogue activities, in spite of their unpredictability and high energy. She and Aron felt that the relationship with Sanchez was not damaged by the incident.”

Questions remained

- Why are we planning?
 - For us? Because it's the law? Could it hurt us?
- What is a RWP committee
 - Relationship between technical and local expertise
 - Relationship between data and values
- What is our relationship with ISC?
 - Are they paying attention?

Relationship with the Interstate Stream Commission (ISC)

- Parent – (rebellious) child?
- What was the legitimacy of a regional water plan?
- How would a state water plan be crafted from regional water plans?
- What about conflicts between regions?
- Formed committee with ISC to draft “Regional Water Planning Handbook,” a template for regional plans



Today: Much to be proud of

- Sustained through effort of amazing volunteer board members
- Dialogue Newsletters, thanks to Lisa Robert, Chris Nunn Garcia, and now Kathy Grassel
- Annual Meetings
- Three retreats with ISC to discuss needs of regions
- Upstream-Downstream Project (2006-08)
- Governance Project with ISC (ongoing)
- Regional Water Planning Handbook (1994 and 2013)
- Publications: “Water Planning in Four States” (1994) and “Water Conservation Incentives Project” (2007)
- Contributions to State Water Plan process (2016-18)

Today

How is it different?

- Comfort ~ Complacency?
- A place in the NM water world
- No funding ~ volunteer dependent
- Challenges greater
- We're older

....Easier to start than sustain

2044? Fear #1

The New Mexico Water Dialogue is long gone and two of us survivors are remembering (hopefully) the good old days...



2044? Fear #2

Only 20 people come to the 50th annual Dialogue meeting, all of them are over 65.

The speaker is gloomy.

No one is paying any attention.

Not all the participants are human...



2044? But...

Good news:

The New Mexico Water Dialogue Website (not updated since 2019) receives an award for the Most Antiquated Website, narrowly beating out The Civil War Re-enactment Society.



2044? My Hope

- The Dialogue:
 - Is well-funded with a new generation of staff
 - Has a huge and growing membership
 - Publishes 2 newsletters a year, plus a special legislative edition
 - Has the same representative, vital, energetic, slightly wacky board
 - takes on a major initiative each year
 - responds to variety of needs of regional water planners for education, conflict resolution, workshops, dialogue

How to make that happen

- Revisit mission, clarify, update
- Raise money to hire executive director, and eventually more staff
- Connect with, listen to, engage younger generations
- Renew outreach to all water interests/sectors to make sure Dialogue is representative
- Fund projects, provide help where needed
- Keep talking, include all voices, have fun