

New Mexico Water Dialogue 25th Anniversary Statewide Meeting

New Mexico Water Dialogue: Our Beginning and Our Future

By Lucy Moore

Twenty-five years is a long time for a non-profit to survive, especially one that depends on the dedication and hard work of a volunteer board. Sustaining the New Mexico Water Dialogue another 25 years will take creativity and courage, but more about that later. First, I would like to take a quick look at how and why the Dialogue came to be.

In 1987, in the beginning, there was the legislative mandate for regional water planning. There were immediate questions: Who is going to do the plan, how are we going to do it, what does a plan look like? I was at Western Network and Chris Nunn was at the UNM Natural Resources Center and together we received a grant to enhance the preservation and wise use of water resources in New Mexico, or, as we interpreted it, to empower regions to play a significant role in determining their future.

We began with a series of workshops bringing regions together that shared a watershed to exchange their frustrations and stories about water planning. The experience gave voice to those on-the-ground experts who knew and cared about water in their communities.

In 1993 we brought together all the big guns, and little ones, too, to talk water. OSE was there, the ISC, Albuquerque, federal and state agencies, acequias, environmental groups, industry, and developers. You could feel the apprehension in the room about saying the wrong thing, revealing too much.

After much posturing by lawyers and technical experts, Michael Benson, Navajo Nation representative, stood up



to speak about his hopes and fears for his people, and his personal discomfort at that moment. He hoped for cooperation and understanding from the other interests but he was not sure it was possible. The room listened and the tenor of the conversation changed. It was the turning point for the Dialogue, when we headed down a path defined by honesty and humility, a key characteristic of the Dialogue.

Soon after we became a 501(c)(3). Our first board president was Lee Tillman from the Eastern Plains Council of Governments, a big tall guy with a cowboy hat that made him even taller, boots, and quite a swagger. He thought the Dialogue was the best thing ever. "We are the glue of the water planning in New Mexico. We keep it all together!" he declared with a huge grin, and that be-

came our motto. "We are the glue!" Our foundation funding paid for an executive director, our first annual meeting, and three committees: executive, legislative and fundraising.

In the early statewide meetings, there were fireworks. We invited everyone, all were welcome, and this meant that interests were clashing. Acequias took on big irrigation districts; environmentalists and developers went to their opposing corners. Everyone was mad at the state water agencies for being so stingy with water planning money, and the feds were highly suspect by many. As facilitator I was nervous before those meetings and even brought a big Mexican bull whip to remind people to be civil.

Still questioning what the regional water plan should look like, who should do it and how, Dialogue members pushed the ISC for a template. The result was a committee -- Dialogue board members and ISC staff -- to develop the Regional Water Planning Handbook. The product proved that on-the-ground experts could successfully partner with a state agency and produce a useful manual to guide planning in the future.

In following years, this partnership has matured. We've had three retreats with the ISC to discuss needs of the regions, we convened the "upstream downstream project" that brought together the three regions sharing the Rio Grande. The Dialogue's Governance Committee meets regularly with ISC staff to promote an inclusive process for determining our water future. We also took part in the state water planning process.



Spring 2019

The *Dialogue* is a publication of the New Mexico Water Dialogue.

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25 YEARS—CONT. FROM PG. 1

Today thanks to incredible board members and support from citizens all over the state, the Dialogue continues to fill a unique niche in the New Mexico water world. I am thrilled to have been there in the beginning, and frankly, I think that was the easy part. Sustaining the effort, building on our accomplishments, keeping fresh and responding to a shifting landscape – that’s a lot harder.

I believe we’re at a critical point right now. Can we keep the Dialogue relevant and vital into the future? The Dialogue operates on a very worn out shoestring. We need serious funding and paid staff to meet the challenges ahead -- climate change, polarized politics, and shrinking resources. And, the founder generation is aging. My hope is that the Dialogue in 2044, is well funded with a new generation of staff, has a big membership, two newsletters a year, plus a legislative

edition. A wonderful wacky board takes on a major initiative every year that comes out of the annual meeting in some organic way in response to a variety of needs for education, conflict resolution, data, and dialogue.

To make this happen, I suggest re-thinking and updating our mission for this new world we find ourselves in. Then, we need serious fundraising to support staff. We need to engage young voices in our governance and in setting priorities, and finally we need to double down on our commitment to include all interests.

And one more thing. If anyone out there would like to apprentice for the Dialogue facilitator position, I can promise a wonderful experience. It would be an honor to pass this role on. I’ll even give you my bull whip...just for old time’s sake.

Report from the Breakout Sessions

Breakout sessions are now an embedded part of the Dialogue’s annual meeting. The issues discussed this year were: Managing Water for Environmental Values/Goals in the Face of Climate Change; Strategies for Water Allocation in a Warmer, Drier Future; Groundwater; Long-Range Water Planning and Alternative Water Sources; Adjudication and Water Rights: Is there a Better, Faster Way?; Urban Conservation; Continued Viability of Traditional Ways of Life; Tribal Water; New Funding Streams for Infrastructure, Projects, etc.; Urban-Rural Interface: Bridging the Gap.

Lucy Moore, the Dialogue’s co-founder and skilled facilitator, guided the small group leaders and prepared a 12-page report summarizing the discussions, which were rich and dedicated to working out challenges collaboratively. You can access the report on the Dialogue’s web site nmwaterdialogue.org (from there, go to Notes and Updates and then click on Jump to Breakout Session). You can also access Lucy Moore’s summary of the meeting in the Green Fire Times, April 2019 (<https://greenfiretimes.com/green-fire-times-2019/>).

As you will see from the report, the Dialogue’s annual meetings have developed “a special culture based on based on mutual respect, appreciation for the needs of others, and commitment to open, inclusive, creative dialogue.” Thank you Lucy for your leadership.

Our thanks go out to departing board members Paul Tashjian, Janice Varela, Dennis Inman, and Ramon Lucero for outstanding service to the New Mexico Water Dialogue. And a warm welcome to new board member Patrick McCarthy.

Panel: Challenges Going Forward

Understanding economics through the lens of water

When Janie Chermak, research economist and chair of the economics department at UNM, arrived in 1995, one of the first things she heard was, “Albuquerque is not sitting on a lake of water.”

Now in 2019, she assesses the years since. “We can be proud that conservation is working in this state; we’re reducing the water that we use.” She names the San Juan-Chama diversion that has resulted in a rebounding aquifer, plus efforts underway to improve watersheds and reduce the impact of wildfire. She lists groups working together via the regional water plans, water sharing to alleviate shortage, efficiency gains and increased research across disciplines, understanding that water is not simply a hydrologic, engineering, legal or economic problem. “These are the things 25 years ago that we weren’t doing,” she says, “the days when engineers and economists looked at each other as aliens.”

Despite the bright spots, Chermak would say that New Mexico’s economic future is not entirely rosy. “In the paper this morning, we are 50th as a place to raise a family,” she begins. “What does that have to do with water? Water is a resource that is part of every development. We have water planning, economic development, education, environment, but these are looked at in terms of sequential consideration



rather than simultaneously.” She says that the economic viability of the state has to change 180 degrees. “We can’t be an economy of always depending on oil and gas. How do we include the environmental aspects of this? How do we include climate change? Can we start to have a larger dialogue that says we recognize that water is intrinsic to every piece of the economy of the state, and maybe say that our economic development is basically tied to water? Where we want to be in 10 years should depend on what we can do waterwise. How do we start to think about this differently beyond resource planning and state planning? Can we dialogue to conclude that water is the lifeblood of New Mexico and its economy, where we don’t have to say, we have so many dollars and we’ll continue if the price of oil stands up?” Chermak concludes that the Dialogue is important in answering these questions—a place for disparate groups together have become comfortable speaking.

From Canals to Climate Change: Radical Alternatives

Fred Phillips, Professor Emeritus of Hydrology, NM Institute of Mining and Technology, invites us to take the long view. He posits that our concern now is climate change, that we live in a different world, and must act accordingly going into the future.

He begins by saying that routine water administration has worked out pretty well, but that the actual application of prior appropriation is a legal fiction. It works well in small agricultural-oriented river drainages, but in basins like the big Rio

Grande, priority of right is almost impossible to establish. Phillips doesn’t think this basin can ever be adjudicated, that the actual diversion of water is only vaguely related to the water rights, that enforcement has never been attempted, “so we have water law that we work our way around.”

He names the big changes in New Mexico between 1905 and 2019: (1) We have a huge increase in population that is almost all urban and suburban. People have very different viewpoints and priorities than did the farmers who made up the majority in 1905. (2) There’s been a decline in the importance of agriculture as we place more value on the natural environment. And (3), we are seeing steady decline in water supply through climate change.

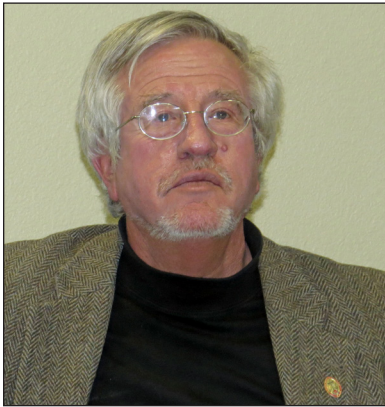
Phillips points out the ways water is actually managed: (1) Shared shortage: Everybody gets together and agrees that we don’t have enough to go around. (2) Conjunctive management: Limit groundwater pumping to live within the compact, which has no relation to the water laws. (3) External authority: The federal government threatens take over administration of water unless you protect the silvery minnow “and lo and behold water for the minnow was provided.” (4) Negotiated agreement allowing settled Navajo water rights.

But now Phillips names outcomes and situations that have transpired because of application of current water law “that suggest we may want to rethink things.” (1) A Bureau of Geology 2018 report on the expected lifetime of the Oglala aquifer in the vicinity of Clovis concludes the aquifer is gone. “It’s a textbook example of unsustainable development and it is perfectly legal and approved by prior appropriation.” (2) The San Augustin Plains groundwater application is denied multiple times by the State Engineer, not because it has violated New Mexico water laws; but because of no identified end user. “So if the company



GOING FORWARD—CONT. FROM PG. 3

owning this ranch is able to come up with a contract with a municipality to pay for the water,” Phillips says, “I don’t see that the State Engineer has any choice but to approve the application.” Finally, (3) the flow in the Rio Grande. A 2013 report by the Bureau of Reclamation shows a projected 50 percent decline in the flow of the Rio Grande from 1950 to 2100. “How is the doctrine of prior appropriation going to deal with this? Is the solution to keep



putting Band-Aids on the increasingly bleeding body? Or is there an alternative solution, which is to toss it out and start over with something new?”

Phillips realizes that to throw out the current code and start over is a radical alternative, so somebody has to put some proposals on the table. Some starting points for discussion: (1) Formally recognize that water is New Mexico’s limiting resource. Money, energy, population, and intellectual capital can be increased. Water is a zero sum game. (2) Strengthen the principal that water is a resource owned by the public as a whole. Strengthen the statement of the right of the public to manage and allocate water in the public interest. (3) Maintain private rights to water diversion but make temporary transfers (i.e. leasing) easier. “Temporary transfers can serve as a safety valve to reallocate water where it is needed in either times of excess supply or shortfall.” (4) Allocate water so as to achieve the societal goals of the population. Under current laws, transfers of water are invisible and will result in a state that most citizens probably consider undesirable; i.e., transfers from agricultural to urban interests, resulting in a state with not very much agriculture and lots of distributed population. “Instead

why not allocate water to the major sectors (agriculture, municipal, industry, and environment) to achieve the desired state?” (5) Finally, explicitly recognize that water supply may decline and make provisions for dealing with that. Don’t blindly expand consumptive demand, e.g. population, without agreeing beforehand how to redistribute the water. Any approach to shortage administration to achieve desired ends will rely on negotiation rather than cutting off people in an arbitrary way.

Phillips says that before any of these radical alternatives are ever going to happen, “there’s going to be a whole lot of screaming and yelling, so better keep applying bandages while discussions proceed.”

That box of chocolates

As a longstanding board member of the NM Mexico Water Dialogue from its earliest days to the present, Michael Benson continues to amuse and inspire. His presence at this year’s 25th anniversary meeting was no exception. His first big laugh came with description of his parents, his mother being Navajo and father German, thus, “Ich bin Navajo.”

Benson grew up speaking Navajo and going to every kind of school-- state, public, day, Catholic boarding, and then graduating from a prep school in Massachusetts, finally university in Connecticut. He said that in the late 1960s there was a big move to integrate schools, “so they sent some of us poor people over to the rich to enlighten them,” he chuckles along with the audience.

Benson grew up between Shiprock and Gallup steeped in tradition, his grandmother a big influence. In the late 60s and 70s, she with young Michael and others would protest against the City of Gallup’s opening sacred ceremonials to tourism, encouraging Natives to show them out of season, a deed considered sacrilege to traditional Navajos. Benson tells this story to relate how his protest activity those days would prove his credibility in his future efforts to promote the Navajo water development projects to Navajos suspicious of outsiders’ intentions. “Otherwise people would have thought Michael is selling us out,” he says.

Benson began working in the water management branch in 1992, became involved with the Western Network that

would later become the Dialogue, and became an invaluable part of the Navajo negotiation that settled San Juan River water rights, resulting in a settlement approved by Congress in 2010. “When we had to explain the projects that would be in the settlement, we went to meetings at the chapter houses twice a month, we educated the people with public information and public involvement.” He says without the Dialogue it wouldn’t have happened. He doesn’t think the Council would have approved it if it weren’t for the regional water planning program and implementation, which occurred because the Dialogue advocated for it with no other group advocating for it.

He’s only ever been a specialist, he says, never holding high position. He is fond of equating his experience with the movie character Forrest Gump who shows up at all momentous occasions. By example, he was recruited to work on the contract to build pipelines pursuant to the Navajo-Gallup water supply project. With only a degree in political science, “I stumbled into a bin of hydrologists and lawyers. They found me useful.”

Benson is convinced that the future is cooperation and gives the Dialogue a lot of credit, as well as New Mexico. “What a wonderful state--multicultural and very tolerant of different kinds of people. It’s been wonderful to work in the state and meet all the wonderful people who made the San Juan River water rights settlement project possible. We’re thankful for the NM Water Dialogue for pushing the idea of negotiation and collaboration instead of litigating. After all, when you go to court and there’s a court ruling, it’s like a box of chocolates, you never know what you’re going to get.”



Panel: Current Management Practices

"We're here to help"

Bureau of Reclamation's Dagmar Llewellyn began jokingly asking, "Why am I here?" The Dialogue meeting's only federal employee was able to do her scheduled talk despite the government shutdown dictating that non-essential federal employees stay home. Her colleagues who intended to be here did have to stay home.

Llewellyn started with some history. Reclamation goes back to 1902, formed to make the West hospitable where people could live and thrive. The Bureau provided the funding and engineering expertise to construct dams, allowing for the development of a stable water supply to the 17 western states and to increase irrigated acreage. The mission has evolved over the years. "Local entities make their own decisions, but as federal servants we can help," Llewellyn says. One way has been through collaboration and providing expertise and funding in science and investigations. "Funding assists with planning efforts and implementation," she says. "We can't change local water management policy but we can bring people together and support decision making with science and technology. We also provide opportunities for local entities to apply for grants, for example, for watershed management and restoration."

Collaborative effort is a hallmark of Basin Study programs, Llewellyn says. "These basin studies are organized around watersheds so we don't have to pay attention to political boundaries, and we can incorporate the ESA into the planning picture." One completed success has been an assessment of water supply and demand in the Santa Fe basin, which was completed in conjunction with the City of Santa Fe, and now, with funding under Title XVI, the city is embarking on a water reuse program. "Another study, to assess possible agricultural adaptations, is underway in the Pecos basin, in partnership with the Interstate Stream Commission. "The Pecos Basin Study was just about to be



released," she says. "Now there's a delay. New modeling requirements were added by the Department of Interior, so project completion is delayed once again." The Rio Grande Basin Study is currently being initiated with multiple project partners led by the MRGCD and joined by The Nature Conservancy, Audubon, Sandia Pueblo, the MRG Water Assembly, and the Union of Concerned Scientists. The study seeks to identify projected gaps between supply and demand and to develop resilience-building measures and adaptations. One of many adaptations under consideration is development of new water sources; e.g. deep brackish sources. She cites the Brackish Water National Desalination Research Facility in Alamogordo "that's available to researchers from anywhere. It



attracts many to New Mexico to research energy efficient ways to use brackish water resources that New Mexico has in abundance."

"We need a true adjudication"

Jim Dunlap is the long-time Commissioner for the Rural Water Users on the San Juan Water Commission.

Many also know Jim Dunlap as an Interstate Stream Commissioner for 15 years.

With decades of experience in rural water as a water operator plus currently as Commissioner for the Rural Water Users on the

San Juan Water Commission, Jim Dunlap is one of Dialogue's go-to persons for historical perspective about New Mexico's water future. He was instrumental in bringing New Mexico rural water policy up to speed starting in 1976 when the Safe Drinking Water Act was passed and rural communities had to learn how to test water samples for a list of potential contaminants—a list which has since grown from a few to over 100 affecting some 400 rural water districts scattered over New Mexico.

"It was a wonderful life being a water operator," Dunlap says. "I started because nobody else would do it." And that is understandable considering the lack, and inconsistency, of funding, the fights for water for infrastructure, and the competition with "population centers," as he calls the cities, going out of basin to get water, eyeing rural water rights for development. "Albuquerque had to go out of basin to get water. And it's going to have to happen again and again," Dunlap says. "Not that I'm in favor but water flows to money, population centers have the money."

Rural communities face uncertainty in what their future is going to be." Jim Dunlap was not impressed by calls today for re-writing and modernizing New Mexico's longstanding water law. "So I'm going to say, one of the biggest things facing rural water is a true adjudication of the water rights in the state of New Mexico. I hear people say 'throw out the water law'. When you go to changing the water law and the old Spanish laws that go back to the 1500s in the acequia associations, what are you going to do when we say we're going to change all that? Those people have depended on that. You can't do that. We need a true adjudication."

CURRENT MANAGEMENT—CONT. ON PG.6

GOING FORWARD—CONT. FROM PG. 5

He also chided the State Engineer’s Office for sitting on a water transfer application from irrigated land to a subdivision in the Kirtland valley west of Farmington that over the years has gone from 300 customers to 3,000, and apparently has still not been acted on, despite Dunlap’s ‘hol-lering.’ “We have to get adjudication or



we’ll never know what we got.”

Understandably, as commissioner for rural water users in the San Juan basin, Dunlap is very protective of the use of future and existing water rights and water resources of the basin’s member entities, which include Aztec, Bloomfield, Farmington, San Juan County, and the Rural Water Users Association, all of which receive their municipal water supply from surface water supplies. He claims that the Colorado River Drought Contingency Plan being negotiated among the upper and lower basin states, where all states are being asked to sacrifice, could hurt senior San Juan Basin users because of lack of adjudication. “So adjudication,” he repeats, “We’ve got to adjudicate. We got know how much water we got, we can’t get by without it.”

"We're going to be doing more with what we have"

The City of Albuquerque is not waiting around for disaster to fall, now or in the next 100 years, thanks to the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority (ABCWUA) with its myriad portfolios addressing climate change, drought, aquifer levels, wastewater reuse, and conservation. Rick Shean,

Water Rights Program Manager ABCWUA, gave us an upbeat report of what the Water Authority has accomplished and intends to accomplish as the decades go by. He showed us a graph displaying the stunning payoffs since the San Juan Chama Drinking Water Project went on line 10 years ago. “In 2008, we were almost 100 percent on groundwater,” Shean says. “Last year it was only 30 percent of our total use, so we’re able to use San Juan Chama for 70 percent of our drinking water.” And that’s good news for the aquifer. Twenty-five years ago, groundwater levels were going down. “When we started using surface water, groundwater levels started picking back up. While not so dramatic over the entire basin, there are areas where it’s gaining almost five feet per year for the last 10 years.”

Albuquerque’s Bear Canyon Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) project has also paid off with 1,425 acre-feet currently in storage and 300 acre-feet being recharged every year. Other initiatives described by Shean include a watershed management plan, a climate change portfolio of nine scenarios from worst case (high demand, low supply) to best (low demand, high supply), storm water capture, indirect potable reuse (water from the WWTPs into an environmental buffer), and continued conservation measures.

None of this has happened overnight. The Water Authority has been implementing water resource management strategies for the last 25 years starting in 1997. “This water management approach goes beyond the day-to-day or annual operations planned, and also beyond the 40-year plan that’s required of us,” Shean says. “Our most recent update was Water 2120 pushing our planning horizon out to a 100-year



horizon. Within that we incorporated climate change data. All the forecasting work that the Bureau of Reclamation did really helped inform what our supply would like into the future.”

Shean compliments Albuquerque residents for responding to the conservation messaging, the proof being that the Gallons Per Capita Per Day (GCPD) demand during the 1990s was 250; GCPD today is down to 130, the goal being to lower that to 110 in 20 years.

“And certainly a group like the Dialogue here was getting the conversation started 25 years ago,” he adds. On a practical local level, the Water Authority has worked to engage its customers, businesses and residents with education and economic incentives. “We’ve been pushing more efficient construction codes for actual structures, appliances, and fixtures, and trying to get those into the market here in the basin.”

Notably absent from ABCWUA’s 100-year plan is that the city is no longer going to depend on acquisition of pre-1907 water rights—the past gold standard for growth and development of urban centers to the detriment of the agricultural community. “Going forward we’re going to be doing more with what we have, being able to conserve or use less groundwater, have conjunctive strategies in place between ground and surface water, and innovate through reuse,” Shean concludes. “It’s been said that there’s no new water there out there. Certainly better management of what we have is where we see our success in the last 20 years and going forward.”

Shaping a Positive Future

In the Midst of a Clash of Paradigms

Melanie Stansbury, a newly elected representative to the New Mexico legislature, has a lifetime of experience in water, starting with her family's irrigation company, and advancing to seven years at the federal level, including the White House, the Senate Energy Committee, and Office of Management and Budget. Her graduate research centered on conflict resolution and policy governance around water. When she decided to move back home, a few people convinced her to run for office. And she won. "Now I have my own business, and also work part time as the senior advisor to the Utton Center, plus I'm working with non-profit organizations across the state to develop a collaborative watershed plan for the Rio Grande basin."

These days in New Mexico's water world she says we are in the midst of a clash of paradigms. "Old paradigm solutions for the 20th century were based largely on getting authorization for new large infrastructure projects and then finding ways to subsidize these projects through either federal or state dollars," she says. "It is still the dominant paradigm, especially when you look at bills being produced in Congress and much of what we do in our state. Our science and our understanding of watersheds moved ahead about two decades ago but our governance institutions haven't caught up with them yet."

So what does water management in the 21st century look like, she asks. The new paradigm is focused on managing water as a basin on a watershed scale, focused on integrated water management across sectors, placing priority on enhancing and restoring natural systems, "because these natural systems are our natural capital and support our communities."

Stansbury believes that now is the moment to embrace a new paradigm in wa-



ter management. She has three B's we need to go forward: be bold, brave, and thinking beyond the box. "How do we wholesale reform the systems that have served us in the 20th century but no longer make sense in the 21st, particularly as we're facing the impacts of climate change?" In New Mexico, she says we are most limited by our own imagination and our own lack of willingness to be brave in a policymaking space.

Outside of the box, she means looking outward at what other folks are doing in other states and in the world that are innovative. As example she relates the successful breaching of the Elwha dam in Washington State, brought about when federal, state, tribal, municipal, utility, irrigation, and fisheries people

came together to solve a problem at a watershed scale.

The next 25 years of ideal water governance falls across three categories, starting with changing the law. "There is no other sector in which we try to solve 21st century problems using 19th century ideas, and yet we accept this as the norm in water management," she says.

Second is the challenge of funding. "Because we are a poor state, our budget is small, and there's not a lot of wealth here in philanthropy to help with things that have been transformational in other places," she says, "which means that we have to be even smarter in putting together more collaborative funding packages, and stop competing with each other. We also have to look for help outside of New Mexico."

Finally, look for what can happen within the existing system, things like building integrated data systems and tweaks to existing water systems.

Three major actors that have to be engaged to support transformational change, according to Stansbury: a Round House that's well led and visionary, a legislature to do bold, brave and out of the box legislating, and all the stakeholders--including the utilities and the irrigation districts and tribes--at the table.

Melanie Stansbury concludes with a lesson learned in her years of policy work. "You can't give up. Eventually the stars will align. It may take decades but the stars will align."

Dutch Salmon In Memoriam

Dutch Salmon, a man of many passions and talents and a long history of defending New Mexico's wilderness, died this spring. We are fortunate that we all got to know and work with him as a member of the board of directors of the New Mexico Water Dialogue. He was also a former Interstate Stream Commissioner and New Mexico Game Commissioner. Dutch was a writer, book publisher, and bookstore owner as well as a fisherman and hunter and outdoorsman. For decades, he fought to defend the Gila River, including co-founding and chairing the Gila Conservation Coalition. We will miss him.

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Brief Report from the 2019 Legislative Session

For a full report on what happened to water bills this year, go to <https://nmlegis.gov/Publications/Session/19/SubjectIndex19.pdf>, page 58-59. Two important bills include SB 5 and HB 651.

SB 5, Interstate Stream Commission Membership Changes Pocket-Vetoed by the Governor

SB 5 sponsored by Sen. Wirth proposed to enable both the governor and the legislature to appoint members as well as to clarify their qualifications. The bill was passed by both the House and the Senate but was not signed into law by the governor.

HB 651, The Water Data Act Passed and Signed

The Water Data Act, a bipartisan bill sponsored by Rep. Melanie Stansbury, Albuquerque Democrat and Rep. Gail Armstrong, Republican from Magdalena, allows the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission and the New Mexico Bureau of Geology to develop a “modern, integrated approach” to collecting and sharing water data that comes from a variety of state, federal, local, tribal and nongovernmental organizations.