**Improving Water Governance and Planning in New Mexico**



**Presentation by the Governance Study Group**

**to the**

**Water and Natural Resources Committee**

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**Who Is the Governance Study Group?**

**The New Mexico Water Dialogue sponsored a statewide regional water planning meeting, July 2015 at Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge**

* **Broad regional water planning attendance:**
	+ 14 of the 16 water planning regions, including NMWD Board and ISC staff
* **Discussion of ISC’s current round of regional water planning**
	+ Positive and negative experiences documented in the facilitator’s report
	+ Substantial flaws in the process and product were reported
* **One outgrowth of meeting was the “Governance Study Group” (GSG)**
	+ All-volunteer group of nine water planners from around New Mexico
	+ Objective was to identify needed improvements to planning process

**Current Regional Water Planning Cycle**

* **Fundamental issues**
* Limited resources (time and dollars)
* Artificial and misleading technical approach
* Limited objectives (mostly project lists, rather than problem solving)
* Lack of participation incentives
* Insufficient participation – public and institutional
* Almost entirely state, rather than regional, process

**What Did GSG Do?**

* The group met ten times, researched water planning processes

 in other western states, and considered New Mexico experiences

* Identified six topic areas that need serious improvement in NM
* Developed and refined issue papers which described problems and

 recommended remedies for each topic area

* Key ingredients for the next round of water planning

 are in the summary of findings and suggested next steps

* The summary and six issue papers are on-line

 at NMWaterDialogue.org under “Water Governance”

* Met twice with ISC staff leadership,

 who acknowledged these issues and remedies, and encouraged us to proceed

**What Areas Need Improvement?**

* **Governance and institutional arrangements**
	+ Establish representative regional groups
	+ Recognize ongoing planning as a problem solving process
	+ Provide a negotiating table space
* **Strengthening linkages**
	+ Connections among plan levels, plan topics, and planning neighbors
* **Public participation**
	+ Create incentives for broad participation and more effective input
* **Tribal participation**
	+ Consultation and better collaboration for meaningful two-way dialogue
* **Technical information**
	+ Must be credible, relevant and address regional issues
* **Water rights adjudication**
	+ Plans must take ownership and claims into account

**What Initial Steps Might the Legislature Take?**

* **Support grassroots regional collaborations**
* **Honoring §72-14-43, recognize and support regional water planning entities**
* **Establish statewide working groups to refine the recommendations**

 **for state and regional water planning:**

* **Public participation and tribal participation**
* **Technical data**
* **Adjudication**

**The GSG would be happy to participate.**