Reports combined

**New Mexico Water Dialogue**

**Annual Meeting, January 12, 2017**

**“Toward a More Relevant State Water Plan”**

**Breakout Session #1:** How can the state water plan be relevant to tribes?

**Facilitator:** Sharon Hausam

**Main Themes:**

1. It is a challenge to integrate the state’s processes – for gathering data, obtaining participation, and governance – into traditional tribal timeframes and leadership structures.
2. The state water plan can be an opportunity to listen, respect, build relationships, share examples (case studies, especially those that demonstrate collaboration), and educate about tribal water. This process will need to recognize that each tribe is different.
3. The state water plan needs to protect water resources for all people – as a multi-cultural effort – and all generations, understanding water as a commons. A focus on money and jobs, alone, is misguided.
4. The state water plan must respect tribal sovereignty and water rights – at least as much as it is concerned about Texas’ water rights. Tribal water rights must be taken into account – if not adjudicated, then it must consider claims. The state water plan could be a springboard to negotiated settlements, and the design of alternatives to adjudication.

**Discussion Highlights**

* Values
	+ We need to find ways to give back, to the resource itself (the water, natural systems). There are traditional processes for giving thanks and giving back.
	+ The state water plan should translate our values towards water – the spiritual aspect – into our duty.
	+ The state water plan should incorporate this principle: take only what you will use, and let the rest be an abundance for others.
	+ We need to live together and work together to protect water resources – not have a mindset that focuses on jobs and money. We need to protect water for all people.
	+ The state water plan should acknowledge that New Mexico values water differently than other states do. Here, water is about quality of life, not just economic development.
	+ The plan needs to acknowledge water as a “commons,” and manage the resource, together, for the benefit of all.
	+ The state water plan – and everything we do with water – needs to take care to not sacrifice future generations.
* Tribal sovereignty and water rights
* We need to ensure that the state water plan respects tribal sovereignty. We should review the 2003 state water plan and see how it fell short.
* The state water plan should explicitly acknowledge the conflict between the state’s law of prior appropriation – the oppressor’s law – and tribal water use.
* The state should make tribal water rights a priority. The longer we wait, the harder it’s going to be to address this issue.
* The state and regions must take tribal water rights into account. They have to stop ignoring this. Otherwise, tribal water rights come as a surprise to non-tribal users in the future.
* The state water plan could refer to tribal claims for water – not just adjudicated amounts.
* The state water plan needs to recognize the value of tribal water settlements in providing certainty about water availability. This benefits non-tribal users.
* State water planning could be considered a springboard for negotiation/negotiated settlements of tribal water rights.
* The state water plan could be an opportunity to find alternative approaches to addressing tribal water rights.
* The tribal water rights adjudication process is stacked against tribes. The state and large users, such as energy users (e.g., Plains Electric) are the ones who come out ahead.
* The balance between tribal and non-tribal needs is important. There needs to be a mechanism for addressing this balance.
* Sharing information
	+ This is a huge opportunity. There is tremendous ignorance about tribal water rights, tribal plans, and tribal water codes. Tribes have a broad impact, but this is largely unrecognized. The state water plan could show how tribal needs and goals are related to the state’s water needs and goals. It could point to opportunities for working together.
	+ The development of the state water plan should include mechanisms for sharing information, rather than reinventing the wheel. For example, the Navajo Nation has information on its web page that could be downloaded and used in other plans. The state needs to take the time to look for this information.
	+ In addition to sharing case studies, the state water plan could incorporate materials from other reports or documents that demonstrate the value of water to tribes.
* Tribal processes
	+ Tribes are having to conform to the state’s idea of what a water plan should be.
* The water planning process (past processes and most recent regional water planning effort) was already designed, and it wasn’t on a tribal schedule. Tribes have not been prepared to provide input.
* The state’s water planning follows a formal process, in the political system – but that’s not how tribes are traditionally structured or how they operate.
* There could be a mechanism for incorporating tribal water plans into the state water plan. This process, and the state water plan, would need to acknowledge the individuality of each tribe.
* The state water plan should recognize tribes that have done a lot of work defining their goals, planning, and developing codes.
* Some tribes have their own water plans. The state water plan should acknowledge and respect them, and see how to integrate them.
* Tribes can develop their own water plans.
* Tribes need to look carefully at doing their own water plans.
* Tribes do not always have the capability in-house to participate effectively in water planning.
* Could an entity work directly with tribes to help them develop water plans (if they do not have them already)?
* Collaboration and communication
* People come together and move apart, but there are shared values. There are success stories between acequias and tribes, describing how we share the water. There’s an opportunity to offer case studies that demonstrate this sharing.
* The state water plan could be an opportunity to work together, to share. It would help to have a group that is consistent, maintained over time.
* The key points of contact at the regional level need to include tribal representatives. Contact should not just be made to steering committee chairs with the expectation that they will distribute information to tribes.
* The state needs to get over its prejudice against tribes.
* There needs to be more cross-cultural communication.
* The state water plan should be about mutual respect and listening (between tribes and others). There needs to be an approach that allows each individual tribe to be heard.
* Partnerships are important, especially for specific projects.
* Specific elements of the plan
* The state water plan could look at water conservation, on all levels – including erosion control. The plan could look at introduced plants, such as salt cedar.
* Consider the range of ecological zones and approaches to effective management in each of them.
	+ Youth: It’s important to work with the younger generation, to have a multi-generational process (including using social media). The state water plan could consider a “7th generation” approach, and allow that future voice to guide the plan.
* Implementation: The state water plan needs to be able to be implemented effectively.

**Breakout Session #2:** How can state water planning be made useful (through policy
guidance, methodology, modeling, data, etc.) to local and regional planning
efforts?

**Facilitator(s):** John Brown and Jason John

**Total participants in both rounds:** 13

**Main themes:**

1. Incentives are needed to assist location participation that will in turn benefit SWP
2. Funding is needed for planning, education and water system needs. Funds need to be used efficiently and effectively.
3. State Water Plan needs to be more proactive and ongoing, including better acess to useable data sets.
4. Encourage continued participation of regional planning groups.
5. Regional and State water plans can be used to assist in funding for more local planning, education programs, policies and projects, systems, and regionalization. Additional funding will be needed and attached to SWP

**Discussion highlights:**

* Education, communication, involvement with communities and local water systems:
	+ Why should they participate in regional or state water planning?
	+ Often inherent mistrust of operators
	+ Feels as if state’s responsibility is all “dumped on the locals”; state/federal presence feels oppressive
	+ Process for water planning needs to be clear and understood by communities
	+ Locals need incentives to participate; need to address their issues; need funding to participate
* Regional boundaries
	+ Should be hydrological, makes more sense
	+ Overlapping supplies across regional boundaries
	+ Should reduce number of regions
* Relationship between state and regional water plans
	+ Policies seem to be in conflict
	+ Could have site specific policies for local areas
	+ Need to identify water supply problems
	+ SWP needs to identify solutions
	+ Some participate in regional planning but not state planning;
* Data/information for State and Regional water planning
	+ Acequias have dealt with shortages, have much to offer others, including SWP in ways of adapting
	+ WRRI, lot of data on recharge, storage, etc., useful for SWP
	+ Look at other states and countries
	+ Need method so that anyone can access water data
* Need a plan to guide development of municipal plans; have to perform audits, etc.
* Need prioritization of needs to help with decisions
* Some local regions in constant litigation over water issues

**Breakout Session #3:** How can we engage the public at the regional and state levels? What kinds of outreach and education programs are available to reach people? What support exists for these efforts?

**Facilitator(s):** Dael Goodman, Virginie Pointeau

**Total participants in both rounds:** 13

**Main themes:**

1. It’s about building relationships and trust: work from the bottom up instead of top-down; have your stakeholders pick the steering committee based on specific criteria
2. Plan ahead: think about logistics that matter and give yourself plenty of planning time before the event; consider timing, location, naming of the event, accessibility, audience
3. Permanent platform: need a forum for talking to leadership and decision-makers; “you can’t talk to a city councilor if you don’t have a councilor!”
4. Educate children: also a path to reach adults

**Discussion highlights:**

* How to bridge the communications gap?
	+ May be language barrier, also science vs. consumer language barrier
	+ Use stories that people can relate to
	+ Need to get the draft plan to the community, and ask them for their priorities
	+ Water festival at Las Palomas with parade and kids activities; booths at fairs
	+ Reach parents through their children; focus on education of young
	+ Need advertising in papers and on radio, tv, flyers; need to spend money on early outreach; make it sexy
	+ Fear-driven initial momentum, like Ogallala Aquifer crisis
	+ Be clear in outreach: What is the problem we need to address? How can we deal with this problem?
	+ Outreach needs to be tangible, tactile and obvious, connected to everyday life
	+ Field trips, include legislators; pull people out of normal work environment
	+ Publications aimed at lay people
	+ Know who your audience is, who you’re trying to engage
	+ Have indicators to measure success
* Permanent and continuous planning process and platform
	+ If you ask people to participate in something that starts and stops, they will drop out
	+ Include importance of water and planning in school curricula; teacher certification programs
	+ through relationship building, “learn how to drive a tractor”,
	+ have organic, bottom up process based on criteria for picking steering committee members
	+ importance of logistics, careful planning for event; be aware of your audience; thinking about timing, location, language, etc.
	+ create direct connection between planning and funding (link Water Trust Board and ISC)
	+ Commit to longterm stewardship;
* Support for regional water planning
	+ Lack of state support for regional water planning; big difference from 2004 to present effort – reflected in level of public participation, no money for outreach means that agriculture and rural representation goes down
* Local sustainability
	+ Off the grid, collect own water off roof
	+ Food insecurity big problem

**Breakout Session #4:** How can we balance water protection and economic development? What can we learn from the Dakota Access Pipeline experience? (Michael Benson)

**Facilitator(s):** Michael Benson

**Total participants in both rounds:** 16

**Main themes:**

1. How do we maintain a good quality of life while conserving (and consuming) the earth’s resources?
2. Standing Rock protest is symbolic or regular people standing up to big money, corporations, politicians; opportunity for people to learn
3. Economic development and water are necessarily bound together. The task is to thoroughly examine and understand the proposed project and assure that negative impacts are mitigated
4. NEPA requires communications, but the process may have been flawed. Some federal agencies view public information and comments as just a box to check off without since outreach. People at Standing Rock may not have been fully informed of facts.

**Discussion highlights:**

* Protests:
	+ Work in your own backyard first, to clean up problems, pollution
	+ Protesting is a way of learning to advocate, speak up
	+ Protesters at Standing may not be clear on facts, protesting Keystone, other grievances
	+ Can protest be useful in balancing water protection and economic development? Can point to flaws in NEPA
	+ Can be conflicts between tribal priorities and environmental positions – power lines
	+ Need to listen to those who are protesting, learn from them
* Problems of the modern age:
	+ Materialism on the rise
	+ Spirituality is suffering
	+ Reservations have become sacrifice areas because cities didn’t want certain kinds of exploitation of resources and waste
	+ Need water for economic development; if econ develop needs quality water, they may protect the water; we need to provide industries with a reliable water supply
	+ Not focusing on renewables
* This topic seems to be more accessible to non-professionals, non-technically oriented participants
* Even in best public information process, some people have views that will not change, and some will always complain about being left out
* Standing Rock:
	+ Army Corps followed NEPA process, obligated to inform everyone, consider alternatives, made decision but president overruled
* Communications
	+ Process can be flawed
	+ Some people don’t care about facts anyway
	+ Need to examine industry use of water and communicate with communities
	+ How things are communicated is important—communication is everything
* How to balance resource development and environmental protection? Los Alamos a tragic example

**Breakout Session #5:** How can we involve youth in regional and state water planning?

(Aaron Chavez)

**Facilitator(s):** Aaron Chavez

**Total participants in both rounds:** 12

**Main themes:**

1. Barriers for youth to participate: water planning groups and the Dialogue can seem like elite groups; use social media, “meet up”
2. Listen to young people: make it relevant for them
3. Have youth on Dialogue board: provide mentorship, give them authority, let them influence direction and activities
4. Look at models: ABQ water authority does a lot of outreach to schools – every 4th grader has a field trip to learn about water
5. Make water issues cool: STEM is making efforts

**Discussion highlights**

* Education:
	+ Incorporate water planning as part of education curriculum; needs to be adopted by State Education; water planning cuts across many fields and disciplines, will be useful for multiple requirements; make water issues a requirement in curriculum; need standards and benchmarks
	+ Partner with schools and talk about topics and collaboration.
	+ Role playing – use plan in classroom
	+ Standardized testing may be hurdle, obstacle to new curriculum ideas
	+ Get kids outside to learn
	+ Rio Rancho Water Fairs, ABQ water authority program takes every fourth grader on field trip to learn about water issues
* Involve youth during planning
	+ Internships and hands on experience in water issues and planning; many older people in NM who want to mentor youth
	+ May be interested but don’t know how to get involved
	+ Use social media, Facebook, “Meet Up” website where an activity is proposed and people join in
	+ Board involvement: have seat(s) on board (including Dialogue) dedicated to young voices; create “mini board” of young people to explore water issues within local government; incorporate mentorship and internships
	+ Youth attract more youth; need to get ball rolling
* Outreach
	+ Flyers in law school; newsletters with section for youth
	+ Look for models in other states
	+ Summer programs and internships; pay is a big incentive
	+ Make water cool; expand our horizons

**Breakout Session #6:** Does the Technical Data Platform address the needs for a defensible groundwater data base to defend its sustainability in each of the regions?

**Facilitator(s):** Don Diego Gonzalez

**Total participants in both rounds:** 14

**Main Themes:**

* There is a need for definitive groundwater data to defend the needs for domestic systems in particular
* State water plan needs to develop groundwater policy on data – how it can be collected in order for it to be defended.
* Data – how to use it to reflect examples for successes. Some project examples were discussed as successful uses. Need to educate by example.
* By developing database and projecting problems, data can be used to avert a crisis. What’s being presented in plan is too general. It doesn’t identify and focus on hotspots. It’s a defensive platform.

**Discussion highlights:**

Groundwater Policy

The session began with introductions and fundamental understanding of groundwater from each participant; there was a pleasant understanding from each except for one who was interested in contaminated groundwater in his community.

I introduced the session by reporting that too much is said about surface water and the fact that it is manageable because of the wealth of data that defines storage and demand. Not the case for groundwater where the technical platform does not address local of the local source of groundwater.

All agreed that there is no data that supports up to 50% of the demand and regions that are in a moderate to extreme crisis mode. The data reported applies to regional trends showing declines and increases on a large regional scale rather than focusing on local demands.

Good discussion on “what is groundwater” and the need to fundamentally define region by region the system as it exists and to present the same to our legislatures who the group felt are not understanding of the importance of this domestic source of water, exceptions are those in and around Bernalillo County.

This scientifically oriented group expressed the need to add the geo-chemical component to the analysis of groundwater to define optimum management of this water

Policy needs to originate with this group to define what is needed and how to acquire defensible data on groundwater; push it through the legislature

Groundwater Data

Session began with introductions from each and their interests which were varied and provided various opinion on the need for defensibility of groundwater data. Costs are well defined for the collection of surface water but those for groundwater are lacking.

Observations are that annual costs for surface water are acceptable by those federal agencies involved in their collation and analysis; groundwater however are not specifically define as the data is limited and the need for monetary support to expand this data base is important to defend the development and maintenance of urban and rural systems; in NM rural systems are important to maintain the infrastructure that the counties are responsible for.

The use of micro vs macro was an illustration of the defensibility for improvement of water systems that are depleting many groundwater aquifers in NM. The Technical Platform is of no use to local problem-need to identify where the stresses are.

Remarks and thoughts by the participants included Bureaucratic obstacles (what are they?), what is everyone doing? Awareness-how do we accomplish this to the constituents, leverage this science into careers, coordination-who is trying to accomplish this? Enhancing the understanding of groundwater, the need for each region to illustrate their case studies-successes and failures, impacts of drought (important one), is there really interest in the process by our governing bodies? Averting crisis can be accomplished with defensible groundwater data, who are the critical regions?

Final observation: The Technical Data Base does not target the hot spots!

Needed more time-ddg

**Breakout Session #7:** What role can the state water plan play in resolving inter-basin transfer issues?

**Facilitator(s):** Eileen Dodds

**Total participants in both rounds:** 12

**Main themes: (round one)**

* SWP can act as a framework to provide talking points for every transfer request.
* Consider a tax by the region losing water on the region receiving the water which will enable the losing region to buy back some of the water for their citizens.

**Discussion highlights**

* Look at what other states have done concerning inter-basin water transfers. Appropriate their ideas which could work in New Mexico.
* Look for opportunities to move the jobs and developments to the water
* The Legislature lacks the political will to develop new statutes.
* SWP should be more useful in guiding policy to determine alternatives to transfers.
* There is not enough accurate or current information on groundwater basins in New Mexico.

“Be thoughtful and mindful of criteria concerning both ‘move-from’ and ‘move-to’ areas. There have to be specific ways to manage the process.”

No anti-speculation statute exists. No public welfare statute exists. Tremendous pressure in poor states by developers and the state governing bodies for tax-based growth, and it’s at the expense of rural areas. BUT, because “we can”, should we keep encouraging the development ? Can the environment reasonably support the growth? How long before the supplies fail completely ? Develop a forum to SOLVE the problem rather that fighting and failing to compromise. Need funding to aid conservation in rural areas.

**Main themes (round two)**

* Need to deal with the disparity between hydrological and political-administrative boundaries.
* Maintain the reality that there is no clear linkage between “wet-water” and “paper-water”

**Discussion highlights**

* SWP needs a better process for developing and evaluating the technical data to be used in decision making.
* SWP should require and provide neutral bodies for settlement agreements, thereby avoiding litigation.
* The Legislature needs to make new policies.

There should be better ways to determine where, when, and how water is available. SWP should be ready to make specific decisions on transfer issues. The physical and hydrological stability of the “transfer-from” region must be maintained. Regional plans don’t have teeth or directives. Legislature should create “common-sense” policies NOW. Groundwater requires separate rules from surface water.

**Breakout Session #8:** How can we promote the implementation of the state and regional water plans? What are some useful tools, like maps, etc.?

**Facilitator(s):** Janice Varela and Simeon Herskovitz

**Total participants in both rounds: 13**

Main themes:

1. Need to have at the outset, funding sources identified and listed during regional planning process; - regionally. Communication between different stakeholders, including tribes, about how to identify projects and prioritize funding when multiple stakeholders are involved
2. Important for regions to have structure – maybe central clearing house or committee – and an ongoing process to prioritize implementation of projects, educate people and officials about priorities that serve multiple stakeholders; assure there is separate source of funding that serves multiple interests and stakeholders.
3. There is a need to better identify regional priorities, or prioritize goals within regions and at the state level.; it is essential to identify which entity/person/stakeholder would be best to implement each priority to make sure individual goal is achieved
4. There is a need for an ongoing body like the steering committee in each region to track progress, success of implementation of projects to reassess priorities going forward; important not to stop and start the water planning process

**Discussion Highlights:**

* Funding
	+ Plan needs identified source of funding for implementation
	+ Need to reform entire funding process
	+ Confusion about responsibility, authority of Water Trust Board
	+ Look to USDA, and where utilities get their water
* Prioritization of projects in regional plans
	+ Should be focus of plan – both state and regional
	+ No consensus on priorities in steering committee
	+ Role of Water Trust Board – only fund priority projects?
	+ Steering committees need training/structure for prioritizing
	+ Steering committees should continue to meet and track the priorities, promote implementation
	+ Understand that different regions and locales will have different priorities
	+ Look for the common values from all parts of state
* Implementation
	+ Get local officials to include RWP in their processes
	+ Determine who is the appropriate manager/authority to implement each priority –“Who is going to get it done?”
	+ Colorado State Water, Chapter 10, good model for measurable objectives
	+ Albuquerque’s Water Conservation Program also good model
	+ Need to measure how we are doing
	+ Use water supply and water use numbers to measure if goals are, or are not, being met
	+ Need separate, additional pot of money to support multi-stakeholder processes, like the Steering Committee
* Tribal participation
	+ Need to make greater effort to engage tribes, and do it continuously
	+ Tribes facing powers like mining companies with a lot of clout
* Steering committee process
	+ Lack rules about representation, voting
* Communication
	+ Should be focus of plan
	+ Need message that unifies all interests, from agriculture to utilities and everything in between
* Need to look at what we have already accomplished

**Breakout Session #9:** Should the state water plan address environmental and cultural issues, and if so how? What is the role of the Public Welfare Statement in the regional water plans?

**Facilitator(s):** Joaquin Baca

**Total participants in both rounds:** 12

**Main Themes:**

1. Public welfare should be clearly defined and based on local values to provide protection for those values.
2. Public welfare should balance issues; to include financial, cultural, and environmental.
3. Public should have a sufficient time and resources to provide input to ISC & others.
4. Environmental, cultural heritage, agricultural issues need to be more clearly defined both locally and in statutes. Local values should be respected, protected and awareness raised.
5. The planning statutes should take into account other language, such as the Natural Heritage Conservation Act.
6. Funding should be made available to bring more stakeholders into the process along with recognition of Tribal Sovereignty.

**Discussion highlights:**

* Define “Public Welfare”
	+ Approach based on local values, bring in stakeholders from each group. Protect the values of the local folks. Not always recognized.
	+ Defined by each community.
	+ Colorado took 2 years to define public welfare; NM should have had enough time. Next round of planning, more time should be spent by locals before moving forward.
	+ Public welfare needs to address more than just financial interests.
* Project focus v. public welfare focus:
	+ Last round Public Welfare was not taken into account, mostly project focus.
	+ Except in Taos, much more emphasis on public welfare, committee came out to stop water transfers, like Top of the World farm transfer to satisfy *Aamodt* water rights suit downstream.
* Funding for public welfare planning:
	+ More funding should be provided for public welfare planning and not as much for consultants. Local governments felt threatened.
	+ Unpaid legislature makes it difficult to advocate for important issues.
	+ Small scale projects should be incorporated into funding process, (Homeowner level).
	+ Can’t assume taxpayers should or will pay for individual needs
* Environmental and Cultural issues:
	+ Often based on Public Welfare.
	+ How were environmental issues addressed for folks not at planning meetings. What does that mean? What do u do about it?
	+ Environmental issues need to be addressed in a clearer manner and in longer terms. Protections should be addressed.
	+ How is this represented in the end product?
* Tribal perspective:
	+ Native side: use of water as part of a ceremony. Section E, Native Water, does not talk about environmental or water usage in terms of how native values.
	+ Cultural perspectives and definitions should be defined in terms of who it is addressed. From a pueblo standpoint, culture is often guarded due to historic events. Agriculture is considered cultural along with other issues.
* Agricultural values:
	+ As a state that is historically agricultural based, where does Ag fit into the planning process? Not listed in the documents.
	+ Left to regions, MRG called out agriculture but other areas did not. Other states recognize ag is important.
* Subregions:
	+ Each region is often broken in to subregions with different values.
	+ Example: Middle Rio Grande region broken into subregions, split up because different values rural vs urban. Protect their way of life.
* National heritage conservation Act. Melding together of language that respects those languages.
* Participation in planning process:
	+ How comfortable is the environment for folks to be involved in the process, (how inviting for all stakeholder)?
	+ Open to all but due to funding it has not been as inclusive.
	+ Agency folks get paid to be there and so have a larger representation.
	+ Focus groups need to be paid to get represented.
	+ Tribal consultations took place but the state approach did not match the desired tribal approach.
	+ Groups should be created to help open up discussions and allow for in depth dialogue, for example: Broken by group farmers only, tribes only, conservations only, etc.
* Implementation goals should include broken down into addressing issues.
* Boundaries should be based on watershed not on political boundaries.

**Breakout Sessions 10-12: Making the State Water Plan More Useful and Credible**

**Facilitators**: Three tables led by Kelsey Rader and Hannah Riseley-White, Heather Balas, and Angela Bordegary

**Main Themes:**

**Table 10:**

1. Does the state water plan really drive state water policy?
2. Where is agriculture in the document? (Section 2 and 3)
3. More information needed on the strategic water reserve. How does it work?
4. Because there isn’t a statute, we lack the tool to implement water reform
5. Plan needs a true water quality chapter
6. Redesign regional boundaries along watersheds
7. Focus on a few issues in each iteration of plan; don’t be bound by table of contents
8. Need legislative changes to water planning laws
9. Request that regional and state water plans be web accessible and able to be corrected

**Table 11:**

1. Need continuity around efforts in planning; regional groups need to be ongoing, meet regularly; weigh in on Water Trust Board decisions
2. Implementation: more than checking a box; needs to support on ground efforts
3. Structure and process need to be clearer; water plan could establish more clarity on the relationship between state and local water plans and planning processes; help set statewide goals, educate decision-makers; more coordination with other state agencies
4. Data is critical in local and regional water planning

**Table 12:**

1. Need state water plan is interactive, not sit on a shelf
2. Need strong foundation in the science of water supply as part of state water plan; not just water use or water rights; need support from WWRI
3. Need consistent funding
4. Need to set top priorities, with or without consensus
5. Unify and increase coordination between the 16 regions
6. State Plan needs to provide vehicle/method for redrawing water planning regions

**Discussion Highlights:**

***What are the biggest drawbacks or limitations of the current state plan?***

* The water plan sits on a shelf.
* The state water plan is currently on a shelf.
* It’s still not clear what state water planning is.
* The regional and state plans have been useful in terms of compiling information, but they don’t really affect policy.

***Plan Design and Process***

*Plan Format*

* The state water plan should be a living, open document, kept updated with new information as it becomes available.
* The state water plan should be more interactive.
* Mistakes in the state water plan should be corrected to build credibility.
* The plan should focus on a few issues in each section – but which ones?
* Make the next plan live and interactive. Keep it off the shelf.
* Make the new plan interactive, not another static book.
* Maybe the plan should be 5 pages instead of 80 pages.

*Plan Content*

* We need to set clear goals for the plan. Is it for infrastructure? Conservation? Narrow the scope.
* To have a good water plan, we need a clear understanding of our actual water supply/availability. The NM WRRI budget shows we are “mining” our water and on average we’ve used 780,000 acre feet between 1975-2010 that was not recharged.
* It would be helpful to have scientifically sound aquifer mapping as part of the statewide water plan and regional maps. It appears that there is some recharge but not much. New Mexico Tech is trying to work on this.
* The first plan [regional or state?] referenced water depletions as a metric, but that wasn’t continued/maintained.
* The state plan needs to compile resources, including water budgets for each basin. Look at the 2002 water atlas.
* The statewide water assessment is in the third year of study, with numbers for recharge, evapotranspiration, and aquifer recharge. The most current data from that study should be applied to the state water plan.
* The state water budget should be part of the state water plan.
* The plan should use scenarios or at minimum increase awareness of the variability of water (drought years and wet years).
* The state water plan could determine per capita use for the different regions. What is a minimum per capita use?
* The state water plan should be founded on strong science and information on water supply –
* not just use – and at the statewide level.
* You have to have credible data in the state water plan. When people are involved in gathering data, they believe it is credible – so let them be involved and educate them.
* The importance of agriculture should be apparent in the state water plan.
* There should be a chapter on water quality in the state water plan.
* The state water plan needs to address the problem of demands exceeding availability and how to deal with this, and acknowledge that conservation comes from people not using water.
* The state water plan needs to address the “use it or lose it” problem, and reward conservation.
* The state water plan needs to look at inter-basin interests and conflicts. It would be helpful if there were common elements among different plans, and if the plans were done by basin.
* New Mexico has a strategic water reserve, publicly-held water rights dedicated to keeping rivers flowing, but it is not clear how it is being implemented. The state water plan could recommend a policy for the reserve.
* The state water plan has to reflect all the differences in values around the state.

*Planning Boundaries*

* The issues in the state water plan should be divided by basin, not by region.
* The regional boundaries should be redesigned.
* All the regional water plans are different. Going forward this could be determined based on hydrologic basin, and determination made on the hydrologic delineation.
* There are concerns about the current structure – but let’s look at them again by basin when we look at the state plan.
* Having fewer regions would be so much more helpful.
* The boundaries have a level of complexity – surface water and groundwater boundaries not the same. Colorado has some counties that are split, but that’s okay.

*Water Planning Process*

* State water planning should be structured around how it can be a process and not an end goal.
* The steering committees need to have some continuity. The ones that have continued to meet have a sense of ownership of their plans, and have built trust.
* There needs to be continuity in the planning process to create opportunities to develop relationships. Continuous meetings – monthly, quarterly, or even biannually – would be helpful.
* There need to be credible representatives for the regions.
* We need more clarity in the structure and process for the plan.
* A consensus process should be required.
* We need to have creative discussion, and be willing to think outside existing boxes.
* There need to be longer time periods to review drafts and provide input on state water planning. The timelines need to be longer and be clearly established to provide more credibility.
* There needs to be a plan that guides the process – but also a process that guides the plan.
* The water plan was not really reviewed. We should be required to do a town hall to discuss it and have experts to answer questions.

*Coordination and Communication*

* Link the regional plans to the state plan. No more separate processes.
* Connect the state plan in a meaningful way with the regional plans.
* There should be regional plans and a coordinator on the state level.
* Use the state plan to unify and increase coordination between the 16 regions.
* Regional plans need to be tied to the state plan, or people won’t take part in the state water planning process.
* Look at the scale of different activities. We don’t have to get in the weeds on the state plan because we did that with the regional plans.
* There needs to be regional coordination to address compact issues.
* Much of the ongoing work on water issues happens at the regional level, so there need to be linkages between the states and regions to ensure clarity, continuity, and guidance. This needs to happen both top-down and down-top.
* There should be more communication from the state.
* The state water planning process should keep planners informed about what’s going on in other regions. There could be an advisory panel that reports from the regions to the state or the Water Trust Board, perhaps with smaller roundtables and then one big roundtable.
* There need to be representatives from different regions that engage with the state, to help with the state water plan.
* The process of communication between the regions and state should be more face-to-face and communicative, and less technologically-based.
* There should be more intra-regional communication.
* The state water plan has to reflect all the differences in values around the state.

*Public Involvement*

* Some people are not very happy about the public process used in the latest round of regional water plans.
* There needs to be a sense of public ownership of the state water plan. Providing access to information helps create this ownership.
* There needs to be funding for water planning participation, so people aren’t always volunteering their time.
* People don’t understand the state water plan. What is the plan for outreach – what is the plan for the plan? The only thing many people know to do is go to a meeting – but why?
* The planning process should go to each county and have a town hall on water planning for the future, with experts at each one.
* The planning process should incentivize participation, since volunteers are overtaxed. What do people get from participating? Can they get assistance for their future efforts?
* Future state water planning processes should let people know the parameters of public involvement, and create expectations.
* To ensure equality in the interests represented in regional water planning, there need to be different sector and interest representatives, but it’s important to not just “check the box” to say a group is represented.
* Start slow and learn from each other. Take more time getting background from the different groups in the room.
* Consider state planning meetings if they are organized by connectivity (by watershed or basin) or by water supply. Communicate that well.
* People need some education about how the data in the plan was developed.
* Someone in each region could be educated about state plan, almost a liaison to their communities, and explain “here’s how you can get involved.”
* We need to know what the purpose is, have an understanding and clear concept of what the state water plan is and what it does.

***Plan Effectiveness***

*Overall Effectiveness*

* The state water plan needs to be more than just a document to meet statutory requirements, to “check the box.”
* We need a state water plan that’s useful and applicable, and is actually statewide.
* We would like to see how this plan could be useful.
* Change the regional and state water planning laws to provide authority, “teeth.”
* We need fact-based planning that’s integrated from region to region and approved, implemented, and enforceable.
* We would like to see some level of state implementation of a plan.

*Goals, Objectives, Actions, and Monitoring*

* The state water plan should define goals that determine actions.
* The state water plan should describe the kinds of activities that will be happening in the state, so the regions and individual projects can match the goals in the state plan.
* There needs to be language that creates tools for implementation and for measuring success – measure, monitor, or meter.
* The plan could have incentives, measurable objectives.
* The state water plan should keep an ongoing list of goals that are met in each region, to show progress (as an appendix).
* Recommendations – get them into some sense of priority and track whether they happen.
* Track the results of the plan – is it having the impact that we desire? Are we meeting objectives?
* Performance measures are important because you can use them as a tool to relate to the legislature.
* Measurable goals can be defined through input from the regions and on the state level. There need to be indicators.
* Look at the existing water plans. Is there connectivity by the goals of the plans?

*Policy*

* The state water plan can be a tool to inform law/policymakers about the water policy and priorities of the state.
* The state water plan should drive state water policy.
* The state water plan should provide a consistent statement for developing water policy.
* Think about what Texas did – they wrapped up the regional water plans and used them to inform the legislature about the focus for policy and funding.
* We need people involved that are tied to the state legislature, and links to different chains of command, so that the plan can useful.
* The regional water plans do have language that could affect policy.

*Projects*

* The state water plan should demonstrate support for projects.
* We need to set priorities. How do you pick which water projects to do?
* No vague wishlists.

*Prioritization*

* The biggest drawback to the previous process was that there was too much consensus. Everyone knew each other and wanted to be respectful, so the list of actions just got too big. There were no priorities. Be collegial and respectful – but set priorities.
* Each region should be prioritizing its projects. This process helps build relationships.

*Coordination*

* There need to be better connections within the state – particularly between OSE and NMED - to support both planning and implementation.
* There is intersection between state water plan and other agencies on activities – but the agencies are not working together. Agencies may have resources to address issues but they are not collaborating/sharing dollars.
* We need to think more about NMED and water quality, and get their input. This also has a nexus with energy and land use.
* To make the state water plan more credible and useful for state and local agencies there should be cross-collaboration and input from those agencies.

*Responsibility*

* ISC is in charge of water planning since their big charge is delivering water to other states. ISC should own this conflict of interest.
* Regions need to feel empowered to do something.

*Implementation: Project Funding*

* Fund implementation of the plan, not just writing the plan.
* There needs to be more funding to implement projects.
* The plan should identify funding sources.
* Planners are really good and spending other people’s money. They are identifying projects that others need to fund. How do we make sure those dollars are well-spent?
* Tie funding of water projects to the state plan. But make it real.
* The state water plan should use information from the regions to inform funding decisions.
* The infrastructure and capital requests in the regional water plans give those plans “teeth,” make them meaningful. But there’s nothing to hold the state to implementation, so we don’t know if we can make the plans happen.
* Water Trust Board money is not tied to the state plan, and it should be.
* There needs to be an even spread of funding through the Water Trust Board, to all regions, or it should go to something really important that benefits all regions. The Water Trust Board is now more political in terms of its fund allocation. Maybe there could be a formal group that represents the regional plan projects and be a champion for those plans in front of the Water Trust Board. This could lend purpose to the regional groups. There could also be a mechanism to distribute funding through the regional water planning groups. Sometimes projects end up in contention, and some regions feel they are pitted against each other. Projects do need to be credible. The state could also be providing more education about other sources of funding, so that there is less competition for Water Trust Board funds.
* Maybe delve into public-private partnerships to fund key projects. Consider drafting parameters that can be followed.
* Restructuring regions so there are fewer could be tied to capital outlay reform.
* A lot of the local public bodies (like MRGCD) don’t necessarily know the regional or state plan goals and they could be helping implement if they know.
* Use the plan as an educational platform that helps everyone understand needs and how they can help.
* Meetings tied to decisions about funding would have a real purpose, and not be a waste of time.

*Funding Planning*

* Water planning must be a priority for the legislature.
* There needs to be more funding for regional water planning.
* Water planning should be consistently funded, not off and on.

***Additional Comments on Regional Water Planning***

* Some of the facilitators (such as Amy Ewing [sp?]) for the regional water plans were very good.
* The Eastern NM regional plan included “waters of the USA” as well as endangered species issues.
* Some things went really well regionally; different interests worked together. A city was buying water rights. People mistakenly thought city was buying rights to account for growth. This was not true. There was really productive learning when they realized they had this fundamental misunderstanding.
* We went through a lot of decisions in our plan – and met about 60% of the plan goals by accident.

***And, did you know?*** *Andrew Erdmann tells us the watershed boundaries actually align almost spectacularly to the Catholic diocese boundaries. The church’s boundaries naturally evolved around shared supply. So – we try to separate church and state, but the church may have gotten it right!*