**State and Regional Water Planning**

**Work Plan for**

**FY2015 and FY2016**

Executive Summary

The water planning work program for fiscal year 2015 continues the work plan approved for fiscal year 2014 as amended in September 2013.

The Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) is implementing the revised planning approach to update all 16 regional water plans and the State Water Plan over a two-year timeframe. State funding was awarded or otherwise provided this fiscal year to the ongoing regional and state water planning program as needed to stay on track with the overall goal of updating all the water plans in a two-year timeframe.

The revised planning approach underway consists of two parallel work tracks: 1. Completing a “common technical platform” for all the regions (updating the regional water supply and demand data for each region that also takes into account legal and water management changes, and 2. Developing functional regional steering committees made up of each region’s key water stakeholders to identify and discuss their respective water challenges and how to address them through policies, programs, or projects.

Background

When the ISC received a legislative appropriation for FY14, a Planning Committee of the ISC was formed to help guide the planning approach. The Planning Committee developed an approach to update all 16 regional water plans concurrently and provide updated information from all the regions culminating in an updated state water plan. The state’s 16 water planning regions have developed their water plans over the previous two decades but at different times. Some regions have updated their plans, but never have all plans been current. Although a template was written to guide the plans, regions chose differing methodologies (and consultants) to quantify and characterize their water supplies, demands, and population growth. As a result, the regions do not paint the state’s “big picture” of water supply and demand accurately, as the data is inconsistent, or in the case of many plans, outdated. Updating the regional water plans in conjunction with the State Water Plan will provide New Mexicans with tools to better prepare and address water challenges that beset us.

The approach involves the ISC, through consultants working in cooperation with selected ISC and Office of the State Engineer (OSE) technical staff, calculating water supply and demand using a common methodology. The ISC also will provide population projections and economic forecasts, with input from the regions, to help estimate future water use.

Currently, the technical work and regional steering committee formation are preceding on parallel tracks, with the “common technical platform” reports for each region to be provided to and discussed with the regions in the fall of 2014. Along with development of these reports, the ISC has to date met with water stakeholders in 12 of the 16 regions to re-engage water planning steering committees comprised of representative groups as outlined in the revised regional water planning handbook. The ISC anticipates completing the first round of regional water planning meetings this June.

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| **Schedule and Tasks for Years 2013 – 2014 – 2015** |
| ***July – December 2013*** |
| * Regional Water Planning Handbook Revised - Complete, December 2013 |
| * Water Use by Categories Report published by OSE (key data source for water planning) Complete, October 2013 |
| * New Planning Approach Kick-off Meeting for Interested Stakeholders and Public, Complete, December 2013 |
| ***January – June 2014*** |
| * ISC Water Planning Manager and Facilitation Consultant Team conduct outreach and convene key water stakeholders in 16 planning regions\* (see list of meetings held) |
| * Technical data (Water Supply, Demand, Population and Economic Study, Legal Issues) for 16 regions compiled |
| * Population and economic outlook study for 16 regions – projected water demand |
| ***July – December 2014*** |
| * Phase 2 Regional Meetings - continue development of functioning steering committee |
| * October – June 2015 - Funding to regions to work on update (due June 30, 2015) |
| * Technical report preliminary data disseminated and discussed with regions |
| ***2015*** |
| * January: Regional Technical Reports to ISC for review |
| * Phase 3 Regional Meetings |

Description

The 16 regional plans will be based on the same or similar technical methodologies; and the regional water planning groups will be asked to identify the policies, programs, projects, and funding needs that will help them address their current and long-term water planning issues. For efficiency and to ensure that regional water plans “talk to each other,” ISC is calculating water supply and demand using a common methodology. ISC also is providing population projections and economic forecasts, with input from the regions, to help estimate future water use. ISC also will update the legal issues affecting water supply and management from the region’s original plan. These elements comprise a “technical report” developed by the state for each region, leaving the task of identifying water projects, programs, and policy priorities to the regions who know best their needs and conditions. The regions will develop their portions of their plans through a stakeholder committee that represents the various water users in the regions.

The goal is for regional stakeholders to identify regional water planning priorities that will be more closely linked to the Water Trust Board funding process, thus resulting in implementation of water plans. The development of the “technical reports” by a common methodology will allow the integration of the regional water plans with the State Water Plan as envisioned by the State Water Plan Act. The Water Trust Board is a vehicle for implementing the State Water Plan project and program goals. Criteria for water projects and programs under the Water Project Finance Act include prioritization of proposals that are in an ISC-accepted regional water plans.

Work Plan Budget, Funding Source & Time Frame

For 2014, the ISC received a special appropriation in the amount of $400,000 along with a budget of $83,600 from the IWCF for State and Regional water planning purposes. It is expected that all of the $483,600 will be expended by June 30, 2014.

The ISC has tentatively been awarded another $400,000 from NMFA for state and regional water plan updates. For fiscal year 2015, the ISC has a planning budget from the IWCF, a special appropriation and the NMFA grant, for a total of $965,300. Of this FY2015 budget, $565,300 will have to be expended and deliverables received by June 30th because of the funding source end dates.

With this budget, the ISC Planning Manager will continue to manage consulting work on developing the common technical platform for all 16 regions, as well as continue to convene regional water planning meetings with the goal of strengthening the regional steering committees’ capacity to update the regions’ portions of their water plans. While the technical data is being developed and the regional steering committees are being re-invigorated, the planning manager will distribute a portion of the available funding so that they may hire their own consultants or work with the agency to use its existing contractors. Specifically, the funding to or on behalf of the regions, depending on how a regional steering committee chooses, will occur through agreements with the regions to provide for facilitation for public meetings and input, technical writing , editing, and support by contractors so the regions can develop their elements of their regional water plans.

Work Plan Risk(s) and Impact(s)

The water planning program as outlined in this work plan provides a path for bringing together key stakeholders and decision-makers in a region to discuss water management issues based on solid technical data with a focus on solutions that can be implemented. Water planning is a vehicle for promoting solutions in place of conflicts that too often take course through litigation.

Regional meetings afford interested and invested water users in a community to share information about existing water needs and issues and discuss how to address those needs, and most importantly, how to prioritize specific policies, programs, and projects in response. The updated regional water plans can inform the update of the State Water Plan, thereby “integrating” our regional and state water plans, as required by New Mexico state law.

Continued state support for water planning activity is vital and timely as water challenges mount throughout the state and the southwest.

Work Plan Manager

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