

Welcome to the New Mexico Water Dialogue's
2022 Annual Meeting

By Jeffrey Samson

Good morning, and welcome to the 2nd day of New Mexico Water Dialogue's 28th Annual Meeting. My name is Jeffrey Samson and I am honored to be the vice-president of this wonderful organization and grateful to have this opportunity with you all. I'd like to begin by offering gratitude to those challenged with leading the 50-year water planning process. Specifically, the Interstate Stream Commission staff, which as some of you know by now includes Rolf Schmidt Peterson, Hannah Riseley-White, and Andrew Erdmann. Along with assistance from the folks at the New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources, specifically Neila Dunbar whom we heard from yesterday, who together have organized and led a dynamic, and informative water planning process.

High level presentations from our State's leading scientists and engineers, on the water topics that we'll be discussing this afternoon, along with additional materials made available on the ISC site, offer every New Mexican an opportunity to learn about and engage in the water planning process.

Yesterday, we heard from several key leaders and voices in the New Mexico water community. We learned from Mike Hamman, the Governor's senior water advisor and recent director of the MRGCD, about a range of short and long-term actions that are being considered to mitigate the impacts of climate change on the diverse stakeholders of this State. We learned from Dr. Karletta Chief about the potential impacts of climate change on Tribal communities, and how existing infrastructure is not designed to handle changes in the quantity, quality, and timing of precipitation. We learned from Andrea Romero about her work as a State representative, and her drive to address water issues at the State level. And that was all before the morning's break!

After the break ISC director Rolf Schmidt-Petersen shared with us the Governor's goals for the 50-year water plan, and her vision to build water resilience through sustainability and equity. Rolf discussed the need to bring the plan down from a 10,000-foot-high level, to the five-hundred-foot level, so that citizens throughout the State can understand and digest exactly what climate change means for them.

Neila Dunbar, the director of the Bureau of geology and mineral resources, continued the meeting by providing the guiding framework that the team of eight of our State's top research experts followed to inform the planning process. The order

was to “assess and synthesize recent scientific literature on climate, hydrology, and the impacts of these changes” on the State of New Mexico projecting 50 years into the future. And if you attended any of the presentations, or watched afterwards like I did, you’d know that they accomplished the goal. And the science is conclusive – the atmosphere is storing more heat which is driving up the temperature. The degree of change over the next 50-years is up to humanity.

New Mexico State Senator, Liz Stefanics followed up by urging everyone to action. Senator Stefanics touched on a keystone element of our democracy, that if we want to see change, we need to start talking about it. We need to start talking to our friends, to our family, and beyond. And in my opinion, more importantly, we need to start talking to our legislature, specifically to the finance committee that governs the state’s checkbook. Senator Stefanics said that it is the individual values of these state legislators that will drive change.

The results of the survey presented by Nina Carranco with the Water Foundation, and Patrick McCarthy with the Thornburg Foundation before we broke, showed us that there is public support to act now for funding of water planning and projects that help to ensure water supplies for future generations. I hope that if the finance committee members were personally aware of the public’s support they would have supported the

Governor's request and provided the funding for additional full-time employees to help with the 50-year water planning effort, regardless of their values.

Today, we are in for a treat. Professor Sam Fernald, the director of the New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute is going to kick it off by providing us with key take-aways from WRRRI's 66th annual conference titled "Reality and Resilience – Planning for New Mexico's water future" held this past October. Then there will be two panels with a break in between focusing on the topics of resilience and adaptation both critical concepts that will be essential as we move into a warmer future. The panels are composed of an array of speakers with a wealth of experience, whom I look forward to hearing from.

And in the afternoon, the break out group discussions, where the Dialogue takes place. Where we have the opportunity to engage in discussions and share our views while listening and learning about the perspectives of others.

Before I turn it back over to our moderator and co-founder of the Dialogue, Lucy Moore, I want to emphasize a couple points. First, the importance of learning from Native communities. The fact that Water is considered a family member, and is sacred, and is thought of with a capital W, IS the entire difference. Our values are expressed through our actions, and all of the issues that we are facing surrounding climate change and public

health are symptomatic of these actions and values. Quoting local hip hop artist and activist, Andrew “Wake Self” Martinez, who was recently killed in a DWI accident: “We forget that our bodies are water, while we pollute bodies of water.” We water our lawns and grow crops not meant for the environment, while consuming goods and producing waste at alarming rates.

Lastly, although we are only 100 – 200 hundred people here, these conversations are taking place all around the world. And we need to be aware that change is on the horizon and it is time that we stopped being silent about issues that are critical to our civilization. Issues like consumerism, public health, food, and water. So, I challenge all of you to take up Senator Stefanics call, and begin talking more about climate change and the potential risks to our State. Urge the legislature to provide the ISC with the resources they need to complete the work they were tasked. Communication is an essential element of a healthy community and a healthy democracy.

Thank you once again, for this opportunity to set the stage for today’s meeting, and I hope you all have a positive experience and are motivated to return next year, to the 29th annual New Mexico Water Dialogue meeting.