

# Our Water Imbalance – Creating Adaptive Strategies Together

A free public forum and discussion sponsored by the Middle Rio Grande Water Assembly

9:00 am to 12:30 pm - Saturday, June 28, 2014 – UNM Dane Smith Hall, Room120

Continental Breakfast at 8:30

**Water Budget** - In 1999, the Middle Rio Grande Water Assembly developed a Water Budget. 31 experts from various water-related fields investigated where our water came from and how it was used, considering two dozen components. Based on data from 1972 to 1997, the Water Budget showed that water consumption exceeded renewable supply by 15 to 20%. And that was during New Mexico's wettest quarter century in the past 2000 years!

**Regional Water Plan** - That water imbalance provided the basis for our Regional Water Plan. The Assembly, through an extensive public process and in partnership with the Mid Region Council of Governments, developed the 2004 Regional Water Plan for Sandoval, Bernalillo and Valencia Counties. The Plan contains 43 recommendations on how the Region should proceed to balance water use with renewable supply.

**Changes Have Occurred** - More than a decade has passed and we've seen numerous changes. Renewable inflows have declined significantly. Conservation efforts have reduced per capita use. The Conservancy District infrastructure for distributing irrigation water has been improved. The Water Utility Authority has started using some of its surface (San Juan / Chama) water, reducing its groundwater pumping. Some agricultural water has been re-purposed to domestic or urban use. Population has grown. Natural systems have continued to suffer stress.

**For Better or Worse?** - Have we made progress in reducing our deficit spending of water? Or have we lost ground? Have recent climatic changes already impacted our supply? The Water Assembly asked a team of technical experts to study the relation between consumptive use and renewable supply for the follow-on period 1998 through 2013. The report of that technical group, a draft updated water budget, will be presented during the public forum.

**Likely Future Stresses** - Recently, the federal Bureau of Reclamation, in partnership with Sandia National Laboratories, modeled future water availability, based, in part, upon recent knowledge about climate change. One of the main authors of that study will present projections of water availability across the coming decades.

**Possible Adaptations** – An expert presentation will indicate some candidate ways we could adapt to the realities, as well as what it might mean if we don't.

**Next Steps** - The passage of time and increase in knowledge demand an update of the 2004 Regional Water Plan. In keeping with its mandate to provide an open, inclusive, and participatory process, the Water Assembly will kick-off the Update to the Regional Water Planning Process on June 28. The last hour of the forum will be devoted to discussion by participants, on how to begin to create adaptive strategies and update the Plan.



“The purpose of the Water Assembly is to assure – through an open, inclusive, and participatory process – the effective implementation, monitoring and updating of the Middle Rio Grande Regional Water Plan. The Water Assembly will also perform educational and outreach activities to enhance the common interests of the people of the Region for a sustainable water future that balances water use with renewable supply.”