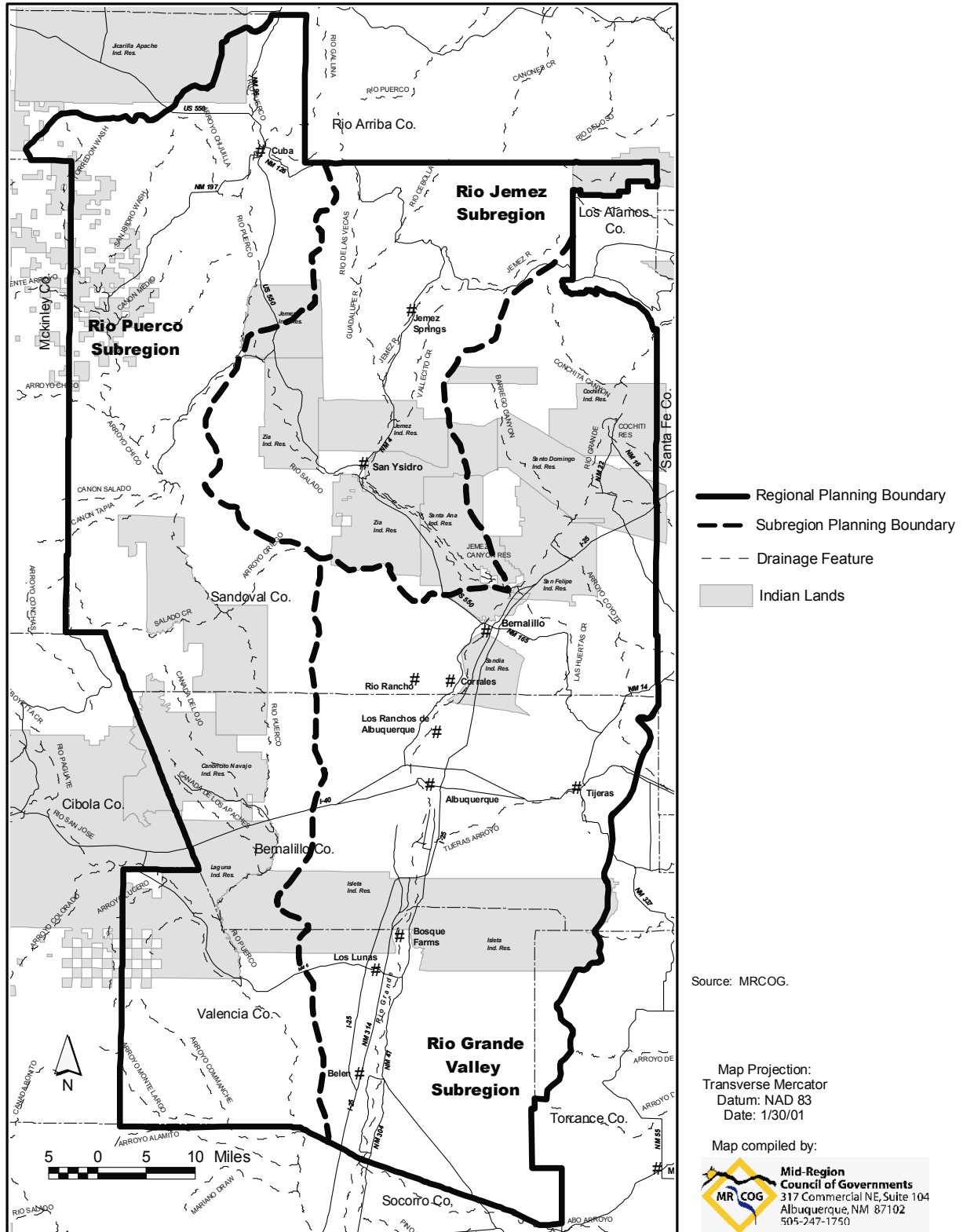


12.1. INTRODUCTION

Figure 12.1-1 Subregional Planning Boundaries



Water issues are a matter of great concern to New Mexico residents. Throughout the state, limited surface and ground water supplies, complex interstate, tribal, and local legal issues, and threats to water quality affect the ability to meet domestic, municipal, agricultural, commercial, mining, industrial and other water needs. Water planning provides an opportunity to assess water supply, analyze constraints on that supply, determine future demand, and evaluate options to meet that demand.

Because of the wide variations in New Mexico's environment and social, cultural, and economic structure, water planning is done at a regional level. [Introduction, The Region 6 Water Planning Process (EPCOG, 2003)]

12.1.1. Water Plan Development

The New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) directs the regional and state water planning process. The ISC designated sixteen water planning regions throughout the state and then directed them to prepare regional water plans in accord with the New Mexico Regional Water Planning Handbook (New Mexico ISC 1994) and §72-14-44 NMSA.¹ As designated by the ISC, Region 12 includes the Middle Río Grande, the Río Puerco, and the Río Jemez watersheds.

The Middle Río Grande Water Planning Region is made up of three counties, Valencia, Bernalillo, and Sandoval. Approximately four years ago the western and northern portions of the region were split into two subregions, the Río Puerco and Río Jemez, shown on Figure 12.1-1. The remaining portion makes up the Middle Río Grande Valley Subregion.

The Río Puerco Subregion encompasses that portion of the Río Puerco watershed within Sandoval, Bernalillo and Valencia Counties. It extends from the Río Arriba County line north of Cuba, south almost to the mouth of the Río Puerco at Bernardo and includes the Village of Cuba, the unincorporated communities and area around it, and portions of Navajo, Jicarilla, Jemez, Zia, and Laguna tribal lands.²

The Río Jemez Subregion encompasses the Río Jemez watershed and is almost entirely within Sandoval County. It includes the Villages of San Ysidro and Jemez Springs, the unincorporated communities and areas around them, Jemez and Zia Pueblos, and a portion of Santa Ana tribal lands.

¹ Water Planning Regions

Region 1. Northeast New Mexico
Region 4. Southwest New Mexico
Region 6. Northwest New Mexico
Region 10. Lower Pecos Valley
Region 12. Middle Río Grande
Region 14. Río Arriba

Region 2. San Juan
Region 5. Tularosa, Great Salt and Sacramento River Basins
Region 7. Taos
Region 11. Lower Río Grande
Region 13. Estancia Basin
Region 15. Socorro-Sierra

Region 3. Jemez y Sangre
Region 8. Mora-San Miguel
Region 16. Lea County

² For this phase, planning was concentrated in the Sandoval County portion.

In the spring of 1999, the ISC and the Middle Río Grande Council of Governments (MRGCOG, now Mid-Region Council of Governments - MRCOG) entered into a Scope of Work to fund Phase I of the Regional Water Plan. The Río Puerco and Río Jemez watersheds were included in the tasks to be accomplished as follows:

Subtask 2.1- Urban and Rural Sector Participation; Linkage between watersheds. – Subregional committees will represent the rural interests of the Jemez watershed, the Río Puerco watershed, and the rural sectors of the Middle Río Grande watershed to provide input to the regional water plan. These subregional committees will serve to involve rural sectors in all phases and activities of the water planning process.

Numerous small communities are located in the Río Puerco and Río Jemez watersheds, hence are part of the Middle Río Grande Water Planning Region. Believing that it was important for these stakeholders to participate in the water planning process, along with residents from the urban centers such as Albuquerque, Bernalillo, and Rio Rancho, Cuba Soil and Water Conservation District (CS&WCD) took the lead in the subregional planning effort. CS&WCD arranged with the MRCOG to (a) undertake Phase I of the program for the two subregions, and (b) serve as the fiscal agent for the process. Mike Wirtz, in an agreement with CS&WCD, was project coordinator for the subregional planning process for Phase I.

Subregional committees to represent the rural interests of the Río Jemez watershed and the Río Puerco watershed were established in accord with the Scope of Work between the ISC and the Middle Río Grande Council of Governments. In January 2000, representatives of the subregional committees formed the Río Puerco and Río Jemez Steering Committees. The groups met separately and jointly throughout the nearly four-year planning process.

Phase I of the Public Involvement Program began in January 2000 and was completed in December 2002. Meetings and workshops were held either in Cuba (Río Puerco watershed) or Cañon (Río Jemez watershed). The purpose of the meetings was to identify issues, concerns, values, and problems, specific for the subregions. A further purpose was to develop a mission, goals, alternatives, and objectives related to developing the subregional water plan.

The public involvement process is described in detail in the Río Puerco y Río Jemez, Regional Water Plan, Public Involvement Program - Phase I report. Appended to that report are the outcomes of the meetings, the Río Puerco and Río Jemez Watershed Planning Steering Committee Agreement and their bylaws, lists of meeting attendees and addresses, notes from meetings, and copies of newspaper articles. Much of that information has been included in the appendices to this report as well.

Phase II of the planning process in the Río Jemez and Río Puerco Subregions began in January 2003. The Scope of Work between the ISC and MRCOG included Subtask 1.4 (Río Puerco and Río Jemez Subregional Water Planning) which called for the following tasks to be accomplished:

(a) Conduct public meetings; (b) Develop goals and objectives that are specific to the subregion; (c) Watershed management planning - define watershed management alternative actions and scenarios that will be needed to ensure optimal availability of

water for the subregion; and (d) Documentation and input to Regional Water Plan - develop a publicly approved set of alternative actions for the subregion.

During the planning process outreach efforts were made to include representatives of all stakeholders in the watersheds. Individuals from ditch associations, domestic water associations, municipalities, unincorporated communities and tribes participated, as well as individuals representing farmers, ranchers, environmentalists, and what was termed “exurban” newcomers, participated. Elaine Moore Hebard, in an agreement with CS&WCD, was project coordinator for Phase II.

After two sets of public workshops and twenty-five Steering Committee meetings, Phase II has successfully concluded with the adoption of the mission, goals, prioritized alternatives and the combined Sub-Regional Scenario. The Vision Statements, and Combined Río Puerco y Río Jemez Sub-Regional Scenario: 2003-2050 ("Fifty Year Water Plan For The Río Puerco y Río Jemez Sub-Regions"), and public welfare statement were presented to governmental agencies and officials for review and comment at endorsement workshops in October and to the public for review and comment at Open Houses in November of 2003. The Steering Committees reviewed the comments and adopted the Public Welfare Statement in December 2003. The public involvement process is described in detail in the Río Puerco y Río Jemez, Regional Water Plan, Public Involvement Program - Phase II report, written by Jennifer Johnson.

Chapter 12 of the Middle Río Grande Regional Water Plan presents the plan for the two subregions developed by the Steering Committees from comments gathered at public workshops. With few exceptions, the work of developing the subregional plan was done by volunteers. Chapter 12 also contains extensive background material, to be used as a reference for future activities. This subregional water plan is intended to be an evolving, regularly updated repository of the water planning data that is gathered. It is also anticipated that this document will provide guidance to local, state, and federal officials in their process of making and implementing public policies and regulations that affect the subregions.

Regional water planning activities to meet the needs of the subregions will need to be ongoing. Data gaps are substantial, making projections not as reliable as desired. The alternatives were not analyzed to the extent of those in the Middle Río Grande Valley, so that the impacts of conservation on water use and water savings are yet to be accomplished. As such, the regional water planning questions were not answered with as much specificity as considered necessary. In the near future, a Phase III process will need to be developed in order to implement the Subregional Plan’s goal to “provide for monitoring and implementation of the water plan. Tasks might include creation of a calendar of actions and a task list. For example, implementing the goal to "promote education for area residents regarding the connection between land use, water and environmental health, and ways to conserve water" might entail putting on workshops, working with teachers and creating informational brochures. To accomplish all of this continuing work will require professional services, such as grant writing, facilitating, and project coordination.

12.1.2. Previous Water Planning

Work begun by the Río Puerco Watershed Committee, established in 1993, evolved into the Río Puerco Management Committee (RPMC), funded in part through the Río Puerco Watershed Act. A Watershed Restoration Action Strategy (WRAS), dated May 31, 2001 and included in the appendices for Section 14, details goals, actions taken and projected, and funding needs. The goals include sediment reduction, vegetation and habitat improvement, and support and promotion of other watershed factors. RPMC was one of twenty groups in the United States to receive an EPA watershed restoration grant this year.

The Surface Water Quality Bureau of the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED-SWQB) has completed a number of projects in the Río Puerco with a variety of approaches to control and prevent nonpoint source pollution impacts, including best management practice (BMP) implementation and working with ranching interests. In 2004, NMED-SWQB began to create a watershed planning committee for the Río Jemez watershed to manage the water quality issues reported, as more detailed in Section 7.

The tribal entities in the subregions also have ongoing water planning projects. In the Río Jemez, many of those projects are mentioned in the Río Jemez (Abousleman) Indian Water Rights Settlement Proposal For Investigation, included in the Appendix accompanying Section 14. Navajo planning for chapter houses in the region is included in Section 8 on Water Use, together with more materials being included in the accompanying appendix.

In both watersheds, land management agencies, such as the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, include watershed planning. Several of the projects are included in Section 14's appendix. At least one of the several Mutual Domestic Water Associations is working on a 40 year water plan, as well as working to upgrade their facilities. Many of the acequias have been and are currently participating with agencies such as U.S. Department of Agriculture to improve efficiency.

12.1.3. Contents of Chapter 12

Chapter 12, coordinated with the regional water plan, was prepared with the aim of providing the subregions with information specifically drawn from the two watersheds for the residents to utilize in future planning. It was developed following the structure set out in the ISC Regional Water Planning Handbook template, with appropriate additions. This document blends public involvement over a several-year period with research and limited analysis. It refers to studies and material generated for the Middle Río Grande Regional Water Plan, which are presently available from the Mid-Region Council of Government or on line at www.WaterAssembly.org, under "Information."

The public involvement and products arising from it are included in the following sections:

- Section 2 describes the public involvement program during both Phase I and II. Extensive appendix material provides information as to the content of the meetings and the attendees.

- Section 3 describes the evolution of the mission statement, goals and objectives, and alternative actions. Extensive appendix material includes iterations of each.
- Section 12 describes the combined scenario developed by the Río Jemez and Río Puerco Subregions. The matrix matches goals with objectives, actions, time, funding and benefits to the extent possible.

Basic background information is provided in the following sections:

- Section 4 describes the physical characteristics of the two subregions.
- Section 5 gives an overview of past and present land use in the two watersheds.
- Section 6 reports details of water supply.
- Section 7 discusses water quality issues in the subregion.
- Section 8 contains information on water uses, detailing use in the categories of public and domestic water supply, irrigated agriculture, and riparian and open water evaporation, and closes with drought planning information
- Section 9 reviewed population trends and the present situation.
- Section 10 is an initial attempt to quantify future water demand by using population trends both in the watersheds and in the larger planning region, addressing the effects that growth in the metropolitan areas will have on the rural subregions.
- Section 11 discusses legal issues and water use arrangements in effect within the two subregions, together with other considerations and constraints.
- Section 13 sets out ideas with respect to implementation and next steps.
- Section 14 contains a list of proposed water projects and a listing of sample projects and resources available as aids in future planning.
- The Epilogue (15) describes the efforts made to obtain comments on the draft plan, as well as contains the comments.
- Also included are a glossary (16) and comprehensive bibliography (17).

Throughout this report are references to appendices. Each section has a corresponding appendix. These extensive appendices contain relevant material to the information reported. Rather than printing them, they are available on cd-rom or at the offices of Cuba Soil & Water Conservation District and the Mid-Region Council of Government.

During the information gathering, an effort was made to include similar information for both the Río Puerco and the Río Jemez. Due to variations in studies and reporting agencies, that was not always possible.

The complete regional water plan, including the subregional one known as Chapter 12, as well as studies and material generated for the Middle Río Grande Regional Water Plan, are available from the MRCOG or online at www.WaterAssembly.org, under "Information." Comments and suggestions regarding this document should be sent to Cuba Soil & Water Conservation District Office, P.O. Box 250, Cuba, New Mexico 87013.

12.1.4. Acknowledgements

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None of this could be accomplished without the time, talent and input of many collaborators. Particular thanks to Steve Lucero and Emmett Cart for their guidance, Judith Isaacs for her editorial assistance, Peggy Ohler for her wisdom and humor, Charlotte Mitchell for graciously handling whatever task is handed to her, and Jennifer Johnson for a superb job of detailing the public involvement and tracking the comments. Jennifer worked on outreach and threading the elements of the goals, objectives and alternatives into a plan, along with other team members. Sections 2, 3 and 12 were prepared by Jennifer, who also wrote the Phase II report, with Elaine Moore Hebard compiling the remainder. Judith Isaacs and Lora Lucero provided their thoughtful reading and editing. Project support came from Peggy Ohler, with MRCOG providing maps. Most of all, thanks are also due to the volunteer members of the Río Puerco and Río Jemez Steering Committees, scenario team members, and the Middle Río Grande Water Assembly for contributing countless hours of work, thoughts and guidance to the process.