

Water Assembly Interest Groups

The Water Assembly consists of people who care about our water and how we use and plan for it. While our values and interests are multiple, overlapping, and sometimes in conflict, most of us identify with a particular set of interests. In order to ensure a balance among these interests in our deliberations, we annually elect a Board of Directors with two representatives chosen from each of six interest areas. The Board of Directors meets at least quarterly to guide working teams to achieve the objectives of the Water Assembly. Today, the hope is that attendees will participate in the interest group most aligned with their attitudes. The six titled interest groups are listed alphabetically below with an initial description of the key issues and intent of the people focusing in those areas.

Descriptions

a. Agricultural Business and Production Group - Representing interests in sale crop and personal crop farming, dairy farming, ranching, agricultural suppliers, etc.

Today, America loses over 1 million acres of farmland a year to urban sprawl, and New Mexico is no exception. Agriculture is the business that provides food necessities for life across the nation. The capacity to produce foodstuffs for human consumption still exists in the Middle Rio Grande region. That capacity may prove to be an important national resource in future decades if irrigated farmland continues to exist along the Rio Grande. The Agricultural Business and Production group seeks to preserve and enhance agricultural practices, profitable farming and ranching businesses, other businesses supported by ranching and farming, agricultural lifestyles, and water rights.

b. Cultural and Historic Water Use Group - Representing historic, traditional and cultural interests such as those of acequias and land grant communities.

Traditional uses and allocations of water have evolved in New Mexico over many centuries, both prior to and since the immigration of Europeans. Indigenous residents and early Hispanic settlers developed effective communal agricultural and water management practices that have enabled them to sustain human life in the desert. Accordingly, water is also seen as carrying great religious significance. The Cultural and Historic Water Use group understands and respects these ancient practices for respecting, managing and sharing water, for living and working together, and for sustaining communities to be an intrinsic part of New Mexico is critical to preserve for future generations.

c. Environmental Preservation and Improvement Group - Representing interests related to species, bosque, river, open space, water quality, etc.

The Rio Grande has been modified substantially through recent centuries of human intervention and neglect. Dams, diversions, channels, and pollution have affected the river flow and water quality as well as plants and animal life in the river valley. The Environmental Preservation and Improvement group is pressing for environmentally sustainable water-use practices such as preserving and enlarging riparian areas, keeping the river wet, the survival and restoration of the Rio Grande's unique riverine habitat, and prevention and mitigation of pollution impacts.

d. Industrial, Institutional and Business Group - Representing interests of small and large business, schools, hospitals, etc.

The availability of sufficient water of adequate quality at an acceptable price is a critical ingredient for business development and well-paying employment. The Industrial, Institutional and Business group seeks to build the economy by attracting and retaining income-producing businesses, especially 'green' industries providing ecological goods or services. The group seeks policies that allow market forces to allocate water to maximize its economic benefit to the community in both rural and urban settings.

e. Residential Water Use Group - Representing rural and urban residential interests.

We are all residents in the middle Río Grande region. We live in apartments, townhouses, complexes and single family homes. We receive water in our homes through urban utility systems, through community well systems, through individual wells, and through bottling distributors. We use the water for drinking, for washing, for growing plants at our homes and for other domestic uses. We are a primary focus for urban water conservation efforts. The Residential Water Use group seeks to have good quality water conveniently available for us and for our grandchildren at an affordable price. We ideally and practically seek to have high quality water for drinking. We have a relationship with other uses and users. We would like to see a wide range of conservation measures implemented at residential and municipal levels (both mandatory and voluntary). We want honest and clear representation of current water situation. We want to understand how we can be involved.

f. Technical Specialty Group - Individuals, government agency and water utility staff providing expertise in geology, hydrology, water law, and other technical expertise.

Providing water for the diverse community that is the Middle Rio Grande is a complex combination of art and science, with a critical need to focus upon the latter. Over time, and particularly recently, we have gained a substantially improved understanding of water and how to manage it. This includes better knowledge of the complex and interdisciplinary side effects and consequences of particular actions. Consisting of professionals who have specialized in the water resource field, the Technical Specialty group seeks to ensure that recommendations and decisions made in implementing our plan are informed by sound scientific, engineering, economic and legal knowledge.



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