



CONSERVATION

A Newsletter Published by the New Mexico Water Conservation Alliance

A Dry Season in the Legislature

Jean Witherspoon



This year's long legislative session ended on March 19; the Governor had until noon on April 8 to sign bills submitted to him. While a lot of water-related bills were introduced, very few actually ended up becoming law.

Mimi Stewart's Water Efficiency bill setting up a water user fee, which the Alliance supported in part, didn't make it out of committee, though it did get farther this year than in 2004.

The bill requesting funds to support permanent positions in the NMSU component of the Rio Grande Basin Initiative, which the Alliance agreed to support in response to Leann Demouche, received only limited funds.

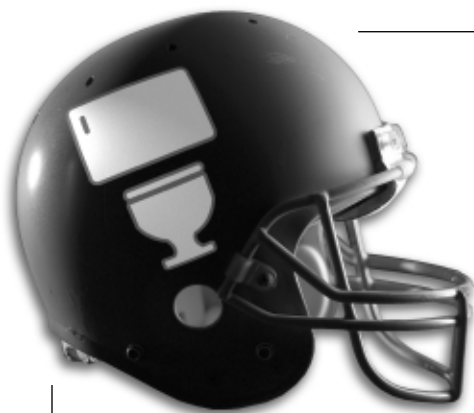
Bills that were signed include HB 195 and SB 123—which provide for a strategic water reserve and use of severance tax bonds for this purpose, HB 304—which makes water conservation and long-term master plans eligible for water and wastewater planning fund grants, and SB 879—which better delineates the powers and duties of the Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority.

Bills to give the State Engineer more authority to regulate domestic wells failed. The two bills aimed at prohibiting Albuquerque from adopting geographically-differentiated impact fees were not signed. SB 1043, which would allow County Commission delegation of subdivision approval authority, also failed.

Where to Go for Low Flow Info

The Office of the State Engineer's Water Use and Conservation Bureau's latest conservation brochure will give you the information you need to choose and maintain an ultra low flow (ULF) toilet. These water-efficient toilets can save you thousands of gallons of water—and lots of money on your water bill—every year. A *Waterwise Guide to Ultra-Low-Flow Toilets* will explain the types of ULFs, show you how to check for and fix leaks, and provide a list of publications and websites for more information.

You can get a copy by calling 1-800-WATER-NM, writing the Water Use and Conservation Bureau, or downloading a pdf from the website www.ose.state.nm.us.



Does Your Super Bowl Leak?

Denver Water took advantage of Super Bowl Sunday to encourage its customers to check their toilet bowls for leaks. Donna Pacetti, Denver Water Conservation Specialist, said people will "likely spend more time with their toilet that day," and suggested it was a good time to look for leaks. She pointed out

that what may seem to be a tiny leak can actually waste 100-250 gallons of water a day, making for a big water bill.

An easy way to check for toilet leaks is to add a few drops of dark food coloring to the water tank. Don't flush for thirty minutes, then check the water in the bowl. If it's colored, there's a leak in the toilet.

Conservation Conferences Break Attendance Records

AWWA In Savannah

Cheri Vogel, Office of the State Engineer

The AWWA Conservation Division workshop held Thursday and Friday, February 17-18, 2005 in historic Savannah, Georgia broke all attendance records for a mid-winter meeting.

Over 120 participants attended the Thursday afternoon session, *Conservation Fundamentals & Innovations*. This session provided an overview of the fundamentals of effective water conservation programs, as well as new initiatives and innovations that are on the horizon.

Mary Ann Dickinson, California Urban Water Conservation Council, and John Flowers, US Environmental Protection Agency, kicked off the workshop with the basics on how much water can be saved, best management practices in water conservation, and how to get started on a conservation program. The following sessions progressed to provide details on specific best management practices and how they impact various size utilities. The highlight of the afternoon was a panel discussion on innovative technologies that are significantly impacting water conservation

efforts: irrigation controllers and ultra-low flow toilets.

At Friday's session, *Conservation: It's Not Just for Drought Anymore*, attendance increased to 145. The goal for the day was to address the challenges facing utilities as water conservation shifts from a crisis-management tool to a part of a comprehensive approach to water resources management. Our own Jean Witherspoon, City of Albuquerque, discussed the cost of conservation related to the value of water by highlighting case studies from the Western US. A lively and entertaining discussion on rates ended the day. Panelists argued the merits of surcharges, seasonal rates, and uniform and tiered rates. Questions from the audience kept the panelists on their toes and enlivened the discussion.

Friday evening's social included a riverboat ride on the Savannah River. The Division and committee meetings were held on Saturday, where the Division approved the new AWWA Water Conservation Manual. [See Newsbits for the really big news from the Saturday meetings.]

An Opportunity to Talk to Congress



The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources convened a short Water Conference on April 5th in Washington, D.C. Jean Witherspoon's submittal, on behalf of the Alliance, was selected for Conservation and Technological Developments.

Jean stressed the need for the federal government to continue its support of conservation through various efforts, including the Bureau of Reclamation's Conservation Field Services Program. She was also encouraged that conservation was included in many speakers' visions of water resource management. New Mexico was well-represented by six speakers and, of course, Senators Domenici and Bingaman.

Thanks to the Alliance for their support of this activity.

While each participant had only two minutes to present, the full version of the 22 papers selected is posted at www.energy.senate.gov.

Xeriscape in Albuquerque

The Xeriscape Council of New Mexico's 10th Xeriscape Conference and Trade Show held February 24-25 drew 420 registered conferees. More than 3,100 attendees attended the free day on the 26th, including homeowners and gardeners.

Robert Glennon, author of *Water Follies: Groundwater Pumping and the Fate of America's Fresh Waters*, warned the conference about the worldwide impact of ground-water pumping. "Groundwater pumping," Glennon said, "causes bodies of water and wetlands to dry up; the ground beneath us to collapse; and fish, wildlife and trees to die.

... The disconnect between the law and science is a major part of the problem. So, too, is our refusal to recognize the unsustainability of our water use."

Shlomo Aronson, an Israeli landscape architect, showed slides of communities that meld modern needs with a rich regional history. He said that conservation can be a form of development and that without the wise management of renewable resources, viable development is doomed to failure.

Joel Glanzberg, an ecological restoration professional, described water and sedi-

ment catchment systems of ancient peoples.

The six free Saturday seminars drew crowds of from 125 to over 500. Scott Varner, executive director of the Xeriscape Council, is planning for a larger hall for the next conference and trade show in late February 2006. The Xeriscape Council is looking for sponsors and supporters to continue its free conference day for the public. This year's major sponsors were the City of Albuquerque, Just Sprinklers, Rocky Mountain Stone, Intel and Rowland Nurseries.

The Water Conservation Community Mourns Jane Ploeser

Jane Heller Ploeser, a member of the AWWA water conservation community for 15 years, died in her sleep Saturday, February 12. She was 53 years old.

As a member of the Water Conservation Committee even before that committee was made a Division of AWWA, Jane chaired the Institutional, Commercial and Industrial subcommittee, and was a contributor to the *Journal*. She joined the City of Phoenix water conservation office in August of 1987 as a water resource specialist. Her work, which focused on business, government, and industrial water use, was recognized by the Phoenix City Manager in 2000 with an excellence award. She left that position in 2003 and recently had been teaching advertising copywriting and marketing at the Art Institute of Phoenix.

Jane and her college sweetheart, Doug Ploeser, would have celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary last month.

"I had always hoped Jane would return to the water conservation field," said Tom Babcock, Phoenix Water Conservation Coordinator, a colleague of Ploeser's during all her years with the City of Phoenix. "She was so good at what she did. Her death will leave a large hole in Arizona's water conservation community—as well as in our hearts."

Rio is Ready!

The Office of the State Engineer's Water Conservation Office, and its partners Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority, City of Santa Fe Water Division, Las Cruces, Rio Rancho, and NMSU Rio Grande Initiative, are pleased to announce the publication of its newest water-conservation curriculum, featuring Rio, a kangaroo rat, who leads students through graphs, games, fun facts and activities. Connect the dots to follow irrigation's path through New Mexico's history and cultures. Playing the Aquifer Game teaches kids how their actions impact the water supply. The teacher's guide provides background information, demonstra-

tions, and additional activities to assist teachers in the classroom.

For information or copies
1-800-WATERNM and
waternm@ose.state.nm.us.



Newsbits

Water Sources Conference 2006 will be held in Albuquerque February 5-8, 2006. Water Sources is typically the largest regular gathering of water conservation professionals in North America, and is held every two years. It is hoped that Alliance members will be well represented in the presentations.

To submit a proposal go to
<http://www.awwa.org/conferences/sources/call/>.

AWWA Rocky Mountain Section annual conference will be held on September 10-14 in Albuquerque. At press time we were unable to discover whether a water-conservation session will be scheduled—that will depend on the quality of the proposals submitted!

Keep the date open and check at:
<http://www.rmsawwa.net/>.

The 35th Annual Conference of the North American Association of Environmental Educators will take place in Albuquerque on October 25-29, 2005. The NM Office of the State Engineer is a partner in the conference. Fiscal partners, presenters, and workshops are presently being solicited.

For more information go to www.naaee.org
or call Cheri Vogel at 505-827-4272.

2nd Annual Navajo Nation Drinking Water Conference will take place July 12-15, 2005 at Navajo Nation Library Museum & Visitors' Center in Window Rock, AZ. Early registration ends June 3, 2005

Registration form and other information
at www.navajopublicwater.org,
or call (928) 871-7755, or
email info@navajopublicwater.org.

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A National Water-Use Efficiency Partnership?

The California Urban Water Conservation Council (CUWCC) is developing the framework for a national partnership on water-use efficiency. A nationwide water-efficiency organization could develop cross-state initiatives, conduct needed water-efficiency research, coordinate partnership projects, and serve as a clearinghouse for water-efficiency progress.

You Can Participate

The CUWCC's program-design effort includes stakeholder workshops to be held throughout the country, a web-based survey of stakeholders, an inventory of existing water-efficiency organizations, specialized focus groups, and a report, due in December 2005, that will summarize all the options and make recommendations.

Water agencies, water providers, manufacturers of water-using products, environmental organizations, builders and developers, and interested government agencies were invited to share their views at any of six stakeholder workshops, which were held from May 17th to May 25th. The Alliance will be represented at the Phoenix workshop and will report in the next issue of the *Current*.

For information, contact Jeffrey Hughes at jeffrey@cuwcc.org or see <http://www.awwa.org/waterwiser/watch/#CUWCC>

2005 ALLIANCE SCHEDULE

June 13: Executive Board Meeting
3 pm, City of Albuquerque offices.

July 14: Alliance Meeting
1 pm, site and agenda TBD.

August 8: Executive Board Meeting
3 pm, City of Albuquerque offices.

September 8: Alliance Meeting
Las Cruces, time, site, agenda TBD

October 10: Executive Board Meeting
3 pm, City of Albuquerque offices.

November 10: Alliance Meeting
1 pm, site and agenda TBD.

December 12: Executive Board Meeting
3 pm, City of Albuquerque offices.