



**NEW MEXICO  
FARM & LIVESTOCK BUREAU**

**WEEKLY INTERIM WRAP UP  
WEEK OF JULY 12 - 16**

## Water and Natural Resource Interim Committee – Gallup NM

### **PRESENTATION: State of Drought in the State and Long-Term Considerations**

State Climatologist Dave Dubois along with Dr. David Gutzler, Professor Emeritus, Earth and Planetary Sciences Department, University of New Mexico provided the committee a presentation on the drought status and outlook.

Dave Dubois reported the reservoir volumes statewide. The reservoir levels as of July 11 are as follows:

Navajo 65%	Elephant Butte 7%
Caballo 10%	Brantley 102%
Heron 22%	El Vado 15%
Abiqui 35%	

It was also reported that the eastern side of the state has been receiving more moisture and is recovering better than the west side of the state which is still relatively dry. Two-thirds of the state have seen an improvement in soil moisture. We still have a long way to go to get us out of drought and although we have seen some improvement, a majority of the state is still in very extreme drought.

Dr. Gutzler reported that current drought conditions have been made worse to due climate change caused by increased temperatures. Over the past half-century, the overall temperature has increased roughly 3-degree Fahrenheit. These types of increases are not anticipated to end any time soon.

The snowpack generally provides the runoff that fills the Rio Grande. During 2020 and 2021 the accumulation of snowpack has been fairly close to the long-term average however because the temperatures are now warmer the snowpack melts sooner and more rapidly. This leads to earlier runoff and evaporation. The dismal conditions we see in the Rio Grande are not due to lack of snow but rather because the snow is melting earlier and not providing as much run off as it did historically. This won't go away as there are no indications that temperature will decrease or cool in the future.

### **PRESENTATION: Acequia Observations: Drought and Climate Change and Community-Based Responses**

Paula Garcia, Executive Director, New Mexico Acequia Association provided a report to the committee. Reported that there are over 600 acequias statewide with a large concentration in north central NM. Acequias are all locally run by local community members. Paula also reported on the recent study that NMSU completed, Acequias of the Southwestern United States: Elements of Resilience in a Coupled Natural and Human System which highlights the relationship between acequias and aquifers. It was also reported that there has been increased effort to utilize water sharing which the state engineer's office recognizes as alternative administration.

### **PRESENTATION: State Water Planning in the Face of Drought Conditions**

Rolf Schmidt-Petersen, Director of the Interstate Stream Commission, provided a report to the committee. Rolf highlighted the focus of the ISC which includes 8 interstate compacts. The severity of the drought has required the agency to direct water administration by the ISC in multiple areas in the state which is leading to backlogs in work on other programs. It was also reported that the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD) and EBID no longer have water stored to meet their farmers' irrigation needs. This has caused many producers around the state to have to turn to pumping. Further, Rolf reported on the continued work the ISC is doing to support the development of a 50-year water plan as directed by the Governor. Lastly, a webinar event was advertised that will address "Climate change leap ahead analysis results over view and 50 year water plan development and steps." The webinar will take place July 21, 2021 at 3:30 via <https://www.gotomeet.me/NMISC/50-year-water-plan-4>

## **Radioactive and Hazardous Waste Interim Committee – Carlsbad NM**

### **PRESENTATION: Proposed Consolidated Interim Storage in Southeastern New Mexico**

Holtec is still working with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission with the HI-STORE Interim Storage Facility for spent nuclear fuel. Holtec claims it is an extremely safe facility that won't affect oil and gas, that they have worked extensively briefing stakeholders, and that they have followed proper procedures. NM Environment Department stated they have no ability to regulate the facility, except in areas concerning groundwater and run-off. The State Land Office is claiming that while the Eddy-Lea Energy Alliance owns the surface rights for the property, but State Land Office owns the mineral estate and has not been included in any conversations or compensation. There were concerns over safety of transport and storage, but the main concern was that NM had no ability to reject the "interim" facility that might become a de-facto permanent facility because there are no plans currently to build a permanent facility.

- Generally speaking, it did not seem like the committee was supportive of having this interim storage located in NM
- The NM Attorney General has actually filed suit against the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission claiming they can't issue a license to Holtec until the U.S. has plans for a permanent facility. The NRC moved to dismiss because they said that should have been filed in D.C. not the NM courts. Texas has also filed a similar suit. Judge should make a decision soon on whether to dismiss or not.

### **PRESENTATION: Produced Water Issues In and Out of the Oil Field**

The presentation began describing how legislation was passed in 2019 related to produced water, this legislation granted the NM Environment Department (NMED) the authority to regulate the use of produced water outside of the oilfield. This legislative action basically opened up the doors on the potential for produced water to be used outside the oilfield in the future. In the short-term, Secretary Kenney at the NMED is planning to put a rule in place which does not allow the use of produced water outside of the oilfield. However, over the long-term the NMED will continue to work with the produced water consortium based at NMSU to research ways to treat produced water as well as future possible uses, including in agriculture. If the state is able to figure out a way to safely use produced water, there is potential for \$4 billion economic revenue stream for the state.