

Improving Water Governance and Planning in New Mexico

**Presentation by the Governance Study Group
to the
Water and Natural Resources Committee
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Who Is the Governance Study Group?

The New Mexico Water Dialogue sponsored a statewide regional water planning meeting, July 2015 at Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge

- **Broad regional water planning attendance:**
 - 14 of the 16 water planning regions, including NMWD Board and ISC staff
- **Discussion of ISC's current round of regional water planning**
 - Positive and negative experiences documented in the facilitator's report
 - Substantial flaws in the process and product were reported
- **One outgrowth of meeting was the "Governance Study Group" (GSG)**
 - All-volunteer group of nine water planners from around New Mexico
 - Objective was to identify needed improvements to planning process

Current Regional Water Planning Cycle

- **Fundamental issues**
 - Limited resources (time and dollars)
 - Artificial and misleading technical approach
 - Limited objectives (mostly project lists, rather than problem solving)
 - Lack of participation
 - Insufficient participation – public and institutional
 - Almost entirely state, rather than regional, process

What Did GSG Do?

- The group met ten times, researched water planning processes in other western states, and considered New Mexico experiences
- Identified six topic areas that need serious improvement in NM
- Developed and refined issue papers which described problems and recommended remedies for each topic area
- Key ingredients for the next round of water planning are in the summary of findings and suggested next steps
- The summary and six issue papers are on-line at nmwaterdialogue.org under “Water Governance”
- Met twice with ISC staff leadership, who acknowledged these issues and remedies, and encouraged us to proceed

What Areas Need Improvement?

- **Governance and institutional arrangements**
 - Establish representative regional groups
 - Recognize ongoing planning as a problem solving process
 - Provide a negotiating table space
- **Strengthening linkages**
 - Connections among plan levels, plan topics, and planning neighbors
- **Public participation**
 - Create incentives for broad participation and more effective input
- **Tribal participation**
 - Consultation and better collaboration for meaningful two-way dialogue
- **Technical information**
 - Must be credible, relevant and address regional issues
- **Water rights adjudication**
 - Plans must take ownership and claims into account

What Initial Steps Might the Legislature Take?

- Support grassroots regional collaborations
- Honoring §72-14-43, recognize and support regional water planning entities
- Establish statewide working groups to refine the recommendations for state and regional water planning:
 - Public participation and tribal participation
 - Technical data
 - Adjudication

The GSG would be happy to participate.