



# State of New Mexico

*Office of the Governor*

**Bill Richardson**  
*Governor*

For immediate release  
9/10/03

Contact: Gilbert Gallegos  
505.476.2217

## **Governor Bill Richardson Postpones Silvery Minnow Talks Pending Federal Legislative Action**

SANTA FE – Governor Bill Richardson today announced that discussions on meeting silvery minnow habitat needs in the Rio Grande have been temporarily postponed because the time frame for reaching consensus was too tight before pending federal legislation.

"Because of the short time remaining, the Bureau of Reclamation informed us they would be unable to come to a final agreement before congressional action commences on silvery minnow legislation," Governor Bill Richardson said. "Therefore, we will postpone further discussions until that legislative rider process is completed."

Reclamation Commissioner John Keys praised Governor Richardson's efforts in the discussions.

"I want to congratulate the State of New Mexico for its contributions in bringing diverse interests together to look for ways to identify the issues surrounding supply and use of Middle Rio Grande Basin water," Keys said. "The state's efforts provide a valuable foundation for continuing discussions over water use in the Middle Rio Grande Valley."

Sens. Pete Domenici, D-N.M., and Jeff Bingaman, R-N.M., have introduced a rider that would exempt San Juan-Chama Project imported water from seizure for use to provide habitat for the silvery minnow. The action came in response to a ruling by the 10th U.S. Court of Appeals in Denver, that both San Juan-Chama water and native Rio Grande water could be taken by federal officials to meet environmental conditions for the silvery minnow.

Gov. Richardson, in response to that ruling, said he would take all necessary action to keep control of New Mexico's water resources in state hands, but at the same time, he would seek cooperation within the state to manage the river to meet the needs of all interests.

The governor initiated the silvery minnow discussions in July in response to a request by the environmentalist plaintiffs in the lawsuit that led to the 10th Circuit Court ruling. The initial plan was to reach an agreement that would be implemented by additions to the congressional rider.

"Because the issues are complex, time is needed to analyze the components of the agreement," Keys said. "We look forward to taking an active role in future negotiations towards a collaborative solution."



# State of New Mexico

*Office of the Governor*

**Bill Richardson**

*Governor*

Governor Richardson said that keeping state water law the law of the Rio Grande was a major objective of the silvery minnow habitat discussions.

The Reclamation Commissioner noted that local solutions to water problems are preferred by the Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Reclamation, as articulated in the recent Water 2025 conference held in Albuquerque.

#30#