



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson
Governor

For Immediate Release
October 11, 2006

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Governor Bill Richardson Proposes Far-Reaching Year of Water Agenda

Major New Infrastructure Projects for Eastern, Western and Southern New Mexico

SANTA FE -- Governor Bill Richardson today announced his legislative agenda for the Year of Water. This agenda is designed to ensure that New Mexico remains well equipped to meet future water needs.

“The Year of Water isn’t a one-time project; it is an opportunity to make tremendous progress toward a sustainable water future for New Mexico,” said Governor Richardson. “Our economy, our citizens and the health of our rivers and streams depend on a continued supply of good, clean water.”

Governor Richardson’s Year of Water legislative agenda includes:

Office of Water Infrastructure: To help make sure water projects are successful, and municipalities get the service they deserve, Governor Richardson will push to create a New Mexico Office of Water Infrastructure. This office will help streamline state bureaucracy by consolidating the state’s water duties and give communities a one stop shop for their water infrastructure needs. And to focus immediately on one recognized water-saving strategy, the Governor will allocate \$10 million for a statewide leak detection and repair program.

Eastern Navajo Water Project: \$15.3 million investment in extending reliable and clean water supplies to Indian and non-Indian communities in the Eastern Navajo checkerboard area. Today, almost 40% of the population of the eight easternmost Navajo chapters do not have easy access to safe drinking water. This funding will help extend water infrastructure to these areas and keep citizens and their children healthy.

Indian Water Rights Settlements: Governor Richardson will allocate \$12 million in state funds this year to act as the state’s down payment on settling the longstanding Indian Water Rights Settlements. These monies in the Indian Water Rights Settlement Fund will be added to each year to ensure that when the time arrives, New Mexico’s share of settlement dollars will be in place. This will help demonstrate to the Federal government that New Mexico is committed to doing its part to resolve these issues.

Ute Pipeline: \$5 million investment in a long-planned pipeline to provide a sustainable water supply for communities across eastern New Mexico. This pipeline will serve communities throughout Curry and Roosevelt Counties, including the Cities of Clovis and Portales.

Salt Basin Assessment: The Salt Basin, which lies beneath Otero Mesa, contains potentially hundreds of millions of gallons of sustainable fresh water supply within pipeline reach of the growing communities of south central New Mexico. Governor Richardson will invest \$2.2 million dollars to put the assessment and potential sustainable development of this resource on the fast track.

“This effort will also again show why protecting Otero Mesa and its pristine water resources are so critically important,” said Governor Richardson. “These three projects, which cover large parts of eastern, southern and western New Mexico, are the kind of big, regional projects New Mexico must design and build to ensure a secure water supply.”

Investments in Water Infrastructure: To provide a permanent revenue stream to fund these projects and to help other needy New Mexico communities, Governor Richardson will also invest \$25 million dollars into the Water Trust Fund. These monies will generate a revenue stream to be distributed to cities and towns across the state to help them extend needed water infrastructure to their citizens.

Water Innovation Fund: Governor Richardson will invest \$20 million into making the best Water Innovation Fund projects a reality. This includes proposals in the planning stages concerning brackish water development, bio-diesel projects, and residential water recycling.

River Ecosystem Restoration: Governor Richardson will propose a \$7.5 million river ecosystem restoration package. These funds will be used to restore and protect waterways all across the state. The Governor made his water announcement today beside a recently restored stretch of the Santa Fe River south of the Santa Fe Airport.

“The stretch of the Santa Fe River behind me is a perfect example of what we must do,” said Governor Richardson. “By working together, the state, local government, private citizens and environmental groups have literally brought this river back to life. The restoration funds I announced today will help similar projects take root across the state.”

Other Projects: Governor Richardson also supports mandated water conservation standards in building codes and a \$5 million dollars investment in the Strategic Water Reserve to help the state meet compact obligations and protect instream water needs.

The Governor also proposed investing \$1 million dollars to help farming families protect their agricultural heritage – and water supplies -- through the purchase of conservation easements. He will help traditional acequias users with \$500,000 in technical assistance funding, and he will initiate measures to adopt a project suggested by Think New Mexico to lease unneeded irrigation water from farmers during drought years.

“These infrastructure, agriculture, ecological and conservation projects are vital to helping a growing state protect its most precious resource,” said Governor Richardson. “These are the major initiatives I have determined to include in my Year of Water agenda. Additional projects and details will be added as we refine the program.”