TOWN HALL
FINAL REPORT

STATE WATER PLANNING TOWN HALL

Advancing New Mexico's Water Future

CONVENER

New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission

RESEARCHER AND FACILITATOR

New Mexico First

- Final town hall recommendations
- Details from the December 13-14, 2017 town hall

NEW MEXICO FIRST

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Executive Summary

The importance of water cannot be understated, and New Mexicans' commitment to water was readily apparent at the two-day State Water Planning Town Hall, held in Albuquerque December 13-14, 2017. This event provided the opportunity for residents of all corners of the state to meet and lend their voices to the 2018 State Water Plan. The result of the deliberations was a set of 33 recommendations issued by six discussion groups. These recommendations have been submitted to the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) for their consideration and, where appropriate, potential integration within the 2018 State Water Plan.

With 225 registrants, this town hall included people from 26 of New Mexico's 33 counties. Many represented state, federal and local government agencies. Others came from business, nonprofit tribal or private interests. Some represented agricultural interests, others attended on behalf of municipalities, educational organizations or the environment.

The recommendations produced by town hall participants touched many of our state's top water concerns. Participants expressed numerous ideas on solving water supply and demand issues, as well as ensuring our state has adequate water infrastructure and funding. A common thread in many group conversations was the importance of developing productive and collaborative water management practices. Additionally, throughout all groups were discussions on the value of water to all regions of the state, and ensuring that local communities are aware of and involved in water decision-making.

Data was at the forefront of many group conversations and recommendations. Five recommendations identified data needs and most groups voted their data recommendation as a top priority. Additionally, of these data recommendations, participants ranked three data recommendations as the top three most impactful recommendations of the entire town hall (see Appendix A). Ideas focused on the need for improved data acquisition and management. At their core, these recommendations spoke to New Mexicans' strong belief that clear facts can provide the basis upon which we should make water decisions.

Funding was another common and highly ranked recommendation topic. Town hall attendees advocated for reforms to the current water project funding processes to ensure more available and continuous funding streams. The types of projects this funding would support were captured in a highly recommended and prioritized recommendation – calling for the development of innovative water infrastructure that increases efficient water use.

Another popular and prioritized recommendation stated the need for the funding and implementation of management strategies to address the impacts of climate change on our state's water supply. Town hall attendees also expressed interest in reform for water policies that allow for flexibility for users, increased water-use efficiency and environmental protections.

Many groups also discussed the water planning regions – advocating for realigning the watershed boundaries, as well as encouraging a more active role for regions in water planning and decision-making processes regarding water. Several recommendations also center on encouraging more collaborative relationships between the state, regions and communities.

Prior to the town hall, participants received a background report that encompassed research and information on topics required for inclusion by the State Water Plan Act. Some of these topics include: supply and demand issues, water quality, infrastructure and funding processes, legal matters, planning collaboration, data management and changing conditions. The background report is available at www.nmfirst.org.

Foreword

Purpose of the Event

Water is perhaps THE most critical policy issue in New Mexico, and the State Water Plan is the primary guide for New Mexico's water policy. As part of public engagement on the update of the State Water Plan, participants at the two-day State Water Planning town hall engaged in discussions on a wide range of water-related topics. This event produced recommendations for the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) to consider and possibly include in the 2018 State Water Plan.

Conveners

The event was jointly convened by the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission and New Mexico First. Information on New Mexico First is detailed below. The Interstate Stream Commission was created by statute in 1935. It holds broad powers to investigate, protect, conserve and develop New Mexico's waters, including both interstate and intrastate stream systems. Governed by a nine-member commission appointed by the governor, the ISC investigates and develops the water supplies of the state and institutes legal proceedings in the name of the state for planning, conservation, protection and development of public waters. The ISC is also authorized to lead the updating of the state's 16 Regional Water Plans and the State Water Plan.

This Report

This report details the state water planning town hall process and outcomes. The recommendations developed by participants are contained in the report along with the results of two voting processes: one by participants in small groups discussions (see Appendix B) and one by the full group of participants on all recommendations (see Recommendations section and Appendix A).

Facilitator

New Mexico First engages people in important issues facing their state or community. Established in 1986, the public policy organization offers unique town halls and forums that bring together people from all walks of life to develop their best ideas for policymakers and the public. New Mexico First also produces nonpartisan public policy reports on critical issues facing the state. These reports – on topics like water, education, healthcare, the economy and energy – are available at nmfirst.org.

Our state's two U.S. Senators – Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich – serve as New Mexico First's honorary co-chairs. The organization was co-founded in 1986 by former U.S. Senators Jeff Bingaman and Pete Domenici.

Introduction

On December 13 -14, 2017, approximately 225 committed water stakeholders lent their voices to New Mexico's 2018 State Water Plan. Everyone agreed on the importance of the work at hand – giving public input on our state's leading water policy document. Participants worked in small groups, organized by topics called for by the State Water Plan Act:

- Striking a Balance: Increasing Water Supply and Reducing Demand
- Protecting Precious Resources: Water Quality, Watersheds and Natural Environments
- Making Improvements: Building and Maintaining Water Infrastructure
- Gatekeeping: Water Rights and Legal Matters
- Bridging Gaps: Collaboration, Improved Water Planning, and Information-Sharing
- Preparing for a Changing New Mexico: Open Topic, Climate Change, Land Use and Economic Development

Discussions were informed by the following roundtable panelists who spoke at the beginning of the town hall. These speakers were:

- Gerald Chacon, Rancher and former New Mexico State University Extension Agent
- Sam Fernald, New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute
- Michaelene Kyrala, New Mexico Environment Department
- Lucia Sanchez, New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission
- Arianne Singer, New Mexico Office of the State Engineer

Speakers discussed the purpose and role of water planning in New Mexico – including the relationship between the regional and state water plans, as well as the impacts of these plans on our state. Actual and potential linkages between these plans and water management activities were also on the forefront of the conversation. Additionally, specific activities such as legal programs, public-private partnerships, data management and water budgets were all highlighted by speakers as central to strengthening and ensuring the long-term health of water use in New Mexico.

The discussion groups began their discussion by envisioning New Mexico in 2028 having benefited from a decade of consistent and innovative water management policies including good water stewardship, as well as respect for New Mexico's diverse cultures and unique state customs. Participants developed vision statements, which are presented in Appendix C.

Using these statements to frame subsequent conversations, participants used the remainder of the first day and morning of the second to craft specific recommendations for state water policy. Final recommendations were submitted by each group for consideration by the full assembly. Participants voted on all recommendations – indicating whether they were perceived as highly, moderately or not impactful. Each small group also identified which two recommendations they believed were top priorities (see Appendix A). The resulting recommendations are arranged in the body of this report by small group topic, and separately in the appendix by perceived impact and priority.

A few cross-cutting ideas emerged repeatedly. Of the 33 recommendations: five addressed data collection or management; seven addressed funding priorities and systems; and three addressed regional planning boundaries. Additional priorities included climate change, water regulations and administration, and watersheds.

Recommendations

The town hall recommendations, and the perceived impact of each, reflect the experience, expertise and deliberations of the participants. Town hall attendees, working in small discussion groups, developed a list of no more than six recommendations and – of those – identified their top two priorities. (Priority recommendations are **bolded**.) For a listing of recommendations ranked by level of perceived impact, please see Appendix A. Recommendations voted as top priorities by discussion groups are listed in Appendix B. For a list of participants, please see Appendix D.

Striking a Balance:

Increasing Water Supply and Reducing Demand

This group dealt with current and potential water-supply sources, taking into account New Mexico's future water demands. Discussions centered on using water efficiently, through both policy and technology, to build a more resilient water supply. The group's underlying theme was determining mechanisms to support the water needs of humans, industry and the environment. Below are the town hall recommendations from this group.

Rec #	Recommendation	Perceived Impact
#1	**Markets:** Expand the use of market-based demand management, and water banking programs to provide for accounting, storage and release of water.	• Highly Impactful: 32% • Moderately Impactful: 45% • Not Impactful: 23%
#2	**Water Balance:** Use the New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute (WRRI) water balance modeling tool to establish regional water balances that can be incorporated into a statewide water balance with review and input from regional steering committees.	• Highly Impactful: 32% • Moderately Impactful: 45% • Not Impactful: 24%
#3	**New Water Supply:** Incentivize the use and development of produced, brackish, and other non-traditional water resources to supplement the water supply, while protecting human and environmental health.	• Highly Impactful: 44% • Moderately Impactful: 38% • Not Impactful: 18%
#4	**Data:** Acquire, process, and facilitate distribution of data on water sources, flows, and uses of surface and groundwater in New Mexico. Include measuring of flows, diversions and return flows. Fund and make available using a central web-based server.	• Highly Impactful: 66% • Moderately Impactful: 26% • Not Impactful: 8%
#5	**Water Policies** Develop drought contingency plans and water shortage sharing agreements for each major river basin; use collaborative processes such as the Active Water Resource Management (AWRM) initiative.	• Highly Impactful: 52% • Moderately Impactful: 35% • Not Impactful: 13%
#6	**Supply Gaps:** Identify the most effective methods to close the gap between supply and demand. Quantify these methods based on estimated cost, time to implement, and potential yield.	• Highly Impactful: 47% • Moderately Impactful: 35% • Not Impactful: 18%

Protecting Precious Resources:

Water Quality, Watersheds and Natural Environments

Preserving water quality and ensuring we have adequate environmental protections was this group's main goal. Primary topics include watershed management, instream flows, technology and community outreach. Recommendations also centered on utilizing and improving regulations and policy tools to better ensure there is plentiful and clean water for New Mexicans. Below are the town hall recommendations from this group.

Rec #	Recommendation	Perceived Impact
#7	**Water Policies:** Develop water policies, procedures, and incentives that: • Allow for flexibility to balance supply and demand • Increase water use efficiency and conservation • Provide mechanisms and processes for use of water for instream flows • Recognize that water has economic, social, cultural and ecological values	• Highly Impactful: 64% • Moderately Impactful: 29% • Not Impactful: 7%
#8	**Watersheds:** Invest in the watershed restoration economy, at multiple scales, through new and sustainable funding sources such as state and local taxes, local business contributions, and reclamation of externalized costs.	• Highly Impactful: 48% • Moderately Impactful: 40% • Not Impactful: 12%
#9	**Regulations and Incentives:** Evaluate, fund, improve, and streamline regulations and enforcement. Use targeted incentives to achieve defined outcomes efficiently and effectively.	• Highly Impactful: 31% • Moderately Impactful: 34% • Not Impactful: 35%
#10	**Data:** Prioritize ongoing data collection, research, and innovative technologies, through effective collaboration among academic, government, private and public entities to develop best management practices and inform public policy based on science. Public policy priorities include preserving watershed health, recognizing the water-energy-food nexus, and mitigating the effects of climate change.	• Highly Impactful: 68% • Moderately Impactful: 23% • Not Impactful: 10%
#11	**Community Education:** Engage local communities in education on watershed management, conservation, the water-energy-food nexus, and cultural uses of New Mexico's water resources.	• Highly Impactful: 39% • Moderately Impactful: 44% • Not Impactful: 17%
#12	**Hydrologic Units**: Base planning processes, policy decisions, funding priorities, administration and management on hydrologic units -- using science and data to improve overall basin and watershed health.	• Highly Impactful: 32% • Moderately Impactful: 49% • Not Impactful: 20%

Making Improvements:

Building and Maintaining Water Infrastructure

The ability to effectively move and use our water relies on both our infrastructure and funding. This group addressed construction and repair needs for water storage and conveyance projects. Just as important, this group discussed the policies and processes that determine our infrastructure priorities and funding. Additionally, some recommendations focus on how we use data and collaboration to make water decisions in our state. Below are the town hall recommendations from this group.

Rec #	Recommendation	Perceived Impact
#13	**Infrastructure:** Identify, prioritize, construct, and maintain innovative, multi-purpose and multi-revenue water infrastructure. Reduce evaporative losses, construct or maintain efficient water conveyances, and build and better-locate storage facilities. Complete mandated and ongoing major projects, establish potable water systems in all communities, and where applicable, use natural infrastructure to support other water infrastructure.	• Highly Impactful: 55% • Moderately Impactful: 32% • Not Impactful: 13%
#14	**Conservation and Sustainability:** Increase water availability by building relationships and capacity to provide scientific and technical assistance, particularly in the following topics: • Aquifer mapping and exploratory drilling • Creation of incentives such as tax credits and/or land and water conservation areas by water rights owners • Use of reclaimed water • Setting water rates to maintain and expand water infrastructure within public water systems • Expansion of watershed and stream restoration to achieve cost-efficient, on-time implementation and operation	• Highly Impactful: 43% • Moderately Impactful: 43% • Not Impactful: 15%
#15	**Water Management Process:** Develop holistic water management vision and practices that incorporate community priorities and create multiple benefits including: • Water conservation • Quality and efficiencies • Riparian and fisheries habitat restoration • Comprehensive watershed management • Supporting markets for banked water and novel water sources • Effective and flexible operation and maintenance actions in our natural and built water systems	• Highly Impactful: 46% • Moderately Impactful: 35% • Not Impactful: 20%
#16	**Funding:** Identify constraints and propose changes in funding streams, strategies, and processes that will prioritize sustainable funding and sustainable projects. Activities should include: • Capital outlay reform • Legislative support for public-private partnerships • Development of innovative funding alternatives	• Highly Impactful: 59% • Moderately Impactful: 27% • Not Impactful: 14%

Rec #	Recommendation	Perceived Impact
#17	**Collaboration and Communication:** Develop an effective system for sharing information about water issues statewide. Encourage and promote tribal participation. Improve public education about collaboration opportunities, regional water plans, and water projects with public meetings. Train water professionals and community leaders to facilitate difficult conversations regarding water issues.	• Highly Impactful: 37% • Moderately Impactful: 33% • Not Impactful: 30%
#18	**Policy and Planning:** Develop an inclusive, forward-looking process at state and regional levels for water planning, management, and policy-making that recognizes: • Diverse community stakeholders • Infrastructure needs • Natural watershed systems The process should implement innovative tools, practices, and projects, such as: • Collaborative "basin roundtables" • Water banks • Instream flow transfers • Conjunctive management of ground and surface water • Ensure high quality of water	• Highly Impactful: 40% • Moderately Impactful: 41% • Not Impactful: 19%

Gatekeeping:

Water Rights and Legal Matters

Legal programs and policies determine much of our water use and priorities. This group reviewed the current major topics in the water regulatory schemes: prior appropriation, adjudications, interstate compact obligations, and various options for moving and sharing water. Below are town hall recommendations from this group.

Rec #	Recommendation	Perceived Impact
#19	**Water Reuse:** Convene a cross-industry forum to address the following identified water re-use hurdles: • Streamlining the regulatory process for each type of water user • Identifying the water quality standard to be used by each type of water user based on intended use (i.e. industrial, potable, agriculture, irrigation) • Identifying technologies for both recycling and reusing water -- including indirect potable reuse through aquifer storage recovery (ASR) • Educating the public, the regulator and water users on the use of recycled water	• Highly Impactful: 48% • Moderately Impactful: 39% • Not Impactful: 13%
#20	**Water Planning Boundaries:** Realign existing water planning regions to reflect interstate compact administration, closed groundwater basins, and the eight Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) boundaries. The Rio Grande Basin would be split into an upper, middle, and lower planning region with a requirement to ensure compact delivery compliance.	• Highly Impactful: 40% • Moderately Impactful: 37% • Not Impactful: 24%

#21	**Funding:** Establish water districts based on hydrologic boundaries authorized to secure funding for administering and adjudicating water rights within the district. Utilize these funds for accomplishing water management goals identified by stakeholders.	• Highly Impactful: 57% • Moderately Impactful: 21% • Not Impactful: 21%
#22	**Water Declarations:** Establish a deadline, set by the Office of the State Engineer, for the filing of declarations of surface water and groundwater and ensure that public notice of such deadline is made available.	• Highly Impactful: 30% • Moderately Impactful: 38% • Not Impactful: 32%
#23	**State Water Officials:** Change the appointment process for the members and director of the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) to require education and experience in a water profession and New Mexico Senate confirmation. Appointees will serve full staggered terms unless removed for cause. No more than five of the nine ISC members will be from one political party. ISC members will represent the geographic and water use diversity of New Mexico, including water rights holders. Create a new selection process and criteria for the State Engineer that emphasizes professional water qualifications and the demonstrated ability to work with diverse water interests.	• Highly Impactful: 52% • Moderately Impactful: 32% • Not Impactful: 16%
#24	**Speculative Water Development:** Work towards legislation or regulations which decreases the likelihood of water speculation in New Mexico, considering the following: • Require completion of proof of beneficial use prior to sale or lease of a water right, and limit the number of extensions to a maximum of 10 years -- provided that the applicant demonstrates continuous due diligence • Clarify the public welfare standard • Develop additional restrictions on inter-basin transfers to protect movement to and from basins • Require science-based geology and hydrology used for water applications be independently peer reviewed	• Highly Impactful: 52% • Moderately Impactful: 30% • Not Impactful: 18%

Bridging Gaps:

Collaboration, Improved Water Planning and Information-Sharing

This group explored how we collaborate and coordinate between water planning entities. Additionally, the group addressed future opportunities to help better engage all New Mexicans in the dialogue on water, as well as how the state manages data and opportunities for improved public education about water. Below are town hall recommendations from this group.

Rec #	Recommendation	Perceived Impact
#25	**State Water Administration:** Bridge the gaps by unifying and fostering collaboration among water agencies. Establish a New Mexico Cabinet Level "Water Resources Administration" department that combines the ISC, OSE, and Water Protection Division of the New Mexico Environment Department. Appoint the cabinet secretary and hire knowledgeable professionals with expertise in water resources to lead the organization. This organization should serve customers (the citizens, businesses and agencies who use water) with clear communication between staff and agency leaders. Encourage the	• Highly Impactful: 47% • Moderately Impactful: 23% • Not Impactful: 30%

Rec #	Recommendation	Perceived Impact
	organization's members to function with the best interests of the citizens of New Mexico rather than the political party in power.	
#26	**Data:** Develop an open hub or centralized access to water data. This would be directed by a water data committee (composed of relevant, interested local, state, tribal, and federal water data experts). The water data committee's tasks would include: • Seek or consolidate existing funding toward a secure recurring budget to support data integration, data collection and maintenance • Incorporate any relevant water data on groundwater and surface water quantity and quality • Develop a centralized public data portal (centralized, consistent data) • Advocate for training and education for citizen science toward data collection support • Identify data gaps and duplication – for more efficient data maintenance • Improve data acquisition • Convert data into usable formats	• Highly Impactful: 48% • Moderately Impactful: 22% • Not Impactful: 19%
#27	**Water Planning:** Reevaluate the meaning and role of regions in water planning, policy, and implementation. In the context of state water planning, move authority and resources to the regional level. Provide legislative authority, as well as financial and technical resources, to self-organized sub-state regional water planning organizations composed of all relevant stakeholders, and organized around boundaries based on physical realities (watersheds and basins) and/or "problemsheds" (organized around a common set of problems). Acknowledge the important role of local communities in the management of their water resources. These regional entities should be empowered to: • Facilitate integrated planning processes • Adaptively address short- and long-term water management issues • Coordinate funding and implementation of water projects • Develop, manage, and utilize sound regional water data	• Highly Impactful: 37% • Moderately Impactful: 33% • Not Impactful: 30%
#28	**Education:** Develop and invest in the education of New Mexicans on water issues for the purposes of: • Good water decision-making • Water conservation • Reducing conflict and building trust on water issues • Engaging the public on water data collection and the collective management of our water Education programs should include kindergarten through 12th grade students, communities, university and community college students, as well as adults.	• Highly Impactful: 52% • Moderately Impactful: 37% • Not Impactful: 11%

Preparing for a Changing New Mexico:

Open Topic, Climate, Land Use and Economics

Changing conditions mean New Mexico must be prepared to adjust water practices and priorities. This group explored potential actions that could impact our state's water future including land use, climate change and economic development. This group also allowed for discussion on topics not identified by other groups. Below are town hall recommendations from this group.

Rec #	Recommendation	Perceived Impact
29	**Data:** Create a data architecture to improve data acquisition, data management, and accessibility for land and water use, planning, and management. Types of data to collect include: • Flow data • Acreages • Diversions • Consumptive use • Return flows • Climatological data • Evaporative losses • Pumpage • Water budget data The architecture should make it possible to gauge hydrologic response and effectiveness of land use treatments.	• Highly Impactful: 69% • Moderately Impactful: 15% • Not Impactful: 17%
30	**Regional Water Planning:** Provide adequate and continual funding for regional steering committees and give them authority to acquire funding and implement the plans. The regional steering committees meet regularly (at least annually) to: • Review and update the plan • Implement plan strategies • Assess the progress Promote continued development of the New Mexico dynamic statewide water budget for regional planning.	• Highly Impactful: 52% • Moderately Impactful: 36% • Not Impactful: 12%
31	**Technology and Water Management**: Develop and implement statewide policies based on sound science for adaptive water management, especially in response to climate change and population growth. For example: • Enact policies to promote water-smart land use and incentivize water efficiency measures. • Create a statewide forest fund to improve forest and watershed health (modelled on the Nature Conservancy Rio Grande Water Fund).	• Highly Impactful: 46% • Moderately Impactful: 42% • Not Impactful: 12%
32	**Climate Change:** Fund and implement innovative strategies to address the impacts of climate change such as: • Water treatment and reuse (e.g. effluent, produced water, brownfield water) • Improving the efficiency of consumptive use • Mitigating impacts of wildfire • Efficient agricultural water use	• Highly Impactful: 66% • Moderately Impactful: 19% • Not Impactful: 15%

Rec #	Recommendation	Perceived Impact
	• Water storage (e.g. upper watershed storage, groundwater storage, wetlands) • Mitigating impacts of extreme precipitation variability (e.g. shortage-sharing agreements, stormwater best management practices) • Funding and conducting collaborative research and development on water-related and environmental stewardship topics.	
33	**Rural Land and Water Management:** Rural communities and land should be strategically valued as indispensable to New Mexico's culture, and its capacity to absorb disturbance and maintain economic function in the face of climate unpredictability. Through land use and watershed restoration, ecosystem productivity should be enhanced for the benefit of farming, ranching, outdoor recreation, and other economies that sustain downstream rural communities and urban centers. Approaches should include, but not be limited to: • Forest fuels reduction • Erosion abatement • Revegetation of bare soil • Planned grazing • Wetland and riparian restoration • Implementation of applicable land management plans	• Highly Impactful: 46% • Moderately Impactful: 29% • Not Impactful: 24%

Appendices

Appendix A: Recommendations by Perceived Impact and Priority

The table below sorts recommendations by town hall participants' perceived level of impact. Recommendations are ranked by "highly impactful," with ties broken by "moderately impactful." In addition, each small group selected their own top two priorities **that are bolded in the table below.**

Rec # and Topic	Recommendation	Highly Impactful	Moderately Impactful	Not Impactful
#29: Data	**Create a data architecture to improve data acquisition, data management, and accessibility for land and water use, planning, and management. Types of data to collect include:** • **Flow data** • **Acreages** • **Diversions** • **Consumptive use** • **Return flows** • **Climatological data** • **Evaporative losses** • **Pumpage** • **Water budget data** **The architecture should make it possible to gauge hydrologic response and effectiveness of land use treatments.**	69%	15%	17%
#10: Data	**Prioritize ongoing data collection, research, and innovative technologies, through effective collaboration among academic, government, private and public entities to develop best management practices and inform public policy based on science. Public policy priorities include preserving watershed health, recognizing the water-energy-food nexus, and mitigating the effects of climate change.**	68%	23%	10%
#4: Data	**Acquire, process, and facilitate distribution of data on water sources, flows, and uses of surface and groundwater in New Mexico. Include measuring of flows, diversions and return flows. Fund and make available using a central web-based server.**	66%	26%	8%
#32: Climate Change	**Fund and implement innovative strategies to address the impacts of climate change such as:** • **Water treatment and reuse (e.g. effluent, produced water, brownfield water)** • **Improving the efficiency of consumptive use** • **Mitigating impacts of wildfire** • **Efficient agricultural water use**	66%	19%	15%

Rec # and Topic	Recommendation	Highly Impactful	Moderately Impactful	Not Impactful
	• **Water storage (e.g. upper watershed storage, groundwater storage, wetlands)** • **Mitigating impacts of extreme precipitation variability (e.g. shortage-sharing agreements, stormwater best management practices)** • **Funding and conducting collaborative research and development on water-related and environmental stewardship topics.**			
#7: Water Policies	Develop water policies, procedures and incentives that: • Allow for flexibility to balance supply and demand • Increase water use efficiency and conservation • Provide mechanisms and processes for use of water for instream flows • Recognize that water has economic, social, cultural and ecological values	64%	29%	7%
#16: Funding	**Identify constraints and propose changes in funding streams, strategies and processes that will prioritize sustainable funding and sustainable projects. Activities should include:** • **Capital outlay reform** • **Legislative support for public-private partnerships** • **Development of innovative funding alternatives**	59%	27%	14%
#21: Funding	**Establish water districts based on hydrologic boundaries authorized to secure funding for administering and adjudicating water rights within the district. Utilize these funds for accomplishing water management goals identified by stakeholders.**	57%	21%	21%
#13: Infrastructure	**Identify, prioritize, construct and maintain innovative, multi-purpose and multi-revenue water infrastructure. Reduce evaporative losses, construct or maintain efficient water conveyances, and build and better-locate storage facilities. Complete mandated and ongoing major projects, establish potable water systems in all communities, and where applicable, use natural infrastructure to support other water infrastructure.**	55%	32%	13%
#28: Education	Develop and invest in the education of New Mexicans on water issues for the purposes of: • Good water decision-making • Water conservation • Reducing conflict and building trust on water issues • Engaging the public on water data collection and the collective management of our water	52%	37%	11%

Rec # and Topic	Recommendation	Highly Impactful	Moderately Impactful	Not Impactful
	Education programs should include kindergarten through 12th grade students, communities, university and community college students, as well as adults.			
#30: Regional Water Planning	Provide adequate and continual funding for regional steering committees and give them authority to acquire funding and implement the plans. The regional steering committees meet regularly (at least annually) to: • Review and update the plan • Implement plan strategies • Assess the progress • Promote continued development of the New Mexico dynamic statewide water budget for regional planning.	52%	36%	12%
#5: Water Policies	Develop drought contingency plans and water shortage sharing agreements for each major river basin; use collaborative processes such as the Active Water Resource Management (AWRM) initiative.	52%	35%	13%
#23: State Water Officials	**Change the appointment process for the members and director of the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) to require education and experience in a water profession and New Mexico Senate confirmation. Appointees will serve full staggered terms unless removed for cause. No more than five of the nine ISC members will be from one political party. ISC members will represent the geographic and water use diversity of New Mexico, including water rights holders. Create a new selection process and criteria for the State Engineer that emphasizes professional water qualifications and the demonstrated ability to work with diverse water interests.**	52%	32%	16%
#24: Speculative Water Development	Work towards legislation or regulations which decreases the likelihood of water speculation in New Mexico, considering the following: • Require completion of proof of beneficial use prior to sale or lease of a water right, and limit the number of extensions to a maximum of 10 years -- provided that the applicant demonstrates continuous due diligence • Clarify the public welfare standard • Develop additional restrictions on inter-basin transfers to protect movement to and from basins • Require science-based geology and hydrology used for water applications be independently peer reviewed	52%	30%	18%
#19: Water Reuse	Convene a cross-industry forum to address the following identified hurdles:	48%	39%	13%

Rec # and Topic	Recommendation	Highly Impactful	Moderately Impactful	Not Impactful
	• Streamline the regulatory process for each type of water user • Identify the water quality standard to be used by each type of water user based on intended use (i.e. industrial, potable, agriculture, irrigation) • Identify technologies for both recycling and reusing water -- including indirect potable reuse through aquifer storage recovery (ASR) • Educate the public, the regulator and water users on the use of recycled water			
#8: Watersheds	**Invest in the watershed restoration economy, at multiple scales, through new and sustainable funding sources such as state and local taxes, local business contributions, and reclamation of externalized costs.**	48%	40%	12%
#26: Data	**Develop an open hub or centralized access to water data. This would be directed by a water data committee (composed of relevant, interested local, state, tribal, and federal water data experts). The water data committee's tasks would include:** • **Seek or consolidate existing funding toward a secure recurring budget to support data integration, data collection and maintenance** • **Incorporate any relevant water data on groundwater and surface water quantity and quality** • **Develop a centralized public data portal (centralized, consistent data)** • **Advocate for training and education for citizen science toward data collection support** • **Identify data gaps and duplication – for more efficient data maintenance** • **Improve data acquisition** • **Convert data into usable formats**	48%	22%	19%
#6: Supply Gaps	**Identify the most effective methods to close the gap between supply and demand. Quantify these methods based on estimated cost, time to implement, and potential yield.**	47%	35%	18%
#25: State Water Administration	**Bridge the gaps by unifying and fostering collaboration among water agencies. Establish a New Mexico Cabinet Level "Water Resources Administration" department that combines the ISC, OSE, and Water Protection Division of the New Mexico Environment Department. Appoint the cabinet secretary and hire knowledgeable professionals with expertise in water resources to lead the organization. This organization should serve customers (the citizens, businesses and**	47%	23%	30%

Rec # and Topic	Recommendation	Highly Impactful	Moderately Impactful	Not Impactful
	agencies who use water) with clear communication between staff and agency leaders. Encourage the organization's members to function with the best interests of the citizens of New Mexico rather than the political party in power.			
#31: Technology and Water Management	Develop and implement statewide policies based on sound science for adaptive water management, especially in response to climate change and population growth. For example: • Enact policies to promote water-smart land use and incentivize water efficiency measures • Create a statewide forest fund to improve forest and watershed health (modelled on the Nature Conservancy Rio Grande Water Fund)	46%	42%	12%
#15: Water Management Process	Develop holistic water management vision and practices that incorporate community priorities and create multiple benefits including: • Water conservation • Quality and efficiencies • Riparian and fisheries habitat restoration • Comprehensive watershed management • Supporting markets for banked water and novel water sources • Effective and flexible operation and maintenance actions in our natural and built water systems	46%	35%	20%
#33: Rural Land and Water Management	Rural communities and land should be strategically valued as indispensable to New Mexico's culture, and its capacity to absorb disturbance and maintain economic function in the face of climate unpredictability. Through land use and watershed restoration, ecosystem productivity should be enhanced for the benefit of farming, ranching, outdoor recreation, and other economies that sustain downstream rural communities and urban centers. Approaches should include, but not be limited to: • Forest fuels reduction • Erosion abatement • Revegetation of bare soil • Planned grazing • Wetland and riparian restoration • Implementation of applicable land management plans	46%	29%	24%
#3: New Water Supply	Incentivize the use and development of produced, brackish, and other non-traditional water resources to supplement the water supply, while protecting human and environmental health.	44%	38%	18%

Rec # and Topic	Recommendation	Highly Impactful	Moderately Impactful	Not Impactful
#14: Conservation and Sustainability	Increase water availability by building relationships and capacity to provide scientific and technical assistance, particularly in the following topics: • Aquifer mapping and exploratory drilling • Creation of incentives such as tax credits and/or land and water conservation areas by water rights owners • Use of reclaimed water • Setting water rates to maintain and expand water infrastructure within public water systems • Expansion of watershed and stream restoration to achieve cost-efficient, on-time implementation and operation	43%	43%	15%
#18: Policy and Planning	Develop an inclusive, forward-looking process at state and regional levels for water planning, management and policymaking that recognizes: • Diverse community stakeholders • Infrastructure needs • Natural watershed systems This process should create and implement innovative tools, practices and projects, such as: • Collaborative "basin roundtables" • Water banks • Instream flow transfers • Conjunctive management of ground and surface water • Ensure high quality of water	40%	41%	19%
#20: Water Planning Boundaries	**Realign existing water planning regions to reflect interstate compact administration, closed groundwater basins, and the eight Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) boundaries. The Rio Grande Basin would be split into an upper, middle, and lower planning region with a requirement to ensure compact delivery compliance.**	40%	37%	24%
#11: Community Education	Engage local communities in education on watershed management, conservation, the water-energy-food nexus, and cultural uses of New Mexico's water resources.	39%	44%	17%
#17: Collaboration and Communication	Develop an effective system for sharing information about water issues statewide. Encourage and promote tribal participation. Improve public education about collaboration opportunities, regional water plans, and water projects with public meetings. Train water professionals and community leaders to facilitate difficult conversations regarding water issues.	37%	33%	30%

Rec # and Topic	Recommendation	Highly Impactful	Moderately Impactful	Not Impactful
#27: Water Planning	Reevaluate the meaning and role of regions in water planning, policy, and implementation. In the context of state water planning, move authority and resources to the regional level. Provide legislative authority, as well as financial and technical resources, to self-organized sub-state regional water planning organizations composed of all relevant stakeholders, and organized around boundaries based on physical realities (watersheds and basins) and/or "problemsheds" (organized around a common set of problems). Acknowledge the important role of local communities in the management of their water resources. These regional entities should be empowered to: • Facilitate integrated planning processes • Adaptively address short- and long-term water management issues • Coordinate funding and implementation of water projects • Develop, manage, and utilize sound regional water data	37%	33%	30%
#12: Hydrologic Units	Base planning processes, policy decisions, funding priorities, administration and management on hydrologic units -- using science and data to improve overall basin and watershed health.	32%	49%	20%
#1: Markets	Expand the use of market-based demand management and water banking programs to provide for accounting, storage, and release of water.	32%	45%	23%
#2: Water Balance	Use the New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute (WRRI) water balance modeling tool to establish regional water balances that can be incorporated into a statewide water balance with review and input from regional steering committees.	32%	45%	24%
#9: Regulations and Incentives	Evaluate, fund, improve and streamline regulations and enforcement. Use targeted incentives to achieve defined outcomes efficiently and effectively.	31%	34%	35%
#22: Water Declarations	Establish a deadline, set by the Office of the State Engineer, for the filing of declarations of surface water and groundwater, and ensure that public notice of such deadline is made available.	30%	38%	32%

Appendix B: Vision Statements

After first breaking into discussion groups, town hall participants were asked "*Imagine it is the year 2028 and New Mexico has benefited from a decade of consistent and innovative water management policies including good water stewardship as well as respect for New Mexico's diverse cultures and unique state customs. What does our state look like in this regard*?" Facilitators then worked with participants to develop characteristics that would become the group's vision statement for New Mexico's water future in 2028.

Striking the Balance:
Increasing Water Supply and Reducing Demand
New Mexicans recognize the economic, social, historical, cultural and environmental value of water. New Mexico has adequate water supplies including equal access to clean water by all. New Mexico's water balance is sustainable. Water is available for agricultural, industrial, residential and commercial uses, economic opportunities and growth, and the environment of the state. Cooperation and collaboration among users is a part of the water planning system and contingency plans are in place to prepare for episodic drought and declining supplies. Conservation and efficient use of water is a priority as is the metering and accurate modelling of water systems.

Protecting Precious Resources:
Water Quality, Watersheds and Natural Environments
Resilient and healthy watersheds and ecosystems make clean water available for all, and support people and livelihoods, wildlife, and balanced growth. Stewardship of water supplies enable agricultural communities to thrive economically using sustainable and diverse agriculture practices. Science is integrated into water policy.

Gatekeeping:
Water Rights and Legal Matters
State has meaningful and resilient water plan that addresses crucial problems identified by all stakeholders through an adaptive collaborative process. State water management agencies have adequate resources to professionally, effectively, and consistently administer State water resources and address stakeholder water needs.

Preparing for a Changing New Mexico:
Open Topic, Climate, Land Use and Economics
New Mexico water resources are resilient; communities and the environment have adequate water to sustain them during drought and climate change. Water is used efficiently meeting all needs. The state develops and implements plans, incentives, and infrastructure aligning with efficiency, recycling and economic development. Ongoing effective water planning includes all New Mexican communities.

Bridging Gaps:
Collaboration, Improved Water Planning and Information-Sharing
New Mexico is a national leader in water science, management and governance that respects and serves our diverse communities and traditions, and provides good quality water for all residents and ecosystems. An educated citizenry, government, and grassroots organizations regularly collaborate, work with real and accurate data that is accessible to all, to create locally appropriate, workable, and sustainable solutions to its serious problems.

Making Improvements:
Building and Maintaining Water Infrastructure
In 2028, New Mexico has an innovative and sustainable water-use economy, water management system, and infrastructure in which competing water needs are balanced. Water management is informed by science and community input -- including tribal, colonias, land grant, and acequia communities. Cooperation among stakeholders and funding groups has resulted in innovative, beneficial projects that maximize resources and positive outcomes for both people and nature.

Appendix C: Town Hall Participants and Staff

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