

PANEL

Municipal Water Quality Problems and Information Needs

Frank C. DiLuzio
Director

Santa Fe Metropolitan Water Board

The Metropolitan Water Board, which is part of the Santa Fe water franchise, was created by a Santa Fe ordinance. The franchise of the water board is unusual in that its senior signatories are the city of Santa Fe, Santa Fe County and the water company. The board is funded through contributions from the city and from the franchise tax received from water sales. This total is matched by the water company. The functions of the Metropolitan Water Board are to preview technical studies, long-range planning for water services, availability of water, and policy recommendations to the principals. In effect, the board is really a technical study group that only makes policy recommendations. It really has no functions of its own except the administration of water which is in the San Juan-Chama project. The authority extends only over water that is purchased under contract and that to which the Metropolitan Water Board holds the allocation rights. We contract with other agencies to have studies performed. For example, we are working in partnership with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the State Engineer Office (SEO) in designing a three-dimensional model. We are participating by providing the cost of the model. We're talking to them now about doing some other studies for us. We believe that the character of our organization, the lack of our staff and the availability of talent in the state encourages us to use the USGS and the SEO. Even when we formulate programs that we

hope to do through consultants, we try to do it with the full understanding of the SEO and the USGS. We do this in hopes that the information developed is useful not only to the Metropolitan Water Board and its principals, but also to other water agencies in the state. I don't think anybody in the state can enjoy the luxury of having single source information only for their use. I think that because the dollars are short and the data requirement is large, we had better work collectively in sharing information. We also believe that in using information from state institutions like New Mexico State University and the New Mexico Bureau of Mines, along with data from the USGS and the SEO, that we are tapping the best brains in the state. In turn, whenever we do things on our own, such as monitoring wells or constructing observation wells, we provide the data we've developed to anyone who has any use for it. I believe more of this must be done.

I was very impressed with the description of the work being done by several of the agencies and others represented at this conference, including the proposed long-range plan of the USGS. I feel much like the little girl who inherited a million dollars. After the lawyers explained to her what it meant in terms of how many dollars a day she could spend and never run to the end of it, she finally said, "But can I have five cents for an ice cream cone?" There are problems in the state of New Mexico that involve small community water supply systems. These problems are very small but they're very serious to these communities. I would like to see some accommodations made for the small problems--not large basic problems, not large watershed problems--in terms of providing them with technical assistance and some type of funding. We've all read

stories about how these communities have had to haul in water because their wells ran dry. Perhaps these problems are too small for large agencies to handle, but the state must face up to them. In Santa Fe County, we are taking a look at our own community systems because, under the ordinance, we've got to see what needs to be done to upgrade them. Basically, this is being done because if the city expands its boundaries and the communities become part of the water system, we would like to know the physical conditions of their systems. We hope to be able to improve them as time goes on so that their standards of construction are consistent with those of the main company. I believe that a better coordinated approach to these problems and a much better means of transmitting technical information is a must. The people who operate the systems every day can convert this technical information and these ecological studies into management techniques they can use. I would like to see all the technical information developed in these basins converted into management techniques such as those Lee Case referred to in his talk. Some of us know how to take information, such as the geohydrological data being developed, and use it in making everyday decisions. This information will not only help us operate the system properly but also will help us design better systems--both small and large--in the future. Santa Fe County has 29 community systems of all grades and kinds; some are very good, some are very bad. The one large system in Santa Fe, which serves 50,000 people, has the staff and the funding to improve its own system. But this is not true for every small village in Santa Fe County that has water problems, and will continue to have water problems. The water

quality in many of these small systems is very bad and must be taken care of.

Another problem we have in getting information together is that we have a basin in which a great number of studies have been made. I think at last count, there were 156 minor studies and about seven major studies. Information from these studies must be put into a form that can be used in developing management plans for the basin. For example, we really have very limited information on recharge. Until we know these facts, we really can't develop a long-term management plan for the Santa Fe Basin. Fortunately, we have three sources of water in Santa Fe: the Santa Fe River, which gives up somewhere between 4,000 and 5,000 acre-feet a year; the basin, which releases about the same quantity; and the contract water we're buying from San Juan-Chama where we have 5,600 acre-feet and we'll ask for 9,000 more. The saving grace for Santa Fe, and one which will give us the water requirements for growth through the year 2015, are these two sources plus the ability to purchase water from the San Juan-Chama. The combination of resources and proper management will stabilize water requirements for Santa Fe. If managed properly, Santa Fe should not have any serious water problems in the long-term.