

PANEL

Federal Water Quality Information Responsibilities, Activities and Needs

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In New Mexico, our office--the Rights Protection Group of the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs--is primarily interested in water rights. We're the half of the bureau that is always in court along with the state engineer. Our interest in water quality focuses on water quality that crosses Indian reservations.

Some of the water quality issues we've recently been involved with include the Indian pueblos in the southern quarter of the South Valley, mine tailings ponds on Indian lands and mine dewatering. We've also been concerned about a city that has dumped the water from its sewage upstream from Indian lands.

One of the reasons we're looking at water quality on Indian lands is for the possible development of Indian water resources. The Pueblo Indians, in particular, have religious as well as agricultural and domestic uses for the surface water. Our primary responsibility then, is to assure that the quality of water available to the Indian people of New Mexico is sufficient to meet their needs. Delfin Lovato, the chairman of the All Indian Pueblo Council, will discuss Indian water needs in more detail later.