

INDIAN WATER QUALITY INFORMATION NEEDS

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Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for providing me the opportunity to come before you to express some of the concerns and needs of the Pueblo tribes of New Mexico concerning water quality standards. As many people of the Southwest are aware, water is of great importance to the Indian people, for religious purposes as well as a practical life-giving resource. For years the interest in water has been one of amount available. A major concern among the Pueblo tribes always has been whether or not they would have sufficient water to maintain their crops in their community. However, in recent years the concern for quantity has been compounded by a concern for maintaining the quality of that precious and limited resource. Increased development and population expansion on or near reservations have not only put a strain on the amount of water available to all but has also resulted in altering the quality of those waters.

The concerns of the Pueblo tribes are varied in nature depending on tribal locations. Our pueblos, such as those in Jemez and Zia, have the same concerns as rural communities. Areas such as Acoma, Laguna, Isleta and San Ildefonso have more modern fears brought on by urban development and chemical waste contamination. The rural areas are concerned with the development of wells that will provide usable waters as well as with the maintenance of clean water stream designations from the many streams that run through their lands. Many of these concerns deal with maintaining

the purity of streamflows that are coming under increasingly larger recreational uses. This would include the waters of the Rio Jemez and the tributaries of the Rio Grande as they are found in the northern areas of the state near the pueblos of Santa Clara, San Juan, Picuris and Taos. These are areas where the waters provide excellent recreational use and any downgrading of those waters could result in an eventual loss of those recreational benefits to Indians and non-Indians.

The lower waters of the Rio Grande and the waters of the Rio San Jose are of a more immediate concern when discussing water quality standards. The pueblos of Laguna and Acoma are currently confronted with a serious degradation of the Rio San Jose due primarily to inefficient waste disposal from the city of Grants. Each tribe must be made aware of or be informed of municipal actions taken upstream from them which could have direct effects on the waters passing through their areas.

The pueblo of Isleta, which sits right below the city of Albuquerque, has for years been subject to a growing danger due to the expansion of city waste into the Rio Grande. This includes domestic as well as industrial waste. The pueblo does extensive farming, but the recent diminishing of the quality of water is beginning to have an effect on their farming activities. The possible effects that the new nuclear treatment plant at the Montessa Park area might have on waters flowing from the Rio Grande into the pueblo of Isleta have not been totally made known to the Pueblo community.

As the population of New Mexico expands and municipalities come in closer contact with water sources that also feed the Pueblo communities,

the effect that these municipalities will have on the pueblo water source will have to be given a higher priority.

For centuries the pueblo water needs have been based on recreational and agricultural uses. The increased industrial and domestic water uses which are rapidly growing around the reservations' boundaries will have direct and dramatic effects on the tribal communities. The Pueblos must not only be informed about the potential effects these changes in water uses might have, but also be given information about what these water uses will be before they have occurred. Without such information, there cannot be any type of worthwhile working relationship between the Indian and non-Indian communities. Until the non-Indian communities recognize the Pueblo tribes as neighbors who also have a great dependency on a shared resource, the fight over water will be never-ending. Because of the preciousness of the resource, the Indian and non-Indian communities cannot afford to expand their energies in a continually combative manner. Planning for water needs is going to have to include all the parties affected and this means, in no small way, the Pueblo communities.