

NEW MEXICO WATER RESOURCES RESEARCH INSTITUTE BACKGROUND

New Mexico's Water Resources Research Institute (WRI), founded in 1963, was the first such organization in the United States. It also was among the first 14 in the United States financed under the 1964 Water Research Act.

The original purpose of the WRI was to coordinate existing water research at New Mexico State University. When the institute was founded, 32 water research projects were in progress, scattered among 10 university departments.

Since then, the WRI's goal has broadened to encourage water resources research throughout the state. The WRI now works with all the state universities, state agencies, federal agencies and private firms which sponsor water research activities.

Unlike some of the other 52 water research agencies funded under the 1964 law, the New Mexico WRI does no in-house research. Instead, the institute serves to help researchers obtain the means to do their projects and assists granting agencies in determining where research money should be spent.

Projects sponsored by the institute and its companion agencies also provide the means for students to do research leading to undergraduate and advanced degrees.

Projects selected for funding are first screened by a nine-member Program Development and Review Board which is made up of water authorities from universities and state agencies. Those selected by the board are then submitted to the funding agencies for final approval.

The WRI assists in administering funds for approved projects while they are in progress and publishes the researchers' interim and final reports as appropriate. The WRI distributes these reports to educational institutions, libraries, sponsoring agencies and other interested researchers.

Beginning in 1964, federal funding made up the bulk of the WRI's budget. In 1970, the state legislature appropriated the first state funds, \$104,000, to support water research through the institute. In

1982, federal funds made up about 43 percent of the WRRRI budget at \$560,000 with various state and private funds accounting for about 57 percent or \$740,000.

The Annual New Mexico Water Conference, which dates back to 1956, was one of the earliest organized efforts to broaden the study of state water problems. About 150 persons attended the first conference and before it ended, they voted to make it an annual event. Each year since, the conference has been a public forum for federal and state decision makers, representatives of the water users in industry, recreation and agriculture, university researchers and state residents to discuss New Mexico's water problems.

A statewide advisory committee also advises the institute on New Mexico's water research needs and on the overall institute program.