



**WATER WARNING: IT'S NOT JUST THE DROUGHT
"WATER Q2 AND RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS FOR WATER PLAN SUPPORT"**

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ABSTRACT

New Mexico's population is growing at a rapid pace and available water supply often intersects with the quality of the scarce water available for sustaining human, animal, and plant life. Much emphasis of late has been placed on the actual amount and location of water needed, especially during recent drought impacts being realized in many parts of the State. "Water Warning," a 27-minute video production that aired on PBS April 21 at 7:30 pm, highlights the connection between water Quality and Quantity (Q2) in New Mexico. The video focuses on some of the key water quality issues that New Mexico also faces.

The New Mexico Water Plan, supported by Governor Richardson, is strongly needed for New Mexico. Serious issues face this state in the video related to:

- Population growth (waste water systems)
- Industrial development (as depicted by the State's burgeoning dairy industry)
- Industrial wastes (as depicted by a dry-cleaner's groundwater plume of chlorinated solvents in Espanola)
- National labs (as highlighted by contaminants at LANL) addressing water quality

A fundamental problem that NM faces is the lack of public awareness and support to translate the many scientific and technological efforts underway into meaningful changes for the State. This problem is demonstrated by representative lack of funding and resources dedicated to the advancement of concrete solutions for both water infrastructure development and water quality protection and treatment. The legal framework governing water issues in this state is in need of integration and updating to bring New Mexico up to par with other states' progress in legal and technology advances. The Multi-Agency New Mexico Water Plan task force is now facing these issues. A key component to its success is public education focused on making the general public fully aware of water quality issues. This must translate to a public will to fund the resources to address the Water Task Force initiatives.

Economic and quality of life issues are currently tied to a great deal of uncertainty about the scarce, and largely unseen, groundwater resource in New Mexico. The state has a unique need to step up the transfer of what it learns about its water supplies to citizens to help us decide how and where to grow. How feasible this effort will be depends on making informed decisions together.

New Mexico's main water agencies—the Office of State Engineer and the Environment Department along with its institutions of higher learning and National Laboratories—must be willing to work together to achieve the goals of integration and advancement of the State Water Plan. The public, as always, is the key to the success of this plan by being invited in as a partner and a willing participant to the changes needed for a stable and prosperous water future in this arid state of New Mexico.





