

Mexico Visit Highlights Conservation Innovations

The Utton Transboundary Resources Center organized and led a group of New Mexico irrigators on a visit to the Delicias Irrigation District in Mexico last fall. The trip was sponsored by the New Mexico-Chihuahua Commission Water Work Table, which maintains a dialogue with agricultural users in New Mexico's neighboring state of Chihuahua to discuss water topics of mutual interest.

The goal of the trip was to exchange information and highlight new technologies with the hope of improving techniques for conserving water. New Mexico participants included managers of the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, Elephant Butte Irrigation District and Carlsbad Irrigation District, along with representatives of the northern New Mexico acequias.



A Mexican irrigation official describes agricultural water conservation techniques to members of the New Mexico delegation.

The 220,000 - acre Delicias district, located about 60 miles south of Ciudad Chihuahua, has implemented a number of state-of-the-art water conservation techniques during the past five years. They

were designed to assist Mexico in its water deliveries to the United States as required under a 1944 international treaty.

Prior to obtaining these government-funded irrigation improvements, each farmer was required to sign an agreement in which the farmer commits his conserved water to treaty obligations and growing municipal needs. The farmer is allowed to use 25 percent of the water saved. During the past five years, a total of 108 million acre-feet of water have been conserved. As a comparison, this is about 50 times the volume of Elephant Butte Reservoir at full capacity.

To view a PowerPoint presentation on this project that Susan Kelly presented at the 2006 Annual Fall UNM Water Forum, go to: http://uttoncenter.unm.edu/international_projects.html.



In technology from Israel, a series of sand filters cleans water for use in drip irrigation.

Workshops Address Rio Grande Water Delivery

The Utton Transboundary Resources Center assisted in a series of workshops last fall aimed at reconciling water use and planning efforts of three water regions along the Middle Rio Grande.

The Middle Rio Grande basin, which stretches from Santa Fe to Elephant Butte Lake, includes three regions designated to develop long-range water plans. Given that this corridor represents more than half of the state's population, the demands on the water are significant, and varied.

According to a 2004 study conducted by S.S. Papadopoulos & Associates for the Interstate Stream Commission entitled, "Middle Rio Grande Water Supply Study, Phase III (2004)," the basin currently incurs an annual deficit of 71,000 to 110,000 acre-feet. As a comparison, annual usage in the Albuquerque area is about 50,000 acre-feet.

"Even with the various recommendations by cities and rural water users up and down the Rio Grande, there is still a potential deficit," says Susan Kelly, associate director of the Utton Center. "And everyone agrees that implementation of those recommendations will be extremely challenging for the basin."

Everyone also agrees that collaboration is key to finding workable solutions to ensure that the annual delivery obligation for Rio Grande water to Texas is met.

The New Mexico Water Dialogue, through a grant from the McCune Foundation and in cooperation with the Interstate Stream Commission, sponsored the workshops. Six representatives from each region discussed a broad range of thorny issues concerning water in New Mexico, including the conflict between the urban counties and rural counties in which urban interests plan to transfer water rights from agriculture to municipal use.

More information on the Upstream-Downstream project is at the following website: nmwaterdialogue.org/id15.html.

In an effort to keep the dialogue going, the Utton Center is spearheading an effort to work with a smaller group of stakeholders to develop a collaborative project for the three regions.

"Obtaining consensus on how to proceed is challenging, but it is an important continuation of the first step that was achieved in bringing these three regions together for initial talks," says Kelly.

For questions about this process, contact Kelly at 277-0514.

Marilyn O'Leary Announces Retirement

Bringing people together to collaborate on water issues in ways they had not done before was Marilyn O'Leary's greatest reward as director of the Utton Transboundary Resources Center for the past six years.

Especially significant were two invitation-only national conferences, one at which lawyers and scientists addressed interstate water issues and discussed their different approaches to the problem, and a second that assembled tribal leaders, government representatives, acequia members and other irrigators to work on the settlement of water apportionment issues.

Results of both conferences were used in the creation of a model interstate water compact, which offers a mechanism for resolving water conflicts through collaboration rather than litigation. The model compact continues the center's interest in transboundary water institutions begun by Professor Albert E. Utton when he helped produce the Bellagio Treaty, which established a process for resolving groundwater disputes between nations.

"It was rewarding to see how participants at our conferences broadened their knowledge of the issues and advanced their capabilities to collaborate on management possibilities," says O'Leary ('81), who will step down in March.

Under her leadership, the Utton Center hosted a number of CLE conferences and other workshops, including one that was requested by people with opposing opinions of how to restore the Rio Grande bosque. The center also has been involved in water management research projects for both the federal and state governments.

"We have an important role to play in state and national water issues," says O'Leary. "It is satisfying to see how the Utton Center has promoted people's ability to collaborate and manage their own water issues."

Speaking of collaborations, after March, O'Leary looks forward to writing a book with two of her cousins about choices available to people in their 50s and beyond. She also expects to be working on solutions to global warming and spending time traveling with her husband, Jim.

"It is hard to imagine a better director for the Utton Center over the past six years," says Dean Suellyn Scarnecchia. "Marilyn advanced the vision of the center, stabilized its funding, involved students, faculty, experts and community members in resolving water issues, all while maintaining the center's neutral and mediating role. We are so grateful for the fine leadership, intelligence and good humor that Marilyn gave the Utton Center."

Joe Stell Shares Views on Water in New Handbook

Recognizing the contribution state Rep. Joe Stell has made to water policy throughout New Mexico, Susan Kelly ('81), associate director of the Utton Transboundary Resources Center, spearheaded a project to record the Carlsbad legislator's views on the subject.

Stell, an educator, was elected to the state Legislature in 1986 and retired last year. During his tenure as a lawmaker, he served on various natural resources committees and Gov. Bill Richardson often referred to him as "Mr. Water." He has received numerous awards for his legislative work.

For the Utton Center project, Kelly interviewed Stell to learn of his views on major water issues facing the state. She worked with Stephanie Beninato, an historian and legislative analyst, who helped research those issues.

Their work, which was funded by the McCune Foundation, has been compiled into *Water Matters! A Primer on Water Issues for Members of the 48th New Mexico State Legislature*, a handbook for legislators to guide their work on water issues in the 2007 Legislature. The handbook includes a personal history of Stell, along with additional thoughts on water and other issues and can be accessed on the Utton Center's website at <http://uttoncenter.unm.edu>.

CLE Focuses on Climate Change



Tom Udall ('77) outlines proposed legislation.

UNM Law Professor Denise Fort and Marilyn O'Leary ('81), director of the Utton Transboundary Resources Center, joined with the Natural Resources, Energy and Environmental Law Section of the New Mexico State Bar to present a December CLE on climate change.

U.S. Rep. Tom Udall ('77) opened the daylong program, titled, "Climate Change Impacts, Laws and Policies," with a talk that highlighted details of legislation he introduced last year to address global warming. Dean Suellyn Scarnecchia gave a presentation titled, "I call it climate change, you call it global warming: How to represent clients on climate change issues and maintain your professional demeanor and civility."

Fort shared the platform with Dr. Larry Rasmussen, author of *Earth Community, Earth Ethics*, to present the ethics portion of the program, and representatives from Sen. Pete Domenici's and Sen. Jeff Bingaman's energy staff participated in the panel on governmental initiatives. Kyle Harwood ('99), outgoing chair of the section, and incoming Chair Steve Hattenbach helped to organize the conference and were on the program.

Susan Kelly Named to Water Panel



Susan Kelly ('81), associate director of the Utton Center, was appointed by Gov. Bill Richardson to serve on the New Mexico-Chihuahua Commission Water Work Table. The commission works on a variety of common issues at a state-to-state level, including water issues.