

MINUTES OF THE
SANTA FE COUNTY
WATER POLICY ADVISORY
COMMITTEE MEETING

June 12, 2025

Santa Fe, New Mexico

1 Opening Business

A. This meeting of the Santa Fe County Water Policy Advisory Committee (WPAC) was called to order at approximately 4:00 p.m. (technical difficulties delayed the start of discussion until 4:12 p.m.) by Emily Wolf, Vice Chair, on the above-cited date in the Plaza Conference Room, 240 Grant, Santa Fe, New Mexico. The meeting was conducted as a hybrid with people attending in person and on line.

B. A quorum was achieved with the following members present:

Members Present:

Emily Wolf
Amy Jordan
Peter Gowen
John Kadlecek
Stephen Schmelling
Laird Graeser
Darrin Muenzberg
Commissioner Bustamante, *ex officio* [virtually]

Member(s) Absent:

Shann Stringer
Jeff Montoya
James Mike Henry

County Staff Present:

Andrew Harnden, Senior Planner, Growth Management Department/Planning Division
Hvtce Miller, Intergovernmental Outreach Coordinator
Cristella Valdez, Asst. County Attorney
Travis Soderquist, Utilities Deputy Director [virtually]
Brittney Montoya, Constituent Services Liaison
Jacqueline Beam, Sustainability Manager
Leandro Cordova, Deputy Manager [virtually]
Herbert Foster, Planning Division
Walker Boyd, County Attorney [virtually]
Elizabeth Houghton, Sustainability Specialist
Maxx Hendren, Planning Division

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Valerie Rangel, GIS Senior Planner

Others Present:

Carl Dickens

Kaleb Brooks, La Pradera General Counsel [virtually]

Paul White, Santa Fe Basin Water Association

Jack Sullivan, former County Commissioner and TAC member

Jim Richardson, La Pradera [virtually]

Jason Shaffer, La Pradera [virtually]

Elizabeth Roghair, Eldorado Area Water & Sanitation District [virtually]

C. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Gowen moved to approve the agenda. Mr. Muenzberg seconded and the agenda was unanimously approved.

D. Introduction of WPAC Guests

Those present introduced themselves.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes

A. May 8, 2025

The date for today's meeting was incorrect in the minutes.

Mr. Gowen moved to approve the May 8, 2025 meeting minutes as amended. Mr. Kadlecsek seconded and the motion passed without opposition.

- 3. Matters from Staff** – Mr. Soderquist announced that item 4.A. regarding conjunctive use will not be presented this evening until more questions are answered.

4. Presentations

- A. Presentation for Application to County for Bulk-Water Agreement (La Pradera Community Representatives)** Mr. Kaleb Brooks, General Counsel, La Pradera

Mr. Brooks advised that the HOA for La Pradera has submitted a preliminary application on behalf of its members for retail wastewater service under the BCC resolution number 2015 121. He sited La Pradera south of I-25, in the Community College District. They are seeking a sale of its consumer collection infrastructure within the community to the County together with related property rights and easements in order to connect to the SR-14 interceptor that is being constructed along Old Dinosaur Trail. Site plans have already been created with two possible connection points. Once connected with the County system the members of the HOA would be retail customers to the County utilities.

Representatives for La Pradera first met with the County concerning a connection to SR-14 in the fall of 2023. In the early meetings, it seemed as if the County wanted to move quickly to approve this connection and to begin negotiations to create a full acquisition agreement in 2024. At that time La Pradera's wastewater discharge permit was set to expire in the fall of 2024 with the anticipation of the need to refurbish the system to comply with NMED's recommendations which would imply major costs to members of the HOA so it was seen as a good deal for both the County and La Pradera. After the initial application was approved by La Pradera there were significant discussions between the County and La Pradera concerning this project. Due to the expeditious nature of these early discussions, La Pradera received an extension to their discharge permit from NMED which was set to expire in 2024. In March 2024, HOA representatives met with then County Utilities Director Choman and left the meeting with the understanding that the project would move forward quickly. La Pradera was confident that the project was moving forward and the HOA hired Mr. Brooks. NMED agreed to administratively continue the discharge permit set to expire in 2024. The official application was submitted to the County shortly thereafter in March of 2024 with the hopes that discussions could resume between the County and La Pradera but La Pradera received very little feedback from the County. And at this point, the project ground to a halt.

County Legal advised the HOA to file an application and go through the standard process rather than the MOU concept discussed during 2024 and earlier. The application was completed and filed in 2024 and there has been little feedback from the County. To date, they have received no feedback regarding the application. Speaking frankly, Mr. Brooks, said this meeting was set without notice to La Pradera.

Mr. Brooks said La Pradera has made several decisions early on in this process in reliance of its understanding from the County that this project was moving forward. He emphasized that the process has been less than transparent.

La Pradera is seeking approval from WPAC that the BCC should consider this application. La Pradera wants to be in the position that it is legally and administratively ready to connect as soon as physically possible. He reviewed the application noting it follows the guidelines as set forth in Resolution 2015-121. They are also requesting a relevant timetable for the SR-14 Project because La Pradera needs to make important financial decisions regarding management of their wastewater system in the interim.

Mr. Gowen asked Mr. Soderquist if he has reviewed the application for completeness and he replies that yes, it has been reviewed and is complete. He has some further questions regarding the application but they have not been answered since discussions are still in the preliminary phase and are largely contingent upon the design and completion of the SR-14 sewer line. The application is ready for review by WPAC. As far as financing the project, the initial idea was to have the county hold bidding for the project with support from the customers in La Pradera as well. Mr. Gowen goes on to ask whether they plan to have one or multiple connections and Mr. Brooks responds saying the initial plan by Souder Miller was to have two connections.

Mr. Schmelling asked what previously went wrong in moving this application forward. One of the La Pradera representatives said there was an issue with nitrogen that was quite expensive for the community to remedy. And it was the County's recommendation to tie into County system.

The application is on Boarddocs and additional materials can be obtained.

Mr. Gowen moved to forward the application to the Drinking and Wastewater Management working group to review and report back to the WPAC in either the July or August. Mr. Kadlecsek seconded and the motion passed without opposition.

B. Presentation & Discussion: Santa Fe County's Conjunctive Management Plan for the Santa Fe Basin Update (Travis Soderquist, Public Works) - Presentation was cancelled due to ongoing discussions with OSE.

5. Informational Items

A. Stormwater Management Working Group

Mr. Dickens said the group did not meet this past month; however, he has talked to Michael Carr regarding stormwater projects. He said he views the management of stormwater as a means to protect and help the aquifers.

B. Drinking and Wastewater Management Working Group

Mr. Gowen reviewed the following:

- Task 1: Develop a framework for potential customers to efficiently navigate the process of connecting to the county utility system. Work in Progress, told to pause work on this until the La Cañada de Los Alamos application process has been finalized to come up with avenues to improve the existing process.
- Task 1A: Develop and Present Recommendations to the BCC for La Cienega and La Cieneguilla drinking water contamination mitigation. They will continue to have monthly meetings with the community. They would like to continue to develop a water plan for the county water utility that addresses: recharge of the area aquifer and springs, reduce pumping of county held wells in and near the planning area, planning future expansion of the county water system to manage withdrawals from well near the planning area to help with recharge and mitigate completion of the aquifer, investigating and actively pursuing other points of diversion that would reduce impact on the planning area, investing and pursuing the possibility of using effluent to supplement a safety of flow, coordinating a cooperative process with the community of all water interests, minimize impacts of future water use on the planning area, and incorporate county growth area zones to further define areas that may have future access to county water systems.
- Task 2: Review report dealing with contamination and cleanup time and advise the BCC on the most efficient path forward. No change to that since May.
- Task 3: Review policy, procedures and enforcement for a county-wide domestic well monitoring program. No change to this, the group is reviewing the counties current domestic well monitoring initiatives.

- Task 4: Santa Fe 2100 water plan preparing for the growth and expansion of infrastructure and increase water demand. There is nothing new to report upon.
- Task 5: Pursue petition for return flow credit application. This is under active consideration by the city and county, the working group is not actively involved.
- Task 6: Promote aquifer storage recovery, no change.
- Task 7: Solicit community representation and engagement regarding the scope of work considerations during county project development phase. No change to this, WPAC is not actively participating in this at this time.

Tasks 5, 6, and 7 considered with a lower priority.

C. Outreach Working Group

Mr. Kadlec and Mr. Gowen reviewed the following:

- Task 1: Recommend the initiation for developing a joint powers agreement with the City of Santa Fe for stormwater and wastewater management. WPAC has been told to hold back on this for now. Mr. Stringer plans on having discussions with city officials about this but has not had time to do so.
- Task 2: No change
- Task 3: No change
- Task 4: Concluded with what happened in the legislature and will be removed and lower tasks will be elevated.

6. **Action Items** – None were presented

7. **Matters from the Public**

Jack Sullivan was present to comment on the County's conjunctive water management plan. In November 2023, a legal ad appeared in the *New Mexican* indicating that the County was partnering with two area developers to transfer water rights to an exploratory well – not a production well – in Rancho Viejo. The well is less than .5 miles from the residents of Churchill Road. The 25-year old community of Churchill Road has an immediate issue with impairment to their residential wells. The well the County proposes to transfer is the Stagecoach well located on Cerrillos Road at the Stagecoach Inn, and has been in the process of being transferred since 2006. Due to multiple protests the application was withdrawn in 2011.

Mr. Sullivan championed the notion that the conjunctive management plan aims to reduce reliance on groundwater resources. However, moving a water right from Cerrillos Road – an area served by municipal water to a 23-year old, 1,350-foot deep exploratory well with 20-inch casing in Rancho Viejo – creates a production well of unknown water quality. He noted that below 1,000 feet arsenic problems arise. He expresses concern that this “exploratory” well has the potential to deplete the aquifer.

Mr. Sullivan stated that the Churchill community has met with the John Utton, the County's contract attorney, and the hydrologist and learned that additional water rights are in the process

of being transferred to this exploratory well. The well is proposed to serve as backup, appears to have no restrictions and test pumped 300 gallons per minute.

Mr. Sullivan said each of the eleven Churchill residents protested, paid the State Engineer, and will have to hire a hydrologist and pay legal fees. This transfer of water rights from Stagecoach is required for servicing the La Pradera subdivision. He understood the County's hydrologist has a draft report

Also speaking from the public was Paul White who indicated he was interested in joining a working group.

8. Matters from the Committee

A. State of NM June 2025 Water Summit

Ms. Wolf said a draft agenda has been prepared for a County Water Summit to take place this year.

Commissioner Bustamante said what is needed is how, where and what is done with water in Santa Fe County. This is a complicated issue but it will provide a great deal of information and sort out the current water rights and water demands. The expertise on this committee will be important in sorting the details. The County will hold the water event. The commissioner proposed holding a special virtual meeting to act on the draft. There was no objection to the concept. Mr. Kadlec recommended inviting a watermaster from the Pojoaque Tesuque basin to comment on the draft.

With regard to task #1 of the Drinking & Wastewater Management working group, Mr. Gowen invited input on how to improve on the process outlined in Resolution #2015-121 and to contact him via email. Tonight, he and Mr. Harnden are on the agenda of Santa Fe River Commission and will be providing an update on the WPAC's work plan. There was consensus to invite interested commissioners to participate within WPAC working groups.

Commissioner Bustamante advised the committee members that a memorandum explaining what actions would be necessary to pursue a water authority has been sent to them via email. She suggested adding it as a future agenda item.

B. Request to NMED for presentation update on Bishop's Lodge discharge permit

Mr. Harnden NMED Groundwater Bureau has offered to provide a presentation update on the permit application. He suggested the July 10th meeting and the committee members concurred.

C. Santa Fe Watershed Association Bureau of Reclamation Grant for Collaborative Watershed Planning

- Ms. Wolf said the BOR has moved the Watershed's grant forward. She suggested inviting a representative from the Watershed.
- Mr. Kadlecek announced that the Santa Fe Pojoaque Soil & Water Conservation District has two open positions.
- Mr. Dickens said the tours to the BDD and Paseo Real Treatment Plant are planned for a Thursday afternoon from 12 to 4. Notice requirements should be addressed in the event a quorum is present.

9. **Next WPAC Meeting: July 10, 2025**

10. **Concluding Business**
A. **Adjournment**

Following a motion by Mr. Gowen and second by Mr. Kadlecek, this meeting adjourned at approximately 5:45 p.m.

[Signature]

Respectfully submitted by:
Wordswork

Approved by:

[Signature]
Emily Wolf, Vice Chair
Shann Stringer, Chair

COUNTY OF SANTA FE) WATER POLICY ADVISORY
STATE OF NEW MEXICO) ss PAGES: 8

I Hereby Certify That This Instrument Was Filed for
Record On The 26TH Day Of September, 2025 at 02:04:22 PM
and Was Duly Recorded as Instrument # 2068029
of The Records Of Santa Fe County

Witness My Hand And Seal Of Office
Katharine E. Clark
Deputy *[Signature]* County Clerk, Santa Fe, NM

