

**MINUTES OF THE**  
**SANTA FE COUNTY**  
**WATER POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING**

**May 8th, 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. by Chair Shann Stringer 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:**

Shann Stringer, Chair  
Emily Wolf  
Laird Graeser  
Amy Jordan  
Peter Gowen  
James Mike Henry [virtually]  
John Kadlecek  
Darrin Muenzberg [virtually]  
Commissioner Bustamante, *ex officio*  
Jeff Montoya [virtually]

**Member(s) Absent:**

Stephen Schmelling

**C.     Approval of Agenda**

Mr. Gowen moved to approve the agenda. Mr. Graeser seconded and the agenda was unanimously approved. [Mr. Muenzberg was not present for this action.]

**D.     Introduction of WPAC Guests**

Those present introduced themselves.

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2. **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

A. **April 10, 2025**

Mr. Gowen moved to approve the April 10, 2025 meeting minutes as submitted. Ms. Jordan seconded and the motion passed without opposition. [Mr. Muenzberg was not present for this action and arrived shortly thereafter.]

3. **Matters from Staff**

No matters were raised by the staff.

4. **Presentations**

A. **Presentation & Discussion: County MS4 Stormwater Management Program**

Michael Carr, Public Works, presented background to the Stormwater management program. The Clean Water Act was started in 1972 and the MS4 permit program was brought under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System program in 1990.

Mr. Carr presented the following: Phase 1 included cities or urban areas over 100,000 residents which excluded Santa Fe. Santa Fe which was included under phase 2 in 1999 for populations between 50,000 and 100,000 residents. The permit being issued in 2007. Between 2013 and 2022 the County was not in compliance with the permit, they did not submit a report of compliance until mid year 2022 for FY2021. The County has been in compliance since then and submitted annual reports on time each year.

Last April, the BCC approved the revised stormwater management plan which can be accessed on the County website. Parts within the county's jurisdiction include the Village of Agua Fria, La Cienega, La Cieneguilla, and parts of the Community College District. As the County has come into compliance with the permit, they have identified some priority areas to monitor such as areas that are being heavily developed and the area near those that are possible sites for illicit discharge or stormwater discharge in general. The MS4 project has gained support in recent years from Bohannon Huston to help develop procedures that include good housekeeping, a pollution prevention program plan, publishing an annual report sheet and every aspect going forward with the program.

The contract with Bohannon Huston has been broken up into 18 specific tasks, many of which have been completed but some are continuously being worked on until the funding is exhausted and the task is complete. A large task is developing internal procedures. Staff has been drafting documentation of best practices for the stormwater program. Meetings with the representative from Bohannon Huston occur every two weeks to discuss progress of specific tasks and other ongoing related topics including any NMED related projects to Santa Fe waterways programs that might affect the program going forward.

The best supporting document is the permit is stormwater management plan from 2024. The plan is posted on the County's website and the committee was encouraged to review it. The

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County does not currently monitor road-based infrastructure regarding stormwater outfalls, Most of those are monitored by NMDOT but the County will be working with them going forward on stormwater quality testing.

Public Works also monitors all County-owned facilities to make sure that there are no sources of water pollution coming from them. That inspection begins tomorrow and it will be included in the pollution prevention and good housekeeping plan.

County staff participated in a stormwater training relating to the construction permit for EPA, the goal is to have more people participating in this training. The goal is that the roads crews know what to monitor if they are out working on a road to prevent any runoff situations. This training will be developed internally over the next year and will also include the maintenance staff of open spaces and participation will expand to any new developments.

Plenty of signage has been put up regarding Earth Day in parks and open spaces which will hopefully help mitigate pet waste and illegal dumping. Illegal dumping of trash continues to be a major issue across the county. Currently, all reports of illegal discharge are forwarded to public works and they figure out if it is illegal dumping or something more serious and other agencies such as NMED need to get involved.

One task in the works with Growth Management is to make more stormwater management information available to developers, initially it would be in paper form added to development permits but all of those permit systems are being moved online. Another task involves working with GSI/Green Stormwater Infrastructure on a rainwater capture program. Public Works is also working to track all of the stormwater pollution prevention plans from County-owned projects to have a copy of them on record.

Section 7.19 of the SLDC for the NPDES is currently reserved with no writing in it and Public Works is working with outside groups and looking for recommendations from WPAC to help flesh out the writing of that section.

Mr. Gowen asked if there are any substantive differences between the City's permit and the County's permit that Mr. Carr is aware of. Mr. Carr responded no but that the City is reporting quite a bit differently than the County because they have more urban areas and stormwater systems.

**B. Presentation & Discussion: Tesuque Peak Camera Initiative (Dr. Johnathan Frenzen, Santa Fe Fireshed Coalition Communications Committee Co-chair)**

Dr. Frenzen discussed his involvement with the Fireshed Coalition which is five years old and they have several partner organizations.

The early phase of the fireshed camera demonstration project has received donations and support from several organizations. Enough money has been provided to allow the coalition to buy equipment and sign leases with the desire to be operational once the snow clears on Tesuque Peak. This fire camera will be the first operational fire camera in the state of New Mexico. The

State of California has 1,300 of these cameras operating with the same software that the coalition will be using. UNM has offered to serve the role and facilitate the operation of these cameras in the future, which is similar to California, Oregon and Washington where the major state universities operate these systems.

A fire camera is the exact same kind of security cameras that are present all over the City such as the ones used in parking lots. They are hardened and weatherized and can operate in remote locations with battery packs, solar cells, and satellite antennas to transfer data.

These cameras have the ability to provide a lot of meaningful data because they can rotate 360 degrees, can zoom in up to 40x, 24/7 monitoring, can see in the dark with visible and infrared spectrums, are very reliable and cost very little to operate. The camera alone is not sufficient; it needs to work with a powerful computer with an AI system operating it that is trained to identify smoke plumes. The AI system helps reduce the number of false alarms to prevent the fire departments from wasting time and resources. These AI systems need to be able to: differentiate between fog and smoke, identify if there is more than one fire, provide location data such as coordinates, and provide insight on fire behavior. These cameras provide situational awareness and help people understand the character and nature of the fire and allows for local organizations to determine how best to mobilize and dispatch resources. On a clear day the line of visibility is 30 miles long and 50 miles long at night.

The State of California has a website run by UCSD that the public can go to and see the view of each camera. The website blurs out public and private buildings for security reasons. The data is taken via satellite to computers and is then interpreted by live staff who can then contact local authorities to dispatch crews. The information can also be used to create some kind of public alert. The public has several options for finding this information, such as: Alert Santa Fe, which will be fully operational, and the alert west camera where the images from the camera can be located and the Watch Duty app.

The Watch Duty app scrapes the internet to find information about natural disasters and usually alerts the public faster than most other alert systems.

The goal of the project is to give agencies such as the county a low risk experience with the tool, providing an opportunity for the Santa Fe fireshed coalition to lend technical assistance. The hope of this initiative is to get agencies behind the effort to be able to expand the program across the entire state. The public is largely behind this initiative.

New technology is being developed by companies such as Google that may be able to replace this technology in the future but it may take a long time or may never be feasible. While there is hesitancy to heavily invest in this program, it may be the best solution for a long time, especially in remote locations.

## **5. Informational Items**

### **A. Review of BCC feedback on WPAC 1<sup>st</sup> Quarterly Report 2025**

After the April 29<sup>th</sup> presentation, Commissioner Greene suggested that on behalf of the Village of Tesuque and its residents that the county considers hiring an independent facilitator to lead discussions between Bishop's Lodge and the community. These discussions would include groups such as Protect Tesuque and many others. Also coming up on the calendar is the hearing for Bishop's Lodge which will be held the week of May 19<sup>th</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup>. Protect Tesuque went to the Court of Appeals over the issue of the use of water and waste and the Court agreed to hear the case. The NM Environment Department was treating the case as groundwater discharge but the opposition was saying that it should be treated as surface water discharge due to the hydrologic connection with the stream.

## **B. Stormwater Management Working Group Monthly Report**

Report tabled until the next meeting because Mr. Muenzberg was unavailable for comment at the moment.

## **C. Drinking and Wastewater Management Working Group Monthly Report**

**Task 1:** Develop a framework for potential customers to efficiently navigate the process of connecting to the county water system

- Not much change, The Board of Commissioners has not furthered considered the application.
- Mr. Gowen has prepared memos that describe existing procedures and policies for developments.
- The policy for connecting existing community systems is what the task is focused on.

**a.** Mr. Gowen asked Mr. Kadlec for updates on La Cienega and La Cieneguilla drinking water contamination

- the consultants for the Preliminary Engineering Report are ready to meet but a date needs to be decided upon.
- The contractors offered dates and topics to present to the working group
- Mr. Kadlec will meet with the working group members likely around the end of May after the contractors have worked on those four topics.
- The likely meeting dates is May 28, 2025 with confirmation still pending.

**Task 3:** Review policy procedures and enforcement for county-wide domestic well monitoring program

- No updates since last month

**Task 4:** Santa Fe 2100 Water Plan

- Mr. Schmelling who is in charge of this task was not present

**Task 5:** Pursue Petition for Return Flow Credit

- The City is working through this on their own
- There is an agreement in place between the city and the county to investigate the return flow credits together.
- It is going to be a portion of the Santa Fe 2100 agreement that is being worked through
- Funds have been set aside by City and County for the wastewater investigation portion of the project
- The county will have input but the city is working through it much faster

- The county has return flow credits from the San Juan Chama water which is part of the investigation
- There could be instances where there is some credit that the county would see because of the San Juan Chama water going to the Paseo Real Plant through the Abajo Lift Station.
- The Water Resources Agreement disclaims any county right to return flow credit from the Paseo Real Treatment Plant
- In order for the county to proceed along that line there would have to be an amendment to the Water Resources Agreement

**Task 6:** Promote Aquifer Storage Recover at The Quill plant

- As of now there is no one on WPAC that is working on that item, it is a staff project.

**Task 7:** Solicit Community Representation and Engagement Regarding the Scope of Work Considerations during the Project Development Phase

- No WPAC Committee Member is currently working on this item and Mr. Gowen offered to take on the task
- This only applies to county projects.
- The foundation for this initiative was to have community representation to help the county decide what direction to go in.
- Focused on future projects.

**D. Outreach Working Group Monthly Report**

**Task 1:** Joint Powers Agreement

- Mr. Gowen explains that as he was doing background research he came across a resolution that supports regionalization and encourages the creation of a water authority.
- Mr. Gowen met with Andrew Chavez a couple of weeks ago regarding this topic
- The direction that WPAC has right now is small incremental steps including opening up communication with the city to the extent that the county resolution is still in effect
- This is an effort that may take generations
- Some officials from the City have read the WPAC quarterly report to the BCC that may open dialogue between the two entities
- The city-county working relationship will not change until leadership wants to do that. As of 2018, WPAC has been working with the City's water conservation committee but that has paused since COVID
- Once discussions open up again, things can begin to move very quickly especially because of Senator Wirth's bill that was passed about regionalizing utilities
- If progress cannot be made, Commissioner Bustamante has a different approach: the City is already partnering with the County
- There are concerns surrounding the acequias and mutual domestics but those can be cut out of a regional plan as well as watersheds
- The County continues to approve development and there is always questions of where the water comes from. Having a central authority to adjudicate this would make these conversations much easier with much less conflict
- The goal is to make these processes more efficient
- The Commissioner suggested surveying residents about regionalization
- The County is about to come into a large increase in water supply which could be used as a bargaining chip to get the City on board with regionalization

- The City is no longer looking to purchase water rights whereas the county is continuing to pursue more water rights
- Commissioner Bustamante also pitched hosting public meetings discussing the issue and inviting City officials with the hope that it will put public pressure on the city to engage in these discussions

**Task 2:** More Coordination between County, NMED and OSE

- No major updates
- Ties into County septic permit applications
- With state interim committees beginning this summer Mr. Graeser proposes crafting language to get legislation for funding for NMED to be able to update its GIS layer for septic permits
- The Water and Natural Resources Interim Committee has their organizational meeting June 3<sup>rd</sup> and they are asking for topics

**Task 4:** Support Primacy of Surface Waters in the State

- SB21 was passed and signed by the Governor and NMED is off and running with rule making
- To remove this task WPAC will have to formally propose an amendment

6. **Action Items** No action Items were mentioned or commented on.

7. **Matters from the Public** - No matters from the Public

8. **Matters from the Committee**

The Army Corp just hosted a workshop on integrating nature based features and solutions into their engineering. This included lightning talks from people doing this work on a state level. They specifically discussed the City of Albuquerque's Green Stormwater Infrastructure Best Management Practice Guide which can be a great resource for the committee.

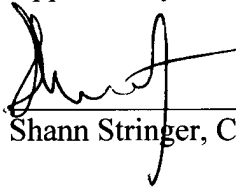
9. **Next WPAC Meeting:** June 12, 2025

10. **Concluding Business** - No concluding business.

9. **Adjournment**

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

Approved by:

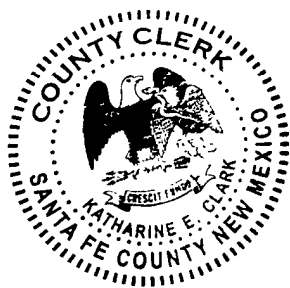


Shann Stringer, Chair

Respectfully submitted by:

Wordswork

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COUNTY OF SANTA FE )  
STATE OF NEW MEXICO ) ss

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[ Hereby Certify That This Instrument Was Filed for  
Record On The 22ND Day Of July, 2025 at 01:58:32 PM  
And Was Duly Recorded as Instrument # 2063362  
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Witness My Hand And Seal Of Office

Deputy *Katharine E. Clark* County Clerk, Santa Fe, NM  
Katharine E. Clark