



ISC Regional Water Planning Update

November 2015

Dear Interested Stakeholder:

I want to thank you for your ongoing efforts in support of effective regional and state water planning, and to provide some information on the status of the regional water plan process going forward.

The Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) is nearing completion of our internal review of the 16 Draft Regional Water Plan updates and will begin this month to disseminate a few each week to the regions. The goal is to have all draft plans finalized and accepted by the ISC Commissioners by the end of 2016.

Background

In 2013, the ISC revised its updating methodology to ensure concurrent and consistent updating of all 16 regional water plans. As part of this process, the ISC adopted a “common technical platform” approach to be used as a foundation from which each region can then develop plan details. Unchanged from the previous water plan development, a representative steering committee from each region is organized to work closely with the ISC to update their respective region’s plan.

A significant component of the common technical platform approach is the use of an “administrative water supply” method for determining each region’s present and future water supply. This approach is based on legal and administrative constraints coupled with hydrological data and trends. The state adopted the common technical platform in part to provide greater interregional consistency in addressing water supply and demand challenges and to foster improved coordination and cooperation on interregional and statewide water management issues. The revised update approach is detailed in the “2013 Updated Regional Water Planning Handbook: Guidelines to Preparing Updates to New Mexico Regional Water Plans” (“Handbook”) available on the Office of State Engineer website: <http://www.ose.state.nm.us/Planning>.

The ISC is optimistic that this approach will help make it easier to implement the policies, programs and projects contained in your updated regional water plans. The state’s major water infrastructure funding source, the Water Trust Board, uses as a funding criterion for proposed projects whether that project or program is included in an “ISC-accepted Regional Water Plan” (from Water Trust Board Project Management Policies, Section 1.3 Project Prioritization). The Water Trust Board also looks to the State Water Plan for guidance in identifying priority statewide projects and programs. Ensuring consistency between the 16 regional water plans is essential to effectively integrate them into the State Water Plan,

as required by law. The State Water Plan will be updated from the current 2003 State Water Plan once all of the 16 updated Regional Water Plans are accepted by the ISC.

Current Status and Next Steps

Over the past year and a half, the ISC and planning regions worked together to reconstitute and assemble the 16 regional steering committees per the 2013 Updated Regional Water Planning Handbook. The ISC, with its contractors' assistance, then worked with those regional steering committees to develop implementable strategies for solving each region's water challenges, which were incorporated into the draft regional water plans currently being reviewed by ISC. Meetings in your region will recommence when your region's updated draft plan is received by the Steering Committee for your review and input. ISC will send out to the steering committees the draft plan, along with guidance about how input will be gathered and addressed.

In order to complete all 16 regional plan updates within the next year, the ISC and its regional facilitators will be staging our work with the regions over the course of the year, and we will keep all the regions apprised of any scheduling changes. We ask that you have patience with this process and respect deadlines as provided by the facilitators for your region. The process going forward is generally as follows for all regions:

1. The ISC Water Planner will email to each region's steering committee that region's draft plan, providing as much time as possible in advance of your region's first ISC-facilitated meeting.
2. The ISC facilitator for your region will be in contact with your region (steering committee and interested stakeholders) about your first ISC-facilitated regional steering committee meeting. We encourage each steering committee to meet in advance of that meeting to internally review and discuss your draft.
3. ISC will be providing 3 facilitated meetings in your region.
4. ISC contractors will continue to coordinate with your steering committees on the dates and locations, as we did last year. More information on region-specific deadlines will be provided at your first meeting.

Information about the Interstate Stream Commission's state and regional water planning program is available on the OSE website. If you have questions or comments, please email us at ISC.WaterPlanning@state.nm.us. Please feel free to share this information.

Thank you for your interest and involvement in water planning in the State of New Mexico.

Sincerely,

Deborah K. Dixon, P.E.

Director

Interstate Stream Commission

The ISC Regional Water Planning Program