

GUIDANCE DOCUMENT #1

New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission – Regional Water Planning Program

Comment Process for Draft Regional Water Plan Updates

November 2015



Thank you for your participation in Regional Water Planning. The New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) is currently working with all water planning regions simultaneously with the ambitious goal of completing all sixteen plan updates by October 2016. This process is feasible only with the support and expertise of the regional steering committees and the application of a streamlined process for gathering and addressing feedback on the current drafts. Regional input is critical to ensure that the updates accurately reflect local water needs as well as lay the groundwork for implementation of sound water resource management practices.

This document outlines the public comment process for the regional water plan updates. Once all sections of the updates have been reviewed the reports will be finalized and presented to the ISC for acceptance. Ultimately the report will serve as an update to your region's previously accepted regional water plan. (ISC acceptance criteria will be outlined in a separate document.) The plan updates will then be integrated into a State Water Plan to be completed in 2017.

Public Comment Process

Based on similar requests from several regions, the ISC will initially distribute drafts to steering committee members only. We recommend that your steering committee review the draft thoroughly and be prepared to provide input and comments at the first ISC-facilitated meeting in your region. It may be helpful for steering committees to meet in advance of ISC-facilitated meetings to discuss the draft reports and develop consensus on comments to be provided.

At your first ISC-facilitated meeting the following items will be addressed:

- 1) Posting of the regional water plan document – in its current *draft* form – on the ISC website for broader public access.
- 2) Nomination of a 'Comment Point Person' from the steering committee to work with the ISC to collect and distribute comments. This individual will not be tasked with responding to comments, only to assist with receiving and forwarding comments to steering committee members and the ISC.
- 3) Outline a public involvement plan for the coming year. The ISC will be providing three facilitated meetings *only* in each region. Steering committee meetings are open to the public and regions are encouraged to conduct broader outreach for these meetings. To the extent feasible, subcommittee meetings and/or additional public meetings organized in coordination with the ISC may be helpful in your region.

We will provide a deadline for public comment for your region at your upcoming ISC-facilitated meeting and on the ISC website. Members of the public will be encouraged to communicate their feedback to their regional steering committees. Comments received from each region will be distributed to all steering committee members as well as ISC staff working in that region.

Guidelines for Document Revision

Sections Prepared by the State (Sections 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7)

- Consolidated Comments – Final revisions to the drafts will be made by the ISC based on recommendations from the regions consolidated into a *single document*. Comments from ISC-facilitated meetings will be provided to the steering committees by ISC facilitators to be included with this single document. We encourage the regions to discuss the drafts and work toward consensus in their comments. Although the ISC will review comments provided by individuals, edits to the final document will be made based on the recommendations of each steering committee as a group.
 - Corrections – All efforts to improve accuracy are appreciated. If the steering committee believes that something is incorrect, sources of alternate data or interpretations should be provided so that they can be referenced. Special attention to sections unique to your region is recommended.
 - Additions – Regional steering committees may provide additional text including: research and analysis, data, or commentary, to be included in the appendix. Some minimal references to this material within the main body of the document may be possible.

When making suggestions, please comment on how the proposed change will better assist your region in planning to address your water needs. To ensure consistency among the 16 regions substantive revisions to the structure, technical approach, methods, and results will not be possible at this time. However, the ISC is committed to involving stakeholders in shaping the methods used in future rounds of regional water planning. (See below.)

Sections Prepared by the Regions with ISC Assistance (Sections 2 and 8)

The regions are responsible for developing the content for these sections. At your first ISC-facilitated meeting further guidance on the preferred format for these sections will be provided. Section 2 addresses *Public Involvement in the Planning Process*. Section 8 addresses *Implementation of Strategies to Meet Future Water Demand* and describes the policies, programs, and projects that the region has identified. The ISC staff and contractors will continue to provide support preparing these sections based on steering committee input.

Additional Feedback

In addition to comments specific to the draft updates, the ISC welcomes feedback regarding:

- the overall process for this round of regional updates
- the common technical platform, which is the method used to estimate current and future available water supply, under both normal and drought conditions, as well as future demand

Stakeholder input will be important in guiding the next round of regional water planning. The ISC recognizes that steering committee members, and others, may have valuable ideas about how to improve the technical approach so as to both better support regional water planning needs and allow for consistency statewide. The objective of consistency in regional water plans is to support greater interregional and statewide coordination and cooperation on water management challenges, including directing decision-makers in allocation of funding and ensuring the State Water Plan addresses in a meaningful way our state's most pressing water issues.

The ISC will be capturing this feedback in forms to be provided online and at all ISC-facilitated meetings.

Thank you again for your important work supporting state and regional water planning.