

RIO GRANDE WATER FOR INDUSTRIAL AND MUNICIPAL USE

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The subject assigned to me for presentation is "Rio Grande Water" city and industry representation. First, I would emphasize that I am not an engineer and certainly not an expert on the subject assigned.

I am not so much concerned about what has gone on in the past except, as the past may serve as a reasonable guide as to what can be expected in the future. There is no question in my mind as to the seriousness of our present situation as regards water supplies now available to city and industry, and certainly all of us can be alarmed when we attempt to look even five years forward. When we attempt to look ten, fifteen or twenty five years into the future, the problem becomes even more staggering. There is only one area in the state that now has a surplus of water for municipal, in industrial and agricultural use and that is the Tucumcari area. Even that plentiful supply of water appears to be in danger of being lost to our neighbors on the east.

Just what is an acre foot of water? Briefly, it is 325,850 gallons of water. How far does an acre foot of water go toward satisfying the demands of even a medium sized municipality in the state of New Mexico? For the last fiscal year of a community near here the average daily usage per person per day ran to 190 gallons, this adds up to the sizeable total of 69,350 gallons per year per person. Further projected this means that an acre foot of water will supply the needs of 4.7 persons for one year. This municipality in question, has an average water rate of 28¢ per thousand gallons of water delivered to the customer, whether to a household or to an industry. Further projected this means that an acre foot of water has a gross value of \$91.24 for such use.

Now let us look at agricultural use of water and approximate gross value of an acre foot of water in growing crops. The primary money crop produced along the Rio Grande in New Mexico is cotton. Of course there are many other crops produced such as, vegetables, grains of many kinds and descriptions, alfalfa hay, fruits and others, but I believe that you will agree with me that cotton production should be the main yardstick to be used in this area. Based

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on last years production and estimated average price for lint and seed we arrive at a gross income per acre of cotton of \$275.04 per acre. When we consider that it takes an average of three acre feet of water to produce an acre of cotton we get a gross value of \$91.68 per acre foot of water used. Other crops will not produce nearly so well if we exclude vegetables and nuts.

From the above comparisons we have these figures - an acre foot of water for municipal and industrial use is worth \$91.24 while for cotton production it is worth very nearly the same or \$91.68 per acre foot.

The time allotted to me will not permit a full development of the economics involved; so I had better get along with my real proposal. We all know that where a question of the welfare of our population is concerned that water for municipal and industrial use has and will come first regardless of the rights and legal questions raised by the confiscation of agricultural water for use by cities and industry.

If a city or municipality or industry confiscates water which rightly belongs to an individual, the only result will be one of real hardship on the individual; However, if that individual is reimbursed for the fair value of his land with water rights or his water rights are purchased outright, then this individual has suffered little economic loss.

Briefly what I propose is that municipalities and industry, which are mostly one and the same, since most municipalities furnish water to their industries, be encouraged to purchase sufficient water rights- or land with water rights to take care of the needs in the foreseeable future. Perhaps this is not possible under present laws and should this be the case, I would plead for the enabling legislation to be passed as quickly as possible. We must bear in mind that most cities and municipalities are not in a financial position to accomplish this in the near future, so some considerable thought and planning must be given to the problem of financing such purchases. Perhaps the financing is a job for the state or the federal government or a combination of the two. At any rate, the financing could be arranged so as to allow the city or municipality to pay for their water rights over a long period of time. This proposal could apply to any city or municipality in New Mexico, not necessarily just along the Rio Grande River.

On October 15, I presented this proposal to the New Mexico Economic Development Commission at a regular meeting held at Santa Fe, New Mexico, and recommended that the staff of the Economic Development Commission take this matter under study, and advisement. The Commission voted unanimously in favor of the study I proposed. I firmly admit that this plan is not perfect and that it needs much thought, study, and consideration before it can be placed in a workable form. I thank you for your attention.