

WATER FOR NEW MEXICO TO THE YEAR 2000 AND 2060

Governor David F. Cargo^{1/}

The Water Resources Research Institute and the Statewide Advisory Committee are to be commended for their foresight and initiative in organizing this conference to look at the subject of "Water for New Mexico - To the Year 2000 and 2060."

Our present water supply comes essentially from an average precipitation of about 13 inches per year, for a gross product of roughly 85 million acre-feet. But this precipitation is characterized by wide variability from place to place and from time to time. Average annual precipitation varies from about 8 inches in the desert valleys to more than 30 inches in the high mountains. This has provided New Mexico with a wide variety of vegetation.

River inflow into New Mexico from other states totals about 2.5 million acre-feet. Yet approximately 3.4 million acre-feet per year is discharged to downstream states. It is hoped that in the not too distant future, the outflow will approximately equal the inflow.

Now, in addition to the measurable flow in her rivers, New Mexico is fortunate in possessing large quantities of water in underground storage. The United States Geological Survey estimates these at 20 billion acre-feet of which roughly one-quarter, or five billion acre-feet is thought to be fresh or only slightly brackish. (The State Engineer Office has estimated that 20 billion acre-feet is enough water to cover the entire state to an average depth of 260 feet.) Not all this underground water is physically and economically extractable, unfortunately, but these reserves do represent a tremendous asset that can be developed as the needs for water increase.

Current estimates are that New Mexico's population will more than double by the year 2000, and that by 2060 it will have increased tenfold or more. This places a heavy responsibility on all of us that are concerned with water, its sources and the demands that will be placed upon it. Proper planning is indispensable. Careful studies of our laws that govern the appropriation and use of water should be undertaken and revisions recommended where necessary. Our compacts with other states should be continually reviewed. It is vital that our negotiations with other states be conducted from a sound base of knowledge and understanding of our present and future requirements. I offer the services of my office, the State Planning Office, the State Engineer Office and any other state agency under my jurisdiction

^{1/} Governor of New Mexico. Statement made to the Thirteenth Annual New Mexico Water Conference, March 28, 1968, on the subject "Water for New Mexico to the Year 2000 and 2060." Governor Cargo served as chairman of the opening session.

to aid in this regard. The Interstate Stream Commission, which carries the prime responsibility for the negotiation and administration of our interstate water compacts and for the conduct of litigation over interstate waters, should call on us for help whenever they may need it.