

Alice Darilek is a water resources specialist with the New Mexico State Engineer Office. She holds a B.A. in Communications from American University in Washington D.C. and has held positions with the Dallas Chamber of Commerce, Oregon Water Resources Department, New Mexico Environment Department and the New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department. Alice is a member of the American Water Works Association's Water Conservation Committee and is vice-chair of the AWWA Rocky Mountain Section Water Conservation Committee. She is also a member of the Conservation Committee for the Santa Fe Metropolitan Water Board.



OPENING COMMENTS FOR THE WATER CONSERVATION PANEL

*Alice Darilek
Water Resources Specialist
New Mexico State Engineer Office
P.O. Box 25102
Santa Fe, NM 87504*

I am glad to see that WRRI has placed water conservation on its program agenda this year because I believe it is an important issue in New Mexico, and one that will become increasingly important in the coming years. I am particularly pleased to have such a distinguished panel with us today to talk about municipal water conservation. They are some of the leading experts in the country in this field, and I am sure we will learn a lot from them.

Before I introduce the panelists, I would like to make a couple of comments about the state water conservation program that the New Mexico State Engineer Office and the Interstate Stream Commission have begun to develop. We have decided to put more of an effort in the area of water conservation because we think it is going to provide an important water supply alternative in meeting the state's water supply crunch that is expected to occur in the next few years.

You heard Eluid Martinez talk this morning about some of the issues that could bring about that water crunch. Issues such as groundwater mining, water pollution, and the rising costs of water development and water and wastewater treatment are making water conservation an increasingly attractive alternative water supply option, to meet both current water needs and future water demands.

We began working on developing a state water conservation program early this year and are focusing our current efforts on water conservation research and education. Next year, if we are successful in obtaining funding from the legislature, we will begin actual development of the program through an extensive public participation process. We will use this process to work closely with the regional water planning entities and citizens across the state to help us determine what should be contained in the water conservation program.

I don't want to spend time discussing the details of the program now because I'd like to focus on the subject of this particular panel, municipal water conservation. However, I want to let you know that we have prepared a discussion paper on the program, which outlines why we think a program is needed, how we propose to develop that program, and what we think some of the elements are that might be contained in the program. The paper is being distributed at the conference today. If you obtained a copy, read the paper, and have questions or comments concerning the program, please call me at the State Engineer Office in Santa Fe. I'd be glad to discuss the program further with you. If you didn't get a copy of the paper and

would like one, please give me a call, and I will send it to you.

Now, to the subject at hand — municipal water conservation. In the past, most municipalities have implemented water conservation measures to address droughts or other short-term water shortages, in which a quick and substantial reduction in water use was needed for a limited period of time. Now, communities are looking to water conservation more and more as a long-term water supply alternative in their water supply planning process. By using water more efficiently and reducing water demand, they have been able to stretch their current water supplies, and, in a sense, create a new supply of water to meet present and future demands.

To talk about how they have stretched the water supply in their communities, we have with us today four panelists from our neighboring states of Colorado, Arizona and Texas.

I'd like to add one more comment. As long as we view water conservation as just another government policy, I'm not sure how much we will really accomplish in this area. But, if we look at conservation as a shared responsibility, where each of us does our part (as we all use water every day in a direct and intimate fashion), then I think we can make significant progress in using water more carefully and treating it with the respect it deserves.