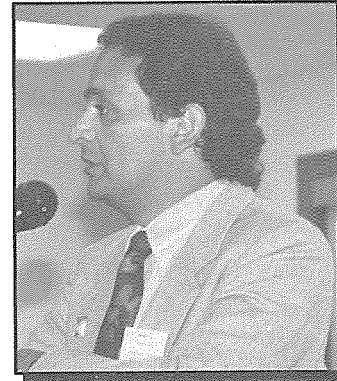


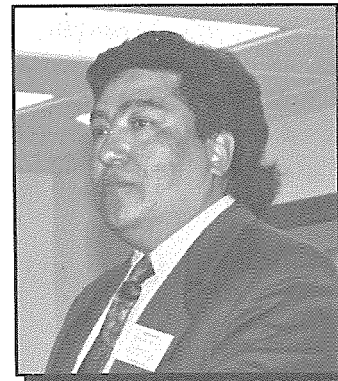
Lisa Robert is a free-lance writer with a special interest in water resources issues in the Rio Grande valley. She served as editor of the Watermark, a newsletter for ratepayers of the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District from 1987-1992, and is currently president of the Assessment Payers' Association, an MRGCD constituency organization. She is the author of Profiles of Water Management in Middle Rio Grande and Estancia/Sandia Basin Communities, a case study of regional water planning in Sandoval, Bernalillo, Valencia, Torrance and lower Santa Fe counties.



Aaron Rael holds a master's degree in Human Resource Development, and has been working with the Regional Water Planning Dialogue for over a year. Prior experience includes work as a project coordinator for the Water Information Network, and as a park ranger at the Wild Rivers Recreation Area in Taos. Aaron served as conference coordinator for the New Mexico Citizens' Water Quality Conference in Albuquerque several years ago which was a grassroots conference on water quality problems affecting low-income and minority communities.



Richard Pacheco recently completed a degree in Environmental Management. He worked with the Española-Pojoaque Valley Regional Water Planning Committee and will do a guest-editorship for La Corriente, the newsletter of the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo Sustainable Development Initiative. Richard was a real estate broker in Española for a number of years.



ADDRESSING CONFLICT THROUGH THE DIALOGUE PROCESS OR DON'T KILL THE MESSENGER

Lisa Robert
35 Miguel Road
Los Lunas, NM 87031

Aaron E. Rael
PO Box 998
Questa, NM 87556

Richard L. Pacheco
941 Calle Mejia, #1503
Santa Fe, NM 87501

THE REGIONAL WATER PLANNING DIALOGUE

The Regional Water Planning Dialogue is a Ford Foundation funded project to support community self-determination through regional water planning in New Mexico. Organized by Western Network and the Natural Resources Center at UNM, the Dialogue brings local and regional water planners together to reflect on what they have accomplished, how the process could be enhanced or facilitated, and what they have learned that might help other regions in developing their own plans. To date, case studies of water planning efforts in the Pecos Basin, Taos County, the Pojoaque/Española Valley, the Middle Rio Grande, and Socorro/Sierra counties have been carried out by the Dialogue staff, and roundtables have been held to bring water managers and other regional constituents together to talk about grassroots planning.

THE FIVE "C's" OF COMMUNICATION

Lisa Robert

I'm the Pollyana of the Dialogue group—instead of seeing the glass half empty, I tend to see it half full. When I think about the Dialogue process, I keep coming back to this: ideally it begins not with "conflict," but with

common ground—not with what separates us, but with what brings us together.

The other night, my sister phoned, long distance, to ask if I knew what the five "C's" were. "I don't mean oceans," she said. A friend had asked her the same question. It was his eighth-grade son's homework assignment: name the five "C's." Neither of us had a clue. Then her friend called again. He had jokingly posed the question to his seven-year-old daughter. "Oh that's easy," she told him, "It's the code of the classroom: caring, courtesy, consideration, common sense and cooperation."

The Dialogue work requires that same list. We come to this real life classroom from diverse backgrounds, combinations of self-confidence and anxiety, each with our personal load of emotional ties and bete noires, and that infamous teacher known as experience suddenly expects us to communicate with each other! We need those five "C's."

This year, I interviewed perhaps sixty people about their role in the water planning process. They were busy folks: community administrators, county commissioners, public works department heads, agency representatives, and local water system managers, and most of them had never heard of the Regional Water Planning Dialogue. Over and over I found myself explaining who I was and why I wanted to take up their time.

I couldn't have done it without the first "C." Dialogues begin because we care about something. I discovered that a "messenger" asking questions from behind a shield of distant neutrality earns only answers that are distant and neutral. Neither of us invests anything. It is caring which breaks the ice. Not to say I need give up my objectivity and align myself with any "side," but I can express what interests me, what fuels my desire to communicate.

In doing that, I open a door, inviting the other person to do the same. Now we must engage in the second "C" which is courtesy. The job is to hear what's being said. This is no one-sided business, but an exchange in which to prove trustworthy. I have to signal when I don't understand, respect confidence, and recognize as a gift whatever is offered. Courtesy can be the most difficult of those "C" words, but it promises the greatest reward because it paves the way for all the rest, beginning with consideration.

Consideration means taking my partner-in-dialogue seriously; I may not agree with what is said, but I give it credence and treat it charitably, realizing every opinion is a piece of the larger design. It is crucial to remember, too, that what I reflect back and the spirit in which I present it can color the self-perception of the person to whom it refers. I learned this firsthand in submitting case study drafts to those I interviewed. I'll share with you my favorite example:

"I read your profile about our community water planning efforts to the town council members," one respondent told me. "We looked around at each other and said, 'Wow! Did we do all that?'"

Of course it isn't always so gratifying or easy. Misunderstandings happen and it's work to unravel them. But I commit to getting it right and the other individual begins to see the value in having the story told. Little by little, we are moving toward the next "C" which is a kind of common sense: we know very well that real communication makes us vulnerable, but at the same time, we are stronger for having shared it and certainly we are encouraged to try again.

Now the possibility exists for bringing all the players together, to hear each other's story and discover their regional commonality. The Dialogue's roundtable discussions are expansions of one-on-one communication: with a fortified sense of who they are and what they have to offer to the planning process, the stakeholders can begin the final "C" which is cooperation. How they relate to each other and the beneficial coalitions they may someday build are made possible by those first halting efforts at dialogue. There are still conflicts to resolve, but now there is a precedent for approaching them together, because communication is a path: the more often it gets used, the clearer and easier it becomes.

THE CODE OF CONFRONTATION

Aaron E. Rael

As we have seen, a good communicator uses the five "C's" of the Code of Communication to produce effectively a model of inclusive dialogue. However, this model is not always used to its fullest potential.

Often we are faced with the fear of communication. Frequently consultants, project directors, or even planners are not willing to bring people with different points of view together for fear of confrontation. We might even say that there is a philosophy out there that preaches, "don't let adversaries talk." We do have to admit that there are risks in bringing people together. There are the risks of other agendas, personal grudges, and even sabotage. But, a greater risk exists in not encouraging dialogue between opposing parties.

Water issues often cannot be separated from concerns, such as long-use planning or economic development, and at some point these other agendas can be incorporated into the process. As for personal grudges, participants are not asked to like each other, just to work together. And as facilitators of communication, are we not the one sabotaging the process by not allowing for true dialogue?

Frustrated facilitators have stated that they have tried the Code of Communication in working with opposing parties, and yet this dialogue

process does not work. The Code of Communication is implemented, but it is executed on a one-to-one basis. Instead of facilitating dialogue among various parties, communication is carried on between the facilitator and each respective party. Facilitators act as messengers. They in fact become intermediaries. The message is not separated from the messenger. When the dialogue process does not work, the messenger becomes the focus of the anger, the exasperation, and the alienation. By circumventing contention, legitimate communication becomes sidestepped.

This avoidance of communication leads to an entirely different set of five "C's." These can be called The Code of Confrontation: **conflict, contempt, confusion, controversy, and chaos**. In attempting to avert conflict, the Code of Confrontation, is in fact reinforced.

There is nothing wrong with conflict—it is a natural part of dialogue—what is important is how conflict is addressed. One method by which the Regional Water Planning Dialogue has successfully addressed conflict in the inter-regional roundtable workshops is by producing and disseminating case studies prior to the meeting date. Each case study reflects issues and concerns of a respective region. While key individuals are interviewed in compiling the data, direct quotations are never attributed to a particular person. Participants review and revise drafts of the document before final drafts are sent out to participants in other regions. Participants are able to become familiar with other regions' concerns in a safe and non-threatening manner. When the Roundtable Dialogues happen, there is an explicit understanding of various points of view, since participants have already correlated their concerns with the concerns of other regions. When a position needs to be defended, it is with an awareness that there is a common vested interest in the dialogue process.

In bringing persons with different viewpoints together through the Roundtable Dialogue, a forum is provided for seeking out commonalities. Providing an arena for listening to each other leads to a willingness to come together again. The result is a step-by-step disarmament. All stakeholders should be included early in the

process, yet the dialogue should be inclusive enough to bring in other newly identified parties. Through the incorporation of other interests, new alliances are formed. An example of this process can be found in the Pojoaque/Española valleys, where parties came together to discuss water **quality** issues, even though these parties were involved in a water **quantity** dispute.

In a process-oriented approach, the means defines the outcome. The Regional Water Planning Dialogue has found this method useful in creating a vehicle for interested individuals and parties to claim ownership in a bottom-up approach to water planning. Participants no longer focus their anger on the messenger, instead they ask why this process was not started sooner.

THE FIVE "C's" OF CONCURRENCE

Richard L. Pacheco

The Pojoaque/Española Wastewater Steering Committee consists of members from north of Santa Fe, south of Velarde and south of Abiquiu Dam including six Indian pueblos, three counties, the cities of Santa Fe, Española and Los Alamos, various villages and federal, state and tribal agencies. The committee also has representatives from the Chama River and the Rio Grande Valleys, along with the valleys of Chimayo, Nambe, Pojoaque, and Tesuque. The group was formed due to concerns over potential groundwater contamination created primarily by rapid residential development and high septic tank use, illegal dumping of septage in irrigation ditches and arroyos, and the lack of a wastewater management plan for the area.

For any group to agree on anything, the group must first have a clear understanding of what it has in common and agreement on the group's objectives. Concurrence is a coming together, in agreement with others, in opinion and in action. Similar to the five "C's" of Communication and Confrontation, Concurrence has its own five "C's."

The first "C" in concurrence is **constituency**. A constituency is the people served by an organization or an institution. The Pojoaque/Española

Addressing Conflict through the Dialogue Process or Don't Kill the Messenger

Wastewater Steering Committee is a group of several interested community leaders, coming forward as one organization to identify the region's wastewater problems and to provide a forum in which they can mutually address these problems with constructive and unified solutions.

Together they have taken action in a Public Education Program for their constituency. This program allowed the Committee's leadership to take some responsibility for their constituents becoming informed, and for obtaining their support. A water testing program assisted in revealing to their constituents the conditions of water quality and water quantity. A survey study helped them to identify their specific interests and the concerns of the entire regional population.

The second "C" in concurrence is **connection**. A connection happens when one person is connected with others by common interests, and when an arrangement to advance their interests exists. Four years ago the Steering Committee's work resulted in a Master Plan, which allows for the cooperative management of the region's wastewater. The plan connects the entire membership in a formal plan of action to confront their common problems with workable solutions. The plan of action has become the foundation in which Indian and non-Indian communities have bridged the gap of their differences, uniting them in a common effort and connecting them into a family of communities.

Collaboration is the third "C." Collaboration is to work jointly with others in an intellectual endeavor toward a common objective. The Pojoaque/Española Wastewater Steering Committee includes over 16 different entities. What makes this group unique is that six of these entities are Pueblo Tribes. This project provides a forum, with an opportunity for dialogue, between Tribal and non-Tribal governments, allowing them to come together as neighbors and partners to solve their common problems. Pojoaque Pueblo and the county of Santa Fe now have a joint powers agreement for the management of a Regional Septage Facility. This document can serve as a model for other joint projects within the area. San Juan Pueblo and villages of

Chamita and Alcalde might now address their common problem of groundwater contamination due to high septic tank use. Santa Clara Pueblo and the City of Española may be able to work together on wastewater management issues for the areas where they share common boundaries.

The next "C" is **compassion**: a sympathetic consciousness for the distress of others exists together with a desire to alleviate it. This region is a multicultural and ethnically diverse area where people of all types must live and work together as one unified community. The Steering Committee's success is due in part to the respect and trust shared by everyone for each other's culture, values, religion and way of life.

The fifth "C" of concurrence is **community**: a group of people with a history of common social, economic and political interests, living together within a larger society. The Steering Committee consists of residents from the city and county of Santa Fe, the city of Española and the lower part of Rio Arriba County, the community and county of Los Alamos along with the Los Alamos National Laboratory. In addition there are the pueblos of Pojoaque, Tesuque, Nambe, San Ildefonso, Santa Clara and San Juan. Land grant and acequia associations also are included.

These communities now have the chance to work together in a spirit of cooperation and with objectivity. For example, the Los Alamos National Laboratory, in the interest of better public relations, has generously donated to the Steering Committee expensive water testing equipment. In doing so, they have taken the occasion to repair what in the past has been a bad reputation as a disinterested neighbor. LANL has seized an opportunity for improving their public image.

To have concurrence within communities, groups must collaborate with each other connecting with respect and trust—working together as neighbors and friends for the betterment of their constituents. Like a committee member recently said, "It is nice to know that someone else in the community stays awake at night worrying about **my** problems."