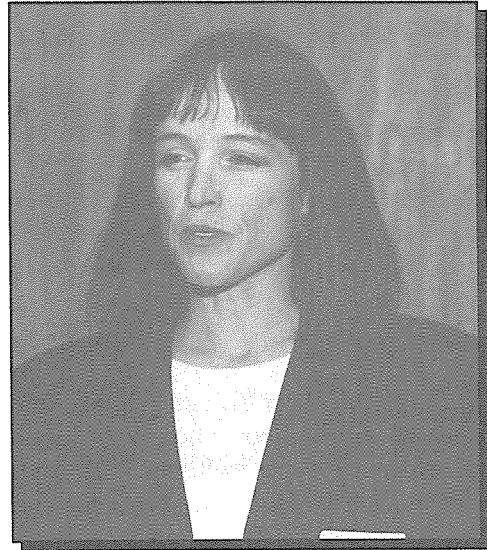
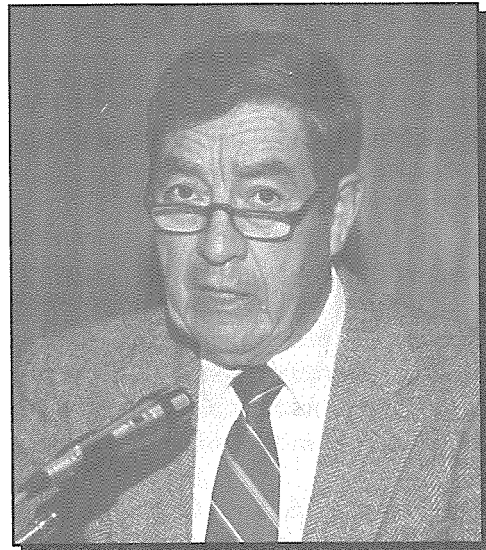


*Tracy Seidman Hephner is a full-time rancher in northeastern New Mexico. She and her husband, John, share responsibilities on two ranches, 70 miles apart, in Mora and Colfax counties. They raise beef cattle and roping stock and dryland farm. Tracy has served on the Interstate Stream Commission for almost 10 years and has been an active participant in the Regional Water Planning Dialogue. She co-chaired a work group charged with writing the basic guidelines for water planning in New Mexico. The result was the Regional Water Planning Handbook, which was formally adopted by the ISC in the summer 1994 and was published in the fall.*



*Palemon Martinez is a graduate of NMSU with B.S. and M.A. degrees in Agricultural Education. He was employed by NMSU Cooperative Extension Service where he served as Santa Fe County extension agent, resource conservation and development specialist and northern district director. He is retired and serves as a volunteer to many organizations including an appointment by Governor Bruce King to the Interstate Stream Commission. Palemon is co-chair of the ISC Regional Planning Task Force. He also assists with local water entities such as acequias, mutual domestic water associations and other agricultural users.*



## REGIONAL PLANNING: INTEGRATING INDIVIDUAL PLANS

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Regional water planning began in 1986, when the New Mexico Legislature directed that regions with political and hydrological interests in common begin to plan for their water future. Criteria for regional water planning came from the legislation and was general and vague. Water planners from across the state submitted proposals to the Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) for grant money, then set about building a water plan.

Results were predictably uneven. Grant money was usually inadequate to fund a complete job. Some regions focused on specific problems while others took a broader view but lacked the required data or failed to consider all water uses within their region.

The Regional Water Planning Dialogue, an effort funded by a Ford Foundation grant, did much to unite water planners and recognize common goals and frustrations. At a January 1994 meeting of the ISC, the Dialogue brought people together to discuss problems and roadblocks in the planning process. Planners asked for more structure and guidance in their task. At the same time, ISC staff was recognizing flaws and omissions in plans that were submitted to them and that had been, for lack of a better word, completed.

At a subsequent meeting, Palemon Martinez and I were named to co-chair a subcommittee for water planning. Our first task was to write guidelines that could be used in every planning region. To do the job well, we needed help. We assembled a work group of talented, dedicated and very outspoken individuals with broad experience in planning. We did not concern ourselves with representation on a geographical basis or of special interests. We tried to choose people who could help us understand the problems of different types of water users.

The Interstate Stream Commission is very grateful for the participation of the individuals on the work group:

*Bobby Creel*  
*NM Water Resources Research Institute*  
*Gary Daves*  
*City of Albuquerque*  
*Vickie Gabin*  
*Sierra Club*  
*Debbie Hughes*  
*New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts*  
*Michael Benson*  
*Navajo Nation, Dept of Water Resources Mgmt*

*Thomas Shelley*  
*Phelps Dodge*  
*Tony Mayne*  
*Santa Fe Metropolitan Water Board*  
*Joe Quintana*  
*Middle Rio Grande Council of Governments*  
*Lee Tillman*  
*Eastern Plains Council of Governments*  
*Fred Vigil*  
*New Mexico Acequia Commission*  
*Randy Kirkpatrick*  
*San Juan Water Commission*  
*Consuelo Bokum*  
*New Mexico Environmental Law Center*  
*Michael Riley*  
*Elephant Butte Irrigation District*  
*Hal Engle*  
*New Mexico Rural Water Users Association*

We were given a difficult task, a short time to complete it, and absolutely no budget. We held intense day-long meetings in Albuquerque, fueled equally by debate and the coffee generously provided by Gary Daves. Our gratitude goes to Gary and the City of Albuquerque for providing us with a place to meet, and to the staff cooperation of both the Interstate Stream Commission and the State Engineer Office for great support services.

The result of our efforts is the *Regional Water Planning Handbook*, which has been formally adopted by the Interstate Stream Commission. It sets a template for water planning in New Mexico, and delineates the tasks necessary to develop a comprehensive plan. These tasks are addressed in full in a companion document, called the *Checklist for Water Planning*, which also will be available through the Interstate Stream Commission office.

As we began to assemble the Template, we realized that it was necessary to establish some assumptions to be accepted by all planning entities. Discussion on various assumptions was heated and valuable. Though we may have debated every sentence in the entire Handbook, we did reach a consensus in every area, including the assumptions.

I'd like to describe these assumptions briefly.

1. *An adequate plan for public participation shall be a prerequisite for regional water planning.*

One of the first things we saw in reviewing the first phases of regional plans was that the

## Regional Planning: Integrating Individual Plans

most successful ones were successful because of substantial public involvement. Other plans were flawed because key players—elements of water use in the region—had not been involved in the planning process. It was obvious that public involvement plays a crucial role in the planning process.

2. *Plans shall be written on the assumption that New Mexico and federal water law will not change.*

Planners are free, encouraged even, to propose changes in water law. However, planning must be done within the parameters set by existing water law. In other words, you can't plan on a law changing.

3. *Plans shall presume all future water needs must be met by management of the water supply currently available to the region. If that is not feasible, as supported by analysis in the planning report, other sources of supply may be proposed if feasible in economic and engineering analysis.*

This one is easy to understand, though it may have some people swallowing a little harder—don't plan on using anyone else's water. One work group member provided a perfect example for this assumption when he said, with a dreamy expression, that he'd planned to make a million dollars in the year after he graduated from college. Our message here is that you can dream all you want, but the reality is that we want to know how you are going to live with what you've got.

4. *Water conservation should be the first item considered among feasible water supply alternatives in the management of water to meet current and future water demands. Regional water plans should demonstrate what portion of the future water demand could be met from projections of conserved water. Regional water plans should outline the responsibilities and authorities of each local governing body.*

In areas that anticipate a shortage in their water supply, the first place to look for more water is in the area of conservation.

5. *Population projections shall be based on the Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER) model, with any deviations from that model justified. BBER projections and any exceptions shall be reviewed within the public participation program and with Commission staff.*

We needed to establish a base for the facts and figures used in planning, so we ask that planners begin with the BBER statistics. Planners may not agree with those statistics, and they are certainly encouraged to present other data to support differences in population projections.

6. *Analysis of water use shall be broken out into the following categories:*  
*Public Water Supply*  
*Domestic*  
*Irrigated Agriculture*  
*Livestock*  
*Commercial*  
*Industrial*  
*Mining*  
*Power*  
*Reservoir Evaporation*  
*Fish, Wildlife and Recreation*

This assumption provides a similar starting point for planners and builds in some consistency between all regional plans.

### Note

The *Regional Water Planning Handbook* and Checklist are now available on request. Contact person is Phil Haseltine at the Interstate Stream Commission office at (505) 827-6091.