

Tom Davis has been Manager of the Carlsbad Irrigation District for the past 15 years. Prior to his employment with Carlsbad Irrigation District, Tom was employed by the U.S. Forest Service for 15 years. Five of these years, Tom served as District Ranger and was responsible for the management of the 289,800-acre Guadalupe District of the Lincoln National Forest. He has extensive experience in managing natural resources in Texas, Idaho, Arizona, and New Mexico. Tom is a native of Oklahoma and a graduate of Oklahoma State University. He is active in the National Water Resource Association, Family Farm Alliance, Western States Water Council, and serves on the New Mexico Water Trust Board.



PANEL DISCUSSION: PLANNING FOR NEW MEXICO'S WATER FUTURE

Tom Davis
Carlsbad Irrigation District
201 South Canal Street
Carlsbad, NM 88220

Thank you for that introduction. What a marvelous place we are gathered in. A place where water that was once used to grow corn is now used to entertain people and grow lawns and golf courses. Could this be a sign of future water uses for the state?

It is an honor for me to sit with such a distinguished panel. This is maybe the only time you will see Letty Belin and myself sitting side by side on friendly terms.

You know, what a great time to live and what a great county we live in. Never before in the history of mankind have we had such a safe, dependable, abundant supply of water and food, as we have today. You can go anywhere in the United States and drink water safely from a public water system. That has never been possible before in the history of mankind. You can go anywhere in the United States and eat food

from public restaurants safely—that has never been possible before.

We produce more food in this country per acre, with less water than has ever been accomplished before. We have made some great strides. You can go to almost any dwelling in the United States and flip a switch and the lights come on, or go to the tap and get a drink of safe water. We need to believe in ourselves and to appreciate the generations of builders who went before us who were able to get us where we are today.

But we cannot stop there, as you have heard some of the other speakers say, because of the current drought, because of our increasing population. We are ever changing and must be evermore vigilant, as Secretary Curry said, in protecting the quality and quantity of our water supply.

In the business I'm in, we are concerned not only with water quality and keeping the Pecos flows as unsalty as possible for our crops, we are also very concerned about the quantity of water we have. The current drought drives us to competition with other uses: Pecos River compact demands and endangered species demands are all factors when considering available water supplies needed for the economic viability of our farmers.

Having talked about all our accomplishments, we cannot rest on our laurels and expect all of these things to be available to succeeding generations. In my small world, I have a few buzz words today that I think may need to be viewed from a different angle—for instance, our state's adjudication process. Adjudications are necessary to determine who and how much, or who and what has how much, so to speak. However, adjudications are not working in this state. The adjudication in the Carlsbad Project has been ongoing for 30 years, and may well go on another thirty years. I predict that the adjudication process, as it functions today, will not be completed statewide. We need to look at some way to accurately streamline the adjudication process. But we still need to get it right. The Settlement Agreement that we just reached on the Pecos River could be an example of how we might deal with other adjudications throughout the state.

I hear a lot of talk about water conservation and irrigation efficiency. I want to say those efforts are not silver bullets either. Often, increased irrigation efficiency actually deprives or impairs the water supply for downstream users. Conservation, carried to the extreme in some cases, could impair water supplies for a downstream senior diverter or reduce return flows to rivers. So none of these things are crystal clear and can be applied with a broad-brush. We hear of silver bullets like watershed management. Watershed management may be an opportunity in some areas, for example, in areas with high enough rainfall that some water yields could be increased. Watershed management could also be used for re-establishing grass cover or improving range conditions, but in some cases, watershed management may not result in any great water yields. Regions that have underground aquifers that depend on areas of recharge would benefit from high surface runoff flows of water passing through those areas of recharge rather than the same volume of water being evapotranspired by vegetation upstream of the recharge areas or slowly percolated into the soil. Those of us who store water in downstream reservoirs would like to see tremendous

overland flows to fill our reservoirs and less evapotranspired or infiltration upstream.

Sometimes things get oversimplified in a time of impending crisis, like we may be in now. We need to take care to think things through and look at possible unintended consequences that might result from any action before we take off and spend a lot of time and money on such actions. One of the things I think Letty Belin mentioned was, "there is no new water," and I agree with her to a large extent. However, I believe we should spend time, energy, effort, and brainpower into looking for economical ways to produce and clean up brackish deposits of underground water that lie thousands of feet under the surface of New Mexico. These deposits could be a source of water that is not available to us at this time and could be cleaned up to the extent that it could be used for agricultural production. That would free up some higher quality agricultural water that then could be shifted to some other use, such as M & I uses, or entertainment for the public and growing golf courses.

I think it is incumbent on all of us to not just look for the easy solution, because generally easy solutions are not going to be there. It is going to take a lot of thoughtfulness, and a lot of effort, and a lot of cooperation, and a lot of collaborative effort to insure that we in New Mexico can maintain necessary economic growth and at the same time, maintain the standards of living to which we are so accustomed.

Thank you.