

Director's Statement

We celebrated 50 years of annual New Mexico water conferences this year at the site of the first 25 annual conferences, New Mexico State University. Nearly 300 participants including 50 students attended this milestone conference to discuss the history of water in New Mexico, our situation today in meeting a myriad of challenges, and the prospects for New Mexico's water future.

A warm autumn day greeted folks who traveled to Elephant Butte Dam for the pre-conference tour. The afternoon tour began in Truth or Consequences with an overview of the Rio Grande Project presented by staff of the Bureau of Reclamation. The group then visited the Dam and viewed it from a couple of lookout points. A sudden cloud burst had the group scattering back to the tour buses just as the tour was coming to an end. A reception followed the tour that evening at NMSU's new Stan Fulton Athletics Center. The reception provided another opportunity for participants to network among friends and colleagues, many of whom have been attending WRI water conferences for many years.

Several long-time attendees were acknowledged as the conference got underway including several who had been to at least 20 WRI conferences, including John Hernandez, Tom Bahr, Bobby Creel, Fred Hennighausen, and Wayne Cunningham.

Opening remarks were made by NMSU agricultural economist and speaker extraordinaire, Lowell Catlett. Catlett woke up the early morning group with his musings on the aging Baby Boom generation and how agriculture has evolved over the past 50 years.

He was followed by UNM School of Law Professor Emeritus Chuck DuMars who gave the 2005 Utton Memorial Water Lecture, "Prior Appropriation Law and Future Water Allocation: Preserving Water for Future Generations." Chuck began the lecture with some personal recollections of his good friend and former colleague at the UNM School of Law, Albert E. Utton, and their work together over many years.

Interstate Stream Commission Director Estevan Lopez talked about New Mexico's experience with interstate water compacts and related agreements. Estevan and colleague John Whipple have prepared an excellent paper summarizing, by basin, the history of compact development and administration as well as related litigation and Congressional action. The paper, along with all papers presented at the conference, is contained in this proceedings and all papers are posted on the WRI website at: <http://wri.nmsu.edu/publish/watcon/proc50/proc50.html>.

Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves at the evening banquet where Cowboy humorist and poet Baxter Black performed. Baxter stayed after the show to autograph his books and CDs. The featured luncheon speaker was former WRI director Tom Bahr who led the institute from 1978 until 1999. In addition to reflecting back on his tenure as director, Tom gave us a quick seminar on one of his retirement activities – how to make good wine.

The 50th Annual New Mexico Water Conference was dedicated to H. Ralph Stucky, the first director of the New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute. New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson declared October 19, 2005 as Dr. H. Ralph Stucky Day. John Hernandez and Bobby Creel paid tribute to Dr. Stucky and presented the proclamation to Dr. Stucky's two children who attended the conference, John and Creta.

The water conference advisory board members seem anxious to begin planning the next water conference. We wish them well and look forward to another 50 years of New Mexico water conferences.



M. Karl Wood
Director

Funds for the proceedings publication were provided by registration fees, the U.S. Department of the Interior, and state appropriations to the New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute.

Photos by Stephen's Photo Service.