

PANEL DISCUSSION

THE FEDERAL PERSPECTIVE AND INITIATIVES ON WATER

Moderator

Karl Wood was named director of the New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute in June 2000. He joined the NMSU faculty in 1979. Prior to his tenure at the WRRI, Karl was assistant department head and range coordinator for NMSU's Department of Animal and Range Sciences. Much of his research over the years has been related to water resources, and for 20 years, he was a member of the Range Improvement Task Force, which provides scientific expertise to help resolve disputes over management of water and other natural resources. Karl completed a B.S. in 1974 in forestry and range management and an M.S. in 1976 in range science with field emphasis on soils and range improvements both from the University of Nevada/Reno. In 1978, Karl received a Ph.D. in range science with field emphasis on watershed management from Texas A&M. Karl has nearly 150 journal articles, research bulletins, special reports, and conference proceedings publications to his credit, mainly in the areas of range hydrology, range vegetation and soil assessment, and rangeland management, including reclamation of disturbed lands, range improvement techniques, grazing systems, and management of rare and endangered species. At the WRRI he has represented NMSU as chair of the Lower Rio Grande Water Users Organization, co-chair of the New Mexico-Texas Water Commission, and chair of the regional Paso del Norte Water Task Force.



Panel Discussion

Mike Connor works for Senator Jeff Bingaman, the Chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee in the United States Senate. He is Majority Counsel to the Committee and is responsible for all issues before the Water and Power subcommittee as well as Native American issues that are within the Energy Committee's jurisdiction. Prior to joining the US Senate, Mike was with the US Department of the Interior (DOI) where he served as Director of the Secretary's Indian Water Rights Office (1998-2001), representing the Secretary of the Interior in negotiations with Indian tribes, state representatives, and private water users to secure water rights settlements consistent with the federal trust responsibility to tribes. Before joining the Secretary's Office, he was employed with the DOI Solicitor's Office in Washington, DC, and Albuquerque, New Mexico. Mike received his J.D. from the University of Colorado School of Law and is admitted to the bars of Colorado and New Mexico. He previously received a B.S. in chemical engineering from New Mexico State University and worked for GE.



Zane Vaughn is a Legislative Assistant for Senator Domenici (Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources and Energy and Water Development Appropriations Subcommittee) focusing on issues related to the federal budget, judiciary, government affairs, taxes, environment and public works, agriculture, CERCLA and Superfund issues, water and related litigation, and endangered species and related litigation. Zane is a native of Las Cruces and received a B.S. from Texas Tech University, an M.S. from North Carolina State University, and a J.D. from Texas Tech University School of Law. Prior to joining Senator Domenici's staff, Zane was a trial attorney with a private firm in Texas focusing on complex and commercial litigation.



Ron Morsbach has been a Field Representative for Congressman Steve Pearce working out of Socorro since 2003. He handles economic development issues for the Socorro area. He was the President of the Ramah Water and Sanitation District for 25 years, Chairman of the North West New Mexico Council of Governments for four terms, and Chairman of the New Mexico Association of Regional Councils for two terms.



Johanna Polsenberg is the Senior Legislative Assistant for Representative Tom Udall, a member of the House Appropriations Committee. Johanna's portfolio includes environment, agriculture, science, and natural resources issues such as forests, public lands, water, wildlife, and oceans. Prior to joining Udall's staff in early 2004, Johanna spent a year as a research faculty member developing an interdisciplinary coral reef study and management project at the University of Miami. She also studied coral reef diversity and marine reserve design in Sulawesi, Indonesia, and mangrove ecology in North Queensland, Australia; rehabilitated marine mammals at the Marine Mammal Animal Hospital in Marin, California; researched mangrove diversity and resource use in Samoa, Fiji, and Micronesia; and contributed to the development of a drug targeted against breast cancer that is now in clinical use. She received a B.S. in biochemistry and chemistry from the University of Vermont, an M.B.A. from the University of Maryland, and a Ph.D. in ecosystem ecology from Stanford University.



Tito Madrid was appointed by Governor Gary Johnson as Director of Field Operations for the New Mexico Environment Department from 1993-2000. He worked for Representative Wilson from 2003 until the end of 2006, when he left to work for the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce. There, he became the Senior Director of Regional & Local Public Policy and Government Relations. Tito rejoined the staff of Representative Wilson in October 2007 in the Albuquerque District Office. He has 27 total years experience with the Environment Department working in various positions including Underground Storage Tank Bureau Chief, District Manager, Health Program Manager, and Environmentalist.



THE FEDERAL PERSPECTIVE AND INITIATIVES ON WATER

Mike Connor for Senator Jeff Bingaman
Zane Vaughn for Senator Pete Domenici
Ron Morsbach for Congressman Steve Pearce
Johanna Polsenberg for Congressman Tom Udall
Tito Madrid for Congresswoman Heather Wilson

Mike Connor: I guess it is unfortunate that I get to go first, because the things that I am going to talk about are things that I am sure everyone else on the panel will talk about. I think for the most part we are pretty united as a delegation on water issues. Certainly on the Senate side we are, because Zane and I work together almost on a daily basis when he is not working on the farm bill or some of his other projects. I guess I kind of specialize in water a little bit more. Whether it is Zane or his predecessors, Senator Bingaman and Senator Domenici decided a long time ago that water was not in any way, shape, or form a partisan issue and that it is something to work together on because

the state has many challenges, and they need to put together their efforts to deal with those challenges. Even with their standing in the Senate, it is tough to get done all that we think we need to get done for New Mexico.

From my standpoint with Senator Bingaman, I have two sets of responsibilities with respect to initiatives that we have been working on. Certainly and always on Senator Bingaman's mind are his responsibilities for dealing with water issues in the state, so I will talk a little bit about that. He is also the chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, so we have a bunch of nationally weighted issues that we are trying

to deal with also. Let me go through those very quickly. I am not a fast talking easterner. I am from Las Cruces originally, so my fast talking is just related to trying to let everyone else have a chance to talk.

I think with respect to state-based initiatives, obviously what we are working on, as you have heard from others, are the Indian water rights settlements that have been signed by the state and several tribes here, whether it be the Navajo settlement in the San Juan basin, the Aamodt settlement on the Nambe-Pojoaque-Tesuque stream system, or the Taos settlement involving that pueblo. We spent a great deal of our time trying to work with the settlements that have been agreed to between the state and the tribes. We are trying to deal now with some of the policy issues that we see as a delegation so that we can move those forward. For the Navajo settlement, we have already introduced legislation. We have put together a concept for paying for the Navajo settlement, and I think right now we are doing the same thing with the other two settlements. The key thing is paying for those settlements. We are kind of working behind the scenes right now trying to find a way to guarantee funding to implement those settlements, so that if we enact them, they will get funded, they will get implemented, and those claims will be resolved for the benefit of everybody in those basins.

The next thing I will mention is the eastern New Mexico pipeline project. We have historically introduced the legislation, and there has been a ripeness issue from the Bureau of Reclamation's perspective. There is also a funding issue from the Bureau of Reclamation's perspective, but the ripeness one is one that we have been working on with those folks in eastern New Mexico. I think they are just about done, and we are ready to introduce that legislation again early next year.

The Middle Rio Grande is an issue that is constantly taking up the entire delegation's time. Along those lines most recently, the Water Resources Development Act was passed in Congress, and there were a number of initiatives in the Act related to the Rio Grande that the entire delegation worked on and supported. There was the Rio Grande Environmental Management program, the Middle Rio Grande Restoration program, and a cooperative agreement of authority. All of these authorizations have to do with bringing the Corps into the basin with a much more active role in addressing some of the problems that exist in the Rio Grande. The cooperative agreement of authority is a little thing,

but it is probably one of the most important because it will allow them to cooperate with the Cochiti Pueblo to look at some of the reoperation scenarios, which I think are key to addressing some of the long-term Endangered Species Act (ESA) problems.

The transboundary aquifer assessment bill that Senator Bingaman and Senator Domenici cosponsored was enacted last year. We very much are looking into trying to maintain the funding to get that off of the ground. You may have seen some of the reports recently about the grand opening of a water project for groundwater development in Juarez in the Mesilla aquifer. It is those types of international issues that we want to avoid having joint studies on both sides of the border. That is pretty important from our perspective.

On the national stage, I want to mention three things that we are working on in the committee. As Bob Hirsch mentioned this morning, Senator Bingaman and Senator Domenici put together something called the Secure Water Act. It is basically a science-based initiative intended to ensure that we have better data, whether it be stream gaging, groundwater data, or data about water use and availability. Those three items are promoted as part of that bill. We want to strengthen the National Streamflow Information Program that Bob talked about this morning. The idea is that better science leads to better data, and that leads to better management. We are also dealing with the issue of climate change and the impact on water supply and trying to get a better understanding of the implications of that. We are looking at more refined models, downscaling atmospheric models to understand what may happen basin by basin in that area, and then finally a bill for conservation efficiency. No matter what water challenges we face, whether drought or some other change, such as population increases or environmental demands, conservation efficiency is going to be the key to addressing those challenges.

Aging infrastructure I think is very much a problem. With respect to the infrastructure we put in place, a lot of it was done 100 years ago, and it is deteriorating. We need to do upkeep on it, and we are seeing more of that issue come to the surface.

Finally, water reuse projects have been talked a lot about lately. There are some reuse projects in New Mexico that have been in place, certainly with respect to Albuquerque and some other community planning. Reuse is a huge thing in California in particular. There are reuse projects everywhere in the state of California, which I think reflects progressive water management,

but also the realization that even a state like California, which is the eighth largest economy in the world even on its own, needs a little bit of federal assistance.

Those are the kind of initiatives, the major issues that I see comprising the funding issues concerning water. Unfortunately, water resource programs have not been in favor over the last seven or eight years. If you look at it from an inflation standpoint, they have actually decreased anywhere from 11 percent through 2007. If you look at the President's budget from 2001 to 2008, those water resource programs have been reduced by 20 percent. Water issues are just hitting us everywhere, not just in the West but also in the East as you heard a bit ago. That is the biggest issue we have to grapple with. We need somehow to find the balance where there is an effective federal partnership with state and local communities and get back to where we are a responsible partner in that effort.

Zane Vaughn: For those of you who I haven't met, my name is Zane Vaughn. I am also, like Mike, a native of Las Cruces. I work for Senator Domenici. Mike and I kid each other that we have to be bipartisan, because Mike's mom was actually my first grade teacher, and I don't want him to tell her on me, because I know she will get me in a heap of trouble. I think Mike hit on a lot of the stuff that both Senator Domenici and Senator Bingaman have been working on. Some of those areas both senators have been working on for quite some time. I won't go back through it and rehash any of that. I think Mike did a good job of that. I will tell you that—I am sure most of you know this, I hope that you know this—Senator Domenici will be retiring at the end of this Congress, so we have about 13 more months left on his tenure to try to figure out what he can and can't do for the state of New Mexico in relation to water.

We have tried to prioritize certain initiatives for the Senator to let him look at and pick through and see exactly what it is he wants to do. I will tell you one of the critical issues right now that he is faced with is one that he and Senator Bingaman are working on, which is again the Indian water rights settlements, particularly how to find enough money inside the federal government to come up with the federal cost share. I think that is a very difficult prospect inside any time frame, especially 13 months. It is also made more difficult by the way the administration has been positioning itself. It is something that we are going to try to work through. It

is something that Senator Domenici would like to see happen before he leaves office.

One of the things that is on the horizon for us is a bill that is going to come out maybe at the end of this session or the beginning of next year that Senator Domenici has been working on, in some form or fashion, since the early 1980s. Basically the focus of that bill is the interdependence between energy and water. A couple of the critical aspects of that will be that this piece of legislation will call on the federal government to look within each of the agencies to determine what their roles are regarding water and how to get those agencies to work with one another in order to better meet the water needs all across the United States. That has a significant impact.

I think a lot of people lose focus on the broader picture. For example, if you take the current farm bill that we are looking at right now with all of the corn subsidies and the energy incentives contained in it, there are not many people looking at that in regard to what kind of water consumption it will take. Why would a producer in New Mexico change his farm plans to start planting corn and sorghum? What does that do to our water allocations that are currently out there? I think what Senator Domenici is going to try to do through that legislation is address some of those more global concerns. I think that after the OPEQ oil embargo quite some time ago, you saw a national initiative to try to look at some of these, but it died off. As drought becomes more persistent and more strains are placed on federal dollars on the federal level, I think this is going to be a critical component as to how the federal government reacts and helps each individual state with its water needs and with the energy needs that we are faced with right now.

Johanna Polsenberg: I am Johanna Polsenberg, and I work with Representative Tom Udall. It is nice to be out here again. I am in D.C., and I come out to the state occasionally, but almost every single year I've been able to come for this water conference. It is just a clear indication of how important water is for us. On the top of my notes, I have scribbled a line that says, "Water is the most bipartisan issue," and we have heard that reflected so far. It is very true. We work together on many, many water issues.

I'd like to say that there are both the national and state perspectives that we have to take as federal lawmakers; however, the national issues are pretty much writ large in the Southwest and especially in New

Mexico. I have the bumper sticker behind my desk that reads, “If you think we have bad fights over oil, wait until we start fighting over water.” We hope at meetings like this that we will not come to that point.

Mike, Zane, and I all mentioned the water settlements. Mike also mentioned the Ute pipeline. We have the northern district, and we have all three of the water settlements and the Ute pipeline in our district. When you total the amount, we are looking at over \$2 billion that would have to come to the northern part of the state to address these water issues that are all pressing and urgent. The portion of the Ogallala that extends into New Mexico is expected to be unviable in 15 years. These are on the order of month to years problems now. We are not talking on the scale of a century. We are talking short lifetimes right now, so these are very large issues.

One of the focuses that we are taking is on climate change. I think Julie’s presentation really laid the blueprint for a lot of what we are trying to focus on. While some climate change predictions are uncertain, there is a strong consensus across most of the models, if not all, that the Southwest is going to get drier. I refer now to a study that was done in the Sierra Nevadas. Global warming over the last 40 years by less than one degree has led in the Sierra Nevada Mountains largely in the California area to an average of about 28 to 30 fewer frost free days each year. We are seeing effects from relatively small temperature changes magnifying to rather large indirect effects. That small difference in warming has led to about a fourfold increase in wildfires. After this last wildfire season, you probably have to update that. When you look at these large-scale warming trends—one degree, two degrees—what will that mean on the ground? That is the point Julie brought up that the Congressman is really focusing on. It has been brought to his attention sitting on the appropriations committee and the authorizing subcommittee on the interior. As you know, appropriations is the committee that sets the budget.

Julie mentioned the lack of data. It is astonishing for us to learn this first year on the appropriations committee that, particularly over the last seven years, the funding has created some holes in our data, such as the USGS stream gauge that Mike and Julie mentioned. It is not now adequately able to monitor and see, if we have this one degree change, what it means on the ground. Can we get an early warning to see these magnified indirect effects from small global changes? We are trying to address inadequacy of

monitoring and data collection through the appropriations process.

Another thing that has been brought to the Congressman’s attention, both by his tenure on the resources committee and also now on the appropriations committee, is the fractionation of various land management agencies. The Forest Service is managing their piece, and BLM and national parks have their pieces. There are all these pieces in contiguous areas managed by different agencies. Another example is the Bureau of Reclamation, when looking at water. Their efforts are not necessarily being coordinated. It is necessary to manage each of these pieces for multiple uses, which the Congressman has always recognized; for example, forests can be water factories in watersheds and need to be protected. Perhaps other land uses can be used for other reasons. We are focusing in and getting the agencies there and asking, “How are you working together? How are you looking at connectivity between all the various pieces that you are managing?”

Again, the Congressman has a long-term focus on the watershed role of forests not only for water yield, but also for the prevention of fire hazard. Just to wrap up and reflect again the efforts Mike and Zane were talking about on conservation. I want to reiterate that we have so much water to gain from simple conservation; it is relatively simple to talk about, but very difficult to carry out. Our focus now and in the near future is to create greater efficiency, whether it is irrigation efficiency, water use, or putting money to research to get the technologies that have been discussed for water reuse, water use efficiency. The Congressman always likes to relate a statistic, and I hope you all know it better, about the water use, say, of a citizen in Albuquerque versus a citizen in Santa Fe versus a citizen in Las Vegas. The Las Vegans are very, very conservative in their water use and those in Albuquerque, not so much. He recognizes that if they can do it in Las Vegas, we can do it elsewhere in this state, and he is trying to find ways that we can enhance that conservation. Thank you very much.

Tito Madrid: Good afternoon. My name is Tito Madrid, and I have the honor of representing Congresswoman Heather Wilson’s office. I’m not from Las Cruces. I can finish my talk with what has already been said. When I joined the Congresswoman’s staff, I saw the unity of the entire delegation in their work on water issues. I am from the district office in

Albuquerque, so I get to go out and see where all of these water projects are, the need for them, and the work that has been done. The delegation works really hard in Washington, D.C. We get to see down in the district the projects for which they have worked so hard. To both of the senators and Congressman Udall, thank you for all of your work on behalf of the constituents in at least Congresswoman Wilson's district.

I don't want this to be a campaign speech, so I am not going to list everything the Congresswoman has done. She has worked very hard on water issues, and that is where a lot of her projects have come from. She has helped communities with flooding and with water to providing drinking water wells and so on. One of the issues I think she is working on and struggling with for the future is how to balance the needs of our district and the state, between farmers; agriculture; the Endangered Species Act (ESA), for example, and threatened species; development in our cities, jobs; and so on. That will be the biggest issue that she sees coming out in the next couple of years. How do we do this balance? Water is scarce. Everyone is talking about the cliché—you know that it is going to be a war for water out West. It might possibly be. With all of the requirements put on water from the cities, from the farmers, from the ESA, there are just a lot of demands on water, and they are not making any more water, folks. Congresswoman Wilson is looking at what she has called the New Mexico Aquifer Assessment act. It is kind of a forward-thinking act to look at the water in the deep aquifers, say 3,000 feet or deeper. There is some water there that we can possibly use. She has introduced legislation that would take a look at the salinity of this water, the availability of the water in certain aquifers, and how susceptible the aquifers are to contamination. It is basically looking at other sources of water supply.

The Congresswoman is also very interested in conservation credits. For example, if you are a farmer and you laser level your field and are not using all of the water you are allotted, there is a possibility that you could get some kind of credit put into a water bank or you could lease the saved water out. The idea is to reward conservation efforts. That may create a source of water there. It is always a balancing act for the Congresswoman, trying to balance the needs of her district and state and make sure everyone has water. Water is important for our future. I thank you and the delegation for their help.

Ron Morsbach: My name is Ron Morsbach. I work out of the Socorro district office for Congressman Steve Pearce. Tim Charters from our Washington office was supposed to be here, but he could not make it and he asked me to pinch hit for him. As mentioned earlier by previous speakers, the delegation works very closely together on water issues. Conservation is a very important part of our water resource solution, but it cannot ultimately be the final solution to water needs for our state in the future. It is a big part of it, but there are other things that are just as important for us to work on.

The Congressman is very cognizant of how important it is to keep as much of New Mexico water in New Mexico as possible. He worked with the Senate side on the Arizona Water Settlement Act, which is on the Gila. Hopefully a resolution can come to pass that will allow New Mexico to retain the acre-feet there and not make all of the Arizona developers happy by letting it go to Arizona.

Desalination of brackish water is very important. We need to continue to fund and work on technology to make the process more economical. Retention of water in the state is important, so we need to continue to look at the areas where water can be retained and released to protect not only the urban areas, but the farming and ranching industry, which is the largest industry in the state of New Mexico. We need to continue to work on eliminating and reducing the invasive species of salt cedar and the Russian olive plants along the rivers in New Mexico. We need to continue to try to fund that effort. Sometimes funding becomes a difficult issue, but working on these issues is very important for the water resources of the state. It is very important to protect endangered species, but it must be done in a reasonable manner so that all interested parties can work together to make that happen and still maintain the water usage that is used for consumption. We continually need to work on restoring the watersheds and have better management on our national forests, which generate a lot of water in the state by using better management. Right now, unfortunately, we have too many trees in the forest sucking up a lot of the water that could flow.

I personally visited, as Tito did, some of the areas where we used to have flowing rivers and what have you, but they do not exist anymore because the water can't get into those rivers. They are dry as they can be, yet some of the farmers and ranchers who have been in that area for a long time can remember when

they were fishing in those rivers. Now they are dry. Those are the issues that the Congressman will work on with the delegation to continue to improve the scenario to have reasonable water resources in our area, not only for urban areas but also for our rural and farming communities as well.

Question: This is a question for Johanna. You said that in 15 years the Ogallala, I guess you are referring to the aquifer, would be unviable. Are you referring just to the New Mexico part of it?

Polsenberg: That's my understanding of it, the New Mexico part of it, from where they are drawing water.

Question: Anyone can respond. It seems to me the philosophy of the Bureau of Reclamation is to move water too often in the West to municipalities, perhaps because of money, power, votes, whatever at the expense of drying up entire states. I am wondering if maybe with global warming we should pause and take a look at this kind of force. It is really important. This actually happens globally too. The entire planet is drying up, and we are moving water into municipalities in places like India and China. We are doing it in our own state. I actually think in the next 15 years the Rio Grande will be kind of attacked the way the Colorado River was in the last century. We have an opportunity to keep our diversity in this state and do things differently and perhaps be a model federally for keeping an area that might be healthier in terms of the planet naturally.

Connor: I'll answer that just to acknowledge the problem more so than to offer a solution. My sense is that your concern is with ongoing urbanization and drying up of our agricultural areas. I do not necessarily agree that it is driven from the federal level. I think it is driven from market forces and local realities more so than anything else. I don't think there is any silver bullet to protect water uses across the board, but I also don't think we have gone nearly to where we need to go with conservation efficiency and that includes managing our reservoirs and water operations or reusing water or looking to new supplies, such as desalination, and dealing with the energy costs involved with that. The bottom line is that we are trying to address water issues in many ways to try and promote all those things that deal with immediate water needs and that may provide some water for new uses and to protect existing uses. From Senator Bingaman's perspective, water drives everything we do dealing with the economic needs of a growing state and protecting

the culture of our state. While New Mexico is not in the top ten, it is certainly in the top half or top third of growing states. We want to have agricultural areas. We don't want to just dry them up as a way to foment our economic growth in the future. All that is just to say that we look at this from any number of different potential solutions to help alleviate water needs, to help avoid water crises, and to look at the long-term by putting in a suite of tools and authorities and funding that we need to keep everybody balanced in all those different sectors of New Mexico.

Question: How is the New Mexico delegation going to deal with the Oberstar-Feingold bill that is out right now? I think it is called the Clean Water Restoration Act. That bill constricts, confines, and limits the ability for us to use our water resources in the future. How is the New Mexico delegation going to handle that?

Vaughn: I am not divulging any official position on that. I have seen that bill, and I know exactly what you are talking about. It is the reauthorization of the Clean Water Act. One of the significant obstacles in front of that piece of legislation at least in the Senate is that it has been authored by one of the most polarized members of the body and cannot garner the 60 votes necessary to clear out of our chamber. I don't think it is going to go anywhere. What happens after this Congress though if the body were to shift in such a way to where 60 votes could be garnered in favor of the Democratic party, then I think something like that could be on the horizon. As far as in the near future, I do not think that is going to happen on our side.

Question: Texas and New Mexico have recently started some interesting efforts pertaining to salinity and looking at salinity projects with both budgets on the Rio Grande, especially the lower Rio Grande. Maybe we can look at these with an interstate approach. I would like to suggest that maybe in the Secure Water Act that the Senator has introduced we can include something to help us address salinity issues for the Rio Grande and the Pecos. Instead of finding new water, we could clean up the supplies that we have, and that would make a significant difference to our water availability.

Connor: I think the question deals with advocating for salinity issues on the Rio Grande and the Pecos, maybe similar to what has been done on the Colorado River and maybe what we could do as part of the Secure Water Act to initiate that activity. I think part

of the problem is understanding the issue and then doing something about it. I think with respect to the salinity issues not just in the Rio Grande basin but in other areas, we should incorporate as part of the Secure Water Act building this database of information about our water supplies and water quality data. Salinity would be fundamental to understanding the problem. I think to move to a solution similar to the Colorado River salinity program, you will need to follow the process that those folks followed getting that program established. They got all of the states together, which is always the most effective way to deal with these issues—to bring the states, local, and federal government together and say, “You’ve got to help us do something.” That is what they did in the Colorado River basin. The salinity program was one of those win-win situations for everybody. Yes it costs money, but when you bring stakeholders from Colorado, Texas, and New Mexico all to the table as well as local effective communities, I think that will be very helpful to get a Rio Grande basin salinity control program.

Question: Currently the climate change models all predict that most of the very heavy impacts will be in the areas where the tribes are located. These are also people who are the least stable to deal with these impacts in terms of technology, research, infrastructure, and so forth. This question is for Zane, because I was very intrigued when you said that Domenici was interested in the connection between energy and water. As you know, on the Navajo Nation, there are very rich energy resources. There has also been a very high price for the Navajo Nation with those energy resources. Now with climate change impacts predicted to be quite severe, especially in the New Mexico corner of the Navajo Nation and energy development using so much water, I would like to hear a little bit more about that connection and Domenici’s interest between energy development and water resource use in an area where there is already not enough water.

Vaughn: I will tell you one of the things that I didn’t mention as a component inside the bill that he is working on right now. There is a climate change component in that bill that allows the federal government to look into the impacts that climate change is going to have and how to specifically try to address the issue. I don’t think Senator Domenici has gone too far out there on climate change, but suffice it to say he knows the impacts are significant in New Mexico, especially concerning more drought. I think that question has a

lot to do with 1) supplying the appropriate amount of federal funding for the Navajo settlement, and 2) finding a way to get the federal government on board in relation to climate change and to start developing initiatives in order to assist impacted communities in particular areas. I think that is a very important area and one that does dovetail into that bill that I was talking about.

Question: As far as the forest thinning in our area, with the RS 2477 road closures possible, we need as many of those road open so that we can economically get in there and clean those forests. We need your help. How do the senators stand on closing those roads?

Vaughn: I have seen a little bit about this but not much. I have turned part of that over to the appropriate staffer in Senator Domenici’s office. I will tell you right now though that Senator Domenici is supportive of forest thinning in an effort to prevent fire. I believe right now from the latest I have seen in our office internally he is opposed to those road closures.

Polsenberg: I think this is an example of the pitched battle that you sometimes hear out there. Each of the sides stake their claims, but the reality of it is a lot closer to the middle. My understanding is that in some cases clearly road closures are beneficial to the forests for keeping the forests and the ecosystem intact, keeping access away when there shouldn’t be access. In most cases, however, the recognition of the damage of overgrown forests is there. As we go about determining road closures, I think it will be done in a way to make sure we can get the work done that we need with the access that we have before just closing it off. I think it is just an example of how you see the two sides staking their positions extremely, but then really working it out in the middle.

Morsbach: When you look at some of the plans that the Forest Service has with regard to road closures, it has been evident that many of the roads in the forests are not on the Forest Service maps. This is especially true in the area that I am coming from, which is the Gila. It is important that people in that area go look at the proposed roads so that when the road program is actually implemented, they know where all of the roads are. They are encouraging farmers and ranchers to look at the particular roads to make sure that the road to their tank and what have you isn’t closed because it isn’t on the Forest Service map. When the roads are closed, I think there is the possibility that after a year, this issue will be reviewed again regarding the opening

of lanes for fire protection and for ranchers. It is important that they look at the plans to make sure that roads that are important to them remain open.

Question: What do you think it will take to get two New Mexico senators back on the Energy and Natural Resources committee? Will that ever occur again?

Connor: I don't know. We are not going to do much better than we are right now, with a chairman and a ranked member. I always joked during the last election in 2006 that New Mexico was going to have a chairman and a ranking member. It didn't much matter. Our chief council researched this, and that is the first time that has happened on a committee—that one state had both the chairman and the ranking member. Except for appropriations, there are very few committees that are as important as Energy and Natural Resources. Even getting two senators again on the same committee would be a little tough quite frankly. I think Senator Domenici is going to leave a huge hole. That is an obvious understatement, probably the biggest one today. EPW is just as important with respect to the core. Obviously the appropriations committee is where we would like to see another New Mexico senator. It is going to be tough with respect to Energy and Natural Resources.

Vaughn: Senator Domenici shared with me a story one time. He said, "You know when I first got on the Energy and Natural Resources committee, I wanted to do everything my way and I couldn't get it all done. Having Senator Bingaman there to go to and say, 'Hey, is there some common ground here where we can meet and try to get some legislation passed?' was key." I think both of them combined have more seniority as a delegation, as a pair, than in any other state. It is not only on energy, but they have the bulk of a lot of the other committees covered. Senator Domenici is senior on budget. Senator Bingaman is senior on finance. Senator Domenici sits as an appropriator on the energy committee. You cannot pull too much over on two senior members who have that kind of weight to push around. As a freshman senator coming in, he or she would ask to be on every committee but it's just potluck at the end of the day. It would be very difficult for them to get on what is called a Class A committee, like energy or budget or finance or appropriations. You will see a stronger likelihood that there will be another member on Indian affairs or maybe EPW or another similar committee.

Connor: I just want to put a quick plug in for both senators. I think people ought to be proud of this. Next week, we are going to go back into session, and we are going to try to get some major energy legislation enacted. If we do, it will be because of New Mexico's two senators. The legislation deals with fuel efficiency and a lot of things within the committee's jurisdiction and some not, but the senators are both leaders in energy policy, and I think they are both being relied on by the leadership to pull something together that can get 60 votes in the Senate and move to the House. This is something that everyone should be aware of. It is not just for New Mexico, because these guys are major players in the national stage.

Question: About two months ago I had the privilege to attend an event where Senator Bingaman was the keynote speaker. In a forty-minute speech, he went through all of the things important to our nation, including the Iraq war, healthcare, and education. He didn't mention water once, and I was surprised he didn't. I asked during the question and answer session, "What is the thought in Washington on western water problems?" He looked at me a minute and said, "We kind of have a tendency to leave that up to the states." Again, that kind of surprised me. If you take a look at New Mexico alone, a federal agency like the Bureau of Reclamation controls one heck of a lot of water in New Mexico. Nine western states and now three eastern states have a great problem with water resources. The states that have water like Washington, Michigan, and Illinois are trying to get ours, why isn't this on the national scene?

Connor: I've heard Senator Bingaman say this a number of times, and it applies to water. With respect to climate change or something like that, he said, "The public and the community in some cases are way ahead of the Congress." I think his view on water issues is that that is true too. There is no resounding human cry within Washington, D.C., about water issues. They are fundamental to basic life issues, but obviously economic enterprises everywhere in the West are based on access and availability of water. I hear it in the water and power subcommittee and the issues I deal with everyday of strong concerns at a minimum and extreme concerns from every western state represented on our committee. Now we are getting it in the southeast. We are quietly, methodically trying to put in place tools for when people do wake up with respect to water issues. I don't want to make this a partisan speech at

all, but this administration has neglected water resource issues without a doubt. It is reflected in their budgets and their priorities. I think what we are doing right now is going for the next administration—whoever it is, because I think whoever it is is going to have to pay a lot more attention to water—so we are methodically working on items like the Secure Water Act and getting the fundamentals in place. Senator Bingaman and Senator Domenici last year passed the Rural Water Supply Program Act. We couldn't get any funding in the budget. Maybe Congress can write in \$1 million or so to get that program up and going, but it is a tool that is going to be in place for those administrations that want to use it. When there are enough impacts nationwide for the Congress to realize we need to be investing more money in these programs, from basic science to infrastructure to river restoration programs and so on, they are going to warrant that. We just haven't quite caught up with the public yet.

The reality is that the water resource programs across the board are about \$10 billion. That includes the Corps of Engineers, EPA, Bureau of Reclamation, USGS, USDS, USDA rural utilities programs—those are about \$10.1 billion. That is 0.2 percent of the overall budget. You ask these folks what they can do, not just the federal agencies but partnering with state and local agencies, if you increase that budget by 20 percent. You wouldn't even recognize that in the federal budget, and it can have a major impact on a lot of things going on. There is going to be some crisis that is going to bring it to the table. The reality is that it is not that expensive to deal with, quite frankly.