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## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Alexander "Sam" Fernald, NM Water Resources Research Institute

In Spring 2011, Xochitl Torres-Small of Senator Tom Udall's Las Cruces office approached NM WRRI regarding a potential conference on water conservation that the Senator wanted to hold in cooperation with New Mexico State University. A conference planning committee, with input from the Senator's staff, decided to broaden the topic to look at water scarcity in New Mexico, especially as it relates to the ongoing drought. And it became clear that WRRI should host the conference as its 57<sup>th</sup> Annual New Mexico Water Conference. New Mexico State University President Barbara Couture was eager to co-chair the conference on the NMSU campus.

During the summer, I met with Senator Udall in his Washington D.C. office to discuss the conference and came away with several ideas for the planning committee, including a panel of former New Mexico State Engineers to provide the "straight talk" on water in New Mexico. The Senator was keen to hear lessons from the past and how we can apply those lessons to the future. A transcription of that panel discussion is including in these proceedings.

The conference was held at Corbett Center on the NMSU campus and drew a record crowd of over 500 participants, including more than 50 students. Farmers, ranchers, engineers, experts and community members addressed the impact of water scarcity and explored possible solutions to help New Mexico adapt to the drought. Conference participants were encouraged to ask questions of the speakers as well as to propose their own actions on strategies and policy proposals.

The day following the conference, a diverse group of water policy experts met to discuss and organize the proposals and recommendations that were made at the conference. A Water Conference Report was issued the following April, a product of months of hard work following the conference. We are very appreciative of the effort by this workshop group. The report also includes recommendations by audience members from the conference. The full report is contained herein.

As Senator Udall said, the Water Conference Report represents a continuation of the conversation on water scarcity. The upcoming NM WRRI annual water conference will highlight proposals to deal with the issue. I hope you'll join us for the 58<sup>th</sup> Annual New Mexico Water Conference, *New Water Realities: Proposals for Meaningful Change*.

I would like to thank the sponsors of the 2012 water conference. Their generosity allowed us to offer a registration fee of only \$25. New Mexico State University, Los Alamos National Laboratory, Sandia National Laboratories, Elephant Butte Irrigation District, Rio Grande Basin Initiative, Hazel & Ulysses McElyea Endowment, and Senator Tom Udall made this successful event possible.

Also, thank you to the workshop participants who gave willingly of their time and were respectful and thoughtful while discussing controversial issues:

- Beth Bardwell, Audubon New Mexico
- Greg Daviet, New Mexico Pecan Growers
- Jorge Garcia, City of Las Cruces Utilities
- J. Phillip King, New Mexico State University
- Julie Maitland, New Mexico Department of Agriculture
- Olga Morales, Rural Community Assistance Corporation
- Howard Passell, Sandia National Laboratories
- Fred Phillips, New Mexico Tech

- Blane Sanchez, Pueblo of Isleta/New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission
- Bruce Thomson, University of New Mexico
- Talia Lapid, Senator Udall's Las Cruces Office
- Marco Grajeda, Senator Udall's Las Cruces Office
- Andrew Wallace, Senator Udall's Washington DC Office
- Jeanette Lyman, Senator Udall's Washington DC Office

And lastly, thank you to the conference planning committee members who met many times over the months leading up to the conference and whose insight and suggestions were invaluable:

- Greg Daviet, New Mexico Pecan Growers
- Elizabeth Driggers, Senator Tom Udall's Office
- Gary Esslinger, Elephant Butte Irrigation District
- Sam Fernald, NM Water Resources Research Institute
- J. Phillip King, New Mexico State University
- Julie Maitland, New Mexico Department of Agriculture
- Catherine Ortega Klett, NM Water Resources Research Institute
- Fred Phillips, New Mexico Tech
- Jeanette Lyman, Senator Tom Udall's Office
- Aggie Saltman, NMSU Government Relations Office
- Bruce Thomson, University of New Mexico
- Xochitl Torres-Small, Senator Tom Udall's Office
- Andrew Wallace, Senator Tom Udall's Office
- Frank Ward, New Mexico State University

See you in Albuquerque on November 21-22 at the 2013 NM WRRI annual water conference.

Alexander "Sam" Fernald  
Director, NM WRRI