

PETE V. DOMENICI
NEW MEXICO

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RESOURCES
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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3101

October 25, 1995

Dr. Tom Bahr, Director
New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute
New Mexico State University
Box 30001, Dept. 3167
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88003-0001

Dear Dr. Bahr *TJM*

I appreciate the opportunity to make a few brief comments to the Water Resources Research Institute's 40th Annual Water Conference.

I believe there are few more important issues to the State of New Mexico than that of its water resources. Further, I believe one of the most important issues with regard to water resources is that of determining the amount of water New Mexico actually possesses.

Take, for example, the Middle Rio Grande basin. The water from this basin--which extends from Cochiti on the north to Bernardo on the south, covering 4,300 square miles and five counties--is crucial to a very large portion of our State. Nevertheless, there are many unanswered questions as to how this aquifer really works. Is it replenished by precipitation and seepage from the river, or is it ancient water that, once used, will not be renewed?

To answer these questions, I convened a Technical Task Force to make recommendations to learn more about the basin. This group developed a plan that envisions, among other things, geophysical studies, exploratory drillings, recharge experiments, and multi-well aquifer tests. Further, a basin-modelling program is now being developed which promises to be an archetype for similar studies throughout the arid Southwest.

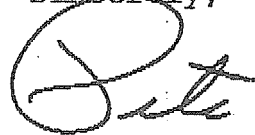
I believe work of this type is absolutely critical as New Mexico goes into the Twenty-First Century. Only by possessing the most

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accurate data about the availability of New Mexico's water will decision makers at all levels--state, local, and federal--be able to craft the best policies about this most precious of New Mexico's resources.

I wish you much success in your work, and look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Pete", enclosed within a large, loopy circular flourish.

PETE V. DOMENICI
United States Senator

PVD/gz/fdg

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SUZANNE C. SULLIVAN
CHIEF OF STAFF

October 28, 1995

Tom Bahr
Director
New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute
New Mexico State University
Box 30001, Dept. 3167
Las Cruces, NM 88003-0001

Dear Tom:

Thank you for your kind invitation to attend the 40th Annual Water Conference. I regret that my congressional schedule will prohibit me from joining you.

Setting aside the issue of water availability in the Southwestern part of the United States, the most important water resource issue facing New Mexico is the attempt by certain federal agencies to control water rights. Conflicts arising over the control of water rights are occurring more frequently in the 13 Western states that have large percentages of public lands.

The Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Forest Service have been pursuing statutory and regulatory changes which exert more federal control over water issues. In most instances, these agencies' objectives are in direct conflict with rural community development, including agricultural producers. The lack of consideration for local needs and interests is a primary reason that the Department of Interior policies are so controversial. I believe that current statutes preserve states' rights with regard to water issues, and I will fight any attempt to give the federal government more authority over the lifeblood of our rural communities.

In my opinion, public land issues should, to a much greater extent than they are now, be addressed at the state and local level. I believe that the Republican Leadership in Congress has already proposed specific reforms to water related and public land issues which would give states control over these issues. The Clean Water Act, Rangeland Reform, Mining Reform, and many others have a good chance of becoming law during this session of Congress.

United States Senate

October 27, 1995

A MESSAGE FROM U.S. SENATOR JEFF BINGAMAN

The most important water resources issue facing us today in my opinion is wise use of the resource. Defining wise use are items that we in Congress will continue to debate, I am sure.

Let me commend you on your efforts to clarify, elucidate and educate in forums such as this one sponsored by the New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute at New Mexico State University.

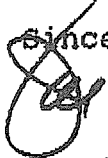
In answer to the issue of who the responsibility and authority falls on to define, make policies regarding, and to preserve and protect a resource which provides the gift of life to our state, the answer would have to be all of us.

From the perspective of the 104th Congress, I am sure everyone in the room is aware of the philosophical arguments shaping this latest version of our government. In my opinion, the resounding refrain in Congress is a marked emphasis on states' rights - an emphasis we haven't seen in Congress for many years, maybe even a hundred years. The fact that there is a decentralizing move to shift responsibility farther back to an individual level also answers the question of who the stakeholders are. We are going to be called upon as individuals, more and more frequently, to make more of the choices and take more of the responsibility at the local level.

It is increasingly in our best interests to make our own conflict resolutions. We need to sit down together, at this level, and decide the best and wisest use of our resources. The institution comes into play as more and more of a community function. Institutions, such as New Mexico State University, will be called upon increasingly to provide the expertise, backup, and resources we are going to need to make responsible local decisions involving our lifeblood, our future, and our present.

I appreciate the opportunity to briefly touch on the importance of maintaining state and local control of water related issues. I would also like to express my very strong support for the New Mexico Water Resource Research Institute and will continue to urge my colleagues to maintain this support in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Joe Skeen', written over the word 'Sincerely,'.

Joe Skeen
Member of Congress

United States Senate

October 27, 1995

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