5.4 Jicarilla Apache Nation

5.4.1 Introduction

The Jicarilla Apache Nation Indian Reservation (Jicarilla Reservation or Reservation) spans more than 879,917 acres in north central New Mexico. The Reservation is located in the upper reaches of the San Juan River Basin and the Rio Chama in north central New Mexico and straddles the Continental Divide. The Reservation’s northern boundary borders the Colorado line. The western boundary of the reservation is about 15 miles east of Navajo Reservoir.

Dulce, NM is the Reservation’s sole community and is home to the Jicarilla Apache Nation’s (Jicarilla or Nation) tribal headquarters. In 2010, the Nation had a population of 3,254.

Figure 5.4-A presents a general location map with Reservation boundaries, communities, and other important features.

5.4.2 Physical Setting

The geography on the Jicarilla Reservation ranges from high desert at the south boundary, at about 6,500 feet in elevation, to mountainous areas reaching over 11,400 feet in elevation in the north. The landscape varies from rugged pine-covered mesas and pinion-juniper woodlands to lowland sagebrush flats. Coniferous forest dominates the higher elevations in mountainous areas.

5.4.2.1 Watersheds

The Jicarilla Reservation is located in the Upper San Juan Basin. The following water bodies lie within the Reservation boundaries: Willow Creek, Rio Chama, Dulce Lake, Mundo Lake, Horse Lake, La Jara Lake, Enbom Lake, Hayden Lake, and Stone Lake. The Navajo River, which is a tributary to the San Juan River, is a perennial stream on the Reservation.

5.4.2.2 Climate

In winter, the average temperature is 24.9 °F, and the average daily minimum temperature is 7.9 °F. In summer, the average temperature is 62.6 °F, and the average daily maximum temperature is 82.0 °F. The average annual total precipitation at Dulce, NM is 17.89 inches. Of this, about 7.0 inches, or 39 percent, usually falls in June through September. Thunderstorms occur on about 41 days each year, and most occur in July and August. The average annual snowfall is 56.5 inches at Dulce. On average, 58 days per year have at least one inch of snow on the ground.
FIGURE 5.4-A
Jicarilla Apache Nation Indian Reservation Map

See the Disclaimer and Introduction to Chapter 5.0.
5.4.3 Historical Use and Cultural Importance of Water

In 1887 when the original 416,000-acre Jicarilla Reservation of Northern New Mexico was created by the executive order of February 11, 1887, water was a major consideration. At the time the Reservation was created, the General Allotment Act of 1887 (or the Dawes Act as it was popularly known) was enacted, which sought to divide reservation lands into allotments for individual Indians and families, and to encourage farming on lands allotted to individual Indians. The Jicarilla were able to revert their individual allotments back to tribal ownership, thus avoiding the fractionation of tribal lands and their appurtenant water rights.

Due to the high elevation of the Reservation, along with the heavily timbered slopes and the short crop-growing season, homestead-style farming on the original lands of the Jicarilla Apache was unsuccessful. Thus, these lands were largely devoted to commercial timber operations. By 1906, the Reservation had nearly doubled in size by the addition of what is now the southern end of the Reservation. This additional land provided year-round grazing of livestock as well as subsistence farming. In the 20th century, the Nation gained tourism and recreation benefits from its Reservation lands and waters. From the mid-20th century to the present, oil and gas development is the principal economic activity on the Reservation, resulting in the use of significant quantities of water as well as the prospect of significant degradation of water quality on the Reservation.

Realizing that rapid growth throughout the American Southwest was resulting in massive diversions of the region’s rivers, including the sacred rivers encompassing their homeland, in the 1960s the Jicarilla began a concerted effort to define in modern terms the extent of their indisputable rights to permanent sources of water to make their homelands permanently habitable and productive. These efforts have led to significant settlements and court decrees setting forth the Nation’s rights to waters from both the San Juan River and Rio Chama systems, as well as rights to participate in major federal water projects authorized and funded by the United States Congress.

The Nation’s ancient culture provides that the Nation’s water uses will determine Jicarilla’s cultural future as a distinct people. Nearly 70 years of intense economic activity on the Reservation have led the Nation to bring modern technology, scientific research, and economic analysis into deliberations concerning the future of the Nation’s water.

Water, in all its forms from clouds that bring the rain, to the snow that provides the blanket of winter and icy spring flows, to its life-giving presence in rivers, lakes, and streams, is sacred to the Jicarilla people and has been a fundamental tenet of the Nation’s religion since time immemorial. In Jicarilla creation stories, “Born of Water” is a major deity who made the world a safe place for human habitation and brought the four sacred rivers – the Arkansas, Rio Grande, Canadian, and Pecos Rivers – to the Jicarilla people. This territory encompasses sacred mountains as well, including Mount Blanca in southern Colorado that feeds water from snowmelt into the Rio Grande River. These river basins roughly define the territorial boundaries of the aboriginal Jicarilla homelands, encompassing much of present-day northeastern New Mexico, southeastern Colorado, and the panhandles of Oklahoma and Texas.

To the Jicarilla, their sacred homelands, with all their animal, plant, and water resources, were given to them by Great Spirit and are to be protected and honored through religious ceremonies and rituals. Even today traditional Jicarilla families travel to bathe their infants in and seek the
blessing of the waters of these sacred rivers of the Jicarilla people. The Jicarilla homelands are considered sacred, shaping Jicarilla religion, culture, lifestyles, and their very identities as a distinct people. Elders still predict spring flows and summer availability of water from the timing rather than the density of snowfall, closely reflecting what scientists today refer to as its moisture content. The landscape and climate of their lands have always dictated the traditional culture of the Jicarilla. Water, to the Jicarilla, has never been just a commodity or a necessity of life, but a sacred element that requires respect, reverential treatment, and efficient use, and is used symbolically in all religious ceremonies and rituals.

The persistence of Jicarilla culture in a real sense is connected to the land, its natural resources, and its environment. The land and its waters not only hold the key to the past of the Jicarilla people but define their present. The reverence for and appreciation of the scarcity of water continue to dictate the Jicarilla’s individual and cultural relationship to their homeland. The features of the landscape, especially its water resources, are instrumental and integral to the Nation’s modern economic development and the preservation of this ancient culture in the 21st century.

### 5.4.4 Jicarilla Apache Nation Water Supply

In October 1992, Congress enacted the Jicarilla Apache Tribe Water Rights Settlement, P. L. No. 102-441, 106 Stat. 2237 (1992) (Settlement Act). The Settlement Act represents a full and final settlement of the future use water right claims of the Nation to the waters of the Colorado River. As part of the Settlement Act, Congress approved a contract between the Nation and the Secretary of the Interior dated December 8, 1992 (“Federal Contract”) to provide for the diversion by the Nation of 33,500 acre-feet per year (AFY), with a corresponding depletion right of 25,500 AFY, from the Navajo Reservoir water supply at or above the reservoir, and to provide for the delivery to the Nation of 6,500 AFY at Heron Reservoir through the San Juan-Chama Project. Through the Federal Contract, the Nation agreed to subordinate its reserved water rights in exchange for the right to use wet water delivered by the United States at the locations and in the amounts described above. The United States has title to the delivered water by virtue of state law, and the state law priority date for that water is 1955.

In addition to the reserved water rights for future use mentioned above, in 1999, the Eleventh Judicial Court of New Mexico in the San Juan River Adjudication entered a Partial Final Decree adjudicating Jicarilla’s water rights in the San Juan River Basin in New Mexico. Under the Partial Final Decree, the Nation has a reserved right for historic and existing uses not to exceed an annual diversion of 5,682.92 AFY or the quantity necessary to supply a depletion of 2,194.58 acre-feet (AF), whichever is less, and a net evaporation of 2,187.16 AF. These are federal reserved rights with a priority date of 1880 (Table 5.4-A).

With respect to the water made available from the Navajo Reservoir or the San Juan-Chama Project under the terms of the Federal Contract, during periods when the Secretary finds that the actual water supply is more or less than the estimated firm yield to the project, Jicarilla shares in the available water supply in the ratio that its contract amount bears to the firm yield. In times of shortage, the Nation shares in the available water supply in the manner set forth in Section 11(a) of the Act of June 13, 1962, 76 Stat. 96, 99-100.

Jicarilla also has rights to the use of water in the Rio Puerco Stream system, but these rights have not yet been formally adjudicated or legally addressed.
5.4.5 Current Water Use and Operations

There is essentially no irrigated agriculture on the Jicarilla Reservation, and current domestic, commercial, municipal, and industrial water use is minimal. The majority of the Nation’s water is subleased to other water users outside the Reservation boundaries. The Settlement Act expressly permits the Nation to sublease water off-Reservation to generate revenue. Jicarilla subleases water to users both in and outside of the Colorado River Basin.

5.4.5.1 Domestic, Commercial, Municipal, and Industrial Water Use Category

Records of actual water use are limited to the diversions and depletions for domestic, commercial, municipal and industrial use within the community of Dulce (Table 5.4-B). The Navajo River runs north of Dulce and provides the community with its domestic water supply.

5.4.5.2 Environmental, Cultural, and Recreational Water Use Category

There are seven fishing lakes on the Jicarilla Reservation: Hayden, La Jara, Stone, Mundo, Enbom, Dulce and Horse lakes. Each lake ranges in size from 35 to 500 acres, when full. Additionally, approximately 12 miles of the Navajo River on the Reservation provide fishing opportunities. The Jicarilla Game and Fish Department has been working on habitat restoration in the Navajo River to protect three rare native fish species – the Rio Grande cutthroat trout, roundtail chub, and the razorback sucker.
5.4.5.3 Transfers, Leases, and Exchanges Water Use Category

Leasing of Jicarilla’s settlement water is provided for in the 1992 Settlement Act and the Federal Contract with the United States. The Nation leases its settlement water to a number of different entities for off-Reservation use subject to the approval of the Secretary of the Interior. Since settling its water rights in 1992, the Nation has entered into more than a dozen leases with off-Reservation entities. The first and largest of the leases was a 21-year lease for 16,500 AFY to the Public Service Company of New Mexico (PNM). PNM used the water for the utility’s coal-fired San Juan Generating Station. The smallest lease was for municipal supply to the Elks Lodge in Farmington, New Mexico for 15 AFY. Most of the Nation’s off-Reservation water leasing goes toward industrial uses related to power generation and coal mining. The Nation executed two contracts for municipal supply to cities – one in 2004 to supply the City of Santa Fe, New Mexico with 3,000 AFY, and one in 2011 to supply the City of Gallup, New Mexico with 7,500 AFY in the future as a component of the Navajo Gallup Water Supply Project. The Nation has also leased water to Reclamation, which used 5,300 AF in 2013 as in-stream flow in the Rio Grande to protect the endangered silvery minnow. Table 5.4-C presents leases from 2009 through 2013.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Recipient</th>
<th>2009</th>
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<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
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<td>3,000</td>
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<td>600</td>
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<td>31,655</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4.5.4 Summary of Current Water Use

Jicarilla’s average annual water use for the period from 2009 through 2013 is presented in Figure 5.4-B and Table 5.4-D.
5.4.6 Tribal Water Use Challenges

Access to water is fundamental to the right of the Nation to use and enjoy its lands, to maintain the integrity of its territories, and to provide for the needs of its people. In 1992, the Nation obtained a full and final settlement of its future use water right claims to the waters of the Colorado River. Jicarilla’s water rights provide access to water for the Nation to conduct cultural practices, provide drinking water to the community of Dulce, and support economic development. In short, Jicarilla’s water rights enable the Nation to maintain self-sufficiency.

While Jicarilla has obtained a full and final settlement of its water right claims on the Colorado River, it still faces challenges in the areas of obtaining funding for on-Reservation water infrastructure development and rehabilitation; legal, administrative, and political barriers...
affecting the ability to fully realize the benefits of its right to sublease water off-Reservation for its economic benefit; declining water quality; and the effects of climate change on water supplies.

Jicarilla lacks the economic resources to build and maintain infrastructure for delivery of water. Development of the Nation’s water rights and the capability to use water on the Reservation largely depends on the construction of major new water infrastructure to allow the Tribal community to access water Jicarilla already holds the rights to. Constructing new water infrastructure requires significant financial resources and long-term investments from both the Nation and the federal government. One of the primary challenges is the availability of federal funds to implement ongoing and future water development projects.

The economic survival of the Nation largely depends on having water for domestic use. For the most part, the Jicarilla people are not able to live or work on the Reservation outside the town of Dulce, New Mexico due to, among other things, a lack of sufficient water systems in other locations on the Reservation. The population has limited economic resources that make large capital investments necessary to develop additional water systems difficult to achieve. Further, the widely dispersed on-Reservation population results in large distances between water sources and water users.

The existing water system for the town of Dulce consists of a piecemeal municipal water delivery and wastewater collection system. This system has deteriorated over the years due to lack of capital improvements and maintenance by BIA, which previously owned and operated the system. Because of this deterioration, the wastewater system and system lagoons operate at over 100 percent capacity during the summer months and over 500 percent capacity during the winter months.

The Jicarilla Apache Reservation Rural Water System Project was designed to replace existing water and wastewater facilities in and around the town of Dulce, and provide services to the newly developed area of Mundo Ranch. However, the failure of necessary federal funding for the project has resulted in a very slow-moving project that has not kept up with the Nation’s increasing need for repair and maintenance of the existing water system.

The lack of reliable potable water and sufficient infrastructure impedes economic development and has detrimental effects on the quality of life, including public health, and economic self-sufficiency of Jicarilla. The Nation needs a reliable, high-quality water supply in areas outside of Dulce to continue diversifying the economy for on-Reservation employment and to live in the Nation’s traditionally dispersed manner across Reservation lands.

Another water use that Jicarilla relies on for economic survival is subleasing its settled water rights to other water users outside Reservation boundaries. Such subleases can provide income that can help build the Nation’s economic self-sufficiency while allowing non-Indians access to needed water. Given the high economic value of water in some off-Reservation areas, subleasing has become an important means to raise funds for water development projects, to achieve the highest and best use of Jicarilla’s water rights, and to provide for the needs of the Nation and its people.

However, legal issues associated with jurisdiction and control over Jicarilla’s water marketing efforts present a challenge to the Nation’s efforts to expand its water marketing program and to fully realize the value of its settled water rights. The Nation’s water marketing program has been
highly successful and has generated a substantial amount of income for the Nation each year. For decades, the Nation has been diligent in seeking out active water users and subleasing its settlement water to these users at rates near the top of the New Mexico water market. However, in recent years, the Nation’s water marketing revenue has slowly declined due to low water demand, low market prices, and the expiration and non-renewal of some of the Nation’s more profitable long-term leases. Existing policies and regulations have been relied upon to attempt to limit the Nation’s off-Reservation use of its water. This may result in the Nation having large amounts of unused water, losing substantial revenue, and ultimately not realizing the true economic value of its water rights in future years.

Declining water quality also threatens to limit Jicarilla’s future uses and value of water. Indian reservations face some of the greatest water pollution threats of any areas in the United States and the Jicarilla Reservation is no exception. Sources of impairment to water quality on the Reservation include: oil and gas activities, septic systems, landfills, grazing, timber and logging activities, commercial development, electric generating systems, ranching, and recreation. Indeed, a burgeoning issue in natural gas production is the practice of hydraulic fracturing and the concerns this raises for both environmental and water resource contamination and of overlapping and potentially burdensome federal, tribal and state regulations.

To add to these concerns, there is also the issue of how water supplies are changing due to climate change. Prolonged drought conditions in the Southwest have seriously affected the fishing lakes on the Jicarilla Reservation, which has resulted in decreased opportunities for fishermen. Water levels of lakes in the region have drastically decreased over the last few decades, with some lakes completely dried up. Of the seven fishing lakes on the Reservation, two of these lakes, Hayden Lake and La Jara Lake, are currently dry. Reduced rainfall will also negatively impact native plants, some of which are culturally important to the Nation.

Finally, another challenge for the Nation is that the basic law governing allocation of Western water has not changed substantially in over 100 years, and is steeped in dated concepts fashioned to address situations no longer relevant. Indeed, Jicarilla’s water settlement was negotiated over twenty years ago and does not reflect current changes in water supply, demand and values. Water itself, the regional demand on it, and views of its value is changing at a rate that outpaces the ability of the law to adapt. The Nation finds itself in a constant struggle with Western water policymakers and practitioners to introduce flexibility into the law to address changes in basin-wide issues of supply, demand and values.

5.4.7 Projected Future Water Development

Jicarilla’s future water development was assessed by first examining the location, quantity and type of current water use and then, by applying the Tribal Water Study’s scenario planning process envisioning a range of future water development.

The Tribal Water Study’s scenarios and associated themes are listed below. Detailed descriptions of these scenarios (storylines) were created to consider a wide range of possible water development outcomes. For additional information, including the scenario storylines, see Chapter 4 – Methodology for Assessing Current Tribal Water Use and Projected Future Water Development.

- **Current Water Development Trends (Scenario A):** Current trends in on-reservation water development, governance, funding, and resolution of tribal claims remain the same.
- **Slow Water Development Trends (Scenario B):** Decreases flexibility in governance of tribal water, levels of funding, and resolution of tribal claims slow tribal economic development. This results in a decline in the standard of living and delays resolution of tribal claims.

- **Rapid Water Development Trends (Scenarios C1 and C2):** Increased flexibility in governance of tribal water allows innovative water development opportunities and increased funding availability leads to tribal economic development. This results in an increase in the standard of living, thereby contributing to the fulfilment of the purpose of the reservation as a homeland and supporting the future needs of tribal communities. Scenario C1 considers partial resolution of claims and/or implementation of decreed or settled rights; and Scenario C2 considers complete resolution of claims and implementation of decreed or settled rights.

Jicarilla contemplated its water development through 2060 by reviewing its current water use estimates and reflecting upon how these might change under the four scenarios. During this process, the Nation considered such elements as the scenario conditions described in the storylines, current or future planned projects, anticipated changes in water use by category and the extent and condition of existing water infrastructure and the need, as well as the cost, for new infrastructure to support water development. Although the majority of the Nation’s water is currently leased to other water users, the Nation contemplated future development in the four water use categories: Irrigated Agriculture and Livestock Water Use (AG); Domestic, Commercial, Municipal, and Industrial Water Use (DCMI); Environmental, Cultural, and Recreational Water Use (ENV); and Transfers, Leases, and Exchanges Water Use (TRAN).

From this examination, Jicarilla extrapolated likely future use if current trends (Scenario A) continued through 2060 and prepared a quantified water development schedule. Subsequently, Jicarilla used this same approach to prepare future water development schedules reflective of how the other scenario storylines (Scenarios B, C1, and C2) could affect its future water development. The documentation for each development schedule is presented in the following sections.

### 5.4.7.1 Future Water Development Schedules

The assumptions used to prepare each water development schedule are described below. The schedules presented graphically in Figure 5.4-C and numerically in Table 5.4-E.

**Current Water Development Trends (Scenario A)**

If current trends in on-Reservation water development, governance, funding, and resolution of tribal claims remain the same, Jicarilla assumed that full use of its water diversion right (45,682.92 AFY) will occur by 2040. Domestic use was assumed to increase by five percent in the northern part of the Reservation through 2060 for on-Reservation housing (about 50 houses by 2060). An additional 1,200 AFY was assumed for housing, commercial and industrial development in the southern part of the Reservation by 2040. After 2040, any water right not used for DCMI purposes was assumed to be leased to other water users. There is currently no AG or ENV water use on the Jicarilla Reservation, and this trend was assumed through 2060.
**Slow Water Development Trends (Scenario B)**

Decreases in flexibility in governance of tribal water, levels of funding, and the resolution of tribal claims could slow tribal economic development in Scenario B. Under this scenario, Jicarilla assumed a 45 percent decrease in TRAN water use due to changes in local water use and availability and a loss of prior subleasees, such as resulting from a shutdown of the Public Service Company of New Mexico’s coal power plant. DCMI remained constant with current use through 2060. No AG or ENV use was assumed.

**Rapid Water Development Trends, Partial Settlement Resolution/Implementation (Scenario C1)**

Under Scenario C1, a partial resolution of the claims and/or implementation of decreed or settled rights leads to increased flexibility in governance of tribal water allowing innovative water development opportunities, and increased funding availability leads to tribal economic development. Jicarilla assumed full development of its water diversion right (45,682.92 AFY) by 2030 due to the ability to lease to interstate markets. Domestic use was assumed to increase by 33 percent through 2040 for on-Reservation housing (about 300 houses) and remain constant through 2060. An additional 1,200 AFY was assumed for housing, commercial and industrial development in the southern part of the Jicarilla Reservation by 2040. After 2030, any water right not used for DCMI purposes was assumed to be leased to other water users. No AG or ENV use was assumed.

**Rapid Water Development Trends, Complete Settlement Resolution/Implementation (Scenario C2)**

Scenario C2 builds on Scenario C1 by considering a complete resolution of claims and implementation of decreed or settled rights, which further increases water development opportunities. Under this scenario, Jicarilla assumed full development of its water diversion right (45,682.92 AFY) by 2023 due to the ability to lease to interstate markets. Domestic use was assumed to increase by 66 percent through 2060 for on-Reservation housing (about 600 houses). An additional 1,200 AFY was assumed for housing, commercial and industrial development in the southern part of the Reservation by 2040. After 2023, any water right not used for DCMI purposes was assumed to be leased to other water users. No AG or ENV use was assumed.
FIGURE 5.4-C
Jicarilla Apache Nation Projected Future Water Development in New Mexico (Scenarios A, B, C1, and C2)

- **Current Water Development Trends (Scenario A)**
- **Slow Water Development Trends (Scenario B)**
- **Rapid Water Development Trends, Partial Settlement Resolution/Implementation (Scenario C1)**
- **Rapid Water Development Trends, Complete Settlement Resolution/Implementation (Scenario C2)**

1 Jicarilla Apache Nation’s diversion water right in New Mexico is 45,682.92 AFY and depletion right is 34,194.98 AFY.
### 5.4.7.2 Summary of Projected Future Water Development

Jicarilla’s current water use and projected future water development under the Tribal Water Study’s water development scenarios, and modeled for analysis purposes, is presented in Table 5.4-E.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Water Use Timeframe and Category</th>
<th>Scenario A (AFY)</th>
<th>Scenario B (AFY)</th>
<th>Scenario C1 (AFY)</th>
<th>Scenario C2 (AFY)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diversion</td>
<td>Depletion</td>
<td>Diversion</td>
<td>Depletion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>34,194.98</td>
<td>18,339</td>
<td>18,339</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Jicarilla Apache Nation’s diversion water right in New Mexico is 45,682.92 AFY and depletion right is 34,194.98 AFY.

2 Total in the table may not be the sum of components due to rounding.