

**Commissioner's Meeting with the 18 Pueblos re: the Pueblo Irrigation Infrastructure Project**  
**November 17, 2010**

List of Attendees: Bob Alexander (Pueblo of Laguna), Dennis Alexander (NCRS), Tammy Belone (Pueblo of Jemez), J. Robert Benavides (Pueblo of Isleta), Feliciano Candelaria (Pueblo of San Felipe), James Candelario (Pueblo of San Felipe), Mary Carlson (Reclamation), Frank Chaves (Pueblo of Sandia), Peter Chestnut (NPTWRA), Paul S. Chinana (Pueblo of Jemez), Major Richard Collins (USACE), Michael Connor (Reclamation), Nelson Cordova (Pueblo of Taos), Kathy Dickinson (Reclamation), Deborah Foley (USACE), Matthew Gachupin (Pueblo of Jemez), Anthony Garcia (Ohkay Owingeh), Mike Hamman (Reclamation), Sam Hough (Pueblo of Santa Ana), Norman Jojola (BIA), Susan Jordan (Pueblo of Santo Domingo), Ron Kneebone (USACE), Mike Lente (BIA), Charlotte Little (Pueblo of San Felipe), James Lujan Sr. (Pueblo of Taos), Delton Martinez (Ohkay Owingeh), Governor Perry Martinez (San Ildefonso), Jane Marx (Pueblo of San Felipe), James McCook (Pueblo of Sandia), David Mielke (Pueblo of Isleta, Pueblo of Sandia), Holly O'Grady (BIA), Jennie Olguin (Pueblo of Sandia), Rebecca Onchaga (Reclamation), Anthony Ortiz (Pueblo of San Felipe), Pablo Padilla Jr. (Pueblo of Isleta), Brian Parry (Reclamation), Charlene Quintana (Pueblo of Tesuque), Dr. George Reynolds (USACE), Darren Richardson (NRCS), Bill Rohwer (Reclamation), Carlos Salazar (BIA), Governor Bruce Sanchez (Pueblo of Santa Ana), Delbert Sanchez (Pueblo of San Felipe), Viola Sanchez (Reclamation), Che Shu-Nyamboli (Pueblo of San Felipe), Rich Stein (BIA), Gilbert Suazo Sr. (Pueblo of Taos), Art Valverde (Reclamation), Norman Vigil (NRCS), David R. Yepa (Pueblo of Jemez)

The following are highlights from the Commissioner's meeting:

- Commissioner Mike Connor thanked the Pueblo of Sandia for hosting the meeting. He stated that the meeting was originally scheduled for February of this year, but there was a severe snowstorm in Washington D.C. that made it impossible to get to New Mexico.
- The Commissioner stated his hope that the pueblos are becoming more comfortable dealing with the Bureau of Reclamation. Reclamation is much more at the forefront of developing infrastructure projects, and is taking an active role in meeting the needs of Indian communities. He also stated that Secretary of the Interior, Ken Salazar is an enthusiastic advocate for the Department's work with native and tribal communities.
- The Commissioner stated that he is encouraged and appreciative of the fact that representatives from the USACE, BIA, and NRCS were in attendance. We want to work collaboratively with these agencies and use their expertise, authorities, and programs.
- Section 9106 of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (Public Law 111-11) authorized the Rio Grande Pueblos Irrigation Infrastructure Improvement Project. The Act requires a study be conducted to identify and prioritize projects for implementation. This report is to be transmitted to Congress by March 30, 2011. However, Reclamation does not have a line

item in its budget for the project. A line item is needed to initiate activities authorized by the Act. A line item could be established if Congress were to pass a budget with a write-in for the project, or a line item could be included in Reclamation's 2012 budget request.

- Reclamation's current schedule is to transmit the report to Congress by March 30, 2012, contingent upon a line item appropriation.
- In 2010, Reclamation had its lowest ever funding for Native American affairs. The 2011 budget request was back up to over \$7.5 million from \$6 million the year before. Congress has not passed our 2011 budget yet; we are currently being funded by a continuing resolution that will end on December 3, 2010.
- Last fiscal year, Reclamation utilized \$450,000 to conduct pre-study activities and to provide technical assistance to the pueblos for the identification of potential irrigation infrastructure improvement projects. So far this fiscal year, Reclamation has identified another \$150,000.
- Reclamation has received consent forms to participate in the study from 17 of the 18 Rio Grande pueblos. Reclamation has also executed P.L. 93-638 agreements with 11 pueblos. Each agreement is funded with \$18,000 of Native American Affairs technical assistance funding.
- Ms. Viola Sanchez is the primary point of contact for the study. During the meeting she provided a template for pueblos to use in identifying potential projects. The information in the template will help Reclamation prepare the report to Congress. The report will go through Reclamation's leadership to the Secretary of the Interior and then to the Office of Management and Budget before it is transmitted to Congress.
- Reclamation's current estimate of the cost to complete the study in a way that fulfills the requirements of the legislation is about \$2 million. The most important thing the pueblos can do right now is to identify a list of potential projects. Accurate cost estimates can be developed later if funding is insufficient to include these in the report to Congress.
- Mapping is vital for determining if irrigation facilities are eligible for improvement. BIA is going to help Reclamation with this because they have GPS information on just about every site on the pueblos. As funding becomes available, soil testing, surveys, etc., also needs to be completed.
- Reclamation has a concept for how to address the prioritization of projects. Each pueblo would identify and prioritize its own list of eligible projects. These lists of eligible projects for each pueblo would be included in the report to Congress and no attempt would be made to combine the individual lists into one prioritized list of all the projects. Reclamation believes this meets the intent of the legislation.
- The Commissioner stated that one of the purposes of this meeting is to ensure that the pueblos are comfortable with how this information will be presented in the report.

- A question was asked regarding who the points of contact are at the USACE and NRCS. The points of contact are as follows:
  - USACE - Dr. Ron Kneebone – (505) 342-3355
  - NRCS - Dennis Alexander - (505) 761-4400
- A question was asked regarding BIA's role in the study.
  - The legislation identifies the BIA as one of the 3 agencies that will work together with Reclamation on the project. The other two agencies are the USACE and the NRCS.
  - Each of the agencies has its own authorities, resources, and programs. These authorities, resources, and programs can complement each other. To provide maximum benefits to the pueblos, close coordination among the agencies is necessary.
- A question was asked regarding a study that the BIA did in 2005 and to what extent can we use that information.
  - The study in 2005 was a GPS survey of the pueblos along the Rio Grande from an engineering point of view – locating every ditch, every structure. Arrangements are underway to share this information with Reclamation.
- A question was asked about what should be the pueblos' highest priority effort in support of the study.
  - Each pueblo's highest priority should be the development of a list of potential projects, preferably by the end of the year, so Reclamation can start looking at each project from the standpoint of whether it meets the eligibility criteria identified in the legislation.
- A question was asked if there is something Reclamation will need to do in March 2011 to inform Congress of the progress to date and when they can expect to see the study report, or will Reclamation just plan to submit the report in the spring of 2012?
  - Reclamation would prefer to send Congress a status report in March 2011.
- A question was asked about shared projects, such as a project shared between two pueblos. Would a shared project have a higher priority to receive funding?
  - Multi-pueblo projects are something that Reclamation has yet to discuss. Reclamation will look into this, as well as how to deal with "checker-boarding," where irrigation infrastructure serves both pueblo and non-pueblo lands.

- A question was asked about how construction funding would be allocated among the pueblos.
  - Reclamation would hope that every Pueblo would get some portion of the funding each fiscal year. That will have to be worked out once we receive the funding. It would make sense for a portion of the funding to be provided to each pueblo to prepare designs and environmental documents necessary to get projects ready for the following fiscal year. It would also make sense for pueblos with shovel-ready projects to receive a portion of the funding as well.
- Reclamation stated that it is preparing a web page for the study that will include points of contact, schedules, meeting highlights, downloadable documents, frequently asked questions, a calendar of upcoming meetings, and hotlinks to other websites, such as the USACE and NRCS. It is hoped the web page will be functioning around the first of the year.