

**STATE OF NEW MEXICO
INTERSTATE STREAM COMMISSION**

**IN THE MATTER OF
PROPOSED NEW RULE 19.25.16
NMAC – Regional Water Security Planning**

No. NMISC 25-01 (R)

**New Mexico Interstate Stream
Commission, Water Planning
Program,**

Movant.

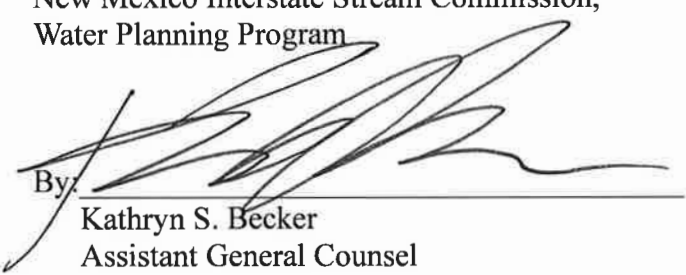
**NOTICE OF FILING OF WRITTEN DIRECT TESTIMONY
OF PARRY ANDREW ERDMANN**

The Water Planning Program (“Program”) of the New Mexico Interstate Commission hereby submits the attached Written Direct Testimony of Parry Andrew Erdmann.

DATED this 1st day of October, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission,
Water Planning Program

By: 

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WRITTEN DIRECT TESTIMONY OF ANDREW ERDMANN

I. INTRODUCTION and QUALIFICATIONS

My name is Parry Andrew Erdmann, and I go by Andrew Erdmann. I am presenting this written direct testimony on behalf of the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission (NMISC) in support of the Water Planning Program's proposed Water Security Planning Rule as submitted by the Commission's petition filed July 17, 2025. The NMISC's Water Planning Program, hereafter referred to as NMISC Staff, is proposing this rule to implement the 2023 Water Security Planning Act (WSPA or Act). My written direct testimony will provide support for the Proposed Rule on the following topics:

- A. History of Water Planning in New Mexico
- B. Targeted Engagement with New Mexico's Tribes, Pueblos, and Nations
- C. Targeted Engagement with New Mexico's Acequias
- D. Next Steps in the Regional Water Security Planning Process
- C. Suggested Changes to the Proposed Rule Based on Comments Received
- D. Conclusion

I have worked on the preparations for the Water Security Planning Rule from the beginning and plan to address questions regarding the development process for the Proposed Rule and the content of the Proposed Rule upon questioning at the Rulemaking hearing. I am currently the Water Planning Program Manager at the NMISC, and my qualifications for the position include:

- as manager of the Planning Program since late 2021, including participation in drafting and passage of the WSPA, assisting the Governor's Office in the completion of the 50-Year Water Action Plan, reviewing and updating the State Water Plan in compliance with the 2003 State Water Plan Act, and working to date on WSPA implementation and support;
- six years of experience working at the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer (NMOSE), first in the hydrographic survey and then in the statewide program for the Water Rights Division;
- eight years of experience working for the City of Santa Fe's water utility in both water resources and water conservation;

- two years conducting surveys and writing reports for the US Forest Service fisheries program in Arizona and New Mexico; and
- two master's degrees, one in Water Resources with a focus on policy, and one in Community and Regional Planning with an emphasis on natural resources.

My Resume (Exhibit 1) further elaborates on my qualifications.

II. HISTORY OF STATE AND REGIONAL WATER PLANNING

State level Water Planning began in New Mexico with the passage of the 1987 Regional Water Planning Act (Exhibit 2). This Act was passed by the New Mexico Legislature in response to a groundwater claim by Texas in New Mexico. The passage of this statute catalyzed the initial round of regional water planning, characterized by regionally led planning committees with limited facilitation and direction from the then newly formed Water Planning Program, which had one staff person. Water planning regions sprung up organically, establishing their own boundaries and developing their plans independently.

The NMISC at the time developed the 1994 Regional Water Planning Handbook to assist in establishing and convening planning committees and to answer the three guiding questions laid out in the 1994 Regional Water Planning Handbook (Exhibit 3):

- what is the region's available water supply;
- what is the region's future water demand; and
- how will the region undertake to meet demand with supply?

The development of these plans was left up to the regions themselves with financial support from NMISC. Some regions developed robust plans supported by thorough outreach and other regions addressed the requirements without significant outreach or discussion.

The initial round of regional planning took nearly 20 years and was completed by 2008 with the Commission's acceptance of the final regional plan for the Taos Region. The 1987 statute was developed largely to protect New Mexico's water resources from out-of-state claims. The range of approach and investment of time with which the planning process was undertaken in regions across the state resulted in plans of varying granularity and did not achieve a holistic and implementable vision for New Mexico's water future. Additionally, because many plans sought to meet projected water shortages by importing water from neighboring regions, the state was unable to support implementation without choosing winners and losers from among the regions. Regions developed the plans independently and lacked the context of plan development in other regions. Additionally, there was no prioritization for state support or for regions to move plans forward themselves.

In 2002 most of the western United States, including New Mexico, entered a period of exceptional drought that has persisted for the past 20+ years. The 2002 water year stressed both municipalities and farmers, ranchers and rural New Mexico and resulted in drastic conservation measures including municipalities like Santa Fe pausing outdoor watering for parks and investing millions in residential water efficiency, such as toilet replacements. In 2003, many states, including New Mexico, passed legislation for the development of a State Water Plan. The 2003 State Water Plan Act (Exhibit 5) provided for a State Water Plan to be created and then reviewed and updated

at least every five years. The NMISC completed the first State Water Plan in December of 2003, and the Plan has been either updated or reviewed in 2009, 2013, 2018, and 2023.

The 2013 State Water Plan update recommended adapting and modernizing the regional water planning process for broader purposes. After the 2013 State Water Plan update, the NMISC Water Planning Program produced the 2013 Handbook for Regional Water Planning (Exhibit 4), which outlined a common technical approach to be used by the existing 16 Regions for the subsequent round of regional water planning. The Handbook prescribed a format with a specified and consistent methodology for determining the ‘Administrative Water Supply’ as a foundation for the second round of regional water planning.

In the second round of regional water planning, the steering committees had a previous regional plan from which to build. The NMISC Water Planning Program supported the work of steering committees by hiring contractors – one facilitator and one technical expert per region – to guide each committee through the process outlined in the 2013 Handbook. It took each planning region two years to complete the process, and by 2017 all 16 regions had water plans based on the common technical approach.

In 2016 and 2017, NMISC’s Water Planning Program solicited feedback from regional planning participants through written surveys and public meetings. Feedback from participants included numerous comments relating to the development of the 2013 Handbook’s common technical approach, and the boundaries of the planning regions. At the conclusion of the second round of regional water planning, the NMISC Water Planning Program told regional participants that the agency would return to each of the 16 regions for the third round of regional water planning.

The NMISC Water Planning Program utilized the work and ideas from the second round of regional plans to develop the 2018 State Water Plan, which provided a compilation of all the Regional Water Plans and, importantly, consolidated the Projects, Programs, and Policies (PPPs) from all regions into a single unprioritized list. The PPPs included in the list were less of a roadmap for improving New Mexico’s water resilience, and more of a menu for potential solutions. Many of the proposed PPPs were mutually exclusive. Despite the limitations of a PPP list, it continues to be a useful compendium of water management strategies that could be tailored to meet local needs across the state. Inclusion on the PPP list also improves the odds that a particular project will receive legislative funding, as the Water Trust Board considers whether a project appears on the PPP list when making funding recommendations.

In 2018, Governor Lujan Grisham’s campaign called for the development of a 50-Year Water Action Plan (50YWAP) for the State of New Mexico. NMISC began development of the 50YWAP by commissioning a technical evaluation from New Mexico Tech projecting the condition of New Mexico’s water resources 50 years into the future to serve as targets for water planning and investment. This report is titled *Climate Change in New Mexico Over the Next 50 Years: Impacts on Water Resources* (Exhibit 7) and is also known as the “Leap Ahead Report.”

The findings of the Leap Ahead Report cover the following eight subject areas:

1. Land-Surface Water Budget
2. Terrestrial Ecosystems
3. Soils

4. Landscape, Fire, and Erosion
5. Surface Water and Groundwater
6. Rivers
7. Precipitation and Stormwater
8. Water Quality

The full report has important insights in each of the subject matter areas, but the summary take-away is that New Mexico will continue to experience increases in temperature resulting in diminishing water availability of roughly 5% per decade resulting in 25% less freshwater by 2070, the state's precipitation events are likely to be less frequent, more variable, and at times more severe. Aridification will exacerbate both frequency and impacts from flooding.

Former State Engineer Mike Hamman was appointed by Governor Lujan Grisham and confirmed by the Senate in 2022. The Governor authorized State Engineer Hamman to convene a New Mexico Water Policy and Infrastructure Task Force (i.e., "Water Task Force" or "Water Policy and Infrastructure Task Force") in 2022 only, consisting of water professionals and subject matter experts from around New Mexico. Working together, the 29 members of the Water Policy and Infrastructure Task Force evaluated water management strategies and made recommendations to support preparedness throughout the state. The outcome of the Water Policy and Infrastructure Task Force is a report titled Facing New Mexico's 21st Century Water Challenges (Exhibit 8).

Relative to water planning, one key finding is Recommendation 2.2: *Elevate water planning, through statutory clarification of its purpose, and proper funding of its work, and through empowerment of regional and local water agencies, to set clearly identified goals for permanent and escalating reductions in water use over the coming decades.* One of the strategies identified to accomplish this recommendation was to amend the 1987 regional water planning statute. During New Mexico's 2023 60-day legislative session, a coalition of people, including former members of the Water Policy and Infrastructure Task Force, worked with staff from the NMISC and NMOSE to draft and present the Water Security Planning Act (Senate Bill 337) (Exhibit 9). Ultimately, the bill passed unanimously in both the Senate and House. The Governor signed the bill into law a few weeks later.

Also in 2023, the NMISC Water Planning Program released the State Water Plan 5-Year Review (Exhibit 6). The 2023 Review built on the findings of the Leap Ahead Report (Exhibit 7) and identifies steps to better integrate regional and state level water planning. New Mexico's State Water Plan has not achieved a statewide vision for water management and does not establish timeframes for goal implementation, but it does outline state-wide needs and priorities, including the need to address climate change and regional planning.

In early 2024, the Governor's Office issued the 50-Year Water Action Plan (Exhibit 10) summarizing the three major water priorities for her administration: water conservation, developing new water supplies, and water and watershed protection. Each of these priorities identifies specific actions to ensure future generations of New Mexicans can enjoy clean water, healthy watersheds, more reliable groundwater supplies, and vibrant local economies. The Act directs the NMISC to utilize broad participation from New Mexicans in future regional water security planning. The process aims to examine and re-envision regional water planning to develop water plans built on local knowledge, community values, and a shared understanding and education on the reality of water now and in the future.

This leads up to today. In order to develop rules and guidelines as required in the Act, NMISC Staff carried out extensive efforts in 2024 and 2025 to collect public input to inform the implementation of the Act including both in-person and online opportunities. In addition, NMISC Staff attended and presented at many meetings and convenings, as well as mounted a significant outreach and media campaign to encourage participation in WSPA implementation. That effort is described in more detail in Ms. Fox's testimony.

III. TARGETED ENGAGEMENT WITH NEW MEXICO'S TRIBES, PUEBLOS, AND NATIONS

The Act calls for the Commission to "establish a procedure, in consultation with the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department (NMIAD) to establish an advisory council for taking into account in the Regional Water Security Program tribal sovereignty, tribal water rights and the water needs of tribal communities." Following the passage of the WSPA, NMISC Planning Staff began work with NMIAD and the Governor's Office to build out this council. In addition, NMISC hired Laurie Weahkee to assist in convening the council. Ms. Weahkee is a contractor who worked for the NMISC to convene a Tribal Water Work Group in conjunction with development of the 50YWAP. That effort resulted in the 2022 Tribal Water Report (Exhibit 11).

Outreach to the leadership of New Mexico's Tribes, Pueblos and Nations began in February 2024, followed by presentations in early 2024 by Director Riseley-White to the All Pueblo Council of Governors and the Six Middle Rio Grande Pueblos. In June 2024, Ms. Weahkee helped to convene an initial meeting of tribal staff and leadership which included 45 participants. At this meeting, the group agreed to meet as an Interim Committee and to call the ultimate council the Water Security Tribal Advisory Council (WSTAC).

The WSTAC Interim Committee met three more times over the summer to discuss input for WSPA implementation, including regional boundary considerations, the Rule and guidelines, and the proposed structure of WSTAC. The NMOSE and the NMISC also hosted a Tribal Water Institute on August 19, 2024, aimed at providing updates to leadership for the Tribes, Pueblos, and Nations on various water-related issues including a general overview of the work of the Interim Committee and options for the final structure WSTAC. In advance of drafting the Discussion Draft, the Interim Committee provided a recommendation to the NMISC for Rule language empowering WSTAC to develop and operate under its own operating principles.

The first official WSTAC meeting, at which the Interim Committee completed its work and initiated the advisory council, occurred on October 17, 2024, at the Roundhouse in Santa Fe. At that meeting the group also selected an Ad-Hoc Steering Committee. WSTAC continued to meet, and the Ad-Hoc Steering Committee provided comments on the Discussion Draft Rule and guidelines (Exhibit 15). These comments (Exhibit 12) were not submitted in time to be included in the Compilation Report. Director Riseley-White provided a response to the comments on July 3, 2025 (Exhibit 13). Discussion on the changes sought by the WSTAC Ad-Hoc Steering Committee related to regional boundaries is covered in the testimony of Ms. Fox and related to public welfare in the testimony of Mr. Chakeres.

The NMISC Staff anticipate that WSTAC will continue serving as a forum to enhance collaboration and communication between state and tribal governments with a focus on safeguarding tribal sovereignty, protecting tribal water rights, and addressing the water needs of tribal communities within the regional Water Planning Program. In FY 2026, NMISC Staff is

committed to work with WSTAC to develop outreach and water educational materials in languages spoken by the Tribes, Pueblos, and Nations in New Mexico.

IV. TARGETED ENGAGEMENT WITH NEW MEXICO'S ACEQUIAS

In 2024 and 2025, NMISC Staff have been working with acequias in the development of the Proposed Rule. Coordination includes collaborative work to strategize for and then develop the Acequia Community Water Report (Exhibit 14), pledged financial support for a Bureau of Reclamation grant awarded to the New Mexico Acequia Association (NMAA) that could help provide a resource to inform future regional planning efforts, and presentations and attendance by NMISC Staff at NMAA and New Mexico Acequia Commission (NMAC) events.

NMISC Staff received comments from the NMAA and the Land Grant Council on the Discussion Draft Rule and Guidelines (Exhibit 14), proposing an acequia-focused group like WSTAC called the Acequia and Rural Water Security Advisory Council Working Group. After NMISC Staff consideration and discussion, the creation of the Acequia and Rural Water Security Advisory Council Working Group was not incorporated into the Proposed Rule (Exhibit 16) for two reasons: first, the Proposed Rule provides for representation for governing entities inclusive of acequias and land grants, and second, the representation of acequias and land grants is on par with other political subdivisions of the state. Notably, the NMAC was created by statute, in part, to provide advice to the Governor, Legislature and the NMISC, to serve as a facilitator for communication between acequias and community ditches and the state, and to review and comment on plans, including to the NMISC. The members of the NMAC are appointed by the Governor and represent various geographic areas of the state. NMAC meets monthly and provides a valuable forum for acequia issues statewide. In Section 12(1)f of the Proposed Rule there is a requirement that “one representative member of each regional acequia association in the planning region or if no regional acequia association exists in a planning region, one representative from that region appointed by the New Mexico Acequia Commission” be invited to participate in its Regional Council. NMISC Staff look forward to continuing to work with NMAA, NMAC and acequias in general to ensure their interests and concerns are adequately considered in the WSPA planning process.

V. NEXT STEPS IN REGIONAL WATER SECURITY PLANNING PROCESS

Regional Water Security planning is designed to be an ongoing process that lasts for many years and which, as explained in Sections 10 and 11 of the Proposed Rule, NMISC is managing in two pieces: the Initial Planning Phase (IPP) and the Ongoing Planning Phase (OPP) which are differentiated by the level of support and leadership NMISC Staff will provide to Councils. The OPP is a much longer period and is open ended, so NMISC goals during this phase are expected to evolve over time. NMISC Staff have identified specific short-term (0-6 years) goals corresponding closely to the IPP, and medium- (3-16 year) and long-term (12 years and beyond) goals corresponding to the OPP under Sections 10 and 11 of the Proposed Rule. Basically, early development of a Regional Water Security Plan is reflected in the IPP and the long-term development and implementation in the OPP.

The short-term objectives include finalizing guidelines, initial development of educational and planning tools and templates to support Councils, and most critically the process and completion of initial Regional Water Security Plans by each region. Medium-term goals include initiation of funding support for each Council, the implementation of regional PPP lists for funding

allocations from the state legislature and multiple other sources, and development of steady levels of staff support for regional water planning. Long-term goals include increasingly targeted objectives generated by individual water planning councils and increasingly detailed science and tools supported by NMISC. These sets of objectives are explained in greater detail below.

Initial Planning Period (Short Term – 0-6 years)

Following the rulemaking hearing and rule effective date of a rule, the NMISC Staff will continue working with the input collected through the Open House Events, the Discussion Draft, and comments heard at the rulemaking hearing to develop the guidelines called for in WSPA to be presented to the Commission for adoption. The Act calls for both a rule and the adoption of guidelines, the difference being that the Rule is prescriptive and binding, while the guidelines will direct other components of the WSPA planning processes with the ability to learn and modify these components over time. Guidelines will include, at a minimum: direction to NMISC Staff for a program to fund planning activities, state agency collaboration, the metrics for reporting on plans to effectively track implementation and PPP outcomes; procedures for NMISC Staff to support the review of plans based on engagement with the public, tribal governments, acequias, and rural communities; and the procedures for NMISC Staff to continually pursue and utilize best science, data and models for the development of Plans. More detail on the guidelines follows this section of testimony.

Once the guidelines are completed, NMISC Staff will begin to convene the Councils, starting with dedicating contractor and staff support and inviting the representative members, followed by at-large and non-voting members, as described in Section 12 on composition of the Proposed Rule. NMISC Staff support will guide Councils in navigating the process, answering questions and finding resources to address questions, and ensuring that progress in each Region remains steady and relatively consistent with ongoing work in other Regions. Contractor support will focus on facilitating meetings of the Councils and supporting them with resources the development of their Plan. Work is underway to outline steps and milestones in the development of new Regional Water Security Plans to ensure that all plans are useful for participants and the State and are approvable by the Commission. In the IPP, NMISC Staff will coordinate with Councils to develop relevant information for annual presentations to the Legislature as required by the Act.

In parallel to inviting representative members and establishing the first of the new Regional Water Planning Councils, NMISC Staff will also be working to establish an advisory roundtable. This roundtable will be active in guiding the IPP process including assisting NMISC Staff and contractors in guiding Councils through the development of their initial plans. The goal of the roundtable is to develop a replicable, adaptable, and predictable model for Regional Water Security Planning that meets current objectives for the State and planning participants, and which can evolve to meet the evolving needs of the Councils as their work progresses, and water availability continues to decline.

On a third track, NMISC will also continue working to prepare materials – Tools and Templates as well as science, maps, and other materials – to help Councils to hit the ground running. More information about this work is included below, after the detailed discussion of guidelines.

Ongoing Planning Period (Medium-Term –(3-16 years)

The medium-term period for regional water planning begins after Commission acceptance of the first regional water Plan and continues until development of the Region's second regional water Plan, presently anticipated as 10 years after the completion of the first and including an update of the PPP list at the five-year mark. This is the first part of the OPP and is characterized by NMISC Staff working to provide the support and tools needed by Councils to complete their work. During the medium term, NMISC Staff will coordinate with Councils to present annually on the progress of the planning process to the Legislature.

The overarching goal for Councils in the medium-term is to differentiate themselves by taking ownership of their individual planning processes, starting with the update of the PPP list due five years after the acceptance of the initial plan. NMISC Staff seeks to have Councils in a position to request assistance in the form of money, facilitation, or both for the development of 5-year PPP updates and/or 10-year updates to regional water security plans. For the NMISC Staff in the medium term, there are four objectives:

- to support Councils between Plans with communication and occasional meetings intended to maintain the Council, continue momentum on implementation, and to ensure compliance with the five-year PPP update called for in the Proposed Rule;
- to provide the support and Tools and Templates needed by Councils to make informed plans and continue to be a trusted source for information about water in New Mexico;
- to work with Councils and PPP sponsors to identify next steps and potential resources to move PPPs toward readiness. This could include help navigating a variety of funding opportunities but will stop short of acting as the fiscal agent for any PPP. NMISC Staff will provide help to PPP sponsors to navigate the complex ecosystem of funding, thereby supporting the implementation of plans; and
- to identify and develop Tools and Templates, and science resources and to coordinate with local, state, federal, and tribal governments to optimize synergy and minimize duplication of efforts, thereby enhancing science availability and reliability and data-informed decision making.

Ongoing Planning Process (Long-Term – (12+ years)

Long Term, after each Council has developed at least two regional water Plans, NMISC Staff expect that the Councils will be operating with less assistance from NMISC Staff. During this long latter period of the OPP, NMISC Staff will continue to develop and improve the Tools and Templates and to support science, data, and education about water locally, regionally, and statewide, and anticipate that the work in this period will focus on specific regional needs as the analyses become finer grained. During the long-term period, NMISC Staff envision assisting Councils in presenting directly to the legislature about regional priorities, in coordination with presentation on Water Security Planning more generally from the NMISC and the NMOSE.

Guidelines

NMISC Staff began collecting input on the Discussion Draft Rule and Guidelines in 2024. The Proposed Rule is responsive to all the rule components specified in WSPA. Some elements of the Proposed Rule that were previously included under guidelines, such as stakeholder

identification and public input requirements, were moved into the Proposed Rule due to the need to ensure a transparent and inclusive public process. NMISC Staff outlined the composition of the Councils in Section 12 of the Proposed Rule and the meeting requirements in Section 13 of the Proposed Rule. The guidelines will be adjusted based on the outcome and feedback from the rulemaking process.

The guidelines will be brought to the NMISC Commission for adoption and for any proposed additions or changes through time. WSPA specifies that the guidelines will, at a minimum, address the following:

- Opportunities for Stakeholder Collaboration
- Funding for Planning Activities
- Process for State Agency Collaboration
- Metrics for Reporting on Regional Water Projects, Programs, and Policies and Water Security Plan Implementation
- Procedures to Support the Implementation of a Regional Water Security Plan Schedule for Implementation of Regional Water

The Discussion Draft Guidelines were based on input from the Open House events, like the Discussion Draft Rule, and addressed the required guidelines one-for-one and in the same order in which they appear in the Act and in the list above. Feedback received during the Open House process, and additional feedback received during the Discussion Draft period, resulted in moving a few items from guidelines to the Proposed Rule and the list was reorganized to better illustrate the intended process and what role the government needed to have versus a voluntary body like a Regional Water Security Council. NMISC Staff will propose guidelines to best complement the final rule contents and language. NMISC staff plan to move promptly with the adoption of the guidelines to avoid postponing the initiation of water planning by Councils. With rulemaking complete and guidelines adopted, water planning by Councils will begin.

Tools and Templates

In preparation for initiating water planning by Councils, NMISC Staff has been working with contractors and with other programs and bureaus in the NMOSE and the NMISC to develop Tools and Templates for use by Councils. Some of the initial Tools and Templates under development by NMISC Staff are described below:

- **Organizational Templates:** NMISC is developing a suite of templates that will provide ideas and strategies for operating Councils, including considerations for by-laws or operating principles, decision making structures, considerations and strategies for state agency collaboration, the development of public welfare statements, and other organizational documents to be used by Councils. NMISC Staff have been interviewing participants from regional planning bodies in other states to help identify template needs and intend to continue to incorporate new ideas and suggestions from regional planning participants.
- **Water Planning Mapping Dashboard:** Working with a local data science firm, NMISC Staff developed a mapping dashboard that provides baseline hydrological and demographic data statewide. This database was pulled together to provide Councils data to characterize their

regions that are accurate, current, and reliable. It builds off work and data from the 2019 Water Data Act and the NMOSE Water Use by Categories Report (Exhibit 17). This database is accompanied by a series of story maps that highlight different aspects of planning efforts, as well as publications and data that are available to Councils, including data about water use.

- **Small Public Water Systems Decision Support Tool:** A key aspect of new Regional Water Security Plans will be the prioritized list of PPPs. As part of this process, communities within a region will need to collaborate on what to prioritize within their Council. NMISC Staff have developed a decision support tool with two main objectives: help small public water systems figure out what PPPs they would like to develop and provide additional information on obstacles and benefits. The goal is to continue to build on this tool by harnessing existing planning efforts and building out resources associated with these decisions.
- **Groundwater Fact Sheets:** A team of scientists from New Mexico Tech and the NMOSE are compiling regional summaries of the groundwater resources in the state in support of the ongoing Regional Water Planning process. The summaries address the geology, water quantity and quality, uses, trends, and very importantly, data gaps in each area of the state. Concise fact sheets will hit the key points of each summary. The groundwater summaries and fact sheets will provide a scientific foundation for the entities, organizations and individuals in each planning region to do the difficult work of charting a water management course in a more arid future.
- **2-D Aquifer Mapping:** The NMOSE and the NMISC contracted with the NM Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources for the creation of the first map defining and delineating the major and minor aquifers of New Mexico. This map and the associated characterization of the aquifers are intended to be the definitive references going forward, and will assist private, public, industry, government, and regulatory stakeholders in making informed decisions regarding the development and use of groundwater in the State.
- **Atlas of Plans:** The Atlas of Plans tool will feature an interactive map with filtering capabilities by geographic region or proximity to a selected location which can help catalogue all previous plans related to water for a given area. Additional functionality may include plan comparisons across regions and alternate ways of browsing planning activities, with the expectation that future expansions could support planning efforts beyond water, potentially serving additional NMISC functions or broader State government needs.
- **Main Stream campaign:** The MainStreamNM.org website and campaign are central to NMISC's outreach in preparation for regional water planning. The campaign has been in development since the summer of 2023 and includes numerous outreach strategies, including a newsletter through which information about water planning and public input is shared, a series of blogs which are annually summarized in a published magazine highlighting water users and leaders across the state to teach about and humanize water management considerations, and other tailored educational efforts including the above

mentioned Tools and Templates and a series of short educational videos about water management fundamentals.

NMISC Staff will continue to focus significant efforts on the development of additional Tools and Templates and will continue to seek out ideas for future Tools and Template as well as partnerships to aid in their development.

50-Year Water Action Plan: Education, Conservation, & Workforce Development

The 50-Year Water Action Plan outlines a comprehensive strategy for improving the resilience of New Mexico's water resources and several aspects of that strategy dovetail and augment the work of regional water planning. The work of Councils will intersect with the initiatives in the 50YWAP in many ways, but the two primary areas of intersection at this phase in the implementation of the Act are bolstering Water Conservation Education and supporting K-12 Curriculum.

The Water Conservation Education initiative is being developed collaboratively by a team including agency leadership, NMOSE Water Use and Conservation, and NMISC Staff. The focus of the work includes helping New Mexicans understand water use and what they can do to conserve water as individuals and as community members. K-12 education support will be in the form of a collaboration between the Public Education Department and the NMISC to ensure subject matter expertise in education and in water management. Workforce development is a complex and long-term process and scoping work is underway to target multiple career paths and outreach strategies. All of these initiatives will offer opportunities for Councils to provide input on ongoing work, to request specific outreach materials tailored to the needs and culture of their region or subregion, and to influence the priorities and strategies driving workflow.

VI. SUGGESTED CHANGES TO THE PROPOSED RULE BASED ON COMMENTS RECEIVED

NMISC Staff reviewed the public comments that were posted on the public comment portal of the ISC Rulemaking and Public Comment page from July 17 to September 27. We received 75 public comments in total with 30 being submitted in the final weekend when the public comment portal was open. Based on our review and reflection, we do have a few further edits to make to the Proposed Rule that support the reasoning and basis for its adoption. Please note, the volume of suggestions submitted was significant and NMISC staff and leadership will continue to evaluate those comments. There may be additional suggested edits by the time of the hearing based on input received during the comment period.

The following suggested edits are presented in order of the Proposed Rule. Suggested edits are shown in underlined italics or ~~strikeouts~~. The following sub-bullet provides a brief explanation of why these edits are being suggested and from whom we received the suggestion.

- Definitions:
 - 19.25.16.7 *(J) Regional Water Utility Authority – A regional water utility authority established by the Regional Water System Resiliency Act or the predecessor of that Act.*
 - This definition was added to ensure Regional Water Utility Authorities representation on the Councils. More explanation to this addition is below.

- Regions:
 - 19.25.16.9.B (6) whether the proposed subregion would enable more effective input into the regional water security program of tribal water concerns and the needs of tribal communities.
 - The addition of this criterion for evaluation by the Commission in determining a sub-region was suggested by the Pueblo of Laguna. NMISC Staff agree with this inclusion as one of the anticipated applications of the sub-region process is to enable communities who are part of an IWRS to plan together.
- Initial Planning Period:
 - 19.25.16.10.A (4) providing administrative support and facilitation for at least four meetings of each council within the region per calendar year.
 - Various commenters suggested a clarification of the meetings to be held by each region. NMISC Staff recommend adding the above edit to clarify that these required meeting would be held within the region.
 - 19.25.16.10.B (3) (e) the decision-making process to be used by the council to make planning recommendations and ultimately prioritize projects, programs, and policies.
 - A version of the above edit was suggested by NM Wild, Western Resource Advocates, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, American Rivers Action Fund, Audubon Southwest and Amigos Bravos. The suggested language above reflects the need for Councils operating principals to reflect all types of planning recommendations, not just the process for prioritizing PPPs.
- Composition:
 - 19.25.16.12.A (1) Representative members. Each governmental entity listed below, if present within the region, is entitled to have a representative to serve on the council for any planning region within which it is located. A single representative may represent multiple governmental entities. If a governmental entity is located in multiple regional water security planning regions, the governing body may appoint the same or different representatives to each council. Each representative member shall be appointed by resolution or official action of each governmental entity's governing body. Representative members will consist of the following:
 - The above edit was suggested by New Mexico Acequia Association, New Mexico Acequia Commission, New Mexico Land Grant Council and RCAC. The addition of the language above makes the process inclusive of processes that NMAC and NMLGC can take.
 - 19.25.16.12.A (1)(e) one representative member identified by the governing body of each irrigation district, artesian conservancy district and conservancy district;
 - The above edit was suggested by the Pecos Valley Artesian Conservancy District. The edit makes the clearer that this governing entity falls into this category of representative members.
 - 19.25.16.12.A (1) (h) one representative member identified by the governing body of any Regional Water Utility Authority.
 - Four groups – ABCWUA, Eastern NM Water Authority, City of Clovis and RCAC – identified the need to add Regional Water Authorities as a

representative member to the Councils they are located within. NMISC Staff agreed with this addition and agreed with RCAC's addition that any group who formed a Regional Water Utility Authority via the Regional Water System Resiliency Act should also be able to be a representative member of any Council.

- 19.25.16.12.A (2) (d) environmental, conservation, or ecosystem interests located ~~water advocacy non-governmental organizations with members or local chapters in~~ the region;
 - A version of the above edit was suggested by NM Wild, Western Resource Advocates, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, American Rivers Action Fund, Audubon Southwest and Amigos Bravos. This edit now better reflects the groups located within the region.
- 19.25.16.12.A (2) (e) water-based sporting or recreational interests located in the region (fishing, rafting, etc.);
 - The above edit was suggested by NM Wild, Western Resource Advocates, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, American Rivers Action Fund, Audubon Southwest and Amigos Bravos. This edit ensures clarity by adding the word sporting which further clarifies the intention of this at-large member.
- Considerations:
 - 19.25.16.14.B (4) water needs for healthy upland, wetland, and riparian habitat.
 - Many commenters, including Rio Grande Return, Valencia Soil & Water Conservation District, and Trout Unlimited, noticed the lack of the term wetland in the inclusion at various points throughout the rule. Wetland was added here to the considerations section to reflect their importance. Wetland were also added as a PPP type in Section 15.
 - 19.25.16.14.C (3) compliance with and implementation of water rights settlements, including local and federally executed Indian water rights settlements;
 - The addition of the above language was submitted by WSTAC and supported by numerous tribal governments.
- Criteria:
 - 19.25.16.15.A (1) Water Security Tribal Advisory Council (WSTAC) engagement, involvement, information, and recommendations including WSTAC responses to those comments, and documentation of any unresolved -opposition;
 - The addition of the above language was submitted by WSTAC and supported by numerous tribal governments.
 - 19.25.16.15.A (5) comments received from state, ~~and~~ federal, tribal and local governments agencies;
 - This edit stems from the WSTAC comment related to the role of WSTAC as a collective in contrast to the representational members of tribal governments as sovereign governments. With this edit and the one above the Proposed Rule now provides for Plan documentation of WSTAC responses, whatever they be, and federal, tribal, and local government responses.
 - 19.25.16.15.C (4) PPP types
 - 19.25.16.15.C (4)(k) aquifer recharge and groundwater sustainability

- 19.25.16.15.C (4)(l) agricultural water use resilience
- 19.25.16.15.C (4)(n) river, wetland and riparian habitat restoration and connectivity
- 19.25.16.15.C (4)(o) livestock water management
- 19.25.16.15.C (4)(s) scientific water studies
- 19.25.16.15.C (4)(t) water related natural or green infrastructure

These six PPP types were recommended to augment existing PPPs by NM Wild, Western Resource Advocates, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, American Rivers Action Fund, Audubon Southwest and Amigos Bravos. These are recommended by NMISC Staff to be added as the list set forth in the section is a “not limited to list” and the intent of NMISC Staff is for PPP types to be added over time as new types of PPP get invented or become feasible.

VII. CONCLUSION

Based on my professional education and extensive experience in these issues, my tenure at the NMISC, and my participation in the passage of the WSPA and development of the Proposed Rule, I recommend the Commission adopt the Proposed Rule as filed with the Commission on July 17, 2025, with the changes recommended above.