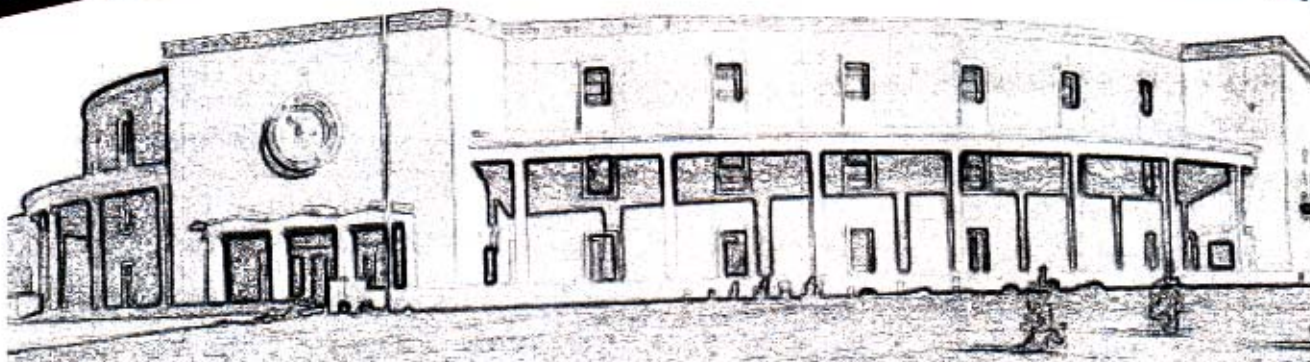


LEGISLEADER



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The *Legisleader* is the official legislative newsletter of the New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau...the state's largest and oldest agricultural organization. Farm Bureau....since 1917 a leader in New Mexico!

Bill Aims to Correct Water Shortage Through Free Market System

By Chris Coon
Managing Editor, N.M.
Farm and Ranch Magazine

Farm Bureau is monitoring a bill that aims to correct the state's water shortage problem by allocating money for the Interstate Stream Commission to buy and lease water rights from willing sellers.

House Bill 195, introduced by Rep. Stell, D-Otero and Eddy, and a Senate Version, Senate Bill 123, introduced by Sen. Cisneros, D- Santa Fe and Taos, would allow the Interstate Stream Commission to establish a strategic water reserve that would have the ability to purchase or lease water from willing sellers or lease from willing lessors.

The bill stipulates that at no time shall the use of water or water

rights held by the strategic water reserve result in an increase in net depletions in any basin. Further, the bill states that the commission shall pay no more than the appraised market value to purchase or lease water or water rights and storage rights for the strategic water reserve.

According to Stell, the purpose of the strategic water reserve would be to assist the state in complying with interstate stream compacts and court decrees and to assist the state and water users in complying with the Endangered Species Act. The revenue source would be severance tax bonds.

This bill is being examined by Farm Bureau's water issues subcommittee, a branch of the organization's Priority Issues Committee. The committee's responsibility is to define Farm

Bureau's stance on certain water issues.

Phillip Arnold, chairman of the committee, said Farm Bureau supports portions of the bill, but Farm Bureau policy contradicts other parts of it.

47th Legislative Session - Jan. 18 - March 19, 2005

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“The bottom line is that we need to deal with the state’s water shortage, and we feel it is necessary to correct the situation with the ESA,” said Arnold. “We agree with the idea of a free market system for the buying and selling of water rights, to correct these problems, but on the other hand, Farm Bureau has policy contradictory to a governmental agency becoming a water broker.”

The legislation is a result of a concept envisioned by Think New Mexico, in 2003. According to Fred Nathan, executive director of Think New Mexico, his organization developed the concept in a policy report entitled, *“Rio Vivo: The Need for a Strategic River Reserve in New Mexico.”*

Representative Stell translated the report into legislation, and it nearly passed in 2004.

Nathan added that the bill survived five committees in 2004, but ran out of time on the Senate Floor last year. He said a broad coalition including water experts, sportsmen, stakeholders representing agriculture, business, environmental and religious interests, has endorsed the bill. Nathan stressed that an important component of the bill is the right of first refusal component.

“One of the most innovative aspects of the bill is that it protects agriculture by granting the right of first refusal to the original purpose of use when water is sold or leased from the Strategic Water Reserve,” said Nathan. “For example, if a farm on the Rio

Grande sold a water right and the Interstate Stream Commission decided a few years later that the water was no longer needed, the farming community would have first rights to buying back the water.”

Think New Mexico is an independent non-partisan, results oriented think tank. Nathan said his organization is best known for its involvement with the food tax repeal. The organization’s website is www.thinknewmexico.org.

House Bill 195 passed the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee and the House Taxation and Revenue Committee and is currently in the House Appropriations and Finance Committee.

HOUSE BILLS being tracked by Farm Bureau

HB 47, introduced by Rep. Moore - Would remove cougars from the regulated game list, making it legal to hunt and kill cougars at any time.

HB 78, introduced by Rep. Stewart - Would allow the Game and Fish Department to purchase and manage land and water from Game Protection Fund and Habitat Acquisition and Management Fund. A \$5 fee would be imposed on hunting and fishing licenses. FB opposes. This bill passed the House Energy and Natural Resource Committee with an amendment to exclude acquisition of land and water.

HB 87, introduced by Rep. Nunez - An appropriation of \$80,000 from the general fund to go to NMSU for the control of pecan pests. HB 87 passed the House Agriculture and Water Resources Committee and was referred to the House Appropriation and Finance Committee.

HB 91, introduced by Rep. Nunez - A personal or corporate tax credit not to exceed \$10,000 for irrigation and water management improvements approved by local Soil and Water Conservation Districts. HB91 passed the House Agriculture and Water Committee with an amendment to allow conserved water to be put to beneficial and consumptive use.

HB 158, introduced by Mary Helen Garcia - Requires home-school students to take required standard based academic performance tests. Also requires such students who do not demonstrate “adequate yearly progress” to attend a public or private school. Can you spell “Big Brother?”

HB 189, introduced by Rep. Brian Moore - This bill would strengthen the current trespass laws and would require written permission to hunt on private land and provides for confiscation of game and fish for violations. FB supports.

HB 297, introduced by Rep. Cervantes - An appropriation to NMSU in the amount of \$750,000 from the General Fund to conduct education programs and water management research. This bill is currently in the House Agriculture Committee.

HB 711, introduced by Rep. Campos - Prohibits the Water Quality Control Commission from adopting and enforcing standards that are more stringent than federal requirements for surface waters only. This bill is currently in the House Energy and Natural Resource Committee.

HB 866, introduced by Rep. Nunez - An appropriation from the General Fund to the College of Agriculture/NMSU for the purpose of vegetation monitoring studies for the livestock industry. This bill is currently in the House Agriculture Committee.

SENATE BILLS being monitored by Farm Bureau

SB 72, introduced by Sen. Steve Komadina- Would hold those responsible for wolf releases liable if a human and/or livestock are attacked. This bill passed the Senate Conservation Committee.

SB 77, Introduced by Sen. Ben Altamirano. Increases hunting fees. FB opposes.

SB 252, introduced by Dede Feldman- This is the ATV bill that will require helmets for 18 and under, registration fees for ATVs. Includes an ag exemption on helmets but not registration. FB supports exemptions but not the new fees.

The Farm Bureau Image

A comprehensive advertising campaign for the N.M. Farm Bureau on the state's radio stations is in full swing. The ad campaign has several objectives including: Telling folks who we are, what we do and why

agriculture is important in the Land of Enchantment. The spots will be in heavy rotation on key stations during the 60-day legislative session. In Santa Fe you can hear the campaign on the 5,000 watt voice of northern New

Mexico, Radio 81, KSWV or "Que Suave." The theme of the campaign is "Farm Bureau....Since 1917.....A Leader In New Mexico.