

Water 2025 Aims to Prevent Crises and Conflict in the West

On May 2, U.S. Department of Interior Secretary Gale Norton cited chronic water supply problems in the West as one of the greatest challenges facing the nation in the coming decades and announced her proposal to help those communities predicted to experience conflicts over water during the next 25 years, even in the absence of drought.

The proposal, "Water 2025: Preventing Crises and Conflict in the West," calls for concentrating existing federal financial and technical resources in key western watersheds and in critical research and development, such as water conservation and desalination, that will help to predict, prevent, and alleviate water supply conflicts. President Bush's FY 2004 budget calls for an initial investment of \$11 million for such efforts.

The Water 2025 effort could help stretch existing water supplies by improving conservation, using more efficiencies, and monitoring water resources more effectively. Modernizing aging water supply structures – from dams and reservoirs to pumping stations, pipelines, and canals – can help stretch existing water supplies.

Response from the States

Californians were not particularly impressed by news of water problems in their state. The combined San Joaquin Valley and Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta

is a region designated as highly likely to experience water conflict in the years ahead. The response of the *Fresno Bee*: "Stop the presses." According to that newspaper, "Presumably the administration believes that what [California has] been doing for the past century and a half is exchanging muted pleasantries on the topic" of water problems, rather than the "vigorous public discussion of the issues" that Assistant Interior Secretary Bennett Raley cites as the solution to the problems. The paper accused the Water 2025 report of "studiously [avoiding] hot buttons of various water issues," including "the requirement for extensive and expensive studies on each and every project that comes along, or the Endangered Species Act."

The Water 2025 report also identifies Las Vegas as highly likely to have water conflict issues by 2025. According to the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, elected leaders in that city were not surprised by the assessment, but were more optimistic about their water future, citing ongoing water banking and conservation projects.

"I'm not concerned about the future of Las Vegas as far as water is concerned because I think we'll be able to buy our solution," said Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman, a member of the Southern Nevada Water Authority Board, according to the *Review-Journal*.

However, stated the newspaper, Ken

Mahal, president of the Nevada Seniors Coalition, said the federal government and the water authority are ignoring the exploding growth straining scarce water resources in a desert.

"We've gotten way ahead of ourselves to keep a sane, organized community with the amount of growth we've allowed to happen here," Mahal said, according to the *Review-Journal*. "I think we're in a headlong crash in this valley that none of these people are willing to face up to."

The report, "Water 2025: Preventing Crisis and Conflict in the West," and additional information on the Water 2025 project are available at www.doi.gov/water2025/


Recent Reports from EPA

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced two recent reports available online.

Calculation and Use of First-Order Rate Constants for Monitored Natural Attenuation Studies (EPA 600-S-02-500, November 2002, 28 pages). Published by the EPA National Risk Management Research Laboratory, this paper explains when and how to apply first-order attenuation rate-constant calculations in monitored natural attenuation studies. First-order attenuation rate-constant calculations can be an important tool for evaluating natural attenuation processes at groundwater contamination sites. Specific applications identified in EPA guidelines (EPA, 1999) include use in characterization of plume trends (shrinking, expanding, or showing relatively little change), as well as estimation of the time required for achieving remediation goals. View or download the report at www.epa.gov/ada/download/issue/540S02500.pdf. For hard copies, call (580) 436-8651.

Assessment and Recommendations for Improving the Performance of Waste Containment Systems (EPA 600-R-02-099, December 2002, 1004 pages). This report was published by the EPA National Risk Management Research Laboratory. It is the first comprehensive evaluation of

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the performance of composite and natural-bottom containment liners constructed in accordance with RCRA Subtitle C (with implications for Subtitle D facilities). The report is a result of cooperative research between EPA's ORD, The Geosynthetic Institute, GeoSyntec Consultants, and the University of Illinois. It contains a detailed study of 187 landfill cells and is arranged in 3 parts: geosynthetic liner technical issues, soil liner technical issues, and field performance assessments. View or download the report by section at www.epa.gov/ORD/NRMRL/Pubs/600R02099/600R02099.pdf.

Army Corps of Engineers Report Compares Sampling Devices

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory recently published the results of a study comparing recently developed groundwater sampling devices. The devices, including the Kabis, HydraSleeve, Discrete Interval, Pneumo-Bailer, and U.S. Geological Survey Passive Diffusion Bag samplers, were tested to determine their ability to recover representative concentrations of a variety of analytes, including volatile organics, explosives, pesticides, and metals. Report TR-02-12, **Study of Five Discrete Interval-Type Groundwater Sampling Devices** (57 pages), can be downloaded at www.crrel.usace.army.mil/techpub/CRREL_Reports/reports/TR02-12.pdf

USDA Provides Drought Recovery Funds

On May 9, Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman announced that 17 western states will receive \$53 million to help farmers and ranchers implement technologies and practices to conserve water and mitigate the long-term impacts of drought. The money is available from USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) through the Ground and Surface Water Conservation (GSWC) provision of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), authorized in the 2002 Farm Bill. States that receive these funds will provide cost-share and incentive

payments to producers who undertake eligible water conservation activities, including irrigation improvements, conversion to less water-intensive crops, and dryland farming.

Funding is based on irrigated acres, surface water withdrawal in million gallons per day, and groundwater withdrawal in million gallons per day. Conservation measures implemented must result in a net savings in groundwater or surface water resources in the agricultural operation of the producer.

Allocations for Southwest states are:

<u>State</u>	<u>Allocation</u>
Arizona	\$ 2,014,800
California	\$ 11,626,500
Colorado	\$ 4,361,600
Nevada	\$ 771,900
New Mexico	\$ 1,324,700
Texas	\$ 7,075,700
Utah	\$ 1,236,400

For more information, visit www.usda.gov

New U.S.-Mexico Border Plan Released

On April 4, the United States and Mexico finalized a new 10-year cooperative plan to protect public health and the environment in the 2,000-mile border region where almost 12 million citizens of both countries live. The new program, Border 2012, will focus on decreasing air, water, waste, and soil pollution and lowering the risks of exposure to pesticides and other chemicals.

The 10 border region states participating in the new program are Baja California Norte, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas, in Mexico, and California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas in the United States.

Key elements of the new program are inclusion of the border states and U.S. tribes as partners in the program, development of a structure focused on regional workshops to facilitate planning, and a focus on goals and objectives based on measurable environmental and public health outcomes.

Copies of the Border 2012 plan, as well as additional information on Border 2012, are available in English and Spanish at either of the following Web sites: www.epa.gov/usmexicoborder and www.semarnat.gob.mx/frontera2012

NM Environment Department Orders Cleanup of Los Alamos Landfill

On April 10, the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) issued a Compliance Order to Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) requiring cleanup of hazardous materials and debris in drainages at the Airport Landfill in Los Alamos. The drainages discharge to Pueblo Canyon and, ultimately, the Rio Grande.

Soils in the drainages contain elevated concentrations of potentially toxic substances, including cesium, plutonium, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), pesticides, and lead. Among the trash that litters the drainages are 55-gallon drums, most of which are now empty; but what they once held is not known. The site has no erosion control to prevent contaminated soils from reaching the Rio Grande, nor is it fenced to restrict public access.

LANL has been investigating the site since 1994. In 1999, NMED began a collaborative effort with the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and the University of California to design an effective cleanup strategy for the site. Although the effort culminated in a plan for cleanup in 2001, DOE withdrew its support for the remedy and has not submitted an acceptable alternative plan to NMED since.

The Consent Order requires LANL to remove the debris from the Airport Landfill drainages by August 2003, to conduct confirmatory sampling once the debris is removed, and to install erosion controls to stabilize the drainages. Based on results of the removal and sampling activities, NMED may require the laboratory to conduct additional activities at the site. The Order also penalizes LANL more than \$167,000 for its failure to clean up the site and submit an adequate cleanup plan.

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