

## **Successes, Weaknesses and the Future of Regional Water Planning**

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Although this panel is focused on “missing conversations”, I think it important to begin by talking about important successes in water planning.

Almost every region has a completed plan. All plans have achieved a common understanding of water supply and demand. This alone is extremely valuable. Good decision-making is dependent on the good information developed in regional water plans.

Without a quantification of the gap between supply and demand, there won't be much effort put into closing that gap.

A common understanding of the resource is more likely to lead to partnerships and agreements about necessary changes.

The purpose of this panel is to address weaknesses in water planning in order to strengthen water planning. Acknowledging weaknesses is the first step to overcoming them.

I am very proud of the Jemez y Sangre regional water plan. However, we are struggling with two weaknesses.

The first is identified in the agenda, that is that given the divergent interests working on regional water plans, some – or many – of the regions reached consensus on many things, but were not able to achieve consensus on sufficient numbers of actions in order to close the gap between available supply and increasing demand. That was true for the Jemez y Sangre region. We reached consensus on describing four alternatives that could close the gap between supply and demand: accessing our San Juan/Chama water, increased water conservation, purchase of water rights, and growth management. Of these four, the city and county of Santa Fe are building a diversion to access our SJ/C water. But the others remain controversial. Most of the easy conservation measures have been taken; in drought years, for example, folks in Santa Fe saw their trees and the city's parks become brown. More severe conservation has significant implications for the city's quality of life. Nor do many folks in Santa Fe do not support sacrificing our rural neighbors for urban growth. And there is almost no support for growth management.

The second problem is that most regional water planners are not the city councilors and county commissioners with authority to implement actions recommended in regional water plans. Even if the group of people who spent years in meetings arrive at consensus on which alternatives are acceptable, that does not mean that elected officials will agree or that they will have the resources needed for implementation.

In addition, our RWP council is now struggling to figure out what its role is:

Do we have role in implementation? Do we have any role in developing proposals for implementation? Are we educational? How do the parts relate to the whole?

So, even though our regional water plan has been accepted, we still have some major obstacles to closing the gap between supply and demand.