



## **Presentation to the Drought Subcommittee Las Cruces, October 14, 2013**

**Thank you Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee**

**My name is Michel Jichlinski and I am the Project Director of the Augustin Plains Ranch Water project. This project is being developed by a group of dedicated investors, including the individuals who have owned the ranch property for over 40 years.**

**We are very excited about the opportunity you have given us to present our project. This project will provide the State a large new source of water, promote economic growth, bring jobs to the Middle Rio Grande communities, protect the environment; all this free of any compact commitment.**

**Located at 7,000 feet elevation in Western New Mexico, the Augustin Plains is a hydrologically closed basin holding a massive aquifer**

**The basin is estimated to hold over 50 million acre feet of freshwater in storage**

**Most of the area's rainfall is currently lost to evaporation – the plains area tops 1 million acres and the average rainfall according to the USGS is of between 12 inches to 20 inches at the high elevations. Total rainfall in the area is approximately 1.5 million acre-feet per year. Natural recharge of the aquifer is minimal, the highest estimate does not exceed 100,000 acre feet per year. Remember it is a closed basin: there is no surface flow out of the plains. What does not go to recharge, is lost. Over 1.4 million acre feet per year of good water is lost to evaporation in the Augustin Plains.**

**The state-of-the-art design for this project will sustainably capture a fraction this water before it evaporates, and make it available to the people of New Mexico. We propose to pump 54,000 AFY from the aquifer, or only 0.1% of the aquifer volume. To ensure sustainability and non-impairment we propose to increase the recharge into the aquifer by 54,000 AFY as well, or 4% of the rainfall. While these are small numbers for the Augustin Plains, this water will have a huge impact in the Middle Rio Grande.**

- This water represents an amount equivalent to the San Juan – Chama water that Albuquerque is currently using**
- This water represents 4 times the amount of water used to maintain the refugia in the Isleta and San Acacia reaches**

**What do we propose?**

**We propose to build a well field capable of extracting 54,000 acre feet per year of clean freshwater, and convey it by a 140 mile pipeline to the centers of consumption in Rio Rancho and the Albuquerque metropolitan area.**



**Using enhanced recharge technologies, the project will keep the aquifer in balance; no “mining” of water will occur. The project will be designed to cause no impairment to existing users.**

**The project will augment the flows of the Rio Grande and enhance the river’s ecosystem while providing much-needed water in refugia for endangered species like the Silvery Minnow.**

**Connections to the 140 mile pipeline will ensure water security and quality for local communities along the right of way and provide emergency hydrants for firefighters.**

**The project will have a zero carbon footprint, creating its own energy. Leveraging off the Augustin Plains high elevation, the project will operate on hydropower and solar renewable energy only. Because the project does not require expensive fuel pumping or water treatment; operation and maintenance costs will be well below current levels, resulting in significant savings for municipal utilities and the people of New Mexico – your constituents - who will be using it.**

**It is amazing to think that this project has the potential to satisfy so many different interests in the state – from those who wish to protect the environment to those who would like to see more job creation.**

**The project will be financed through the water rights market. Unlike what is happening today, where the value of water rights essentially rewards lawyers and speculators, our proposal would convert the value of water rights into infrastructure which would benefit the state for decades to come. We have willing investors who will provide the more than \$600 million required to fund the project. This project could be executed in a span of five years, creating hundreds of jobs and adding 54,000 acre feet per year of reliable – non draught or compact dependent water supply to the Rio Grande valley.**

**We have secured the necessary investigation budget of several million dollars; no financial outlay from the State is necessary. The investors on this project continue to will absorb all of the risk – not the taxpayers of New Mexico.**

**Much high-tech R&D remains to be done as we have to fully develop the hydrological designs, monitoring systems, power systems, and the environmental management systems. The technical consultants we have been using and with whom we intend to continue working are based in New Mexico. The project will put New Mexico high tech companies and Universities to the forefront of water resource management technologies.**

**The Augustin Plains Ranch project does not need financial support or taxpayer investment to get the ball rolling. But the project does need your support and active participation by State authorities.**

**The water we are proposing to produce would benefit the inhabitants of the valley from Santa Fe to Las Cruces. Municipalities would benefit, farmers would benefit, the environment would**



**benefit. Therefore, we believe wholeheartedly that the State of New Mexico should ultimately be a principal agent in the identification of the specific purpose of use of this water. This water belongs to the people of New Mexico and should be allocated where it will most benefit the entire state of New Mexico. That is why the State involvement is key.**

**From the beginning of times, Pueblos, Tribes, Indian nations, Hispanic settlers, homesteaders, farmers, ranchers and urban settlements applied technology to foster the efficient use of water resources and make New Mexico the enchanted land it is today. Acequias, irrigation ditches and the San Juan-Chama project are all expressions of human ingenuity in the face of scarce water resources. Our project is the 21<sup>st</sup> century expression of the same great drive. Its realization will serve the people of New Mexico for centuries to come.**

**We urge this committee and State authorities to take a hard objective look at our proposal and join us in this great endeavour.**