



Tano Road Association
P.O. Box 31967
Santa Fe, NM 87594-1967

A City/County Neighborhood

Claudia Borchert
Water Division
801 W. San Mateo Road
Santa Fe, NM 87505

July 30th, 2011

Dear Ms Borchert,

Thank you for meeting with us recently to discuss your planned application to the State Engineer to renew the permit for the Northwest Well (NWW). As you know, the Tano Road Association (TRA) represents communities in the immediate vicinity of this well. Most of these communities rely on domestic wells for their water supply. Our association members are concerned that continuing the heavy pumping from the NWW could adversely affect the underground aquifer, impact domestic wells, and reduce supplies of groundwater needed for future emergency conditions.

The State Engineer approved the current permit for the NWW in 2002 as a 10-year stopgap measure to provide supplemental water to the City while the Buckman Direct Diversion (BDD) was planned and built. The current permit expires in January 2012. The State Engineer has stated that any subsequent pumping of the NWW will only be for emergency use during either droughts or failure of the BDD supply. The State Engineer's goal was to reduce the City's dependency on the limited quantities of groundwater and enable a future based on a renewable supply of surface water.

We believe that the City Council is aligned with the State Engineer in reducing dependency on groundwater. We understand the current City policy is to rest the wells and use the BDD and reservoir supplies as much as possible. Certainly, residents in the TRA area have expected that NWW pumping will be substantially reduced (except during emergencies) after expiration of the current permit.

At our meeting, we were dismayed to learn that the Water Division is not planning to reduce or restrict pumping. In particular, the Water Division is seeking a new permit to continue the heavy pumping currently allowed (up to 900 acre feet per year without any conditions attached to the use of the water). This approach is in opposition to City policy, against the intentions of the State Engineer, and a potential threat to the domestic wells of nearby residents. We urge the Water Division to reconsider its approach and amend the new application before submitting it to the State Engineer.

In particular, we ask that the new application include a limitation for pumping only during emergencies. Emergencies may be defined broadly to include obstructions to BDD operation (for example, sediment deposits, or ash pollution from forest fires) as well as droughts. We understand that a small amount of pumping may also be required for maintenance procedures. If any other pumping is required from the NWW, we ask that this be called out explicitly in the new application. It is important for both the City Council and residents to understand the purpose and scope of this additional pumping, and its impact on the aquifer.

These changes would provide important leadership in water policy which critically impacts all of us, city and county residents alike. As President of the Tano Road Association and a city resident I am asking for the strongest consideration of our proposals. We are ready to discuss these issues with you at any time. Once again thank you for meeting with us and beginning this important dialogue.

Sincerely yours,

Rich Higgins
President TRA
505-231-3637

cc Rick Carpenter, Water Division
Councilor Miguel Chavez
Councilor Chris Calvert
Commissioner Virginia Vigil