
Meeting Date: December 13, 2023
Staff Contact: Mark S. Sanchez, Executive Director

TITLE: C-23-21 – 2024 Federal Legislative Priorities

ACTION: Recommend Approval

SUMMARY:

The Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority (Water Authority) 2024 Federal Legislative Priorities are summarized below. The priorities are consistent with the prior year requests with modifications to reflect funding and updated status reports.

Funding Request

1. Water Reclamation and Recycling Program

The Water Authority intends to seek multiple forms of Federal and State funding for completion of the South-to-North Reuse Pipeline. This project entails construction of a pipeline that will connect the Water Authority's existing East Side non-potable water systems, allowing reclaimed wastewater effluent from the Southside Water Reclamation Plant (SWRP) to be used to irrigate turf throughout a much larger portion of the service area on Albuquerque's East Side. This pipeline would also enable the Water Authority to store significantly more water from the Alameda subsurface river diversion using aquifer storage and recovery at the existing Bear Canyon surface infiltration gallery.

2. Support Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) Projects

The Water Authority intends to seek Federal and State funding for the completion of two new aquifer storage and recovery (ASR) projects, as part of its implementation of Water 2120, the Water Authority's long-term resource management plan. The ASR projects will increase the Water Authority's ability to store San Juan-Chama surface water locally, in the aquifer, for use to meet customer demand during drought and reduced surface water supply. By storing San Juan-Chama surface water in the aquifer, the resource is readily available to meet demand. Additionally, storing the water in the aquifer instead of Abiquiu Reservoir will result in a smaller quantity of San Juan-Chama water lost to evaporation.

3. Carnuel Water and Wastewater Systems Improvement Project

The Water Authority has been assisting Carnuel for more than a decade to address the community's need for a safe and reliable drinking water supply. The initial construction phase linked Carnuel to the Water Authority's drinking water system, but several additional

phases are required to complete the extension of water and wastewater service community wide. Funding for planning, designing and construction is needed to provide safe drinking water to this community, and public wastewater service. This project will assist in improving water quality in the Carnuel community and the Tijeras watershed. This project will also help residents comply with Bernalillo County's Wastewater Systems Ordinance.

4. Support Annual Appropriations for Kirtland Air Force Base (KAFB) Bulk Fuel Facility Spill Corrective Action

The Water Authority supports any efforts by the U.S. Air Force (Air Force) to obtain and allocate funding for completing the investigation, implementing interim measures, and initiating final remediation activities at the KAFB Bulk Fuel Facility (BFF) site pursuant to fulfillment of the Air Force's Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) permit. The Water Authority supports maintaining or increasing allocations to ensure robust investigation and remediation efforts at the site.

The Water Authority is concerned that the fuel remaining in the ground will not be remediated until a final remedy is selected for the site. The Water Authority requests the Air Force allocate resources to implement cost effective interim measures for the remaining fuel while remedy selection takes place to reduce the impact to groundwater. The Water Authority will advocate the allocation of resources to complete a technically robust site investigation, expediting the RCRA process when possible, and the simultaneous institution of robust interim remediation measures to treat and restore impacted groundwater.

5. Support Appropriations for the Sandia National Laboratory's Environmental Restoration Activities and the Mixed Waste Landfill and other groundwater contamination sites

The Water Authority maintains a status of groundwater protection and monitoring activities at the lab's former operational areas, including the Mixed Waste Landfill, which is one of the solid waste management units covered under Sandia National Labs' (SNL) RCRA permit. The Water Authority would like to ensure that sufficient funding for long-term monitoring and maintenance of the mixed Waste Landfill is secured by the Department of Energy National Nuclear Security Administration (DOE-NNSA).

Additionally, the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) has approved Monitored Natural Attenuation (MNA) as the selected remedy for groundwater contamination at the Tijeras Arroyo Contamination Site and is reviewing final remedy options for the Burn Site. The Water Authority requests that DOE-NNSA ensure sufficient funding is allocated to fully implement comprehensive monitoring and maintenance at these sites for their life span, and that regular status reports are provided to Water Authority staff on an annual basis.

Finally, SNL is nearing completion of the Technical Area – V investigation phase and will soon be proposing final remedy options. The Water Authority supports funding for interim measure activities while a final remedy is selected. The Water Authority requests that DOE-NNSA allocate funding to support robust interim and final remedy measures to mitigate the impact to groundwater.

Legislative Request

6. San Juan-Chama and Native Storage in Abiquiu Reservoir (Policy I-1, Water 2120: Securing our Water Future)

The Water Authority is requesting assistance from the Congressional Delegation to ensure that its federal partners are working in good faith to implement the Water Resources Development Act of 2020 for the benefit of all New Mexicans in the Rio Grande basin.

Implementation of the Act is necessary to allow storage of native water in Abiquiu Reservoir, which is critically important for the future success of Rio Grande Compact compliance, and the Endangered Species Act (ESA) Collaborative Program. The Water Authority will also be submitting a State Engineer's application for temporary native water storage, pending WRDA Implementation and the modification of the Corps' Water Control Manual, a requirement of WRDA.

Status Reports

7. Water Operations and the Endangered Species Act (ESA) Collaborative Program

A Biological Opinion (BO) was issued for water operations in the Middle Rio Grande (MRG) in December 2016 to provide ongoing ESA coverage for the State of New Mexico, Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD) and the BOR (collectively the "Biological Assessment (BA) Partners and the BOR"). There has been a tremendous amount of work completed in 2021 for the ESA Collaborative Program. The adaptive management plan and long-term plans have been approved and are being implemented. The long-term plan is needed to assist with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers efforts to secure additional funding for the environmental programs that are critical for the program. The Science and Adaptive Management committee is active and takes the place of multiple committees. The Water Authority is requesting assistance from the Congressional Delegation to ensure that adequate funding for the Collaborative Program is included in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers budget.