
Meeting Date: November 20, 2024
Staff Contact: Mark S. Sanchez, Executive Director

TITLE: C-24-34 – 2025 Federal Legislative Priorities

ACTION: Recommend Approval

SUMMARY:

The Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority (Water Authority) 2025 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

Under Policy B of the water resources plan (Water 2120: Securing our Water Future), the Water Authority should utilize all excess wastewater effluent as part of a reuse and recycling plan which includes aquifer storage and recovery.

- A. Bosque Water Reclamation Facility Project. Consistent with Water 2120, this project optimizes the Water Authority's available water resources through conservation, non-potable reuse, and possible future direct and indirect potable reuse. The Bosque Water Reclamation Facility (Bosque WRF) project would treat wastewater on Albuquerque's rapidly growing westside, and provide non-potable water for industrial purposes and irrigation needs to westside-area parks, schools, and golf courses. The Water Authority has secured land for the construction and operation of the new Bosque WRF and has also completed the feasibility study required by the Bureau of Reclamation under the Title XVI requirements. The feasibility study, approved by the Bureau of Reclamation, is eligible to move forward towards the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) with this authorization. Phase 1 of the project involves design and construction of the overall 10 million gallon per day (MGD) backbone infrastructure of the Bosque WRF including a diversion structure, fully enclosed screening/grit removal and membrane bioreactor basins/blowers/modules, and a Rio Grande/Bosque outfall structure; future phases would expand the plant capacity and construct the necessary reuse piping and related infrastructure (reuse reservoirs & pump stations). The Phase 1 Bosque WRF will be equipped to initially treat 5 MGD of wastewater, with future expansion to the full 10 MGD design capacity. This project will provide 3 to 5 million gallons per day (3,000 – 7,000 acre-feet per year) of non-potable reuse water for the westside of Albuquerque including parks, golf courses and potentially for industrial users. This planned facility is part of Water 2120, the Water Authority's 100-year water

resources management strategy. While treated effluent from the Phase 1 Bosque WRF will initially discharge to the Rio Grande, future phases will build out the reuse infrastructure to deliver reuse water for irrigation/industrial users. The new Bosque WRF will be located on Water Authority property just north of the Bosque High School and education will be a central part of the facility.

- B. Tijeras Reuse Reservoir & Pump Station Project. Consistent with Water 2120, this project extends the utility's water resources through non-potable reuse. The Water Authority is designing the Tijeras Reuse Reservoir and Pump Station (Tijeras RRPS) facility to supply up to 9 million-gallons per day (MGD) of treated reuse water from our Southside Water Reclamation Facility to the Mesa del Sol area in southeast Albuquerque, where significant residential, commercial, and industrial expansion is taking place. When Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Tijeras RRPS facility are completed, the project will provide pressurized reuse water for irrigation of public spaces (parks, medians, County Sports Complex fields, etc.), private development landscaping, and potential future industrial uses, thus saving precious potable water for other critical community water supply needs.

Phase 1 of the Tijeras RRPS project will install a new 4 MG reuse reservoir, inlet/outlet reuse piping, and flow control vaults at two locations. The future Tijeras RRPS Phase 2 Project will install a pump station facility to pressurize the reuse water for subsequent use by irrigation customers (Bernalillo County Sports Complex, other Mesa Del Sol parks and landscape spaces), and potential industrial customers as well. The Tijeras RRPS project is a necessity for reuse water supply within the Mesa Del Sol development and surrounding Hubbell Springs Trunk area.

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. The Water Authority has completed a feasibility study identifying the two projects for the Water Authority to pursue, including expansion of the existing direct-injection ASR project (DWTP Large-Scale ASR) with two new ASR wells to inject treated San Juan-Chama surface water. The Water Authority has received capital outlay funding along with Water Trust Board and Congressional funding to complete project permitting and design. The Water Authority is therefore requesting \$15M for the construction of the DWTP Large-Scale ASR project expansion, including the two new ASR wells and associated infrastructure. The feasibility study also identified the addition of a direct injection ASR well in the vicinity of the existing Bear Canyon Recharge project at the Arroyo del Oso Golf Course. This project will recharge San Juan-Chama surface water and maximize recharge potential in this portion of the service area. The Water Authority is requesting \$2 million for the project design and permitting.

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 monitors the 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.

6. Support Appropriations for the assistance in removing non-functional turf

The Water Authority has signed on with other major municipalities that utilize Colorado River water in a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to conserve water. The major conservation measure in the MOU is the reduction of non-functional turfgrass (NFT) by 30%.

The MOU signatories have signed on to “Introduce a program to reduce the quantity of non-functional turf grass by 30% through replacement with drought- and climate-resilient landscaping while maintaining vital urban landscapes and tree canopies that benefit our communities, wildlife, and the environment.”

Non-functional turf is a type of grass that is irrigated but not used for recreational purposes or community events. It's often found in: medians, parking lots, in front of businesses, along streets, and in community and business streetscape frontage areas

The MOU is part of a larger effort to reduce water demand and protect water levels in lakes Powell and Mead. The participating water providers will implement conservation actions, programs, and policies that are best suited for their communities and water efficiency goals.

Federal funding through Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART grants or other mechanisms should be supported to help utilities with defraying the cost of NFT removal and transformation.

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.