

East Mountain Water Supply Problems

Comments to the Water Protection Advisory Board 4/9/21

Good morning. Thank you for this time to address you today.

My name is Susan Smith. I'm part of a group of neighbors who live about 10 miles south of Tijeras in unincorporated Bernalillo County. I'm here to inform you about a water crisis in our area and ask for your help.

A little background. Our neighborhood includes the Raven/Skyland/Kuhn Rd area, sometimes called Tranquillo Pines or Ponderosa Pine. Part of the area, about 260 homes, is served by the Tranquillo Pines Water Coop. The rest of us – hundreds more -- rely on wells, but over the past 20 years our wells have been failing at an increasing rate. So now many of us are hauling water, having it delivered, or going without.

Tranquillo Pines Water Coop has been closed to new members for many years. In the past several years the Coop has had to deepen wells and drill new ones more and more frequently. Now even their best wells are failing. They recently informed their members of this crisis.

When my well failed 6 years ago I did not come here to speak with you or seek government help. I assumed it was just part of living in the country and that I had to deal with it on my own. My neighbors have done the same. But the current Water Coop crisis got us thinking – is there a better way?

We individually are always seeking better water solutions. We attend domestic well presentations, participate in water conservation programs and install low flow fixtures and toilets. We harvest water, reuse grey water, build berms and swales, and conserve. We flush and shower less! But now we're imagining how much more could be done with expert guidance and a collaboration of public and private partners.

We have seen what collaboration can do for forest health and fire prevention. Those collaborations have taught us what we as private landowners can do, and have provided assistance, both technical and financial, to get it done. From EMIFPA sponsored workshops, to green waste days at the transfer station, to Ciudad's cost-share program we have worked with partners to improve the health of our lands and decrease fire danger.

What if we had similar guidance, organization and support for addressing water issues? We are seeking partners with whom to collaborate for a sustainable, equitable water future. Our first contact was Commissioner Pyskoty. She is organizing a virtual Water and Fire Event for our community later this month to help us learn more about existing programs. We are reaching out to everyone we can find who's involved with water – and now that includes all of you.

We have read in the Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan that this Board is tasked with many things, including “maintaining a dependable, high quality supply of water”. Is this Board the group that could organize and guide a collaboration to address East mountain water issues? If not, who or what entities do you recommend we contact to fill that central organizing role or to invite to the table? Or is there an alternate approach that you recommend instead?

Thank you very much for any help or direction you can give us.

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