

Special points of interest:

- New Construction
- New Office Building
- Regional Water Plan

"Sin Agua No Hay Vida"; "Without Water There is No Life"

THE REGIONAL WATER PLAN and water rights transfers. By F.R. Bob Romero

In recent months there was a great deal of controversy about the Regional Water Plan and the Public Welfare Statement contained therein. The various stakeholders have now resolved the majority of their differences regarding what should be in this Public Welfare Statement and it will be presented to the Interstate Stream Commission for Acceptance at an upcoming meeting.

Increasing the difficulty of transferring water rights within the Taos Valley was the main bone of contention with the earlier draft of the Public Welfare Statement. Although this plan was developed with good intentions, El Valle, and many other water rights owners and transferees were concerned that the process would be made increasingly bureaucratic.

We are in a situation where many of our lands, that were once primarily agricultural are becoming or have become home sites. Water that was once used for agricultural purposes is now needed for domestic household use. While most of us are very intent on preserving our water rights attached to the acequias for agricultural use, the community must also develop a safe and efficient public water system for the benefit of all of us. This is what the Town of Taos, the Mutual Domestic Water Associations and the Water and Sanitation Districts, such as El Valle de los Ranchos, do. El Valle has documented through annual water testing that groundwater, particularly in the more densely populated areas, is becoming increasingly more contaminated as a direct result of the increased number of septic tanks. (Cont. p. 2)

WHY BUILD A SEWER? BY Sarah Backus

Many people never spend a minute of their lives thinking about sewer. Many people also believe that individual septic systems are adequate for the health of the community. At El Valle, we feel strongly that building the sewer is in everyone's best interest. Why? In earlier times when the population of this community was smaller, community sewer service was not such a crucial matter. People used individual wastewater systems of many types and the small population did not cause a huge impact on the environment. Today, however, groundwater contamination has become an increased reality. With rising land prices, and a growing population, lots have become smaller and are placed closer together. In other words, more and more people are coexisting in closer proximity to each other. As New Mexico residents know, water is a precious resource which must be conserved and protected. Keeping contaminants, such as the dangerous ones found in wastewater, out of the groundwater is the single most important and effective means of protecting the quality of the groundwater. This is the reason that El Valle exists and why its members feel so strongly that construction of a community sewer is in everyone's interest. Certainly, some owners may be inconvenienced by sewer construction, however in the long term, the El Valle sewer will benefit the entire community.

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El Valle Plans a Busy Construction Season

"Construction will commence in April on three additional sewer line projects within the El Valle District."

Construction will commence in April on three additional sewer line projects within the El Valle District. Phase 1E, which is located in the vicinity of La Morada Road and Maestas Road, will likely be completed by July or August of 2008. Phase 2A which brings sewer from the Town Trunk line south of State Road 240 to Tom Holder Road will take place during the same time frame. These two projects are projected to add up to 40 residences to El Valle's sewer. Phase 7-B, the UNM Klauer Campus Lines will also commence this spring. (See article below)

Phase 1F, which has five distinct locations, from the Talpa

area to Cisneros Lane on the west side of State Road 68 will likely commence construction late in the summer of 2008 and finish before snow flies in the fall.

Plans are also being developed for Phase 2B which will take the sewer line from Tom Holder Road through the greenbelt area to State Road 68, and under the Highway into Ranchos de Taos. This project is currently being designed. Construction depends upon funding availability which may not be provided until 2009.



Sewer Construction of UNM-Taos Klauer Campus

El Valle entered into an agreement with UNM-Taos in 2007. The parties agreed to cooperate in order to provide sewer service to the UNM-Klauer Campus located on the Golf Course Road. The District assisted UNM in obtaining financing for the project through the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development Office in

which the Federal government will provide a grant in the amount of \$564,828. A loan to be re-paid over 20 years was also provided by the Federal government. UNM has committed to repaying the full amount of the loan within 60 days of completion of the construction. The project went out to bid in March. Construction is

expected to commence in April and will be completed in August, in time for UNM's Fall 2008 semester.

A separate water line construction project to provide water to the campus will occur at approximately the same time and is managed by the Town of Taos.

Community Meeting

Date: May 21, 2008

Time: 5:00 P.M.

Location: Llano Quemado

Community Center.

Regional Water Plan (Con't.)

Consequently, the mission of El Valle is to install sewer lines and eventually a public water system to provide sewer service and water in the service area. The only way that this can be accomplished is by securing water rights. El Valle does not seek to purchase water rights that are currently being used for agricultural pur-

poses, but it is better that they be used by a public water system than to be lost entirely due to lack of use.

The Board of Directors supported the revision of the Public Welfare Statement to insure that the process to secure water rights does not become more cumbersome and bureaucratic than it al-

ready is. We were not coerced by anyone but were acting to protect the public health and safety and the interest of all of us that need to have clean water available for all our current needs.

EL VALLE'S SYSTEM IS INTERCONNECTED WITH THE TOWN OF TAOS

Gross Receipts Tax.

All businesses within the geographic boundaries of El Valle must pay the gross receipts tax applicable to the District. The district's location Code for reporting purposes is 20-419. The tax rate is 7.125%

In 2002, the District entered into an agreement with the Town of Taos which allowed the District to deliver wastewater to the Town's wastewater treatment plant through El Valle's sewer lines. This agreement allowed El Valle to begin construction of its sewer lines. Initially, the District was allowed to deliver 100,000 gallons of wastewater per day to the treatment plant. It is estimated that the average household will produce 171 gallons of wastewater per day. Thus, with the first 100,000 gallons, the District estimated that it could connect 584 households.

Currently, the District serves 364 residences and places of business. Within two years, it is estimated that the District will reach the 584

households or 100,000 gallon per day mark. Due to this, the District recently renegotiated its agreement with the Town of Taos to allow the delivery of up to 200,000 gallons per day. This allotment includes any discharge from UNM-Taos Klauer campus. The allowed allotment should serve the District for another several years.

In conjunction with the Interconnection agreement that the District has with the Town, it has also agreed to remove certain properties from its boundaries. There are areas within the Town of Taos limits that are also technically within El Valle's District. These are areas that were annexed into the Town during the time that El Valle was not active and are

primarily in the Weimer area near Holy Cross Hospital. To avoid a "double property tax" the District agreed to exclude these areas from its service area. These areas are no longer subject to the mil levy imposed by the District on property owners within its boundaries.

In recent years, El Valle has become much more active and has opposed annexation requests that would bring property within the District into the Town of Taos limits. This opposition is based upon State Law that provides that no property that belongs to a water and sanitation district shall be annexed into a municipality without the approval of the District.

DISTRICT TO CONSTRUCT OFFICE BUILDING

"The preliminary plans call for three small individual offices, a conference room, restrooms and a small kitchen facility."

The District recently acquired a site for its future office building. The one-acre parcel is located in Llano Quemado next to the Llano Quemado Community Center. During 2008, the District intends to go out to bid for a contractor to construct an office to accommodate the District today and in the future. The District will also provide an office for Llano Quemado Mutual Domestic Water Consumers' Association.

The preliminary plans call for three small individual offices, a conference room,

restrooms and a small kitchen facility.

The District offices are currently located in rented facilities outside the District limits within the Town of Taos. By constructing a building, the District will provide more space for its growing operation and will be building equity by owning its own facility.



UPCOMING DATES:

- **Primary Election. Tuesday, June 3, 2008.**
- **Office Closures:**
Memorial Day. May 26th
Independence Day. July 4th.

**El Valle de Los Ranchos
Water & Sanitation District**

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Office Staff:

- Sarah Backus—Director/Attorney
- Pat Sanchez—Office Manager
- Melene Montano—Administrative

FACTS ABOUT EL VALLE

- The District was formed in 1979 by Court Decree.
- The District encompasses 35 square miles in area.
- The District currently serves 367 households and businesses.
- The District delivers approximately 63,000 gallons of wastewater per day to the Town of Taos Wastewater treatment plant.
- The District has an entitlement of up to 200,000 gallons per day from the Town of Taos.

Board of Directors:

- Gabriel Romero—Chairman
- Mario Barela—Vice Chairman
- Andrew Chavez—Treasurer
- F. R. Bob Romero—Secretary
- Meliton Struck—Member at Large



Monthly Meetings

El Valle De Los Ranchos Water and Sanitation District holds its regular Board meetings the 2nd Wednesday of every month at 4 p.m. at the District Office.

Members of the public are invited and encouraged to attend these meetings. The Board of Directors seeks your ideas, information, questions and comments.

Upcoming Board meetings will take place on the following dates:

- April 9, 2008
- May 14, 2008
- June 11, 2008
- July 9, 2008
- August 13, 2008
- September 10, 2008
- October 8, 2008
- November 12, 2008
- December 10, 2008

El Valle office is located at 209-E Camino de La Merced, Taos, New Mexico.

Ted Martinez Honored as an Unsung Hero.

El Valle's Project Manager, Ted Martinez was honored in November 2007 as one of the Community's Unsung Heroes in an awards ceremony at El Monte Sagrado, sponsored by the Taos News. Martinez was honored for his decades of work in community utilities, first as the Public Work's Director for the Town and now as the Project Manager for El Valle de los Ranchos Water and Sanitation District. In addition to his work in the water and wastewater field, on the Regional Planning Organization and Resource Conservation and Development Commission, Ted is also a rancher and a father and grandfather. El Valle is very fortunate to have Ted assisting it is line placement, easement negotiation, trouble-shooting and as a consultant. Congratulations to Ted for this honor.

Funding For El Valle de los Ranchos

El Valle's funding comes from a variety of sources. As residents know, there is a property tax increment included on real property within the District boundaries. Some of the funding comes from connection fees collected at the time a resident connects to the sewer. The most significant source of funding is from State and Federal loans and grants. In addition, as of January 1, 2008, a gross receipts tax of 0.25% on purchases and services within the El Valle District has been imposed. It remains to be seen how much funding this will generate for the District.

As a governmental entity El Valle is required to and does comply with strict rules for budgeting and is audited annually by an independent auditing firm and the State Auditor.

The District's budget for 2007-2008 indicated projected income of \$470,402 and projected expenses of \$577,874. The District started the fiscal year in good shape with \$250,578 in reserves.

El Valle's budget can be viewed in the District's office. Copies are available at 25 cents per page.

Submit comments about this publication to El Valle de los Ranchos Water and Sanitation District, P.O. Box 2797, Ranchos de Taos, New Mexico 87571.