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Augustin Plains Ranch Files New Application for NM Water Permit *Innovative water reclamation, transport project would provide large, sustainable source of water for generations to come*

To view the application, visit <http://sanaugustinwater.com/Images/Application.pdf>

(Albuquerque, NM) - The Augustin Plains Ranch, LLC (APR) has submitted its application for a permit to pump, reclaim, and then transport 54,000 acre-feet of water per year (AFY) from its location near Datil, New Mexico to those Rio Grande River communities that are most in need. The application was filed with the Office of the State Engineer (OSE) yesterday and APR is making it immediately available to all interested stakeholders on its website.

“After many months of work we are pleased to present the OSE with an application that provides information which we believe will allow the project to move forward” said Michel Jichlinski, Project Director. “We have also held numerous meetings to present our proposal to regulators, legislators, members of the press and to the local community. This is a very big step in developing a new and sustainable source of water for New Mexicans for generations to come.”

The State Engineer is expected to decide within the coming weeks if APR can proceed to an official hearing phase. The hearing phase could last up to two years and would allow APR the ability to complete a full and comprehensive study of the area’s hydrology, potential impacts to local communities, pipeline right-of-way issues, legal and compact challenges, and more.

“The full and open hearing process will enable New Mexicans to be certain that the project is viable, sustainable, and in the State’s best interest,” said Jichlinski. “The research that will be conducted during the hearing phase will be invaluable in providing data on this resource that is currently sorely lacking. We look forward to having this conversation with all who are interested and wish to fully understand the incredible potential of the San Augustin Basin.”

Water managers and policy makers from local water districts to Washington D.C. are aggressively seeking solutions to both near-term and long-term supply challenges in New Mexico. Senators Udall and Heinrich recently introduced legislation that among other things, calls for an increase in water acquisition programs. In particular, they are requesting emergency funding for projects that will allow the state to acquire “water from willing sellers to enhance stream flow for the benefit of fish and wildlife (including endangered species), water quality, river ecosystem restoration, and other beneficial purposes.”

“We believe APR water can go a long way in solving some of the state’s most pressing challenges for both now and in the future,” said Jichlinski. “All of our elected officials are pressing for answers and we believe APR is one of the State’s best options.”

More about the water...

Where will the water come from? The Augustin Plains Ranch owns more than 17,000 acres of land in the San Augustin Plains of west-central New Mexico and that acreage sits atop a very large and very deep aquifer that has yet to be utilized. According to the Southwest New Mexico Regional Water Plan, this subbasin (APSB) has a total volume of approximately 50 million acre feet (AF) of groundwater in storage. Early test wells have demonstrated that the aquifer yields water of excellent drinking quality.

The Augustin Plains Ranch is proposing to enhance the sustainability of the aquifer by building structures designed to capture the run-off from the nearby mountain range. The Ranch is strategically located as it intercepts various drainages exiting the range. Total precipitation into the basin exceeds 1.6 million AFY and yet, according to the Regional Water Plan only 18,000 AFY reaches the aquifer for recharge. A relatively small increase in the capture of precipitation would therefore dramatically increase recharge in the basin.

Where will the water go? The water will be delivered via a pipeline to the Middle Rio Grande. A detailed presentation of the proposed routing for the pipeline is included in the application. It starts at the Ranch and ends in Bernalillo County, after 140 miles. All users along the way would have access to the water.

More about the technology...

What makes this a “carbon-free” project? The power needed to operate the pipeline and the pumps will be generated entirely by using clean, green energy. The project property sits at an elevation of 7,125ft, while the Albuquerque metropolitan area lies at 5,200ft. The elevation drop is sufficient to allow for gravity flow of the water to Albuquerque and for the production of hydropower. This will account for most of the project’s energy needs. In addition, the Ranch is situated in one of New Mexico’s best locations for solar power production, which will provide the remainder of the project’s energy.

More about the environment...

Will APR water help to improve riparian habitat and promote the recovery of endangered species? A regional drought has plagued the Southwest for the past decade, exacerbating water shortages, impacting the local and regional economies, and stressing the rivers and riparian habitats. Two endangered species in the middle Rio Grande have a large impact on water operations: The Rio Grande silvery minnow and the southwestern willow flycatcher. As established in litigation and recognized in biological opinions issued by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, endangered species require water. APR water will enable users to use this new resource instead of taking surface or groundwater that currently contribute to the drying of the river. APR water, strategically released into the Rio Grande River, can greatly improve habitat for endangered species as well as all native plants and animals that need water to survive. A healthy river environment will also go a long way in sustaining recreational use and tourism.

More about the communities that will benefit....

What will happen to the communities located near the well field? The biggest concern for farmers and ranchers and townships near the project property will be the effect that the pumping will have on their own wells. In fact, the project will increase water security in the area. The nearby town of Magdalena ran out of water this past year, demonstrating the difficulty that small towns face in keeping their water infrastructure operational. Augustin Plains Ranch water, captured from deep wells and delivered via pipeline where it is needed, would provide certainty of supply to its neighbors for generations to come.

But just as exciting, the project will create jobs for people living in nearby communities and provide a big boost for local economic development.

Will farmers and ranchers have access to the water or will it be used by urban areas only?

Farmers and ranchers have been greatly affected by the drought. Their water allotment has been decreased or entirely eliminated at times, and they have had to switch to expensive groundwater pumping, switch crops or stop producing entirely. The cost of feeding livestock has gone way up and ranching livelihoods are hanging in the balance. With APR water, the combination of decreased municipal diversions and larger return flows back to the river, agricultural users will benefit. In addition, water management and distribution entities may elect to use some of the project water for the benefit of its users. During the hearing phase, all potential users will have the opportunity to voice their opinions and request access to the water if they so desire.

Please go to <http://sanaugustinwater.com/> for more information.

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