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State Supreme Court won't stop massive water project

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The New Mexico Supreme Court has denied a motion to dismiss an application for a massive water project proposed by Augustin Plains Ranch LLC.

The motion was [filed last month](#) by the New Mexico Environmental Law Center on behalf of a couple living in western New Mexico. They claimed that the application filed by Augustin is identical to one rejected by the state engineer several years ago.

The project is aimed at building wells and a pipeline that would transfer 54,000 acre-feet of water annually to the Albuquerque and Rio Rancho area. Residents in the western New Mexico area have claimed the project, if allowed to proceed, would drain their aquifer.

"By keeping the intended use vague, the ranch hopes to speculate in future water markets and ultimately sell to whoever the highest bidders may be in seven counties," [Bruce Frederick](#), the lawyer for NMELC, [previously told Business First](#). Frederick said lack of specific purpose in the application makes it unconstitutional under state law.

[Juana Colon](#), a spokeswoman for the center, said its lawyers are reviewing the court's decision to see how they should proceed.

[Whitney Waite](#), a spokeswoman for Augustin Plains Ranch, said the company was pleased with the decision, and hopes that it will clear the way for a hearing on the proposal.

"We are pleased with the court's decision, which confirms that the Office of the State Engineer will continue to review our new application," Waite said. "We look forward to an extensive and thorough hearing that will demonstrate the tremendous value of the project."

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