

**Concept Note**  
(December 27, 2016)

**Santa Fe Water Charter Initiative**

An initiative by Water-Culture Institute, Santa Fe Watershed Association, [Green Chamber of Commerce?], [City of Santa Fe?], and [Santa Fe County?]

**Overview**

What are the best ways to use Santa Fe's scarce water resources? How can we ensure a reliable supply of water over the long term? What principles should guide decision-making about water policies and investments? Whose views should be considered, and how?

These are some of the questions about Santa Fe's water future that will need to be considered and re-considered as we chart a strategy for our community's social and economic progress in the face of climate change.

We can say with certainty that our future, like our past, will depend upon water. Our growing population will face the constraints of less and less predictable precipitation and river flows. On the "plus" side, we can benefit from new and emerging technologies for using water more efficiently, and recycling and reusing water more effectively. New ideas in the form of policies, institutions and business models will provide new options for governing water and harnessing the benefits of new technologies.

As we face our water challenges by applying new technologies, institutions, and ideas, how can we select the best options for our region, our city, and our current and future residents? What guidelines should we adopt to ensure that the water decisions we take today are truly in the best long-term interests of all of us?

Our premise is that since everyone depends on water, everyone should have a voice in how that water is used and managed. Everyone's views are important, and while there will inevitably be disagreements about the details of how water should be used, there tends to be more consensus at the deeper level of basic principles. Everyone wants our water resources to be sustainable; everyone wants to drink water that is safe; and probably everyone wants everyone else to enjoy safe drinking water as well.

The initiative to develop a Water Charter for Santa Fe will catalyze a community engagement process, through interviews, focus groups, and workshops, to identify the principles about water that everyone can agree on, and document these in the form of a Water Charter. The Charter's principles will address not only economic and environmental values, but also the

community's social and cultural values for water, and values about how water should be governed.

The Charter will reflect the community's consensus views about water, but the process of reaching that consensus will likely entail debates and arguments about the principles which should go into the Charter. To guard against any single interest being overly influential, the draft Charter would be submitted to both the City Council and County Commission for endorsement from the community's elected representatives. And to provide an outlet for viewpoints which do not reach consensus, there will be provision for minority positions to be expressed in annexes to the charter.

The purpose of the Water Charter will be to clarify principles about how water should be used and managed, for which there is overall community consensus, and also to highlight principles which are important to some but not all stakeholders. Both sets of principles can be useful in developing new policies, or planning new water investments.

The Water Charter is intended to serve as non-binding guidance for water-related decision-making by both local governmental bodies and private businesses and organizations. Its practical effectiveness will hinge on the legitimacy of the process of developing the Charter. If the Charter is perceived as broadly reflective of the community's values about water, then there will be a motivation for both public and private agencies/organizations to pay attention to the Charter's guidance.

Monitoring compliance with the Water Charter will be done annually through an annual qualitative assessment prepared by the initiative's co-sponsors. The report will be posted on the co-sponsors' websites, and will also be presented and discussed at an annual "State of Our Waters" symposium each December in Santa Fe (to begin from 2017).

## **Details**

### **Purpose:**

To develop a community-driven statement of principles about how local water resources should be used, and how local water ecosystems (Rio Grande reach from Cochiti to Buckman, Santa Fe River, arroyos, wetlands, and aquifers) should be managed. The principles would be written into a Charter and submitted to both City Council and SF County Commissioners for their endorsement.

### **Approach:**

1. Identify key stakeholders (e.g., Pueblos of Chochiti, Tesuque, and Kewa; Chamber of Commerce and other business groups, Environmental groups, Faith-based groups, etc.)
2. Elicit, through individual and group interviews, the value principles of key stakeholders pertaining to six categories: environmental, economic, social, cultural, governance, and other.

3. Prepare a draft outline showing value principle agreements and disagreements as basis for a workshop convening everyone interviewed and/or others they suggest (ensure balance reflective of community).
4. Conduct one (or more) facilitated workshops to find provisional consensus and clarify areas of disagreement.
5. Prepare new draft charter incorporating disagreements as areas to resolve
6. More interviews to reach consensus positions in private;
7. Follow-up workshop to finalize charter
8. Take to City and County for endorsement
9. Convene annual "State of the Waters" half-day conference to report on past year's water-related decisions of city and county, as well as businesses and other stakeholder groups, and highlight the fit with the Charter. Ensure coverage from local media outlets.

### Activities

- Identify key water stakeholder groups and solicit their partnerships and/or support.
  - Conduct informal individual or small-group interviews with leaders/members of each stakeholder group;
  - Arrange small-groups meetings with a few key stakeholder groups to discuss their value positions about water (based on the informal interviews already conducted);
  - Hold one or two multi-group meetings comprising different stakeholder groups, to get a sense of the consensus-building challenges and develop a strategy for the next steps of the initiative.
- Raise awareness about local water problems and solutions and build community support for the Charter process:
  - Develop outreach brochure with Santa Fe Watershed Association, explaining the process and how the Charter would help guide future water decisions]
  - Write articles for local media (My View), Solicit radio interviews and talks to local groups; Start Facebook Group (Santa Fe Water Charter); Info booths at local festivals (with Watershed Association).
  - [Optional] Establish a Water Charter Advisory Committee to guide project implementation and eventually help monitor compliance with the Charter's principles;
- Identify priority values of major stakeholder groups.
  - Arrange meetings with major stakeholder groups individually (e.g., to brief them on the process and identify their key concerns and interests that need to be addressed in the Water Ethics Charter.
  - Supplement this with individual interviews and/or focus groups
- Develop the Water Ethics Charter document [DG and Assistant]
  - Recruit a workshop facilitator to help plan and conduct the workshops; [6 days of work?]

- Organize a series of two or three workshops with representatives of all major stakeholder groups, to craft the Water Charter for the greater Santa Fe region.
- Finalize the Charter
  - Edit the document for clarity and obtain final approval from the workshop participants (by email, or through another workshop).
- Revamp the Water Charter Advisory Committee into a permanent body to monitor compliance with the Charter, and report each year at annual State of the Watershed conference (See next item).
- Co-organize, with Santa Fe Watershed Association and City/County, a "State of the Waters" conference (in Dec. 2017) to become an annual half-day event.