

## Interview with Larry Brewer

Intro: I'm Bonnie Leverton. It's Saturday, July 29, 2006. We're doing these interviews for the Colorado River Water Users Association and I would like you to introduce yourself.

A. Well, I'm Lawrence, Larry Brewer. Live at 4109 Skyline Drive, Farmington, New Mexico. Have lived here for, in Farmington almost 50 years,

Q. Where were you born?

A. I was born in Pueblo, Colorado and raised in Northern California near Sacramento and all through college and then was in the Marines and in Grand Junction for a couple of years, and then down here.

Q. When were you born?

A. Well in 1939, April the 3<sup>rd</sup> of 1939.

Q. How did you end up in Farmington?

A. Well, I was working for a uranium company out of Grand Junction and we drove through Farmington because it was kind of on the edge of some of the uranium activity and it looked like a growing community. The oil and gas production had really begun in about the mid 50's. This was in '55. I had an opportunity, a job opportunity here, so I came out and then became City Engineer in 1957.

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Q. Tell me about your education. Where you studied and what you studied?

A. Well, I received a Bachelor of Science degree from Stanford University in Engineering. Four years of college and then because of the Korean Conflict I went directly into the Marine Corp and was an Engineering Officer in the Marines. So that's kind of the beginning and then from there was here and City Engineer and then self-employed. Worked for the Tribe for about a year and then back self-employed until I retired from a full company in 1986 in the fall. I've been a consulting engineering since then.

Q. What were some of your earlier career goals that you really wanted to do?

A. Well, just, a civil engineer does public work projects and I'm willing to do as many as I could and we did an awful lot of them; reservoir, airports, subdivisions, city, county, state highways, bridges, civil engineering work type things. It was exciting, always exciting.

Q. What were some of your feelings about water issues back then?

A. Well, I was approached by John Veal, who was a local surveyor, who had worked on water right transfers back in the early '50's. He gave me a set of hydrographic survey maps and said "hang on to these because this is really going to be important"; this is when I was a City Engineer. So, I got to looking in to it and discovered that water was an issue and the city was using more and more water. We needed to have enough rights to be able to divert the water that the citizens need to use for domestic purposes.

Q. There weren't any water rights at that time?

A. Oh no, there was a water right adjudication called the McDermitt Ditch Decree. The State Engineer came up and mapped the basin during the war '38 to '36 or something and then the local judge adjudicated the water in 1948, and the decree dates from '48 State Decree. So there were water rights adjudicated to the cities. But at that time, the cities didn't have any. . . .they were just small cities. Farmington was along that range of time was 2,500. Aztec was maybe 3,500. Bloomfield was just a wide spot in the road, kind of. So there was not an awful lot of municipal water being used, but the adjudication did recognize the need for municipal water and included it.

Q. The longer you were here were you more aware of other water issues or did others come up?

A. Well, we, as consulting engineers, we transferred a lot of water, not only from farm to farm, but from farm to city, or farm to industrial uses. We discovered in the early '60's, mid '60's there wasn't any way to get a direct appropriation from the river. The way that works is that, the State Engineer will accept direct appropriations from the surface water, if there is water available and he did not officially declare the basin as having been fully depleted, but he refused to accept any applications to divert water. We had kind of a test case for the city of Aztec to see if we couldn't force the issue and it of course was protested by everybody, including the city of Farmington. It got put to rest at a hearing but we were never able to develop any direct appropriation from the river, which means if you needed more water, if the municipalities needed more water, industry needed more water, they had to buy farming rights, irrigation rights and

convert them and transfer them from those sources.

Q. Is that what happened over the years?

A. That's how it is, except for the Animas-La Plata, which was suppose to provide for this eventuality.

Q. Talk about being the City Engineer, what did that entail?

A. Well, they wanted me to do everything they could. I was in charge of the street department, the sanitation department and the sewer and water plants and all of that. So it was a natural thing, also all the subdivisions that were approved and at that time we began to require that land that was irrigated it was being subdivided they needed to transfer the water under the streets to the city. Eventually there was an attempt to require that water made be available either by purchasing or transferring from their land to make up for the water that was going to be required by the inhabitants of that subdivision.

Q. What's your first involvement with the Colorado, San Juan River issues?

A. Well, at the beginning, right there. First, the State Engineer is the Trustee for the surface waters of State of New Mexico, which are owned by the people of New Mexico. We were in Santa Fe and we got all the requirements and they had details on how you had to handle a transfer or direct appropriation and you had to get a permit for whatever you wanted to do. You had to prove that you actually had used it beneficially and

of course water, New Mexico water is a beneficial use water right. If you don't use it beneficially you can lose it. That's been tested and kind of fell apart.

Q. Fell apart in what way?

A. Well, there was a suit in the '60's, I think, where the State Engineer was going to take some water from people who had not irrigated their farms within, in a continuing, continuously for a four year period. It was an overall suit and it was in State Court and it got defeated because the State Engineer was, hadn't notified the people that they might lose their water. The judge as I recall made that requirement. They hadn't, so they couldn't sustain the lawsuit and take the water. I don't think it's ever been tested again.

Q. But if he had gone through the process they might have taken that water?

A. I think today that they're going to try to take it from anyone who doesn't use the water beneficially or it's . . . before they didn't worry about the space taken up by a house and yard and a barn, and or public streets and so on. But they are now. They certainly will.

Q. Is it like they're stronger on their feelings on this?

A. No, we just don't have enough water. Of course everything, it effects everything. Nobody was really worried about conserving water because there was plenty and then of course the big thing that I think people aren't aware of here is that there is no ground water

here. Yeah, I wasn't quite . . . I wanted to make it really clear - you can't see that.

Well, as I was saying there is no ground water except within about a hundred feet of the river, maybe in some places a couple hundred feet, but that's only because of the aquifer of the river. You can drill wells, you can try to drill a well and you might get a two or three gallon a minute well that's pretty sporadic at say a couple of three hundred feet.

Q. Let's start your answer all over again, there is no groundwater.

A. There is no groundwater in this plateau. In fact, you're from Cuba and the wells down there are eight and nine hundred feet and you're mining the water because it can't be recharged because of all the impervious formations that lie above that particular formation. So people in other parts of the state where there is a big aquifer, like where in Albuquerque they don't understand the big battle over surface water that occurs up here and so if you . . . I mean surface water is our only source. It is a renewable source, it comes back every year because of the solar cycle, and rainfall, and snow and so on. But it is of the limiting factor, is the water that's available and of course we're limited to a hundred thousand or a million acre-feet or five hundred thousand acre feet, I think it is for the State of New Mexico in the Upper Colorado River Compact, and so there's a finite amount of water that's available and each year and so everyone that uses water, the irrigators, the industry and municipal users are going to fight for that water.

Q. You're talking about having a certain amount of water and everything available, like we just came out of a bad drought is there enough waiting to be used for the bad years?

A. Well, that's been the reason for the, theoretical reason for the Animas-La Plata Project, to help some of the municipalities with the low flow years, but that's a whole other story. There could be years if you have no storage there could be years where you would not be able to divert any surface water for your municipal use or irrigation use or industrial use.

Q. When New Mexico just gets a certain amount, up around here you get a certain amount of the Colorado River, a certain amount of the San Juan and everything else and it's like what, if you're giving it away to other people?

A. Well, you know it's a huge thing because when you start looking at the lower valley states, Arizona, Nevada, California and so on, they have their demands on the water and of course Colorado, and Utah, and Arizona, I mean Northern Arizona and New Mexico have their demands on the water, but this is arid country. We only get about eight to ten inches of rain a year, so we have to live with that. The evaporation rate here is probably 60 inches annually, so that makes us a desert. So, we can't have everything green and everything forested and all of that.

Q. Now some people we've been talking to, some of them think well, we'll always have water, we've got plenty, and we'll always have water.

A. Well, it's like we'll always have coal, we'll always have trees and we'll never get old, but no, there is a finite amount of water and ultimately when it's . . . when all the battles have been over and they've got armed guards at every the head gate, whatever, then we are going to discover that there won't be as many lawns and there will be more water conservation and maybe people will put Astroturf out and we can see the average

per capita use per today here is probably two hundred and twenty gallons a day per capita and that includes the industrial use in town car washes and laundries and other things, but it's probably going to have to go down to maybe even less than a hundred gallons a day. But if you have ever had a RV you know you can get by on ten, twelve gallons a day for an individual to bathe reasonably and the other uses that you have.

Q. Do you see this water crunch coming sooner or rather than later?

A. It's going to be . . . it's kind of like getting old it's just going to get a little bit more evident every day. The golf courses are going to suffer and everybody that loves to play golf is going to complain about that. You know, it is what it is. I think we're fortunate here in that we do have the Navajo Dam to help retain some of the water and of course the city of Farmington and their forefathers had the bravery you might say to invest three million dollars in the reservoir in 1962 that holds enough water to carry the city for about five months in the summer if there was no water in the river. That's pretty good. Aztec has maybe got a week's supply. Bloomfield is totally dependent on Bloomfield irrigation, people over there and they are under the Navajo Dam and they will probably be able to see that it stabilizes the flow in the river. I think we're all going to have to really focus on it as being a problem, just like cancer is a problem or smoking is a problem. We can't ignore it and assume it's never going to be problem.

Q. At the same time you have the water problems; you also have the increase in population. Is that going to speed things up?

A. Well we think this is a great place to live and other people have too, and while there's not maybe so many cultural activities as a lot of us would like, it's a great place to live

and the weather is nice. Sun shines all the time almost and that's pretty nice. So there's going to continue to be people coming. You know you can go anywhere and maybe not in some of the places in the Northeast like Maine where it is so cold and fuel is high, well maybe they're having a negative population growth, but I don't know of anywhere where it isn't because people just . . . of course the population of the world is increasing, a whole lot.

Q. What do you see as the State's biggest challenges concerning the water issue?

A. To wake up that there is a water issue, all right. We found out early on that the State was going to be . . . we assumed when we founded the Water Commission and got started and worked on trying to get the water rights that were tied up in Animas-La Plata Project given to the government that the State would assist us. The State while they didn't particularly fight us, we were totally on our own, in particularly when it came to any sort of help with the Congress. I was told by a State Engineer employee that there's plenty of water in the Navajo Dam and I said "Well the Bureau of Reclamation won't give us but a five-year contract." You can't build a water treatment or put a pipeline to the Navajo Dam fourteen miles away, fifteen miles away and sell bonds based on a five-year contract and he said "Well then you need to go lobby Congress", and so that was the State's answer to the municipal users in San Juan County.

Q. Did you go lobby them?

A. You betcha. We've got a . . . the Water Commission became a major lobbying interest in a lot of the things that happened. As a result of that, we became experts in some respects, more expert than the State. I told this individual, State employee, that it

was my opinion that the State had abandoned the municipal users in San Juan County.

I said that in a meeting many times and he didn't like it and it maybe helped a little, but politics and water, they're just part of it, but they don't mix at all. There were people killed here over water issues when they first got the ditches in because that's the way they settled things back a hundred ten, fifteen, twenty years ago. So I fully understand emotions run really deep on these issues.

Q. Is that your biggest challenge as far as the water issue was concerned dealing with the politics of it all?

A. Well the regulations and just trying . . . you know the Animas-La Plata Project was tied to the Central Valley Project or whatever they called it in Phoenix. It was mandated by law, by Congress that the two projects go hand and hand and that was about in the late 60's. Well phooey, somehow it got separated and then of course, it limped along, the Animas-La Plata Project, and our water was tied up and going down the river because no one could use it because it was a permit from the State to the Federal Government to the Bureau of Reclamation and so everybody thought there's plenty of water because it wasn't being used, because the project wasn't built. Well the project got scaled back and then it ran head on into the Environment Protection Act which shut it down for ten years or more. Of course now in terms of cost per acre foot or something it's just astronomical, what it would have been, if they'd just didn't let them build it. And of course the people that are opposed to these kinds of projects because they want the river to remain pristine and so on and so forth, they use the cost factor as another reason why it should have never been built and they were the root cause for that.

Q. Describe a little bit about what the Animas-La Plata Project was and what happened to it?

A. Well, I think the Federal Government was out looking for projects back in the 30's and they discovered . . . and of course the Animas River is a very steep river. Gee, it's a young geologic river; it's only about ten, twelve thousand years old. The Mississippi River is two million years old and it's very flat. So you can't build a reservoir on the Animas River and retain water, because it doesn't back up any water it's very steep. And they got to looking at it, and of course, the Indian Tribes, the Native Americans their water right had never been adjudicated. Of course their treaties with the Federal Government were back in the 1860's and so when I worked for the Tribe, as an example, I was Chief Engineer for them and we were diverting water from the San Juan down near Page through an Indian project down there that we had designed. I wrote a letter to the Utah engineer and told him that we were going to go ahead and divert and the Tribal Counsel for the Tribe told me not ever to do that again that we were just going to divert whatever we want. Well, I, just being a lowly engineer just wanted to be sure I didn't create a liability for the Tribe, but when I had that letter in hand I didn't worry about it. I just did what we did and no one said anything. That was in 1961, so I knew then that the Tribes were going to wait until the opportunity was exactly right to claim their right, their part of the water. So the Animas-La Plata ultimately became the solution to that too, or a potential solution. It's still a little volatile in that area. It's a really tough issue and for whatever reasons the Feds and the Indian Agents and all the rest of them didn't see the need to clarify or adjudicate any of those problems and so the longer you wait the worse it gets. So that's where we are now.

Q. Were you involved in the Navajo Nation settlement?

A. No, other than just being a member of the Water Commission up until about a year ago. We worked awfully hard to try to include the water right people within the Tribe to participate with us and we tried to be good neighbors. Certainly the city of Farmington furnished water for Shiprock and all the communities between Farmington and Shiprock, domestic water, because the water quality at Shiprock had really deteriorated because of the irrigation up here. The irrigation up here washed a lot of alkaline in to the river and so it was almost not potable at Shiprock, so they had to come up here.

Q. I know if I understand it right when they first started the lawsuit they were saying they owned all of the San Juan River, all of the water rights. What happened to that?

A. Well, I think anytime anybody has a limit on what they might claim they would like to have all of it and it's certainly a much bargaining position to bargain for all of it, then it is to say OK, well, we only really need a fourth. Then you've already given up three-fourths, you see. I don't know, we weren't surprised, but you know it's really easy for State politicians to say "Well that's their problem". I'm talking about the people up here in San Juan Country, it's our problem. We discerned that back in the early '90's and decided that we just had to go on. We finally, we were able to have several of the legislators from, the national legislators from our area here take sides with us. We spent a lot of time making sure that they fully understood the issues so that they couldn't be swayed by last minute lobbying from people who wanted to tell something that was less than the truth. It is true, as you said Mr. Dunlap and I went to a couple of meetings in Colorado and we just . . . and I don't know how it was, we both wore black hats that day, I had a big ole cowboy hat and he did too, and they were both black and we just really messed up their parade and they didn't like it. They said why are you that way and I said, why we're just representing New Mexico. I mean we were the only two representing New Mexico.

Q. Were you successful?

A. Yes, well they finally discovered that we were to be reckoned with. You see the Colorado River originates in Colorado, mostly in Colorado. It has their name on it, so they have a vested interest. I mean, we're just gonna be like the hair on the tail of a dog. We don't have much to say. Then they discovered that they didn't have the federal clout that we could muster through our lobbying. And they suddenly realized that they were going to have to pay attention. Sadly, the state line is between Durango and Farmington or we'd have an awful lot more in common, but because the state line is there, it tends to have each looking down their noses at the other, for whatever dumb reason it is.

Q. Would you count this particular issue a success of yours or an ongoing problem still?

A. Well, I will count it as a success when the Ridges Basin Reservoir is full and the agreements with the Operator of the Reservoir are satisfactory to all the potential municipal water users. It isn't over til it's over. I served for fourteen years on the Water Commission and I've never worked on anything so hard and accomplished so little, you know, but it's very close now, but it's hard for me to be skeptical.

Q. Were you one of the founders of the commission?

A. Not really, I was an active member when we were putting it together. There was the joint powers agreement that put all the entities together in it, the Waters Users

Association as a group and the city of Aztec, cities of Aztec, Farmington and Bloomfield in the San Juan County. I was around during that time providing input and so on, but I didn't serve on any board or body. I was just an attendee to all the activities.

But shortly after, I think it was approved in '70 something and I became a city councilman, I mean '80 something, and I became a city councilman in 1990 and was immediately appointed as the city of Farmington's representative on the Water Commission, so I attended all those meetings.

Q. Jim Dunlap said that he thinks that where you were the absolute most effective is when you were on the council as far as making sure that things happened the way they were suppose to.

A. Well, the first thing that occurred we had to development the public's support for the endless supply of the water, because we were going to have to buy our part of that reservoir, at the time, it was estimated to be, I think something like ten million. So we got a referendum together and lobbied all of the voters and it passed, pretty well, to impose a mill levy to raise the funds to pay the Federal Government for our share of that. I didn't know he said that about me, but I know if there is a godfather to the Water Commission it's Jim Dunlap, there's no question about that. He knows and he's attended almost all the meetings. He didn't wear out like I did.

Q. What were some of the biggest obstacles you faced as far as water issues are concerned for the State?

A. At first it was pretty good. I mean when we went down, when we had water right transfers, ownership transfers, method of use transfers, proof of beneficial use documents, they

were open to us. They had a Water Rights Division that we could go talk to and I became friends with a lot of their engineers. We knew what we were doing, but that just died out by 1970 or there about. It was obvious that the State Engineer was terribly under funded. Everything was done by hand; all of the accounting was done by hand.

Ledgers were hand filled in and it was a big battle in the '90's to get some funds out of the legislature to help the State Engineer. You can take a water right transfer or something down there now and it will be five years before they get to it. Well, it's hard for us to understand because that's even worse then . . . I can't think of any governmental agency that would tie that record.

Q. Get a little frustrating for you?

A. Well, you can't say anything; I mean they're the only game in town. So you make due and you have to warn people that are involved in water right transfers and so on, that don't get your hopes up. You have to write all the agreements and everything else that have to do with . . . water rights have to be built around the fact that's it's going to take forever to get it reviewed.

Q. Did you ever have to come up with a creative solution to get something done a little faster?

A. I was never able to do that. We lobbied and got a fellow that we knew Jim Turney, I knew his father, Bill Turney, and he was an engineer and worked out of Santa Fe. Bill did a lot of good. But typically, the State Engineer was a political appointee, Steve Reynolds was there forever. He was the one that . . . at first I was really down on him about permitting all the water to the Federal Government, but I think what he was

afraid of was that if he didn't do that somehow the Native Americans and their unbridled claim on the water would take it all. He felt that having the Government in the middle of it, too, was probably better and I can't argue that point. If you want to bog it down get the Federal Government involved in it and it will take forever to get it straightened out. But that's OK. That's the way of things, when you have management by committee it's not going to be very efficient.

Q. Well if the State Engineer is taking that much time what chance does the City Engineer have?

A. Well, we just did what we had to do and did the best we could. Like I say, I can remember getting water right transferred in probably a year back in the 60's, because I could shepard it through down there and I knew them and I could talk to them, but they got so far behind. It was, it just was, I don't know much about how the State Engineer works, but I do know that it's still highly controversial a lot of the things and I just wish that. . . they finally did get a Water Master up here, thank god for that because we couldn't guarantee to anybody anything. People were diverting more water than had the right to divert, but you couldn't argue with them. It was time for society to have the government step in and say . . . the other great thing they did was, they do meter all of the, continuously, all of the diversions. That was done when they did the decree. They required partial flumes and other things which fell into disrepair and were torn out because of problems with the ditch and it was never maintained by the State Engineer, but that was a requirement of the decree in 1938 to 1948 when it was approved. It's been a great thing. I'm not ashamed of the legacy I'm leaving for my grandkids. I think it's going to be okay.

Q. What's a water master?

A. Well a Water Master is a State Engineer employee representing the State who has powers to close head gates, lock them with a chain if necessary. On the site adjudicate disputes in water use, in particularly when there is a low flow on the river and when the river's on call, which means that is, you don't have a very high priority you're going to get the last water if there is any left over from those that have the highest priority.

Priorities haven't been talked about lately, but it very well could be. I always thought the Water Master probably would have to drive in an armored car with a side arm just to stay alive. The fellow they have up here is just a real nice guy, I can't remember his name but I met him once.

Q. You say that you're not ashamed of the legacy you're leaving your grandchildren, what do you consider some of your greatest successes?

A. Oh, I just think living as long as I have is certainly one of them. I don't know. I think the greatest success of the Water Commission has had is to be recognized. I think right now there isn't anyone who has any interest in water that doesn't recognize that the Water Commission has done a remarkable job. We told a lot of people even though we were municipal water user oriented, we promised and assured the irrigation users that we would work with them and support them and even provide funds if they had to sue to protect their water rights. They were suspicious of us because it's a natural thing to be suspicious and I think we've gotten maybe half way where they kind of trust us, I don't know if they really do or not. I know that we have . . . the greatest thing is that the State Engineer knows we're for real, not just some commission put together to aggravate or whatever. The Executive Director who's been there ever since the beginning almost, we ran for a while without one, Randy Kirkpatrick, has just done

a yeoman's job. There aren't many legislatures in Washington D.C. that are going to turn him away if he needs to talk to them. It's amazing. I'm awfully proud of that.

I guess that would be one thing because I kind of worked with him when he was just getting started.

Q. When you are talking about your work with water issues, who were you're greatest allies?

A. Well that's an interesting question. I think my greatest ally was the decree that we had because nobody could argue with a State Court decree for adjudicating water. There really wasn't anybody that knew an awful lot about it. The attorneys that had worked on the decree either had moved away or died by the time I got on the scene, fifteen years or so later, maybe not quite that much, ten years later, so I didn't have any attorneys to talk to about what they thought. Colorado has water judges strictly to handle water right issues. New Mexico yet has to do that. I don't know whether they will or I don't know if that is the solution, it could be.

Q. Who are your greatest opponents then, just people that didn't understand?

A. Well there was a group that wanted to keep the river, the Animas River particularly, because it was going to be effected by the pumping. They felt that sucking the water out of the river was going to lower the flow and it was going to ruin the ecology of the river. They were opposed to that and they came to every meeting there for ten years and got up and talked about the same things day after day. It was very tiring to be civil with people and they weren't always civil, but they have their side and you've got to recognize it. I don't know if there was any . . . just that group. Then of course

trying to deal with the State they just literally abandoned us I felt. I still feel they're not that excited about it. If we don't look out after our own interests here . . . one of the things that bothered me early on was the San Juan Chama diversion. I don't know if anybody's talked about that or not. It was included in the funding that went along with all this water that was permitted including the Navajo Dam and the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project. It was set up to divert one hundred and twelve thousand acre feet of water to the Atlantic watershed via the Chama River. They bored a tunnel through the mountain and pulled off some of the river before it got to Navajo Dam, I think it's from the Pine River. It was done. I'm satisfied, totally satisfied, it was done on the account of need that Albuquerque thought they might have for municipal water. Now whether it was the city of Albuquerque's people or whether it was their legislative, national legislative representatives I don't know. For what ever reason the tunnel's big enough to move twice that amount so there is a bunch of vigilantes here watching that, how much they divert, because they're taking our water, see. That's kind of ingest, I would hope that you remember that, but it bothered us. Number one that they would do it in the first place but it was Federal Government and Federal Legislation that set it up and once we realized that we were stuck with it, well then to see it was built as twice as big as it needed to be, really bothered us. We've watched that one hundred and twelve thousand acre foot of water pretty close.

Q. Besides the water rights, what are important water issues that face New Mexico?

A. Well, water quality, no question about it. The selenium, there's some natural selenium that comes down the river particularly the La Plata. There was a time, I don't know if it's today, but there was time when the State adopted selenium maximums were exceeded by the water that was coming down the river from the La Plata. We reminded the Colorado State Engineer that we may have to sue him for poisoning instead, here.

Selenium doesn't affect people as much as it affects the fish and the wildlife. Water quality is going to continue to deteriorate because of a lot of things. I don't know what can be done about it. There's a fair amount of alkali in the surface soils in this area and that alkali gets flushed into the river systems. Downstream I don't know how much the Green and the Colorado dilute the San Juan. As I said earlier, that the water at Shiprock was nearly unpotable it had so much salt in the water, just from the irrigation water returning to the river.

Q. Did we talk enough about the Animas-La Plata Project? Did we discuss as much as you hoped to discuss?

A. We covered a lot of issues and I've been off the Water Commission about a year and a half.

Q. Do you think it will ever get finished? They're saying now yeah a couple, a few more years . . .

A. I only have hope and I'll join the ranks to see to it that it does get finished if necessary. I'm sure it's going to get finished, at least to the extent of the funding. They do it in phases. So if the legislatures change and they don't fund it well then it isn't going to get finished in the time frame that they had. Traditionally government projects like the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project or Animas-La Plata or some of the others, they get carried to completion and I see no reason why this shouldn't. Yes, I expect it will. The impact on the city of Farmington isn't going to be as great if it doesn't get built right a way. The impact on Aztec that doesn't have any reserve could be greater.

Durango is kind of in the same boat they don't have any large reservoirs that would

carry the city of Durango for a season, for instance. So they are going to be dependent. I just don't see any reason why it shouldn't come along.

Q. Is it still strong enough that it's going to do what it was originally set out to do?

A. Oh no they have watered it down. It's half of what it was in terms of what it was going to do. They were going to divert water over into the Little Plata River and the end result is supposed to solve the Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribe. They are over the divide, in terms of the divide between the Animas River and the La Plata River and clear over to the little stream that's under there, that goes through the Ute Mountain Utes. I don't know how they're going to use the water, but they've got some water there. They may end up selling it to other people, whether it's Los Angeles or the city of Aztec or somebody, I don't know. Originally that project was going to have a tunnel to get the water across to the . . . and that's why they called the Animas-La Plata, is because it was the Animas River and La Plata River, but there is not going to be any diversion now they've scaled the project way back from that and in so doing and with everybody fighting for the water the way it was set up when they initially put it together most all of the smaller users got half the water that they were looking for. We ended up with instead of around thirty thousand acre feet; we ended up with about half of that. Half of something is better than nothing I guess and that's all the water there is because of the way it was done.

Q. Is there anything you would have done differently in your career as far as water issues are concerned?

A. Looking back if I had known a little more how this was going shake out at least as I

can see it today I probably would have warned Aztec and Bloomfield to say, you know get in gear and set aside funds every year to buy water rights. I did say that to Farmington and Farmington did set aside funds, a couple of hundred of thousand or more a year for several years to buy water rights from farms and other things. They still do that and so in terms of water rights sufficient to take care of what they divert it's fine. Also Rural Water Association was able to provide water lines and what not on low interest Farmers Home Administration loans. The State Engineer, I heard the State Engineer say that he was going to give them credit for half the water getting back to the river. Well, the new State Engineer says no. So they're actually consuming water down there and so they're going to be required to have more water rights where as the cities who meter their affluent from the sewage treatment plant they're given credit for the return flow. So I would probably have been warning them to get water rights to go with the growth they were in and some of them did. They had no way of knowing that the mandate from one State Engineer was going to be overturned by another one.

Q. What's your greatest surprise regarding New Mexico water issues?

A. The fact that the State Engineer being a statewide paid-for entity supported us so feebly. I use the word support; I don't know that he really did support us. They didn't turn us away but they certainly didn't help us much. It was all our doing if we were going to do anything and we really didn't get on to that until probably '92 or '93. We suddenly realized that the state wasn't going to help us and neither was the Bureau of Reclamation. That was another disappointment because we thought the Bureau would at least look out for our part of the interest. That's when we discovered every entity is in on its own and so we went like that you know.

Q. Did you discover it too late to really help you in the future?

A. No, oh no, they were consistently turning us down. We just realized that our assumption was flawed in the fact that we thought that if we were doing what they were doing we would have been more help, instead of just waiting to see if you're going to do something. It's like let's see if he's going to run off the cliff or should we tell him there's one there. They were perfectly happy with us running off the cliff.

Q. What problems relating to New Mexico's water resources to you think are most critical today?

A. Well I think an awareness of the general public that water is not plentiful and that wasting water is really bad and then to be careful with the quality of the water. You know I think the problems that we have of running storm water back into the river that drains off the streets and from a lot of different places we would rather not have it. There's going to be a tightening of that issue in order to protect the surface water and keep them from being contaminated. I think an awareness of taking care of and being more . . . using the sprinkler system you put in or amount of vegetation you plant and so on and how you do it. There's an awful lot of that going on I know the Water Commission has put on a Water Fair and sponsored by a lot of industries for the school kids in the area and it has been very successful. That awareness is very important.

Q. What do you anticipate will be the State's future challenges with water? Same as today?

A. Well, I think the State's going to have to wake up to the fact that they're going to have

to defend New Mexico's water. I don't know that they haven't, but I certainly haven't been awed by their charging into the fray with California and some of the lower basin states. I'm just disappointed with the. . .see here in San Juan Country there's about sixty-five percent of the water, surface water in the State flows through here and yet we only have, we're only involved in about a hundred thousand acre feet which is, I don't know, like fifteen percent of the water that comes through here, maybe twenty.

So they just don't see it as a problem and they look at, well you can go out drill a well anywhere and the big aquifer that runs under Albuquerque all the way down to somewhere. It takes care of them and they're finally realizing that it's depressing now and they're going to have to watch it. That's why we're watching that San Juan Chama diversion, you know. I think the big issue is just wake up to the fact that this is a limited resource.

Q. Would that be your advice for people operating water resources today or would you have other advice?

A. Well, they don't ask me. Jim and I know everything, Jim Dunlap and I know most everything, but they very seldom ask us for our opinion (laughing). Maybe it's because we overflow furnishing it, you see. At any rate, I'm pretty comfortable with the way things look. The Water Commission is a really good start and I'm very proud of it. I'm satisfied that the people that take Jim's and my place, if he ever does decide to leave the Water Commission, are going to be as good as we tried to be.

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