



Elephant Butte Irrigation District Of New Mexico

530 South Melendres
Las Cruces, NM 88005-2826

Telephone
(575) 526-6671
Fax (575) 523-9666
Dispatch Fax (575) 526-8391
Warehouse Fax (575) 526-1530
Engineering Fax (575) 541-5716

www.ebid-nm.org

Board of Directors

James Salopek, President
Robert Faubion, Vice-President
Willie Koenig, Secretary
Jerry Franzoy
Robert Sloan
Bobby Kuykendyall
Thomas C. Simpson
Ramon Alvarez
Scott Adams

Staff Members

Gary L. Esslinger, Treasurer/Manager
Ricardo Bejarano, Water Master
Gail Norvell, Controller
James Narvaez, Hydrology Director
Valerie Beversdorf, Computer Resources
& GIS Director
Leo Barrett, Maintenance Project Director
Delyce Maciel, HR/Safety Director
Erek Fuchs, Groundwater Resource
Director
Junior Engineer
Zach Libbin

December 11, 2012

President Barack Obama,
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

First of all, let me congratulate you on another four years in office. I write this letter because we were concerned that an important issue in our region was rumored to be resolved by having you make an executive decision instead of letting the issue be resolved locally. We are glad you did not take action prior to your re-election and that now the region has time to hammer out a solution.

The Elephant Butte Irrigation District comprises the New Mexico portion of the Rio Grande Project which is one of the oldest federal reclamation projects in the West. Our district helps manage over 133,000 acres of land from the Texas border north to Elephant Butte Reservoir, approximately 120 river miles. We deliver irrigation water to 90,640 acres of the most fertile and productive farmland in the West. We sponsor over 27 flood control dams in the Lower Rio Grande Watershed from Caballo Dam to the Texas state line in order to protect the farm lands and population centers in the watershed.

SB 1024, referred to as the Organ Mountains Dona Ana County Conservation and Protection Act, sponsored by Senator Bingaman and the proposed Organ Mountain-Desert Peaks National Monument proposed by the NM Wilderness Alliance involve large areas of a high desert watershed that would close designated wilderness areas to timely access and the development of best management practices and infrastructure to protect the river valley from problems associated with this degraded watershed. The existing flood control structures in the region were designed to protect sparsely


populated farm land and are now outdated. Our portion of New Mexico has seen a large population growth and many of those new residents prefer to live in the valley among the agricultural community and even though there has been quite a bit of notoriety to designate a national monument in the area it could be premature to do so.

The area is well known for its prolonged droughts and see-saw climatic flooding. It was not that long ago that the Village of Hatch, known as the agricultural Chile Capital of the World, suffered a devastating flood that also impacted the district's ability to deliver water to other farmland in the region. Our district has major concerns that the new designation would harm or completely stop efforts to reach into the upper watersheds of our area to control flooding and try and utilize any water that may be salvaged for use in the valley.

The proposed watershed, like many watersheds throughout New Mexico, is impaired. Past management practices have led to loss of ground cover, plant and animal habitat and serious erosion. We have met with all groups involved, but there seems to be no movement to resolve many of the issues where restoration work must take place first including green measures such as reseeding ground cover, reduce sediment loads and contaminates such as e-coli which poses public health hazards. Whether or not we agree with the philosophy of either camp, the issues we raise affect everyone when a flood event occurs in our system and would also eliminate any future effort to capture a new water supply for our region.

Notwithstanding the arguments that have been made to you regarding taking executive action we urge you to please allow this issue to work its way through congressional channels where the various segments of our community can come up with a compromise in legislation that will recognize the ability to save a precious water resource and allow us to plan for future flood events.

Sincerely,



Gary Esslinger
Treasurer Manager

cc: Secretary Ken Salazar
Senator Jeff Bingaman
Senator Tom Udall
Representative Steve Pearce
Senator-elect Martin Heinrich