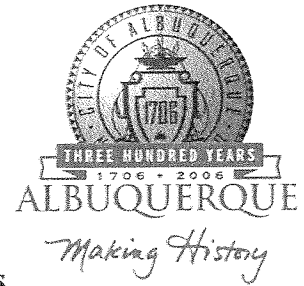


# CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE

February 22, 2005

Contact – Deborah James, 768-3036



## **Mayor Martin Chavez, Environmental Leaders Announce Settlement Agreement**

Albuquerque, NM – City of Albuquerque Mayor Martin Chavez on February 23, 2005 announced a settlement agreement effectively resolving the Rio Grande Silvery Minnow lawsuit and forming a collaborative program to the benefit of all the residents along the Rio Grande. The settlement agreement will be introduced as legislation for consideration at the March 2005 meeting of the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority.

A signing ceremony was held at the new Pueblo Montano Picnic Area/Trailhead at the corner of Montano and Coors Road on February 23, 2005. In addition to Mayor Chavez, plaintiffs in the *Rio Grande Silvery Minnow v. Keys* lawsuit attended the signing including: John Horning of the Forest Guardians; Richard Barish of the Sierra Club; David Henderson of the National Audubon Society; Kevin Bixby of the Southwest Environmental Center; Tom Jervis of the New Mexico Audubon Council; and Kara Gillon of the Defenders of Wildlife.

P.O. Box 1293

"This is an extraordinary day for Albuquerque and its future," said Mayor Chavez following the signing. "With this agreement we form an alliance between municipal and county water users and several environmental groups to ensure the future available water supply and economic viability of the City and the region."

Albuquerque

New Mexico 87103 "The purpose of the agreement is to take steps towards protecting and restoring the ecological integrity of the Rio Grande and to provide greater certainty for the Water Utility Authority to develop and use a reliable water supply," he added.

[www.cabq.gov](http://www.cabq.gov)

In addition to settling the Silvery Minnow lawsuit, the agreement stipulates that the environmental groups will not mount any legal challenges to the Drinking Water Project. Another provision of the settlement is to support a pilot water-leasing program for the Middle Rio Grande area. Another settlement provision requires the City to institute a residential check-off program where residents may choose to pay an additional \$1 per month on their monthly water bills. The money will be used to purchase water to increase Rio Grande water flows.

The Pueblo Montano Picnic Area/Trailhead serves as a much-needed Bosque access spot and is a model of Bosque restoration. The City has created a diversified area that will promote the health of the Bosque and re-establish habitats that have been reduced since the introduction of flood control.

###

**SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT BETWEEN  
RIO GRANDE SILVERY MINNOW v. KEYS PLAINTIFFS,  
THE CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE AND THE  
ALBUQUERQUE-BERNALILLO COUNTY WATER UTILITY AUTHORITY**

**Section I. Parties**

The Parties to this Settlement Agreement (“Agreement”) are the Plaintiffs in *Rio Grande Silvery Minnow v. Keys*, 99 CV 1320 JP/RHS (DNM) (“Plaintiffs”), the City of Albuquerque (“Albuquerque” or “the City”), and the Albuquerque-Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority (“Authority”) (collectively “the Parties”).

**Section II. Purposes of the Agreement**

The purposes of this Agreement are to take steps towards protecting and restoring the ecological integrity of the Rio Grande and to provide greater certainty for the Authority to develop and utilize a reliable water supply. The City and Authority recognize that the health and vitality of the Rio Grande and the Bosque and fish and wildlife that depend on them, including the endangered Rio Grande silvery minnow and Southwestern willow flycatcher, contribute to the cultural, economic and environmental well-being of the City and the State of New Mexico. The Plaintiffs recognize that the Authority requires a reliable water supply to ensure the future vitality and economic viability of the City and the region.

In order to provide certainty to the Parties and to further these purposes, the Parties agree to work together to implement the provisions of this Agreement.

**Section III. Terms and Conditions**

1. Plaintiffs shall:
  - a. Not challenge in any way, through judicial or other means, Section 205(a), Title II, Division C of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2005, Pub. L. No. 108-447 (2004).
  - b. Enter into a stipulation with the City pursuant to the terms of this Agreement and Rule 41(a) in *Rio Grande Silvery Minnow v. Keys*, for dismissal of claims against the City and claims regarding consultation or discretion over San Juan-Chama water for federally-listed species, or any claim relating in any manner to San Juan Chama water and federally listed species, whether such claims are asserted as to the City or federal defendants, and seek the agreement of all other parties to *Rio Grande Silvery Minnow v. Keys* to such stipulation. If all parties do not agree to the stipulation, Plaintiffs, the City and any party joining the stipulation shall move under Rule 41(a)(2) for court approval of the stipulation dismissing such claims.

- c. Request that any final orders or judgment entered by the District Court in *Rio Grande Silvery Minnow v. Keys* reflect the dismissal of any and all claims regarding San Juan-Chama water.
  - d. Forego and refrain from bringing in any judicial or administrative forum, any future claims relating to or brought pursuant to the Endangered Species Act seeking use of San Juan-Chama Water without the consent of San Juan-Chama contractors for protection of federally-listed species in the Rio Grande Basin, and/or seeking federal consultation regarding use of San Juan-Chama water for protection of federally listed species in the Rio Grande Basin. Plaintiffs shall not bring any claims or lawsuits challenging the lawfulness or validity of the February 13, 2004 Biological Opinion for the Albuquerque Drinking Water Project (BiOp) or the June 1, 2004 Record of Decision for the Drinking Water Project. However, nothing in this Agreement shall be construed as prohibiting Plaintiffs from bringing any claims or lawsuits if there are violations of the BiOp and/or reinitiation of consultation over the Drinking Water Project or additional compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act is required due to changed circumstances or new information as allowed and provided by applicable law.
  - e. Acknowledge that the availability of storage space in Abiquiu Reservoir as contemplated by this Agreement is contingent upon completion and operation of the Authority's Drinking Water Project and subject to the conditions of Paragraph III (3)(a) of this Agreement.
  - f. To complement the Authority's appropriation of \$225,000 pursuant to paragraph III(3)(b), provide \$25,000 in funding through voluntary contributions from the Plaintiffs, exclusive of the Sierra Club, for the pilot environmental water leasing program described in that paragraph.
  - g. Recognize the City's water conservation program is a progressive and successful program with appropriate conservation goals.
2. Plaintiff Sierra Club shall:
- a. Move for an order of dismissal with prejudice in *Carangelo, et al. v. New Mexico State Engineer, Appellee and City of Albuquerque Public Works Department, Appellee-Applicant*, No. CV-2004-05036 dismissing Sierra Club as a Plaintiff from that action.
3. Albuquerque and the Authority shall:
- a. Within twelve (12) months or as otherwise agreed to by the Parties, after commencement of full diversions by the Authority for the Drinking Water Project, lease, at no charge, 30,000 acre-feet of storage space in Abiquiu Reservoir for use as a permanent Environmental Pool for the storage of native and/or San Juan-Chama water acquired by Plaintiffs or others through lease, purchase or donation. Such leases, purchases or donations shall be from willing participants ("Conservation Water"), including leases, purchases or

donations by or through the Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program ("Collaborative Program"). The purpose of the lease of storage space between the Authority and the Plaintiffs shall be to benefit the Rio Grande or Bosque habitat and to benefit species listed on the federal threatened and endangered species list consistent with the goals of the Collaborative Program.

- b. Provide such storage space as governed by the following provisions:
  - i. The provision of storage space for the Environmental Pool shall be subject to any requisite regulatory approvals. The Parties shall enter into a sublease for the Environmental Pool.
  - ii. The Authority shall retain title to and jurisdiction over such storage space, and no rights are given to Plaintiffs as to such storage space or the Authority's operations other than as specifically set forth in this Agreement.
  - iii. The Authority shall not be obligated to provide space for the Environmental Pool during any time where space is unavailable for all or part of the Environmental Pool due to factors or conditions outside the control of the Authority, and nothing in this Agreement shall allow operation of Abiquiu Reservoir in a manner which would otherwise impair or impede the Authority's ability to store and release water for Authority purposes.
  - iv. Conservation Water shall be released from the Environmental Pool for the purpose of benefiting the Rio Grande or Bosque habitat and benefiting federally-listed species consistent with the goals of the Collaborative Program.
  - v. The Authority reserves the right to utilize for any purpose whatever space is available from the Environmental Pool that cannot be used in a given year. That space shall be computed as the difference between 30,000 acre-feet and that amount of Conservation Water from any source that is available to be stored in a given year. The Authority agrees that such temporary storage shall not be utilized so as to impair the ability to store 30,000 acre-feet of Conservation Water in subsequent years in the Environmental Pool.
  - vi. The Authority has the right to use any available space in the Environmental Pool for storage of Conservation Water it may hold or acquire or to make such space available to third parties other than Plaintiffs through leases for purposes of storing Conservation Water to be used in accordance with this Agreement.
  - vii. In the event additional storage space in other reservoirs is made available in the future for an Environmental Pool and the Parties agree that the Authority's space is no longer needed, the Parties agree that any sub-lease

regarding the conservation pool will terminate and the provisions of this Agreement obligating the Authority to provide space shall be null and void and of no force or effect.

- c. Support the establishment and implementation of a pilot water leasing program for the Middle Rio Grande area via agricultural forbearance to increase flows in the Rio Grande and protect federally-listed species dependent on the river. Subject to appropriations, the Authority shall provide \$225,000 in funding for such a water leasing program.
  - d. Institute a residential check-off program whereby residents may choose to pay an additional \$1.00/month on their monthly water bill provided that such additional sums are allocated exclusively to acquire water to increase flows in the Rio Grande. Such program shall commence only after the Drinking Water Project is fully operational. Specific provisions of the residential check-off program shall be developed and implemented by the Authority. The administrative costs for the program shall be paid for by the program funds derived from the \$1.00/per month check-off. Subject to any necessary regulatory approvals, the water made available by this program shall be placed in the Environmental Pool in Abiquiu Reservoir created by this Agreement to be used to increase flows in the Rio Grande and protect federally-listed species dependent on the river.
  - e. Incorporate restoration as a component of any fuel reduction program undertaken by the City in the Rio Grande Bosque, including leaving or restoring dense stands of native vegetation to the extent feasible and environmentally appropriate.
  - f. Fulfill any obligations the City or Authority may have with regard to the Biological Opinion for the Drinking Water Project.
4. The City and the Plaintiffs shall:
- a. Jointly request in the *Rio Grande Silvery Minnow v. Keys* litigation that the Court's final order or judgment include a statement that those portions of the Court's April 19, 2002, and September 23, 2002, Memorandum Opinions and/or Orders that relate to the use of San Juan Chama water for endangered species or the Bureau of Reclamation's discretion regarding the same are no longer in effect, in light of this Settlement Agreement, but that all other portions of the Opinions and Orders remain unaffected by this Agreement.
5. The Parties shall:
- a. Work in good faith and in cooperation with the Collaborative Program to use the funding described in Paragraphs III(1)(f) and III(3)(c) to secure additional state and federal funding on a 75/25 matching basis in order to secure \$1 million for the water leasing program. The details of implementation of the water leasing program resulting from this Agreement will be determined in a

future agreement, to which the City, the Authority and Plaintiffs will be signatories.

- b. Attempt to execute environmental water lease agreements with one or more Pueblos or other Middle Rio Grande water users to use the funding described in Paragraph III(3)(c) to forbear the use of a designated quantity of agricultural water rights for a future irrigation season in order to provide increased river flows to protect federally-listed species such as the Rio Grande silvery minnow.
- c. Work in good faith to complete a future agreement among the Plaintiffs, the Authority, and relevant governmental agencies and in cooperation with the Collaborative Program regarding the details of control and use of the water in the Environmental Pool. The agreement shall provide that the water shall be released for the purpose of benefiting the Rio Grande or Bosque habitat and for federally-listed species, consistent with the goals of the Collaborative Program.

#### **Section IV: Duration and Enforcement**

- a. The Parties intend for this agreement to be perpetual, as a permanent resolution of the issues in dispute between them as outlined in this Agreement. Any party may seek judicial enforcement for specific performances of the duties required hereunder, provided that prior to seeking judicial enforcement, the enforcing party shall provide the other party written notice of the alleged breach to allow the non-enforcing party thirty (30) days to correct the alleged breach. Notice shall be provided to:

For the City:

For the Plaintiffs:

Letty Belin  
Belin & Sugarman  
618 Paseo de Peralta  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

And

Sierra Club Managing Attorney  
85 Second Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94105-3441

In no event shall any party be entitled to monetary damages for breach.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have executed this Settlement Agreement on the dates indicated below:

**ALBUQUERQUE-BERNALILLO  
COUNTY WATER UTILITY  
AUTHORITY**

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mark Sanchez  
Executive Director

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
**CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE**

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
James Lewis  
Chief Administrative Officer

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE**

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Kara Gillon

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**NEW MEXICO AUDUBON COUNCIL**

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Tom Jervis

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**FOREST GUARDIANS**

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
John Horning

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY**

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
David Henderson

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**SIERRA CLUB**

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Richard Barish

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**SOUTHWEST ENVIRONMENT  
CENTER**

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Kevin Bixby

Date: \_\_\_\_\_