

State of New Mexico
Office of the Governor

Susana Martinez
Governor

Contact: Scott Darnell
(505) 819-1398
scott.darnell@state.nm.us

For Immediate Release
May 15, 2012

**GOVERNOR SUSANA MARTINEZ ISSUES
NEW MEXICO DROUGHT DECLARATION**

*Declaration Assists Communities in Securing Federal Funding,
Convenes NM Drought Task Force*

SANTA FE, NM – Today, Governor Susana Martinez issued a formal drought declaration that encompasses the entire state of New Mexico. According to State Engineer Scott Verhines, 90 percent of New Mexico faced severe drought conditions at some point during the last year, with the remaining areas facing moderate drought. The 2011 water year was also the second driest on record.

“Drought conditions can create serious problems for many New Mexico communities, farms, ranches, and open spaces. Fire danger is high, water reservoirs run low, and in some cases, we’ve seen towns like Las Vegas take dramatic steps to reduce basic water consumption in their residents’ homes and businesses,” said Governor Martinez. “In addition to the work we’re doing at the state level to assist communities facing serious drought conditions, I’m hopeful this declaration will assist them in securing any available federal funding as well.”

Last week, Governor Martinez met with Las Vegas Mayor Alfonso Ortiz to continue their discussion on ways the state can help Las Vegas residents overcome the water shortages they face each year. Last year, Governor Martinez participated in an event to mark the beginning of the Moreno Street Reclaimed Water Project in Las Vegas, which was funded by a Community Development Block Grant. She also marked an agreement between the State Engineer’s Office, Department of Game and Fish, and the City of Las Vegas to provide 125 acre-feet of water from Storrie Lake to the city.

The Governor has also supported longer-term solutions to the city’s water challenges, such as repairing Peterson Dam and increasing the height of the dam, which would substantially increase the Las Vegas water supply. In her capital outlay request during the recent legislative session, she requested \$16 million in infrastructure investment for dam repairs across New Mexico, including at Peterson Dam. Lawmakers did not approve the funding for dam repairs. Just last

month, the Water Trust Board provided \$600,000 to the City of Las Vegas for engineering work on Peterson Dam repairs, and the Governor will again support providing necessary dam repair funding in capital outlay legislation next session.

The Drought Declaration will also convene the New Mexico Drought Task Force, led by the State Engineer, to examine ways the state can prepare for and mitigate the problems that occur in New Mexico due to persistent drought conditions.

The full text of the Governor's Executive Order can be found below:

EXECUTIVE ORDER 2012-006

DROUGHT DECLARATION

WHEREAS, New Mexico continues to suffer through a prolonged drought; and

WHEREAS, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor, one hundred percent of New Mexico was in moderate drought at some point during the last year, with over ninety percent in severe status; and

WHEREAS, for the State of New Mexico as a whole, the water year 2011 (October 2010 through September 2011) is the second driest on record, with only 1955-1956 being drier; and

WHEREAS, no single definition of drought works in all circumstances which makes drought much more difficult to differentiate as compared to other natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, and tornadoes; and

WHEREAS, the State of New Mexico has suffered through numerous natural disasters associated with the drought, including crop production loss, severe wild fires, and flooding due to severe wild fires; and

WHEREAS, there exists communities where drinking water supplies are threatened due to the culmination of the impacts of from the drought; and

WHEREAS, most reservoirs around the state are at very low storage levels; and

WHEREAS, in spite of recent precipitation events in the state, it may take several years of significantly higher than normal levels of precipitation and snow pack for current reservoir storage to recover; and

WHEREAS, there is a shortage of soil moisture in farmlands, rangelands and forests; and

WHEREAS, it may take a considerable amount of precipitation and snow melt runoff to return the soil moisture conditions and vegetation health to reasonable levels; and

WHEREAS, fire conditions in many areas of the state reached critical stage last summer and may do so again this spring and summer; and

WHEREAS, the current U. S. seasonal drought outlook from the National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center states that the drought will likely persist or intensify across much of New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, this drought is of such magnitude as to be beyond local control and require additional resources; and

WHEREAS, extraordinary measures may be necessary to protect public health, ensure public safety and well-being, and provide for the economic stability of the state.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Susana Martinez, Governor of the State of New Mexico, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and Laws of the State of New Mexico, do hereby declare a state of emergency due to drought conditions statewide; and

I DIRECT the continuation of the New Mexico State Drought Task Force for an additional two years.

I FURTHER DIRECT that the state engineer shall convene the New Mexico Drought Task Force within the second quarter of calendar year 2012 to:

- Assess the continued severity of the drought and its effects on the various sectors of the state's resources and economy.
- Make recommendations to the Governor for intermediate actions and long-term strategies to mitigate drought conditions and impacts in the state.
- Appoint such working groups as may be necessary and appropriate to examine and recommend solutions regarding the drought conditions to the task force.
- Provide information and guidance to the Governor regarding drought conditions.

The task force shall meet thereafter at least once each quarter of the year and shall conduct all meetings and maintain written minutes of its proceedings in conformity with the provisions of the New Mexico Open Meetings Act.

I ORDER the review of the New Mexico Drought Plan and revision as necessary based on: assessment of current conditions, evaluation of drought impacts, and recommendations for appropriate response and mitigation actions to be taken.

I FURTHER ORDER the New Mexico State Drought Task Force to recommend to the Governor recipients and objects of emergency funding, pursuant to and in accordance with NMSA 1978, Sections 12-11-23 through 12-11-25.

I FURTHER URGE New Mexico's counties, municipalities and local governments to consider implementing appropriate firework bans and other reasonable fire prevention measures, pursuant to NMSA 1978, Section 60-2C-8.1.

THIS ORDER supersedes any other previous orders, proclamations or directives in conflict. This executive order shall take effect immediately and shall remain in effect until such time as it is rescinded by the Governor.

SIGNED AT THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE THIS 11TH DAY OF MAY 2012.

WITNESS MY HAND AND THE GREAT SEAL OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO.

SUSANA MARTINEZ
GOVERNOR

ATTEST:

DIANNA J. DURAN
SECRETARY OF STATE

###