

ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL



Albuquerque withdraws controversial water rights transfer application

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The Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority yesterday afternoon withdrew a controversial water rights transfer application that would have for the first time allowed the utility to buy up agricultural water rights and transfer them directly to the utility's drinking water system.

In the past, the utility's ag water rights transfers have involved only buying up farmers' water rights and using the water to offset the effects of the utility's groundwater pumping on the Rio Grande. The river through Albuquerque loses a significant amount of water each year that flows into the aquifer to fill space left by past pumping for municipal water use.

The amount of water involved was small, but the potential precedent was large (see my story from Saturday's paper for more detail). The number of protests filed by major water policy players also was large:

- Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District
- New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission
- WildEarth Guardians
- Janet Jarratt (Valencia County farmer, major New Mexico water policy player)

I've asked for more information from the water utility on the reason(s) for withdrawing the application. I'll have more in tomorrow's newspaper.