

Aguas del Norte Water Alliance Meeting

Resiliency Discussion & 2026 Rates Survey Results

9/11/2026

Hazard Mitigation & Generator Updates

- Carey with NCNMEDD – Rio Arriba County Hazard Mitigation Plan - State reviewed and sent back, county has sent it back to state, state sent to FEMA for approval.
- Matthew from Blue Umbrella Solutions will call the 10 systems about what hazards/list of projects (meters, water tanks, generators, distribution lines, anything you're missing in redundancy) they might have so Rio Arriba can add to their list.
- FEMA 404 Mitigation plan can add yourself to a state list, in the case of disaster, list of possible projects through the hazard mitigation plan, the generator program is a reimbursement.
 - Generators from Wagner are about 1 year out on procurement
 - ♣ Rodney Sanchez – 505-506-5055
 - ♣ Sanchez_Rodney@WagnerEquipment.com
 - Felicity will be new contact for North Central
- Develop committee to meet with county to schedule an agreement (similar to Mora) on how the county and systems communicate

Compliance Reminders

- Sampling- Lead & Copper/DBP Samples
 - Check DWW
 - Due at end of September

Resiliency Discussion

- Natural Hazards and Vulnerabilities
 - Drought, fire, flooding, malevolent acts, lack of operators and water system managers, underfunding
- Invite Brian – new NMED certification person to one of our next sessions
- Ideas:
 - Systems could attend career days to talk about water and wastewater operator jobs



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- Most of northern NM is in severe drought

2026 Rate Survey

- The 6,000 gallons number can be difficult for systems since water usage varies per system, but that's historical number that makes it easier for comparison across time
- SW EFC in the future will request systems' actual rate schedules
- NM has over 1,000 active public water systems
- NM has 533 has active community water systems
- Largest 28 CWSs supply 74% of the state's drinking water
- Remaining 505 CWSs must comply with same standards as the larger ones
- Setting Water Rates
 - Decide priorities and appropriate values to charge their customers
 - State expects systems to review rates every year – however don't have capacity to review or often haven't even changed them in a long time
 - ♣ Takes a lot of time to raise rates
 - ♣ Helps to know what other systems are charging and be similar but still affordable
 - Educating your community about the why of why the rates are what they are
 - ♣ Fact Sheets
 - ♣ There are programs to help consumers pay their water/electricity bills (the state water one discontinued in 2024)
 - ♣ A system could start a fund perhaps that people donate to support those who need assistance with their bills
 - ♣ The state should continue their program to help with indigent consumers. Is there other state/federal funding for indigent users?
 - A rate study is important to have so that you could take it to the state to discuss if perhaps subsidies are needed
 - Self Help Programs (Some food banks)
- NMED Annual Surveys
 - Legislators look at the results
 - Federal legislators look at the results to determine some program funding
 - Other systems may look at the results to figure out what systems around them charge
 - Prior Year Results:
 - ♣ https://www.env.nm.gov/drinking_water/rates/
 - The surveys don't tell us:



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- ♣ if water charges and maintaining compliance and/or avoiding public health violations are linked
- ♣ If a system is covering its full cost of service or subsidizing in some way
- 2026 Summary
 - ♣ 169 Public CWSs responded (~40%)
 - ♣ Median residential water charge for 6,000 gal as of December 2025 - \$44.66
 - ♣ Median charge for <50 connections: \$53.00
 - ♣ Median charge for 51-200 connections: \$50.89
 - ♣ Median charge for 201-1000 connections: \$42.41
- Prior Survey Comparison:
 - ♣ Median number of connections have gone down from 2016 (301) to 2026 (154)
 - ♣ Annual water production of water has gone down
- 2% is the EPA threshold for median household income spent on water income to be considered affordable
- Key Takeaways:
 - ♣ Water rates have increased over time, often more than inflation
 - ♣ Smaller systems typically must charge more
 - ♣ Unclear if the full cost of service is being covered, but charges for services are not considered unaffordable by standard thresholds
- Recommendations:
 - ♣ Submit the survey next year, coming in early 2027
 - ♣ Find and utilize free resources
 - ♣ Collaborate
 - ♣ Find external funding for capital improvements
 - ♣ Be proactive
 - ♣ Without appropriate revenue, maintaining infrastructure, building savings, encouraging water conservation, and paying personnel is not possible
- Recommendations for State Agencies:
 - ♣ Prioritize, incentivize, and compel survey completion
 - ♣ Collect and analyze rate structures, not just charges set at volume
 - ♣ Build capacity to regionalize

To-dos:

- **Next meeting – Friday, November 20th**



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- Share current programs for helping customers with bills



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