

---

**AWRA 2011 ANNUAL WATER RESOURCES CONFERENCE**  
**Albuquerque, New Mexico**

**November 7-10, 2011**

**Copyright © 2011 AWRA**

---

**CONTINUED EFFORTS TO RESUSCITATE THE SANTA RE RIVER**

Claudia Borchert\*, Brian Drypolcher

**ABSTRACT:** The City of Santa Fe has taken steps recently to identify how the 1,000 acre-feet allocated to the Santa Fe River in the City's long-range water plan would best resuscitate the Santa Fe River, named the "most endangered"; in the United States by American Rivers in 2007. For decades, the river downstream of the City's supply reservoirs flowed only when upstream inflows exceeded reservoir capacity or from urban storm runoff downstream of the reservoirs. Through conversations and community meetings, Santa Feans identified the following objectives as the most important potential outcomes for the river: 1) develop an ecologically healthy, vegetative corridor, 2) benefit the entire community with flows, 3) nurture a beautiful, natural urban greenspace, and 4) provide an educational resource for schools and community stewardship. The task of a "Core Working Group" of 12 volunteer stakeholders was to recommend a prescription of daily target flows to meet the community objectives while staying within the annual water budget of 1,000 acre-feet. For average years, the Core Working Group divided the target flows into four timeframes. Two, high-flow pulses provide some water for the entire 16 mile "endangered" stretch; one larger pulse coincides with the spring runoff period and allows for flow necessary for the annual Fishing Derby. Flows of one-fourth the magnitude will provide minimal flows to the downtown area during the summer. Very low flows (less than 1 cfs) will maintain the ecosystem of a restored wildlife preserve within the first mile of the most downstream reservoir. The Core Working Group also debated how to modify the 1,000 acre feet allocation in drier and wetter years. While maintaining the 1000 acre-feet allocation in average and wet years, the Core Working Group recommended an approach to scale back flows as a percentage of forecasted watershed yield in dryer years, with a minimum allocation of 300 acre-feet at the low end of the scale to maintain the wildlife preserve and provide, minimally, for the riparian corridor irrigation needs. The next challenge is to gain approval of the recommended target flows from the elected officials, who may not prioritize river stewardship.

---

\* Water Resources Coordinator, City of Santa Fe, 801 W. San Mateo Rd., Santa Fe, NM 87505 USA, Phone: 505-955-4203, Email: ciborchert@santafenm.gov