

Heinrich calls for locally-driven solutions to tackle drought

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WASHINGTON, D.C.—During a Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources hearing Oct. 13, U. S. Senator Martin Heinrich, D-NM, addressed the long-term drought challenges New Mexico faces, and called for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of water management across the state.

He suggested that locally driven and science-based solutions are key to tackling the impacts of drought and ensuring our communities have access to clean water. The committee considered legislation Senator Heinrich is cosponsoring, the New Mexico Drought Preparedness Act of 2015, which was introduced by U.S. Senator Tom Udall, D-NM.

Senator Heinrich highlighted a successful collaborative effort by federal, state, and tribal governments, utility companies, water users, conservation groups, landowners, and other stakeholders to implement a recovery plan for four endangered fish in the San Juan and Upper Colorado Basins.

Senator Heinrich also highlighted the importance of using limited water infrastructure funds wisely and pursuing cost effective solutions to water supply problems, pointing to a recent Bureau of Reclamation Value Planning Study of the proposed diversion project on the Gila River in New Mexico that found that the costs would likely outweigh the benefits of a diversion project.

Later in the hearing, Senator Heinrich discussed inefficiencies in the operation of federal dams and reservoirs in New Mexico. He also highlighted the need for long-term strategies to make the most of limited water supplies.