

My Turn

Río Grande listed among 10 most endangered rivers

By Elana Lombard

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To the People of Taos and other concerned citizens:

The Río Grande has been listed as one of the 10 most endangered rivers on the planet. One of the first Wild and Scenic rivers in the world to be given federal protection is dying. Do we care?

Some of you may be aware that El Prado's new 1,600-foot well is being drilled along U.S. 64 near the Gorge Bridge. This well raises a number of issues that immediately threaten to further compromise the Río Grande and this beautiful and fragile valley. Please read and make your voices heard.

If this well is allowed to operate, it will directly impact springs along the Río Grande. These springs (including Stagecoach Hot Springs) supply a significant amount of water to the river and support lush riparian ecosystems along the eastern shore. Deep wells create a cone of depression that can drain groundwater from as far as 5 miles away. A prominent geologist projected five years or less of pumping will dry up major springs along the Río Grande.

The water quality of the deep aquifer in Taos is not suitable for irrigation, human consumption or discharging into our stream systems. Glorieta Geosciences did extensive tests on the quality of the deep groundwater in Taos and found high concentrations of arsenic and fluoride in many of their test wells. Pockets of good water exist, but the supply would only be temporary as low-quality water would drain in due to the negative pressure created by pumping. Filtering this water is cost prohibitive.

The planned Tarleton Eco-Village has an agreement with El Prado Water and Sanitation to purchase 200 acre feet of toxic water from the deep well along the Río Grande.

El Prado's water pipeline will run along U.S. 64. Is there a plan to develop U.S. 64 as a commercial strip using water from El Prado's well?

There are two classes of water in Colorado and New Mexico – tributary and non-tributary. El Prado's will be pumping the less regulated non-tributary water. Non-tributary water is not recognized as public property in New Mexico.

The Taos Valley is blessed with good water. In large part, this is due to hundreds of years of acequia flood irrigation that recharges the shallow aquifer we all depend on. It would be nothing less than criminal to squander the natural wealth beneath our feet and do nothing as the Río Grande dies.

Taos needs affordable housing and good and appropriate development, but not at the expense of Río Grande, this beautiful valley and our children's future. The choice is ours.

If you would like a copy of the Glorieta water quality study or other information feel free to email me at muddnflood@gmail.com

Elana Lombard lives and works in Taos.