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## EDITORIALS

### Fixed Water Reserve Should Be Explored

New Mexico has a water problem. There's simply not enough of it to keep pace with the long-term growth projected for our dry state. So long as natives continue to grow their families here, and the highways and airports remain open, a day of reckoning will one day be upon us.

Sound planning for a future of scarce water and a growing population can stave off that eventuality and the bumpy road that leads to it. That's the motivating factor behind the state water plan set to be adopted on Dec. 17. The plan, touching on a tangled web of enforcement, accurate metering, water rights, compact obligations and stepped-up conservation, would establish the basic blueprint to better manage one of the state's most precious resources.

Even if the statewide plan is adopted, this is only the beginning of a long process that will no doubt occupy the time and thoughts of governors and legislators well into the future.

That's where Think New Mexico comes in. The local nonpartisan think tank with an impressive track record has proposed what it calls a "Strategic River Reserve." The idea would essentially have the state acquire water rights from willing sellers so that a large supply of water would be available in the event of a shortage. The idea builds upon the concept of short-term water banks, included as part of the statewide plan, but differs in that the Strategic River Reserve would be a permanent water bank.

It's an idea worth considering.

The proposal shouldn't expressly forbid the purchase of water rights from any seller — acequia members in the north or farmers in the south — but it just might ease the coming water wars.