I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Residents of the far South Valley have expressed concern regarding drinking water quality and fire protection in the area. Historical studies have shown poor water quality in the shallow groundwater, which is the major water supply source for wells in the area. The studies have documented that the poor water quality has been caused by the following sources:

- Septic systems
- Petroleum and chemical underground storage tanks
- Agricultural practices (for example: long term use of fertilizers)

The Albuquerque Metropolitan Area Water and Wastewater Board (AMAWWB) passed a resolution in 2001 to address the water quality issue and need for fire protection by providing a public water system to serve the area. Based on the adopted resolution, Bernalillo County has initiated the planning process, which is supported by funds from local, state and federal sources.

The proposed project will provide water service to residents and businesses of the South Valley in accordance with land use designations and densities from the Southwest Area Plan (SWAP). The goal of the project is to protect public health and safety by providing reliable water service, including fire protection, in accordance with state and federal standards.

The proposed project service area is bounded on the north by Metzgar Road, the south by Isleta Pueblo, the east by the Rio Grande, and the west by a meandering line that corresponds to the land surface elevation of 5,063 feet above mean sea level. Additional areas that extend beyond the project service area will likely be used for water storage reservoir(s), pump station(s) and transmission mains necessary to provide water to the proposed service area.

The high cost of the project and limited funding allocations will require that the project be implemented in phases. The goal of the initial phases will be to serve the existing higher density developed areas including schools, institutions, and commercial facilities. Subsequent phases will be based on providing service to the existing developed areas to the maximum extent possible with available funding.

Water will be supplied from the Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority (ABWUA) water system. Water service to the project area will be provided through a minimum of two supply sources to ensure system reliability. The water supply sources will include existing groundwater wells and the proposed utilization of treated surface water. Water will be provided to the project area from existing storage reservoirs, a new distribution system, and, in the likely future, a new reservoir west of Coors Boulevard. The possible reservoirs that will serve the area are located northwest and east of the project area. A water supply pipeline river crossing will be required from the eastern storage reservoir. A new groundwater supply well is not anticipated for the project; however, potential well sites may be identified for planning purposes.

Three water system alternatives, in addition to the no-build alternative, were considered to provide water service to the project area. These are summarized below:

- **Rural/Domestic:**
  - ✓ Water use restricted to typical residential indoor households only with no outdoor water use
  - ✓ Limited fire protection provided to specific areas based on proximity to major infrastructure
  - ✓ No residential fire protection, with no fire hydrants in residential areas
- **Suburban:**
  - ✓ Water use restricted to typical residential indoor household uses with limited outdoor use for landscaped areas only
  - ✓ Fire protection provided in accordance with Uniform Fire Code
- **Urban:**
  - ✓ No restrictions on type of indoor and outdoor water use. Level of service is typical of city standard water service and conservation requirements
  - ✓ Residential and commercial fire protection provided in accordance with city standards

The evaluation of each of these alternatives included the following:

- **Water quality** – Provide water service that meets state and federal standards.
- **Fire protection** – Provide water service that meets fire protection standards.
- **Land Use** – Provide a water system that is designed based on land use designations and densities from existing land use planning documents such as the SWAP.
- **Business and employment opportunities** – Provide water service that will enable the development of desirable businesses/services in commercially zoned areas, which may also provide employment opportunities.
- **Cost** – Provide a water system that is cost effective and technically feasible.
- **Public Input** – Provide a water system that is consistent with public input obtained from an extensive community involvement process, implemented to solicit comments on the project and proposed design concepts.

On the basis of these factors, the County has proposed the suburban level of water service as the preferred alternative. This concept provides a reliable drinking water system and adequate fire protection, with minimum impact to the character and quality of life of the community.

To assess the potential social, economic, and environmental impacts of the proposed water system, the following environmental information document (EID) was prepared. Environmental documentation consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is required on all proposed federal actions, including the proposed South Valley water system, which will be partially funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Environmental clearance for the project will be obtained through a tiered approach. The first step is the following EID, which addresses overall project impacts at a conceptual level. As subsequent detailed designs and engineering plans for each phase of the project are developed, additional, specific environmental studies will be completed, as outlined in this document.