

El Paso Times  
Borderland  
Saturday, April 13, 2002

### **El Paso plans to buy water at Dell City**

Dan J. Williams  
El Paso Times

Paso's plans to secure more sources of drinking water expanded Friday with the announcement of plans to buy water rights beneath 25,000 acres near Dell City.

The \$8.2 million purchase-option agreement was signed by the Lynch family, longtime property owners in the valley about 40 miles east of El Paso, said Ed Archuleta, manager of El Paso Water Utilities. If exercised within 90 days, the purchase would be the city's third land acquisition since 1992 for rights to water that eventually could be piped to El Paso. The Public Service Board, which oversees the city water utility, bought 25,000 acres near Van Horn for \$1.5 million in 1995 and paid \$2 million for 25,000 acres in the Antelope Valley near Valentine in 1992. "We know we're going to have to import water into El Paso. It's just a matter of when and where, and at what cost," Archuleta said. "It's an insurance policy."

As the city's underground water source continues its course toward expected depletion in 25 to 30 years, the city is looking for other water sources to supplement the well water and the Rio Grande, which now supplies about 40 percent of the city's needs.

Mick Lynch, who with his uncles Jack and Jim Lynch sealed the deal with the Public Service Board, said the sale is in the best interests of El Paso and people who live and work in the Dell City area.

"Fifty years of monitoring the aquifer shows that if managed properly, it could last into perpetuity," Lynch said. "What we are trying to do is bring the PSB to the table as a vested owner of water rights in that area ... and we're confident they will be a good steward of the aquifer."

Archuleta and Lynch said the five-member Hudspeth County Underground Water Conservation District board supports the sale. The board is now considering water-export applications from the PSB and others, including Hunt Building Corp., which owns property in the area.

Hunt recently completed a comprehensive study of the Dell Valley aquifer and presented it to the city. The study indicated that the aquifer is recharged every year from runoff and could supply El Paso up to 50,000

acre-feet of water a year -- about half the city's current use.

Dan J. Williams may be reached at [dwilliams@elpasotimes.com](mailto:dwilliams@elpasotimes.com)