

<http://mountainmail.blogspot.com/2010/07/water-problems-continue-at-alamo-navajo.html>

## **WATER PROBLEMS CONTINUE AT ALAMO-Navajo Reservation**

By Nathalie Nance For the Mountain Mail



Scarcity, and water tasting like chlorine have lately been recurring complaints from Alamo residents. However, a low water supply is not a new problem, according to Alamo Navajo School board, Inc. (ANSBI) Executive Director Michael Hawkes.

“Use always escalates in summer,” Hawkes said.

This is mainly due to people using water for their gardens and livestock. Alamo has five wells, which produce more than four million gallons of water per month. The output is constant, but increasing use causes low supply. Some areas, like the so-called UFO area, have been more affected than others. In addition, when windmills filling stock tanks blew down during windstorms, it left some users at the end of a water supply line without water. When this happens, or when the water is turned off in connection with repairs, anyone can come to the water building and fill up water, Hawkes said.

Moreover, frequent power outages tend to drain tanks and there also have been cases of vandalism, when some one has drilled or shot holes in the tanks.

More importantly, the pipelines have been in a state of disrepair for some time, because of no revenues coming in. To deal with this, ANSBI and the Alamo Chapter formed the Alamo Water Users Association in September last year and introduced a monthly flat rate of \$22 for water use. However, currently, only 60-70 percent of the households pay, according to Hawkes. The water bills have upset some people.

“It is true that some people are not willing to pay,” said Chapter President Scott Apachito.

However, a revenue base is necessary for water maintenance, and to apply for federal grant money in order to gradually repair all the water lines and to restore tanks.

“We also need to do an aquifer study,” Hawkes said. “But right now, we have the highest water quality since September. The water here used to be brown.”

According to Scott Apachito, the focus will be on the possibility of drilling more wells, hopefully within two years. He adds that anyone can volunteer on the board of the Alamo Water Users Association and that everyone is welcome to attend the quarterly meetings.

As far as the complaints of too much chlorine in the water, there is regular testing every month to decide how the water needs to be treated. In fact, according to Hawkes, if water smells like chlorine, it most often means that too little chlorine has been added.

“Right now we are trying as much as we can to get the water back to normal, but it is important to remember that the water is intended for personal use and not for commercial use, like stock and gardens”, says Scott Apachito.

Marcus Pino, who is responsible for maintaining the water system, often comes across people on the reservation watering their cows and horses.

“Water them every two days, not every day, and try to think about other people,” is his advice.