



2013 Year End Report

As we reflect back on 2013 I would like to begin by sharing the thoughts two Argentine artists captured in poetry and song. The Argentine poet Jorge Luis Borges claimed that the *milonga* is one of the greatest conversational forms of Buenos Aires.

The *milonga* of African origin comes from one of the Bantu languages. It is the plural form of *mulonga* meaning “word” or “wordiness”, and suggesting, by extension, verbal entanglement and intricacy. The Argentines turned the original *mulonga* to poems which in turn were created into songs and music and which are fully illustrated in an Argentine ballroom dance where such talk everyone is invited to participate and to collaborate in the dialogue, where the dialogue implies collaboration and complicity.

A Uruguayan *milonga* by the name “Los Hermanos” interpreted by the Argentine singer Mercedes Sosa captures the essence of the brotherhood that volunteer board members have formed throughout the years.

In the paragraphs under the stanzas you will find how the words in the song find similarities to the select women and men that manage our water associations. Similar to the words in the *milonga*, these select women and men have dedicated their lives to the vision of providing safe drinking water to their communities.

While it’s often times associated as a protest song, I interpret it as a song of brothers and sisters working together on a common vision.

Here you will find my interpretation for some of the words of this beautiful *milonga*:

Yo tengo tantos hermanos
I have some many brothers

Que no los puedo contar
That I cannot count them

En el valle, la montaña,
In the valleys, the mountains,

En la pampa y en el mar
On the plains and in the ocean

Cada cual con sus trabajos
Each one with his own works

Con sus sueños cada cual
With everyone of his dreams

Con la esperanza delante,
With our hopes in front of us,

Con los recuerdos detras
With our memories behind us

Yo tengo tantos hermanos
I have so many brothers

Que no los puedo contar
That I cannot count them

Through the years, I have come to develop so many friendships throughout north central New Mexico – an innumerable amount of brothers and sisters dedicated to the same cause of providing safe drinking water to their communities.

Similar to the words in the *milonga*, these brothers and sisters are scattered throughout the valleys, mountains, plains and the vast and profound ocean of state and federal government. Each individual committed with their own works, however similar these works may be. We speak of what has come to past and dream of what lies ahead – these ideas often times clashing and opposing each other.

Gente de mano caliente
People with many talents

Por eso de la amistad
Sharing in friendships

Con un lloro pa' llorarlo
With a cry for the sake of crying

Con un rezo pa' rezar
With a prayer for the sake of praying

Con un horizonte abierto
With a vast horizon

Que siempre esta mas alla
Which seems always beyond reach

Y esa fuerza pa' buscarlo
And the strength that we seek

Con tezon y voluntad.
With willingness and perseverance.

Throughout the years we have come to appreciate the many talents and more specifically the dedication that these select number of volunteer board members have, who with an enormous amount of willingness and perseverance have managed and operated our water associations.

A large majority of these women and men have dedicated their lives to two careers, one which was devoted to the sustainability of their families; wife, husband, children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, while the other without any pomp or glory to the sustainability of our water systems.

Cuando parece mas cerca
When all seems within reach

Es cuando se aleja mas
In fact increases in distance

Yo tengo tantos hermanos
I have so many brothers

Que no los puedo contar.
That I cannot count them.

Y asi seguimos andando
And we continue walking

Curtidos de soledad
Transforming our solitude

Nos perdemos por el mundo
We get lost throughout the world

Nos volvemos a encontrar.
Only to once again encounter each other

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Because in many instances they are the same people, these volunteer board members have experienced the immense ebbs and flows associated with managing, technically operating and seeking financial assistance to keep our water associations sustainable – each time transforming themselves to meet the current demands placed by their constituents, the financial institutions and the ever increasing regulatory requirements - a feat lasting well over half a century. To survive the latest demands, we recognize that working together as brothers and sisters is the only approach we can employ to reach our goals – regionalization.

Y asi nos reconocemos
And this is how we recognize each other

Por el lejano mirar
From a long distance

Por las coplas que mordemos
For the stanzas we bite

Semillas de inmensidad.
Seeds of immensity

Yo tengo tantos hermanos
I have so many brothers

Que no los puedo contar
That I cannot count them

Through regionalization efforts we recognize that through our similar needs and our combined knowledge we can survive the insurmountable demands placed on us. Combining our limited resources we can take bite size portions of the immense seeds of change confronting us.

Pa' que nadie quede atras.
And so that no one stays behind

Yo tengo tantos hermanos
Have so many brothers

Que no los puedo contar
That I cannot count them

Y una hermana muy hermosa
And a beautiful sister

Que se llama libertad
Who is named Liberty

Similar to the volunteer board members of whom I speak above Veronica, Office Administrator, Ken, Business Manager and Carlos, Water Operator have demonstrated an equal commitment to our work under our still newly formed El Valle Water Alliance. Thank you Veronica, Ken and Carlos – without your dedication and hard work, we could not realize the success of El Valle Water Alliance. As we look towards 2014 and beyond, we must

establish long-term goals for the region. As we all know, the state through new funding policies and their recently coordinated efforts to ensure that all local governments are in compliance with regulatory policies and programs is slowly nudging rural small utilities towards some form of regionalization.

While the state continues to develop an environment to ensure we are working towards self-sufficiency, this along with the compounded drought conditions, bleak drought forecasts, limited financial resources to replace existing or construct new infrastructure, a limited number of potential connections in our area and the up and coming efforts to update our Regional Water Plan provide the stage from which we must establish our long-term regional goals.

The following synopsis of a report commissioned by the Legislative Finance Committee provides some foresight of what we might expect from the state in the near future. The report titled “Water Trust Board – A Review of Planning, Spending and Outcomes” illustrates that in order to address the State’s immense water and wastewater infrastructure needs the State of New Mexico will need to change the methods for which it currently provides public financing to meet these needs.

Simply, the purpose of the report was to evaluate the funding program utilized by the Water Trust Board and administered by the New Mexico Finance Authority against State laws and regulations, including collaboration between member agencies to implement the state water plan and achieve cost effectiveness.

Please find the report’s Executive Summary:

Water is critical to the economic strength and public welfare of New Mexico. While providing adequate and safe drinking water for citizens is primarily the responsibility of local governments, the state supports communities through the combined efforts of state agencies, including the Water Trust Board (WTB). The largest of seven water infrastructure programs in New Mexico, the WTB has funded \$250 million for projects since 2002.

The WTB was created in 2001 to conserve, protect, and distribute New Mexico’s scarce water resources by providing funding for water infrastructure projects. The 16-member board represents key state agencies and public members to coordinate policies and funding to achieve these goals. Projects are prioritized to support urgent projects that meet the needs of regional and state water plans. New Mexico provides mostly grant funds for water projects, while the majority of states provide self-

sustaining, revolving loan funds. Second only to Kentucky for providing grant funding for water projects, New Mexico uses severance tax bond (STB) revenues as the funding source.

New Mexico has seven water-related infrastructure programs, although they are fragmented and lack coordination. Programs operate independently of each other and no one agency is held accountable for this much-needed coordination. New Mexico law requires the WTB to prioritize the planning and financing of water projects to implement the state water plan. The state water plan names the WTB to coordinate with state agencies to establish a centralized process for funding water projects.

Although challenges exist for the fair administration of the Water Project Fund, the WTB is correctly funding projects according to policy, including more funding for regional projects that increase the delivery of water. These projects include the three largest diversion projects in the state, the San Juan-Chama, the Navajo-Gallup, and the Ute Lake diversion projects.

With many of the state’s community water systems lacking basic utility management tools, the WTB has increased eligibility requirements to improve financial, managerial, and technical capacities.

To comply with these new requirements, communities will be challenged with adopting best management practices and comply with state and federal laws. These best management practices include financial audits and the use of asset management plans. With many rural water utilities managed by volunteer boards, this challenge will require cooperation and support by the state and the WTB.

Please find the report’s Recommendations: The Water Trust Board should:

- establish a centralized funding process for funding water projects statewide through collaboration by all water funding programs; and

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- require the use of a single uniform funding application process to serve all taxpayers requesting water-related funding, to be accessed by all water funding agencies.

The Legislature should:

- require the use of a single application process for all water infrastructure projects through a uniform funding application process to serve all applicants as well as all funding agencies for water programs;
- establish a single, interagency committee responsible for coordinating all water funding programs for water infrastructure projects and require a centralized reporting process to measure effectiveness;
- require a statewide, comprehensive, multi-year capital plan for water projects; and

Our Website

We now have a website! Our website address is elvallewateralliance.com. On our website you can find board meeting minutes, reports, newsletters, meeting dates, and agency links.

Payment Drop Box

We now have a drop box outside of our office for payments. There are times where a job requires us to be outside the office and we may be unavailable to take your payment in person.

You are able to leave your payment in the drop box located on the left hand side of the entrance. We do not except cash payments!!

Please make sure the payments are in check or money order form.

If you do not have a check or money order there is a Post Office located across the street on the left hand side of the church. The Post Office is open until 11AM.

- prioritize and fund water-related capital outlay infrastructure projects only when existing loans and grant programs cannot.

While the Report's recommendations are very worthy and pragmatic - the details behind the recommendations will likely have the greatest impact to rural communities. With recent changes to the Water Trust Board policies, rural communities can expect to pay in excess of \$100,000 before they can begin to qualify for state funding.

It is with this backdrop in mind that I invite you to participate and to collaborate in the dialogue, where the dialogue implies collaboration and complicity, just like in the *milonga*.

For a full copy of the Legislative Finance Committee Report, please contact Ramón at 505-660-2186.

- Ramon Lucero, President EVWA

About Our Organization

El Valle Water Alliance seeks to maintain sound management practices and the necessary infrastructure to sustain the health of our communities & our water table, for current and future generations.

Articles & Submissions

The El Valle Water Alliance would be happy to hear from anyone who is interested in submitting an article, a story, or even a recipe to appear in one of our newsletters. If anyone is interested, you can email or mail your information to our office and we would be happy to review it. Upon approval, the El Valle Water Alliance would be happy to incorporate any local information in our newsletters.

