

ALBUQUERQUE TRIBUNE
Albuquerque, NM: November 25, 2002

N.M. urged to lighten its electric load

By [Shea Andersen](#)
Tribune Reporter

Conserving energy can save money, create jobs and put water back in rivers, a new study says.

And in a region known to be one of the nation's fastest growing, the sooner New Mexico and the nation can embrace efficiency measures, the better, the study says.

The Southwest Energy Efficiency Project, or SWEEP, last week released the results of its \$250,000 effort to document energy- and money-saving strategies. The group is partially funded by the Hewlett Foundation.

"Our study shows that increasing the efficiency of electricity use will save New Mexico consumers and businesses money, support thousands of new jobs and reduce water use for electricity production by billions of gallons per year," said Howard Geller, founder and director of SWEEP.

The study describes a "high-efficiency scenario" that includes use of more efficient appliances and lighting systems, more efficient design and construction of new homes and buildings, and improvements to industrial processes. Geller said many of the technologies to make the scenario possible are commercially available but underused.

"We are not on a path toward this high-energy-efficient scenario today," Geller said.

If New Mexico stays on its current path, he said, electricity use will grow by 1.47 percent per year between now and 2020.

The high-efficiency scenario aims to lower energy use by 0.57 percent per year.

Reducing energy consumption could mean building fewer power plants, which use water to generate electricity, Geller said.

And when corporations save money on energy, they'll have money to spend on other goods and services, which stimulates the economy, he said.

Geller and SWEEP recommend the state provide financial incentives to utilities to operate energy-efficiency programs and reform utility rates to encourage customers to use less energy.

"Implementing these policies and programs would overcome the market and behavioral barriers that are limiting energy efficiency in New Mexico today," Geller said. "The time has come for New Mexico to mine its energy-efficiency resource."
