



[NMED-SWQB Clean Water Act Interview](#)

Name: Bruce Thomson

Job: Professor Emeritus & Research Professor, Dept. of Civil, Construction & Environmental Engineering, UNM; Water Quality Control Commissioner (Member-at-Large, expires 4/2023)

Date: 10/21/22

- *Tell me the basics about yourself! (education, hobbies, family, whatever you feel like)*

I've got degrees in Civil Engineering (B.S. from U.C. Davis) and Environmental Science & Engineering (M.S. & Ph.D. from Rice University). I've been at UNM since the late Pleistocene (1978). I'm among the last licensed engineers in NM who still knows how to use a slide rule.

Bruce Thomson is the name assigned to me in the federal witness protection program. My real name is Toby Adobe and along with my identical quadruplet brothers (Jacoby Adobe, Pierogi Adobe, and Moby Adobe), we constitute New Mexico's premier International Bluegrass band – the Adobe Brothers.

- *What made you want to participate in protecting water resources (through your work and/or as a Commissioner)?*

My father was a wildlife biologist who instilled a very strong environmental ethic in my siblings and me. In college all of the life sciences classes were full so I got stuck in science & engineering classes to take enough credits to avoid being drafted. I really liked the classes and was good at the subject. Thus, when I finally settled on a major, environmental engineering was a perfect combination for me.

From the time I was in high school until now I've had a strong commitment to public service. I've been on numerous local, state and federal boards and committees. At the state level I've served on the Underground Storage Tank Committee (now the Storage Tank Committee), the Hard Rock Mining Commission, the Wastewater Technical Advisory Committee, and the Water Quality Control Commission. Locally, I was first elected to the Board of Directors of the Albuquerque Metropolitan Arroyo Flood Control Authority (AMAFCA) in 2010, re-elected in 2016 and am presently Vice-Chair of this Board.



- *What “water” accomplishment are you most proud of? What do you love most about your job (or being on the Commission)?*

By far my greatest professional accomplishment has been the teaching, mentoring, and working with a very large number of UNM students who have enjoyed fabulous success in the environmental engineering and science professions. These have included New Mexico State Engineers, senior staff at NMED and other agencies, leaders of major water utilities, leaders of large and small engineering firms, professors at UNM and other schools, and hundreds of very successful professionals practicing in the public and private sectors. Our environmental future is in the good hands of these fine people and I’m pleased to have worked with them.

- *What do you hope for clean water programs in the next 50 years?*

I’ve been in the environmental profession long enough to have seen extraordinary progress in protecting the quality of our surface and ground water resources. In retrospect it’s amazing to reflect on how foolish we were not to recognize that waste management practices prior to passing of the Clean Water Act and all of the other major environmental legislation of 1970’s would not have long term consequences. To a considerable degree much of the focus of environmental professions of the last 50 years has been dealing with wastes and poor waste management practices from this legacy. In the last few decades we’ve been increasingly able to shift our focus towards the future. As our population grows and places ever more stress on environmental resources, I am very optimistic about our collective commitment to protecting these resources and providing a safe healthy environment for future generations.