

**NM 63 Bridge Replacement Project**  
**MPs 21.6 – 22.7**  
**CN 4101410**  
**San Miguel County, New Mexico**  
**Request for Certification**

Project Purpose:

The purpose of the project is to maintain safe traffic flow across the Rio Mora. Existing bridge #3926 was built in 1940 and rehabilitation work was done in 1964. The depth and condition of bridge abutments and the center pier below ground is unknown. NM 63 is the only roadway that allows the traveling public to access the Pecos Canyon, including emergency services. Given the age of the existing bridge and the unknown condition of bridge elements below ground, it is important that a new bridge is constructed to ensure safe traffic flow along the Pecos Canyon.

Project Description and Water Quality Measures:

New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) is proposing to replace existing bridge #3926 with a new bridge on a new alignment that is located approximately 10 – 15 feet east of the existing bridge. The new bridge would be 65-feet long and fully span the Rio Mora with no center pier. The new bridge and roadway alignment would be built while leaving the existing bridge in place so that traffic flow is maintained through the Pecos Canyon. A paved temporary detour would be constructed to allow room to build the new roadway approaches on the new alignment. Geotextile material would be placed on top of the natural ground (including wetlands) followed by the placement of clean fill and asphalt. New bridge construction would continue along with construction of the new roadway alignment and approaches. Once this is complete, traffic will be diverted to the new bridge and roadway alignment. The temporary detour would be removed along with the geotextile material and fill.

The existing bridge and old roadway would be removed along with the center pier of the existing bridge. Removal of the center pier will occur down to 2-feet below the current streambed. When the center pier is removed, surface flows will be separated from the work area using non-erodible materials such as concrete wall barrier, sandbags, steel sheet piles or other equivalent materials. Removal of the center pier would be done using an excavator, backhoe or bobcat. All disturbed ground will be revegetated per NMDOT Standard Specifications.

The new bridge will be 10 feet longer than the existing bridge and will not have a center pier. This will allow the Rio Mora to have more unrestricted flow and therefore enhance water conveyance and ecological functions. Furthermore, disturbed stream banks will be planted with willow (*Salix* spp.) and cottonwood (*Populus* spp.) poles.

For more detailed information review the Pre-Construction Notification that was submitted for this project.

Impacts to Wetlands and Waters of the US:

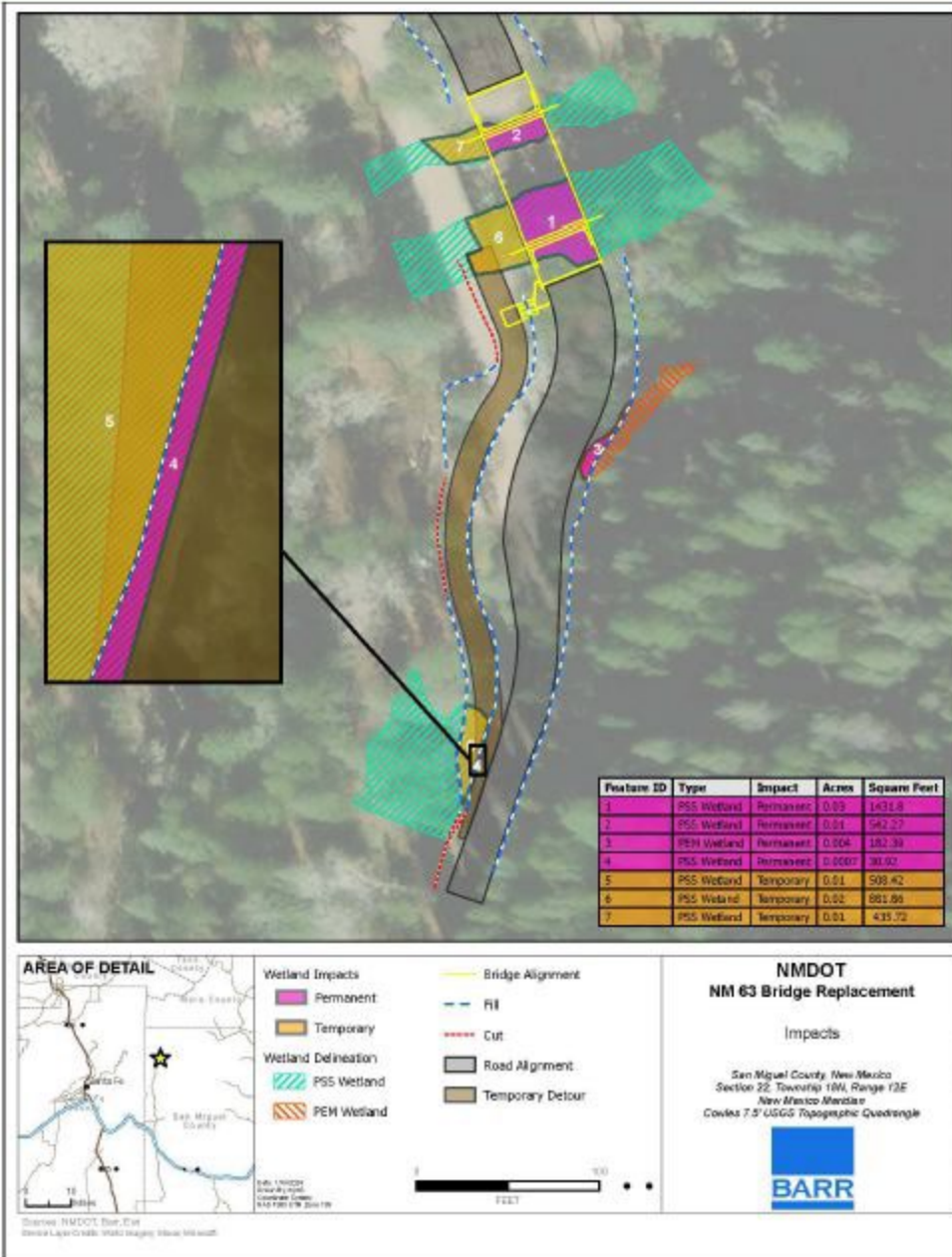
Table 1. Temporary and permanent impacts to wetlands and waters of the US for the NM 63 bridge replacement project located at the Mora Campground within San Miguel County, New Mexico.

<b>Classification<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Type of Impact</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Square Feet</b>
PSS	Temporary	0.0400	1,826.00
PEM	Temporary	0	0
*R3SB – WUS	Temporary	0.0025	110
<b>Total Temporary Impacts</b>		<b>0.0425</b>	<b>1,936.00</b>
PSS	Permanent	0.0407	2,004.61
PEM	Permanent	0.0040	182.39
R3SB – WUS	Permanent	0	0
<b>Total Permanent Impacts</b>		<b>0.0447</b>	<b>2,187.00</b>

<sup>1</sup>PSS = Palustrine Scrub Shrub, PEM = Palustrine Emergent, R3SB = Perennial Streambed (Cowardin et al. 1979)

\*Non-erodible material used to separate surface flows from work area during removal of the existing bridge’s center pier.

For more detailed information review the Aquatic Resources Report and the Pre-Construction Notification.



Map A-5. Aquatic Resources Impact Map

Figure 1. Map showing impacts to wetlands and waters of the US for the NM 63 Bridge Replacement Project located at the Mora Campground within San Miguel County, New Mexico.

# US 63 Bridge Replacement Project CN 4101410

Ecosphere Environmental Services, Inc.



## AREA OF DETAIL



- Road Centerline
- Road Alignment
- Bridge Alignment
- Existing Bridge
- NM 63
- National Hydrography Dataset:
  - River/Stream Perennial
  - River/Stream Intermittent
- National Wetlands Inventory:
  - Freshwater Parked/Strat. Wetland
  - Wetland

## NMDOT NM 63 Bridge Replacement CN 4101410

### Hydrology

San Miguel County, New Mexico  
Section 25, Township 18N, Range 12E  
New Mexico Meridian  
Datum: 7.5' USGS Topographic Quadangle



Overlays: - Pecos Springs - Albuquerque - Farmington

Source: NMDOT, USGS, NHD, etc.  
Derived from: National Hydrography Dataset - 10/2011 (2010), National Wetlands Inventory - 2010 (2010), etc.  
Datum: 7.5' USGS Topographic Quadangle  
Scale: 1:50,000  
Projection: UTM  
Zone: 18N  
Datum: NAD 83  
Units: Feet

Map B-1. Hydrology NWI/NHD Map

Figure 2. Map showing project site for the NM 63 Bridge Replacement Project located at the Mora Campground within San Miguel County, New Mexico.

## Current Site Conditions:

### Topography, Soils and Climate

The project area occurs at approximately 7,915 feet in elevation above mean sea level and is located near the confluence of the Rio Mora and Pecos River. This is approximately 3-miles south of Cowles.

Soils in the project area contain the Morenda-Fiesta-Dula complex, 0 to 35 percent slopes, flooded, and the Etown, moderately deep-Derecho families-Rock outcrop association, 15 to 120 percent slopes (NRCS 2020). The Morenda-Fiesta-Dula complex is primarily a sandy loam or sandy clay loam that is primarily derived from granite and gneiss alluvium. The Etown soil is a very cobbly loam that also contains bedrock and whose parent material is a colluvium derived from sandstone and shale. These soils are not considered prime farmland.

The climate at nearby Cowles, New Mexico has an average annual precipitation of 23.27 inches. Average annual snowfall is 79.2 inches. Average monthly maximum temperatures range from 41.3 °F in January to 76.7°F in July. Average minimum monthly temperatures range from 10.2°F in January to 42.0°F in July with freezing being common from October through May. Most snowfall occurs from December through March and rainfall usually peaks during July, August and September (Western Regional Climate Summaries 2020).

### Vegetation Communities

The project area occurs within the Southern Rockies ecoregion located within southern Colorado and in the Sangre del Cristo Mountains of northern New Mexico (Griffith et al. 2006). This ecoregion mostly contains coniferous forest with deciduous riparian along perennial streams. Upper elevations of this ecoregion are dominated by Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) and white fir (*Abies concolor*) with scattered quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*).

Coyote willow (*Salix exigua*), bebb's willow (*Salix bebbiana*), shining willow (*Salix lucida*) speckled alder (*Alnus incana*) and narrowleaf cottonwood (*Populus angustifolia*) were observed along the banks of the Rio Mora. Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), Ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) Common juniper (*Juniperus communus*), and Engleman spruce (*Picea engelmannii*), along with scattered Gambel's oak (*Quercus gambelii*) were commonly observed in upland areas. State or federally listed plant species were not observed within the project area.

### Aquatic Sites

Bridge #3926 spans the Rio Mora and is within the Pecos Headwaters (Hydrological Unit 13060001). Wetlands and Waters of the US were observed and documented in a



separate aquatic resources report. Approximately 0.02 acres of palustrine emergent (PEM) and 0.29 acres of palustrine scrub-shrub (PSS) wetlands were delineated in the project area.

### Land Use and Disturbance

Land within the right-of-way of NM 63 is managed by NMDOT for the purposes of maintaining the roadway. Part of the project area is within the Mora Campground, which is owned by the State Game Commission but is currently managed by State Parks through a Joint Powers Agreement. This agreement allows State Parks to maintain and improve the campground. This area is heavily utilized by anglers and other recreationists between Memorial Day weekend and Labor Day weekend. Moderate recreational and angler use continues into the fall until cooler temperatures and snowy conditions arrive.

For more detailed information review the Biological and Aquatic Resources Reports.



Figure 3. Picture of existing bridge #3926 (looking north) located on NM 63 at the Mora Campground within San Miguel County, New Mexico.





Figure 4. Picture of bridge #3926 (looking northeast) and the Rio Mora River located on NM 63 at the Mora Campground within San Miguel County, New Mexico.





Figure 5. Picture of bridge #3926 (looking south) and the Rio Mora River located on NM 63 at the Mora Campground within San Miguel County, New Mexico.

Construction Schedule:

Construction activities may commence in December 2023 but more likely will start in February or March 2025. Project activities would be completed by the end of the 2025 calendar year.

List of Federal, State and Tribal Authorizations:

-Federal Highway Administration (FHWA): Authorization will not be requested until project design is more refined and other authorizations are obtained.

Section 4(f) De Minimis (FHWA): Received de minimis concurrence from New Mexico State Parks, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish and FHWA.

-US Fish and Wildlife Service: Authorization not required because the proposed project would have no effect on federally listed species or designated critical habitat.



-State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO): Authorization obtained per NMDOT's Programmatic Agreement with SHPO, NMDOT, FHWA and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP).

-Section 106 Tribal Consultation: Completed; Apache Tribe of Oklahoma, Cochiti, Comanche, Jemez, Jicarilla, Kiowa, Mescalero, Navajo, Tesuque, Wichita and Zuni pueblos were contacted about this project on June 14, 2016. Comanche and Kiowa had no concerns. Pueblo of Jemez did not respond to the 2016 letter and a letter sent March 23, 2022.

-Section 404 Clean Water Act: A Pre-Construction Notification was submitted February 9, 2024 to the US Army Corps of Engineers and is under review.

-Section 401 Clean Water Act: A copy of the above Pre-Construction Notification was also submitted February 9, 2024 to the Surface Water Quality Bureau of the New Mexico Environment Department. A Request for Certification was sent February 26, 2024 and will undergo a 30-day public review.

Pre-filing Meeting Request Documentation:

See below.

**From:** Hirsch, James, DOT <James.Hirsch@dot.nm.gov>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 22, 2024 1:33 PM  
**To:** Klatt, Alan, ENV <Alan.Klatt@env.nm.gov>  
**Cc:** Martinez, Eliza, ENV <Eliza.Martinez@env.nm.gov>; Wood, Jared, ENV <jared.wood@env.nm.gov>  
**Subject:** Pre-Filing Meeting Request - NM 63 Bridge Replacement Project CN 4101410

Hi Alan!

Per 40 CFR 121.4, I would like to request a pre-filing meeting for the NM 63 Bridge Replacement Project that has CN 4101410. This is located on NM 63 between MPs 21.6 and 22.7 within San Miguel County, New Mexico (Pecos Canyon). The existing bridge needs to be replaced and crosses over the Rio Mora, which is a tributary of the Pecos River and designated as an Outstanding Natural Resource Waters (ONRW). A new bridge that is longer than the existing bridge would be constructed on a new offset alignment. Furthermore, the new bridge would not have a center pier within the channel. After construction of the new bridge is complete, the existing bridge and roadway approaches would be removed and revegetated. Construction is anticipated to start in December 2024, or more likely in early 2025 and be completed by the end of the 2025 calendar year.

Please let me know when a pre-filing meeting can be scheduled or if you waive your right to have this meeting. Thanks for your time and feel free to call me if you need further information or have any questions!

**James Hirsch**

Wildlife Coordinator/District 4 Environmental Coordinator  
New Mexico Department of Transportation  
P.O. Box 1149  
Santa Fe, NM 87504-1149  
Phone: 505-469-5535  
Email: [james.hirsch@dot.nm.gov](mailto:james.hirsch@dot.nm.gov)

