



NEW MEXICO ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT  
***Surface Water Quality Bureau***

Public Involvement Plan (PIP) for the  
Clean Water Act Section 401 Certification  
of the federal draft NPDES permit for  
the Doña Ana County Utility Department  
South Central Regional  
Wastewater Treatment Plant  
Permit No. NM0030490

**November 2024  
APPROVAL PAGE**

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Shelly Lemon  
Chief, Surface Water Quality Bureau

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Date

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Susan A. LucasKamat  
Program Manager, Surface Water Quality Bureau

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Date

**Public Notice Date: November 16, 2024**

# I. Public Involvement Plan (PIP) Overview

The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED or Department), Surface Water Quality Bureau (SWQB or Bureau) developed this Public Involvement Plan (PIP) for the State of New Mexico Clean Water Act Section 401 Certification of the draft federal permit for Doña Ana County Utility Department South Central Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP), National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit number NM0030490.

The Bureau encourages the public to learn about and get involved in regulatory decision-making opportunities for the NPDES process. The purpose of this PIP is to provide public participation opportunities and information that may be needed to participate in the Clean Water Act Section 401 Certification process.

This PIP integrates information about the community and identifies resources needed by the Bureau to successfully incorporate community participation activities into the decision-making process for the 401 Certification. The PIP identifies the Department staff and resources needed to accomplish these activities.

The Bureau will meet the public participation requirements for the 401 Certification by following this PIP, which includes all applicable policy, regulatory and statutory public participation requirements.

In developing this PIP, community participation needs were assessed to ensure appropriate promotion of public outreach by identifying whether there is a combination of environmental and demographic factors (i.e., low-income community, minority community, limited English proficiency individuals, linguistically isolated households, etc.) that may impact public participation. These factors are presented in Section IV: Location and Demographics. This assessment identifies community outreach needs and provides for public access opportunities above and beyond statutorily mandated requirements and underscores the importance of adequate public access to information about the Section 401 Certification.

As much as possible, public participation and informational activities related to the 401 Certification will be held within the timelines outlined in the table below. This timeline is tentative and subject to change; activities subject to statutory or regulatory deadlines are noted.

More detailed information about planned Bureau outreach is available in this PIP.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Dates</b>
Notice PIP (invite public input)	Saturday, November 16, 2024
EPA-NMED Joint Public Notice for the draft NPDES permit for Doña Ana County Utility Department South Central Regional WWTP, NPDES NM0030490	Saturday, November 16, 2024, through Tuesday, December 31, 2024
Public Notice/Comment Period for the Department’s 401 Certification	Saturday, November 16, 2024, through Tuesday, December 31, 2024
Bureau sends 401 Certification to EPA Region 6	Wednesday, January 15, 2025

This PIP is a “living” document that may be amended after considering public comments and feedback. The Bureau Chief provides final approval of the PIP and amendments.

## II. Bureau Contacts

If you have questions about the State of New Mexico 401 Certification Process, the Bureau’s website, or this PIP, please contact:

Susan A. LucasKamat, Program Manager  
Surface Water Quality Bureau  
1190 St. Francis Dr.  
Santa Fe, NM 87505  
Phone: (505) 946-8924  
Fax: (505) 827-0160  
Email: [susan.lucaskamat@env.nm.gov](mailto:susan.lucaskamat@env.nm.gov)

Jason Martinez, Permit/Cert. Team Lead  
Surface Water Quality Bureau  
1190 St. Francis Dr.  
Santa Fe, NM 87505  
Phone: (505) 372-8376  
Fax: (505) 827-0160  
Email: [jason.martinez@env.nm.gov](mailto:jason.martinez@env.nm.gov)

If you need to contact the Bureau regarding the Doña Ana County Utility Department South Central Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant or draft NPDES permit number NM0030490, please call or email the Bureau contacts listed above.

### A. Non-English Language Speaker Assistance and Accommodations

Non-English speakers may call the Bureau contact listed in this PIP and request language assistance services, such as an interpreter, so they can learn more about the State of New Mexico Section 401 Certification.

### B. Department Websites

- New Mexico Environment Department - <https://www.env.nm.gov/>
- New Mexico Environment Department Surface Water Quality Bureau - <https://www.env.nm.gov/surface-water-quality/>
- New Mexico Environment Department Surface Water Quality Bureau Point Source Regulation Section - <https://www.env.nm.gov/surface-water-quality/point-source-regulation-section/>
- New Mexico Environment Department Non-Discrimination and Environmental Justice - <https://www.env.nm.gov/general/environmental-justice-in-new-mexico/>
- New Mexico Environment Department Public Notices - <https://www.env.nm.gov/public-notices/>
- New Mexico Environment Department Public Comment Portal - <https://nmed.commentinput.com/comment/search>
- New Mexico Environment Department Events Calendar - <https://www.env.nm.gov/events-calendar/>

### C. 401 Certification Website

The Bureau maintains a website for information on NPDES certifications, permits, and inspections at: <https://www.env.nm.gov/surface-water-quality/point-source-regulation-section/>. The website is kept up to date and has links to 401 certifications and other important documents. Information on draft NPDES permits that are in the comment period for the Department's 401 Certification of draft NPDES permits can be found at: <https://www.env.nm.gov/public-notices/>.

## III. Regulatory Framework

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) retains permitting authority for the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Program in New Mexico, and as such, drafts permits for facilities that discharge pollutants into surface waters located in New Mexico. The New Mexico Environment Department's role in NPDES permitting is to ensure that federal permits comply with the requirements of state law, including New Mexico's antidegradation requirements. The Department's permit certification process is outlined in Section 401 of the Clean Water Act, and New Mexico's Administrative Code at 20.6.2.2001 NMAC.

The Bureau has three options in a 401 Certification. If there is an existing state law or regulation (such as water quality standards) that requires more stringent limitations than the federal permit, the Bureau can write a condition for that requirement, and EPA must include the condition in the final permit. However, the Bureau cannot condition a permit to make it less stringent. The second option is that the Bureau can comment on the draft permit based on best professional judgement and on-the-ground knowledge of the facility. EPA will consider but may not incorporate suggestions made in comments into the final permit. Thirdly, the Bureau can deny certification of the permit if it will not comply with the applicable sections of the Clean Water Act and appropriate requirements of state law. This would prohibit EPA from issuing the permit.

The federal requirement for public notice of draft NPDES permits issued by EPA Region 6 is at least a 30-day public review and comment period (40 CFR Part 124.10(b)), and the state requirement for 401 Certification is at least a 30-day public comment period (20.6.2.2001 NMAC). Typically, this is accomplished via a joint public notice issued by EPA, which is posted on EPA's public notice website, accompanying all the draft permit documents. EPA posts draft permits for New Mexico facilities which are on public notice on their website:

<https://www.epa.gov/publicnotices/notices-search?f%5B0%5D=location%3ANew%20Mexico>.

Final permits (along with EPA's response to comments) are posted to the EPA's website at: <https://www.epa.gov/npdes-permits/new-mexico-mpdes-permits>.

The Bureau does not prepare a draft 401 Certification for the public to review, but accepts comments for consideration in the certification during this public notice period. The Bureau cannot provide a draft document for public review due to stringent federal timelines for permit

issuance – after EPA’s comment period is concluded, the Bureau is required to issue or deny 401 Certification within 45 days from the date that the request to grant certification is received by the Bureau, unless circumstances require a longer timeframe (20.6.2.2001.G NMAC). Federal regulations also require that the 401 Certification is received by EPA Region 6 no later than 60 days after the draft permit is issued unless the Regional Administrator finds that unusual circumstances require a longer time frame (40 CFR Part 124.53(c)(3)). A final copy of the 401 Certification will be sent to EPA Region 6, the applicant, and those who submitted comments for consideration in the 401 Certification.

Final NMED 401 Certifications are posted on the Bureau’s website:

<https://www.env.nm.gov/surface-water-quality/point-source-regulation-section/>.

The public participation requirements of specific water quality programs are specified in 40 CFR Section 25.4 and described in New Mexico’s Statewide Water Quality Management Plan and Continuing Planning Process (WQMP/CP<sup>1</sup>). At a minimum, the public participation process for New Mexico’s water quality programs consists of the following:

- Providing the public with the information and assistance necessary for meaningful involvement;
- Providing a central location of reports, studies, plans, and other documents;
- Maintaining a list of affected or interested parties and stakeholders; and
- Notifying stakeholders in a timely fashion prior to consideration of major decisions (generally at least 30 days).

The Bureau invites the public to submit comments on EPA’s draft NPDES permit for the Doña Ana County Utility Department South Central Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant NPDES permit number NM0030490 directly to EPA Region 6 staff in Dallas, Texas. Directions on how to submit comments to EPA are documented on this website: <https://www.epa.gov/publicnotices/notices-search?f%5B0%5D=location%3ANew%20Mexico>.

Comments related to water quality standards may be submitted to the Bureau for consideration and inclusion in the 401 Certification. If you would like to comment directly to the Bureau, please submit written comments to the NMED Public Comment Portal at:

<https://nmed.commentinput.com/comment/search>, email written comments to the Bureau at [psrs.program.manager@env.nm.gov](mailto:psrs.program.manager@env.nm.gov), or mail written comments to the Bureau contacts listed above in Section II.

## **IV. Location and Demographics**

The Doña Ana County Utility Department South Central Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant NM0030490 is located in the unincorporated community of La Mesa, Doña Ana County, New Mexico.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.env.nm.gov/surface-water-quality/wqmp-cpp/>

## **Demographic Summary**

Demographic indicators were obtained from EPA EJSCREEN, an environmental justice screening and mapping tool, available on-line at <https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen>. EJSCREEN is based on nationally consistent data and an approach that combines environmental and demographic indicators in maps and reports. Users choose the geographic area of interest by indicating a point, line or polygon on the map; users may also choose to select a “buffer” area (up to 10 miles) around the point, line or polygon to better capture the affected community. EJSCREEN then provides a report that describes demographic and environmental information for that area, with or without an assigned buffer. The 2018-2022 American Community Survey (ACS) Report link in EJSCREEN provides a report with U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) data in PDF format. The 2018-2022 ACS, through EJSCREEN, provided quantitative information regarding demographic indicators.

### **Summary of Site-Specific EJSCREEN Inputs**

- Community of Concern = Unincorporated Community of La Mesa, Doña Ana County, New Mexico
- Buffer = 4-mile buffer that includes the facility, outfall, immediate community of La Mesa and the neighboring community of Vado

The 2018-2022 ACS Report indicates that the total population of the area-of-interest for the Doña Ana County Utility Department South Central Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant is 8,374; 43 percent of the community identifies as white, less than 1 percent identifies as Black, 1 percent identifies as Native American, less than 1 percent identifies as Asian American, 47 percent identifies as some other race, and 9 percent identifies as multiracial. Of the total population, 94 percent identify as Hispanic. The percent of persons that communicate in a language other than English (non-English) at home is 82 percent (6,488 individuals), with 3,146 individuals speaking English “less than very well.” The per capita income for the La Mesa community area for 2018-2022 is \$19,648, as compared to the national per capita income for 2018-2022 of \$41,261. From the Bureau’s EJScreen analysis, there are 853 linguistically isolated households in this community. These results indicate that the percentage of non-English-speaking communication in this community is significant and various demographic factors (i.e. low-income community, minority community, limited English proficiency individuals, Linguistically Isolated Households, etc.) may impact public participation.

## **V. Public Participation & Outreach Activities**

The public may ask questions about NPDES permits at any time. Interested community members do not need to wait for a formal public comment period to contact the Bureau. However, the Bureau emphasizes that to be included in the administrative record, comments solicited by public notices about the draft permit must be submitted during the noticed comment periods, and in accordance with the public notice and 20.6.2.2001 NMAC.

Specific outreach activities related to this draft NPDES permit and the Bureau's 401 Certification process include:

- Maintaining a specific Department public notice web page (<https://www.env.nm.gov/public-notice/>) with attachments and links to EPA's draft permit documents (found at <https://www.epa.gov/publicnotices/notices-search?f%5B0%5D=location%3ANew%20Mexico>) and EPA's final permit (found at <https://www.epa.gov/npdes-permits/new-mexico-mpdes-permits/>),
- Creating and maintaining a specific archive webpage with the final 401 Certification letters sent to EPA Region 6 (<https://www.env.nm.gov/surface-water-quality/point-source-regulation-section/>),
- Developing a public notice announcing the opening of the 30-day (or more, if applicable) public comment period (joint notice with EPA Region 6),
- Posting this public notice to the Department's event calendar (<https://www.env.nm.gov/events-calendar/>),
- Emailing this public notice to Bureau's email list through the GovDelivery e-mail delivery service (1,921 general information email addresses and 2,044 NPDES permittee email addresses as of November 2024), and
- Listing the public notice on the NMED Public Comment Portal (<https://nmed.commentinput.com/comment/search>) with attachments and links to EPA's draft permit documents (found at <https://www.epa.gov/publicnotices/notices-search?f%5B0%5D=location%3ANew%20Mexico>).

Copies of the draft permit and any supporting documents may be obtained via download from the EPA Region 6 website during the comment period at <https://www.epa.gov/publicnotices/notices-search?f%5B0%5D=location%3ANew%20Mexico>, or by contacting Susan A. LucasKamat at (505) 946-8924, [susan.lucaskamat@env.nm.gov](mailto:susan.lucaskamat@env.nm.gov), NMED SWQB, P.O. Box 5469, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 87505.

The most direct way to learn about and be involved in the decision-making process for draft NPDES permits is to comment on the federal permit directly to EPA. Relevant comments may also be submitted to the Bureau for the 401 Certification through the NMED Public Comment Portal (<https://nmed.commentinput.com/comment/search>). As stated in Section III above, the Bureau can only mandate changes to the draft permit if based on state law; however, EPA does consider the Bureau's comments based on best professional judgement. Additionally, the public may request to review documents at the Bureau or one of the information repositories listed below.

Based on the demographics report discussed in the PIP, the Bureau's assessment indicates that additional language assistance (interpretation or translation services) or outreach are needed for this activity, at this time. Basic information about public involvement opportunities will be in English and Spanish and will include information on how to request materials in another language or to speak with Bureau staff through an interpreter. The Bureau has determined that there are adequate resources available within the Department to provide LEP services, if requested or

determined necessary. Further details about public participation for this activity are outlined below.

#### **A. Postal Mailing or E-Mailing of Notices to Persons on the Surface Water Quality Bureau's Email List**

The Bureau maintains a general information email list (1,921 email addresses as of November 2024) that includes individuals interested in surface water quality issues and activities and an NPDES permittee email list (2,044 email addresses as of November 2024) that includes facilities and their contractors who have NPDES permits. These lists are a combination of all previously interested persons who requested the Bureau provide them with information about surface water quality in New Mexico and NPDES individual and general permittees. The Bureau regularly maintains contact information, which is updated or supplemented, if additional information is found. Interested persons who submit public comments will be added to the general information email list. Additional individuals, organizations, and other interested parties are added to the email list as requested.

#### **B. Email Updates**

If you would like to be added to the Bureau's email list for information and updates, visit the Bureau's website at: <https://www.env.nm.gov/surface-water-quality/> and click on the "Click here to subscribe to receive email updates!" button on the bottom of the home page. For help, you can contact the Bureau's website liaison, Heidi Henderson at 505-819-9986 or email [heidi.henderson@env.nm.gov](mailto:heidi.henderson@env.nm.gov).

#### **C. Notices in the State Newspaper and Local Newspapers**

There is a state requirement for public notices related to NMED's 401 Certification to be published in state or local newspapers. EPA publishes notice of draft NPDES permits in a newspaper with local distribution in the permit area.

#### **D. Public Meeting Notices, Public Comment Notices, and Other Notices**

Based on the Bureau's evaluation of the community, notices will be in English and translated into Spanish. In addition, the Bureau may post notices on the Department's Events Calendar at: <https://www.env.nm.gov/events-calendar/>.

#### **E. Informational Pamphlets**

The Bureau does not develop informational pamphlets for draft permits. Generally, information about how EPA's permit was developed or has changed is documented in the fact sheet or statement of basis accompanying the draft permit, which is located along with the draft permit itself on EPA's public notice website.

#### **F. Public Comment Period**

The 45-day public comment period to EPA Region 6 on the draft Doña Ana County Utility Department South Central Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant, NPDES permit number NM0030490, is planned to start on Saturday, November 16, 2024, and end on Tuesday,



December 31, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. (CST). The 45-day comment period to the Bureau for consideration in the Clean Water Act Section 401 Certification of the draft NPDES permit for Doña Ana County Utility Department South Central Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant, NPDES permit number NM0030490, is planned to start on Saturday, November 16, 2024, and end on Tuesday, December 31, at 5:00 p.m. (MST).

### **G. Other Outreach**

Currently the Bureau is not using other means of outreach such as flyers or other hard copy postings. However, any updates will be posted on the Department's website.

### **H. Information Repositories**

Copies of the draft NPDES permit and any of the above-mentioned supporting documents may be obtained via download from EPA Region 6's website at <https://www.epa.gov/publicnotices/notices-search?f%5B0%5D=location%3ANew%20Mexico>, or by contacting Susan A. LucasKamat at (505) 946-8924, [susan.lucaskamat@env.nm.gov](mailto:susan.lucaskamat@env.nm.gov), NMED SWQB, P.O. Box 5469, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 87505.

The Bureau is not providing hardcopies or other information at post offices, community centers, public libraries, or other repositories. If you would like to request hard copies of important documents and information about how to comment on the draft permit or 401 certification, please contact Susan A. LucasKamat at (505) 946-8924 or [susan.lucaskamat@env.nm.gov](mailto:susan.lucaskamat@env.nm.gov).

### **I. 401 Certification Proceedings, Outcomes and Responses to Comments**

The Bureau considers public comments received prior to the close of the public comment period in its Clean Water Act Section 401 Certification of the draft permit. The final 401 Certification will be sent to EPA Region 6, the permit applicant and the interested stakeholder and/or community members who commented directly to the Bureau. The final 401 Certification will be available to the public via download from the Bureau's website at: <https://www.env.nm.gov/surface-water-quality/point-source-regulation-section/>.

**4-mile buffer around the Doña Ana County Utility Department South Central Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant (NM0030490)**

