

CLEARING THE WATERS

A quarterly newsletter by the Surface Water Quality Bureau

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River Stewardship Program – Request for Proposals *Coming Soon!*

The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) is preparing to release a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the River Stewardship Program (RSP) in early Fall 2023. The RFP will be announced via the Surface Water Quality Bureau's mailing listserv so watch for the email announcement.

What is the River Stewardship Program?

The goal of the RSP is to enhance the natural functioning of New Mexico's streams and rivers by providing state funding to plan, design, and construct projects that improve surface water quality or river habitat. The RSP is a critical component of the nonpoint source management program and addresses water quality problems including impacts from wildfires, floods, and drought; engages local stakeholders in restoration of their waters; supports New Mexico small businesses both directly for those contracted to do restoration work and indirectly via increased tourism and recreational opportunities; and serves as the necessary match for approximately \$2.25 million per year in federal Clean Water Act §319 funding for New Mexico. There is no match required for RSP projects themselves, which makes the RSP funding accessible to a wide variety of cooperators!

What should I know about the upcoming RFP?

- **Who** – Eligible entities for contracts or agreements include non-profits, businesses, tribes, pueblos, soil and water conservation districts, municipalities, counties, local agencies and state agencies.
- **Where** – Projects occur in surface waters of the state, including lakes, rivers, streams (including intermittent streams), mudflats, sandflats, wetlands, sloughs, prairie potholes, wet meadows, playa lakes, reservoirs or natural ponds. Surface waters of the state also

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means, all tributaries of such waters such as arroyos and include adjacent wetlands. Projects may include planning, permitting, design, construction and monitoring.

• **Important Dates –**

- RFP release - October 2023
- RFP will be open for 60 days
- Proposals due December 2023
- Projects anticipated to start in Summer 2024
- Projects must be completed by June 30, 2027

• **Funding –** The 2023 RSP RFP will have approximately \$4.5 to \$9.5 million available to award for projects. During 2021 the New Mexico Legislature appropriated a one time \$10 million to NMED for the RSP. This funding originated from the federal American Rescue Plan Act (also known as State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds) appropriation to New Mexico. The 2023 New Mexico Legislature reinforced it's long-term commitment to protecting our waters by establishing an annual distribution to RSP from the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund. In addition, the 2023 New Mexico Legislature appropriated \$1,500,000 in capital outlay funds for the RSP.

Successful River Stewardship Program proposals will:

- Describe projects located in a surface water of the state that improve surface water quality and/or river habitat;
- Demonstrate a clear need for restoration actions based on a local, regional, state, or federal planning document, such as TMDL, Forest Plan, Wildlife Action Plans, Source Water Protection Plan, or other planning documents;
- Demonstrate the support and commitment of the community and applicable stakeholders by submitting Letters of Support for the proposed project from local governments, natural resource agencies, and landowners or land managers such as the U.S. Forest Service District Office that may support the permitting for the project, a municipality that may own the land or easement where the project occurs, or private landowners where part of the project is proposed to be built;
- Describe a scientifically sound and sustainable project;
- Provide clear, measurable, and achievable objectives; and
- Propose a budget that is justified, fair, and provides good value for project work.

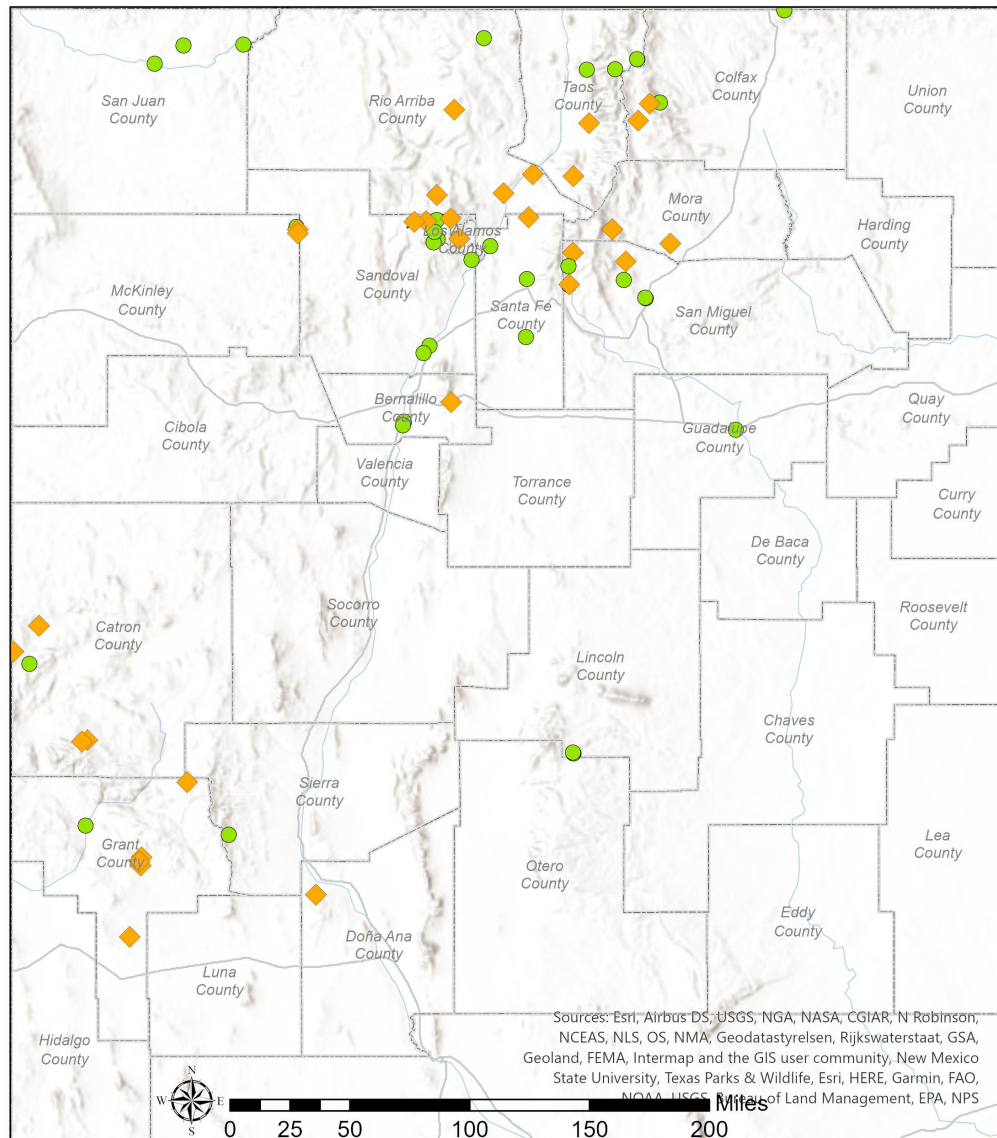
Funding may be used to support implementation in the following ways:

- Itemized hourly wages for work on the project, supplies that are permanently affixed to the project, equipment rentals, administrative costs such as project management, travel, and subcontractor services at fair market rates.
- Planning and partner coordination exclusively within the context of the project.
- Pre-implementation surveys of on-site conditions.
- Costs to prepare permit applications, clearances, and surveys that are required by law.
- Implementation of on-the-ground measures to improve surface water quality and river habitat, such as earthmoving, construction of in-stream rock and log structures, non-native plant removal, planting, and fencing.

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- Post-construction verification of completion and validation of environmental results within the agreement/contract period.
- Gross receipts tax.

For any questions about the RSP or the upcoming RFP, please feel free to contact Kate Lacey at (505) 946-8863 or kathryn.lacey@env.nm.gov. The RSP page can be found on the NMED SWQB website at the link below; <https://www.env.nm.gov/surface-water-quality/river-stewardship-program/>.



River Stewardship Program Projects

Project Status

-  Completed
 Construction
 New Mexico Counties

Map above provides the locations of River Stewardship Program projects - current to 2015.

River Stewardship Program Projects Underway!

The River Stewardship Program announces eighteen (18) new projects that started between March and June 2023. Funding for the 18 new projects comes from a mix of sources appropriated by the New Mexico State Legislature to the River Stewardship Program which serves as state match for NMED's Clean Water Act Section §319 federal grants. The projects were selected through the 2022 RSP Request for Proposals (RFP) released on May 26, 2022 for on-the-ground projects to improve surface water quality or river habitat statewide. There was \$10.37 million available to award for projects in 2022 and cooperators knew exactly where that funding would be the most beneficial. The new projects are scheduled to be completed by June 30, 2025. Check out the challenging work throughout New Mexico that RSP Cooperators are taking on!

Stream and Riparian Restoration on Stone Creek, Quemado Ranger District, Gila National Forest - Bat Conservation International



The primary project goals are to improve stream bank stability and resiliency, and to reduce stream temperature on a two-mile stretch of Stone Creek, a tributary of the San Francisco River, in the Gila National Forest. Approximately 120 stream bank stabilization features will be constructed along a 2-mile reach of Stone Creek in addition to native riparian plantings. NMED awarded \$291,174 to Bat Conservation International (BCI) to complete this project.

Photo to the left shows a stretch of eroding bank and a lack of riparian vegetation at Stone Creek.

Expanding Riparian and Wetland Resilience in Burro Ciénaga, New Mexico - Pitchfork Ranch

The project will continue long-term restoration of the wetland, riparian and grassland ecosystems in the Burro Ciénaga watershed and its tributary drainages by building structures to slow surface water runoff, repair incised channels, and promote aggradation and infiltration to improve conditions for native vegetation establishment. The project will occur in approximately 8-miles of tributary drainages and 1.5-miles of the main channel reach. NMED awarded \$416,875 to A.T. Cole of the Pitchfork Ranch to complete this project.



Photos above and to the left are from work previously completed in the Burro Ciénaga.

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Restoration of Trout Habitat on the Cimarron River – Phase II - Cimarron Watershed Alliance

This Phase II project will improve in-stream low flow and overwintering habitat for brown and rainbow trout on approximately 7 miles of the Cimarron River through the Cimarron Canyon State Park and Colin Neblett Wildlife Management Area near Eagle Nest, New Mexico. The project will install log jams and boulder clusters along with channel shaping to add channel complexity, including pools, to improve fish habitat. NMED awarded \$471,935 to Cimarron Watershed Alliance to complete this project.

Photo to the right shows wide and shallow Cimarron River in August 2023.



Restoration of Tijeras Creek Floodplain, Streambed and Riparian Habitat - Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District

The restoration project will focus on reconnecting Tijeras Creek in the Village of Tijeras back to the floodplain, restoring a more natural stream course to reduce flood risks associated with episodic events, and improving downstream water quality and aquatic habitat. NMED awarded \$824,352 to Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District to complete the project.

Photos below and to the right show eroded and incised sections of Tijeras Creek.



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Wetland and Stream Restoration in the Moreno Valley - Cimarron Watershed Alliance



This project's stated goals are stabilizing channels and restoration more natural geomorphic conditions in the Moreno Valley to reduce turbidity, sedimentation, nutrients, and bacteria from entering Cieneguilla Creek, Saladon Creek, and Garica Creek through erosional processes. NMED awarded \$95,737 to Cimarron Watershed Alliance to complete this work.

Photo to the left shows Cieneguilla Creek where a meander and eroding banks pose a threat to an existing county road.

Stream and Wetland Restoration along the Arroyo La Mina in the Lower Embudo Valley - Ecotone Landscape Planning LLC

The goals of this project are to improve channel and habitat conditions in the Arroyo La Mina in the Embudo Valley near Dixon, NM. The project design will encourage overbank flows, improve sediment retention, and restore the riparian and wetland habitat quality and functions. NMED awarded \$310,800 to Ecotone Landscape Planning LLC to complete this project.



Photos to the left and below show the eroded streambanks of the Arroyo La Mina.



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Reimagining San Vicente Creek and the Silver City Watershed – Phase II - Gila Resources Information Project

This Phase II project will address 1.4-miles of stream and approximately 39-acres of riparian area in Silver City along San Vicente Creek, Silva Creek, and Pino Altos Creek as well as a variety of locations throughout Silver City. The subcontractor will construct grade control structures to stop headcuts and channel erosion, construct water harvesting earthworks to help improve stormwater quality, plant native trees, and remove non-native and invasive species. NMED awarded \$298,387 to Gila Resources Information Project to complete this project.

Photo to the left shows a grade control structure being constructed by subcontractor Stream Dynamics in San Vicente Creek which was completed in Phase I.

Mora River Restoration, Rio Mora National Wildlife Refuge – Phase II - Hermit's Peak Watershed Alliance

This Phase II project will add 1.3-miles of restored channel and riparian areas downstream of a previously restored 0.75-mile reach. This project will increase hydraulic diversity by constructing log jams and anabranch channels, improve floodplain access by constructing floodplain benches, and enhance the extent, cover, and diversity of riparian and wetland vegetation. NMED awarded \$439,981 to Hermit's Peak Watershed Alliance to complete this project.

Photo to the right shows the Rio Mora through the Rio Mora National Wildlife Refuge.



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Sapello River Restoration – Pritzlaff Ranch - Hermit's Peak Watershed Alliance

The Sapello River Restoration project will protect and restore stream geomorphology, reconnect the river to its floodplain, increase riverine habitat diversity and raise the water table to support off-channel wetlands by constructing log jams and boulder clusters, creating floodplain benches, and planting riparian and wetland vegetation. NMED awarded \$415,720 to Hermit's Peak Watershed Alliance to perform this work.

Photo to the right shows Sapello River at Pritzlaff Ranch.



Santa Clara Creek Restoration Project - Natural Channel Design

The project will restore approximately 4.5-miles of Santa Clara Creek and up to 68-acres of adjacent riparian area by expanding and lowering existing floodplains, improving aquatic habitat by creating pool and riffle features utilizing rock and log structures, improving wetland function and area by plugging floodplain gullies, and improving riparian habitat by planting native riparian and wetland vegetation. NMED awarded \$1,031,352 to Natural Channel Design to complete this project.

Photo below shows Santa Clara Creek after the Los Conchas Fire damage from 2011.



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Taos Pueblo Ecological Restoration of Buffalo Pasture and the Rio Lucero Project - Keystone Restoration Ecology



This project will restore the Buffalo Pasture, a 500-acre slope wetland on Taos Pueblo, NM, and approximately 2-miles of the Rio Lucero with the goals of improving stream geometry and floodplain access, increasing channel stability, raising the water table, and enhancing the wetland by increasing meandering, raising the stream grade with plug and pond techniques, wicker weirs, and one-rock dams, and planting native riparian and wetland vegetation. NMED awarded \$676,859 to Keystone Restoration Ecology to perform this work.

Photo to the left shows the Rio Lucero in the Buffalo Pasture on Taos Pueblo.

Improving Watershed Hydrologic Function along Farming and Rangeland Communities of the Rio Grande Basin - New Mexico State University Water Resources Research Institute

This project will address three geographically unique areas: Canjilon Creek near Canjilon, NM; tributaries to the Rio Grande at El Guique and Estaca, NM; and tributaries to the Placitas Arroyo near Hatch, NM. On Canjilon Creek, 9.7-miles of stream and approximately 265-acres of riparian area will be improved by utilizing process-based restoration techniques to mimic beaver activity to raise the water table and expand floodplain access. Near El Guique, Estaca, and Hatch, NM, approximately 140 miles of ephemeral channel will be improved by spreading overland flow in the headwaters of the watersheds to slow flows, capture sediment and debris, and reduce erosive flooding across the landscape and agricultural resources below. NMED awarded \$2,449,437 to New Mexico State University Water Resources Research Institute to implement this project.

The image to the right shows restoration techniques to be used in a variety of areas for the project.



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Calf Canyon and Hermit's Peak Post-fire Rapid Response Mitigation and Protection of Acequias in Mora County - Rio Grande Return

This project will provide a rapid post-fire assessment and identify recovery efforts and locations to construct numerous in-stream structures to increase soil retention and water infiltration to mitigate soil loss and promote watershed recovery along 6-8-miles of stream channel and upstream of acequias within the Hermit's Peak – Calf Canyon burn scar area, primarily within Mora County. Approximately 1,500 to 2,000 erosion control structures will be built and approximately 6,000 native riparian plants will be planted. NMED awarded \$515,906 to Rio Grande Return to implement this project.

Photo to the right shows Rio de las Casa above an acequia headgate in the Hermit's Peak – Calf Canyon burn scar in Mora County.



Adapting and Improving River Stewardship in the Torreon Wash Watershed - Rio Puerco Alliance

This project will reduce sediment contributions to the Rio Puerco and Rio Grande, reduce erosion and increase wildlife habitat, by planting along the banks of arroyo channels in the Torreon Wash Watershed near Torreon, NM. Approximately 8,000 native riparian plants will be planted and fenced for protection, and approximately 300-600 erosion control structures will be installed. NMED awarded \$221,660 to Rio Puerco Alliance to perform this work.

Photo to the right shows the Navajo Summer Youth Crew who worked to install one rock dams in the Torreon Wash Watershed during a previous phase of this work in a similar area.



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San Antonio Creek Riparian and Beaver Habitat Restoration Project - Rio Grande Return



This project will improve approximately 1.35-miles of San Antonio Creek and approximately 47-acres of stream channel, adjacent wet meadow and riparian wetland in the Valles Caldera National Preserve. The project will construct approximately 50 beaver dam analogs and 80 post-assisted log structures, plant approximately 25,000 willows and 100 cottonwoods, and improve existing elk enclosure fencing to protect the newly planted riparian areas. NMED awarded \$211,377 to Rio Grande Return to complete this project.

Photo to the left shows San Antonio Creek just downstream of the Valles Caldera National Preserve.

Willow Creek Watershed Restoration Project – Private Lands Reach - San Francisco Soil and Water Conservation District

This project will improve water quality by repairing stream channel geometry to reduce sediment production from bank and streambed erosion and increase canopy cover to reduce stream temperature on Willow Creek in the Gila National Forest. The project will improve lateral stability in the channel with construction of approximately 50 bank and grade control structures, reduce bank erosion by sloping vertical banks, and increase canopy cover by planting 5,000-linear feet of willows along the creek. NMED awarded \$598,980 to San Francisco Soil and Water Conservation District to complete this project.

Photo to the right shows Willow Creek in the project reach.



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Curb Cuts and County Roads: Greening Urban Infrastructure to Improve Water Quality in San Vicente Creek - Stream Dynamics

This project will construct approximately 100 water harvesting green infrastructure features such as curb cuts or infiltration basins with rain gardens to infiltrate stormwater across Silver City, NM, implement an outreach and education program to promote green infrastructure, and implement five rural road drainage and repair projects to reduce sediment contributions to San Vicente Creek. NMED awarded \$302,658 to Stream Dynamics to complete this project.

Photo to the right shows curb cuts in Silver City to be constructed during this project.



Rio Pueblo Restoration Project - Taos Soil and Water Conservation District

This project will improve water quality on the Rio Pueblo near Vadito, NM by removing existing gabion basket structures that are failing, providing vegetation cover by planting native cottonwoods and willows, reducing sediment loads by restoring eroded streambanks using post vanes and plantings, and installing boulder cross vanes to maintain optimal streambed grade to prevent erosion. NMED awarded \$788,562 to Taos Soil and Water Conservation District to complete this project.

Photo to the right shows failing gabion structures that will be removed as part of this project on the Rio Pueblo.



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