CLEARING THE WATERS

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Cover Photo: Carson National Forest. D. Nelson.





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Uncover the Wonders of New Mexico's Wetlands An Interactive Journey through StoryMaps

By Maryann McGraw SWQB Wetlands Program Coordinator

Gila River oxbow wetland photo from "Wading into Wetlands of New Mexico" StoryMap.

ArcGIS StoryMap is a very popular format on the internet that combines interactive maps with multimedia content and text to tell stories about the world. You can view StoryMaps on tablets, computers and hand-held devices providing the user easy access.

StoryMaps use sidebars of information and immersive slide shows with sound to create a visual tour of the topic being portrayed. The SWQB has recently started using StoryMaps to portray scientific and educational information in a format useable to the scientific community as well as of interest to students and the public. The Wetlands Program has uploaded some exciting StoryMaps on the SWQB Wetlands Program website, https://www.env.nm.gov/surface-water-quality/wetlands/, that you may find inspiring as well as informative and interesting.

Our first wetlands StoryMap is called "*Exploring Southeastern New Mexico Wetlands*." The StoryMap starts out with geographic information about southeastern New Mexico alongside a map of the area covered. This StoryMap is tied to the mapping and classification project that the SWQB Wetlands Program completed in 2019. The next page fills in all the wetlands mapped by that project and provides some statistics about the wetland types. Zoom into the page to see more accurately the coverage of scarce but extremely important wetland resources in New Mexico. The following pages describe the wetland types mapped and labeled with names using the Hydrogeomorphic Classification developed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. These names (classes and subclasses) are particularly useful because they provide the viewer with insight into the different wetlands on the landscape.



The next section explains wetland functions. Wetlands have an important role in the ecology of the landscape. In the past, wetlands were drained and filled and not considered to have much value. We now know that wetlands provide essential physical, chemical and biological functions that maintain the integrity of the surrounding environment. These functions are recognized as particularly crucial in New Mexico where only a small percentage of the land area is occupied by wetlands. Tabs across the top of the StoryMap page directs you to more information about important wetland functions and what wetlands are providing those functions.



The final page talks about other classifications that the Wetlands Program is applying to all wetlands in New Mexico and an overview of all mapping areas. But the story does not end there. Our next newest StoryMap is called "*Wading into Wetlands of New Mexico*." This StoryMap delves further into the mapping of all New Mexico wetlands! The tabs at the bottom of the introductory page leads you to more topics and information on wetlands statewide. This StoryMap has some exciting interactive features. Click on the information buttons to reveal more information about photos and pictures in this StoryMap. There are also links to more information and other wetland websites. My favorite section is the one where you can visit New Mexico's unique wetlands. The user can make selections on the left side of the page to be *transported* in maps to these exciting wetland sites.



Uncover the Wonders of New Mexico's Wetlands

Again, the story does not stop here! We have another StoryMap about southern New Mexico entitled, "*Mapping and Exploring Southern New Mexico Wetlands*." This StoryMap includes a Section called "*Tag a Wetland*." This feature allows the user to add new wetland information to the map! Just locate a wetland where you want to add your comments. Follow the instructions on the page. You can even upload your photos maybe if you saw a beautiful sunset at that wetland, or some interesting flocks of birds! You name it! There is a measuring tool up on the right side of the page that allows you to measure your wetland perimeter or distance from, for example, your home!



I hope you take the time to explore these fascinating story maps and have fun learning about wetlands. Note that there are more StoryMaps coming to the SWQB Wetlands website, https://www.env.nm.gov/surface-water-quality/wetlands/ with more fun features, so check back often!



Screenshot of "Mapping and Exploring Southern New Mexico Wetlands" StoryMap page highlighting the section "Tag a Wetland."

River Stewardship Program - Request for Proposals

The NMED SWQB is now accepting proposals through a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Fiscal Year 2026 River Stewardship Program (RSP). The RFP is available through the New Mexico General Services Department's website through May 20, 2025.

What is the River Stewardship Program?

The goal of the RSP is to enhance the natural function 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 CWA §319 funding for New Mexico. There is no match funds required for RSP projects themselves, which makes the RSP funding accessible to a wide variety of cooperators!

Eligible entities for contracts or agreements include nonprofits, businesses, tribes, pueblos, soil and water conservation districts, municipalities, counties, and local and state agencies.

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

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 total maximum daily load (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.

<u>River Stewardship Program Announces Twelve New Projects!</u>

The RSP announces twelve (12) new projects that started in January 2025. Funding for the 12 new projects comes from a mix of sources appropriated by the New Mexico State Legislature to the RSP which serves as state match for NMED's CWA Section §319 federal grants. The projects were selected through the FY2024 RSP RFP released on October 27, 2023 for on-the-ground projects to improve surface water quality or river habitat statewide. Approximately \$5.8 million was awarded for projects in 2024. The new projects are scheduled to be completed between November 15, 2026 and June 30, 2027. Check out the challenging work RSP Cooperators are taking on to improve surface water quality or river habitat!

PROJECT NAME: Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge Riparian and Wetland Habitat Development and Water Quality Improvement

COOPERATOR: Rio Grande Return

The Valle do Oro National Wildlife Refuge (Bernalillo County) project will supply and install riparian and emergent wetland plant materials within the riparian forest on three of the five wetlands units on the Refuge. Native wetland species will represent those naturally found to have evolved in these specific wetland ecosystems as being well-adapted to the unique conditions present at Valle de Oro, such as fluctuating water levels, periodic flooding, and saturated soils. NMED awarded Rio Grande Return \$540,359.82 to complete this project.



Willow Planting, in a previous phase, at the Valle de Oro in March 2023.

PROJECT NAME: Wetland Restoration in Trout Creek and Romero Creek

COOPERATOR: Amigos Bravos, Inc.

This project will restore the headwaters of Trout and Romeo Creeks, which have been degraded by gullying, roads, and cattle trailing. Amigos Bravos, Inc. was awarded \$677,130.46 to restore wet meadows with plug and pond, plug and spread and contour swale structures. The project will also improve flows and restore gullies and the native plant community.



Broad meadows with bank erosion in the upper Trout Creek Watershed.

PROJECT NAME: Post-fire Restoration of Gila Trout and Riparian Habitat on Black Canyon Creek

COOPERATOR: Bat Conservation International (BCI)

Black Canyon Creek in Catron County is an impaired water of the State of New Mexico due to excess stream temperature. It is a recovery stream for the federally listed Gila Trout. The primary goals of the project are to improve water quality, stream morphology, and instream habitat in a 2.0 mile reach of Black Canyon Creek. This will be done by planting native trees and shrubs, stabilizing streambanks, and creating pools. NMED awarded BCI \$330,385.73 to complete this project.



Cut-off channel plug under construction during a previous phase.

PROJECT NAME: Process-based Restoration of Cimarroncito Creek: Phase 1



COOPERATOR: Philmont Scout Ranch

This project will restore 3.0 miles along the lower Cimarroncito Creek in Colfax County that is impacted due to water diversions and channel incision. The project goals are to recharge groundwater and boost base flows, reduce sediment. improve water quality, and restore riparian area. NMED awarded Philmont Scout Ranch \$409.400.61 to complete this project.

Map of project area.

PROJECT NAME: Phase 2 - Post-wildfire Restoration of Little Turkey Creek

COOPERATOR: JEB Outfitters, LLC.

Little Turkey Creek in Catron County is designated as a high quality coldwater stream for the recovery of Gila Trout, but it is impaired for temperature because of wildfires and post-wildfire flooding. The project goals are to reduce stream instability and improve water quality and aquatic habitats to support the native fish community. JEB Outfitters, LLC received \$209,679.00 to improve stream channel morphology, increase riparian vegetation, reduce bank erosion, improve fish habitat, and reduce stream temperatures.



Eroding cutbanks requiring stabilization and willow plantings on Little Turkey Creek.



PROJECT NAME: Dorsey Spring/Bear Creek Riparian Restoration

COOPERATOR: Gila Resource Information Project

A tributary to the Gila River, Bear Creek in Grant County is a springfed, intermittent stream with perennial reaches below Dorsey Spring. Dorsey Spring (photo on left) is a consistent source of groundwater for Bear Creek. This project will construct a cattle exclosure to protect 43.1 acres of riparian habitat and adjacent upland as well as approximately 1,350 linear feet of Bear Creek from livestock grazing. The project received \$592,322.42 to improve riparian and in-stream habitat as well as surface water quality.

PROJECT NAME: Town of Chama Restoration Project

COOPERATOR: Trout Unlimited, Inc.

The Town of Chama Restoration project will improve the form and function of a section of the Rio Chama to support trout and improve water quality conditions. The section of stream runs through the town of Chama in Rio Arriba County. Trout Unlimited, Inc. received \$697,011.89 to reduce excessive sediment and erosion and improve aquatic habitat and stream features.



Excessive sediment deposited in the stream channel on inside of meander bend on the Rio Chama.

PROJECT NAME: Restoration of Rio Embudo Tributaries in the Lower Embudo Watershed

COOPERATOR: Ecotone Landscape Planning, LLC



This project will address water quality impairments in the Rio Embudo caused by high volumes of sediment from several arroyos in the Lower Rio Embudo Watershed in Rio Arriba County. Ecotone Landscape Planning, LLC received \$533,828.82 to construct and install erosion control structures, stabilize slopes, reduce headcuts, and capture sediment.

Map of project area.

PROJECT NAME: Our Lady of Guadalupe Monastery Pecos River Restoration

COOPERATOR: Upper Pecos Watershed Association

This project will restore approximately 1.0 mile of the Pecos River and 10 acres of riparian habitat in San Miguel County. The goal is to restore form and function to the Pecos River in a reach that has been disturbed by alteration and large post fire flood events. The Upper Pecos Watershed Association received \$728,539.40 to improve sediment transport, restore instream habitat, and reduce bank erosion.





View of uppermost bank erosion site and overly wide channel on the Pecos River.

PROJECT NAME: Bloodgood Spring Preservation

COOPERATOR: Upper Gila Watershed Association (UGWA)

This project involves the replacement of the existing barbed wire fence with a pipe and cable fence. The current barbed wire fence is in disrepair, is choking mature trees, and may not remain effective at keeping livestock out of Bloodgood Spring (Sierra County) as time goes on. Replacing the current fence ensures that this area remains protected for the foreseeable future and secures the spring's ability to provide a high-quality perennial source of cold water (and associated wildlife habitat) in a watershed historically impacted by and vulnerable to wildfire. UGWA received \$105,958.22 to complete this project.



Barbed wire constricting pine growth (at least 10 trees were observed wrapped in barbed wire.

PROJECT NAME: Rio Puerco Riparian and Beaver Habitat Restoration

COOPERATOR: Rio Grande Return

The project aims to expand upon previous restoration efforts and employ utilization of low-tech process-based restoration approaches focusing on the improvement of beaver habitat, the alleviation of sediment inputs into the Rio Grande and the facilitation of floodplain reconnection in this severely degraded stream system. NMED awarded Rio Grande Return \$511,928.89 to restore 2.41 miles of degraded stream channel that will benefit approximately 90 acres of riparian wetlands on Rio Puerco in Sandoval County.

PROJECT NAME: Wetland and Stream Habitat Restoration on Midnight Meadows and Bitter Creek

COOPERATOR: Amigos Bravos

The primary goal of this project is to continue restoration efforts in the headwaters of Bitter Creek and adjacent wetland meadows in Taos County to improve habitat for native Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout. The project will address bank erosion and sediment concerns, improve aquatic habitat, improve floodplain connectivity and promote health wetlands. Amigos Bravos was awarded \$639,392.96 to complete this project.



Road has captured creek and led to headcut. Formerly the creek channel was on the photo right of the willows.



2024 River Stewardship Projects

Clean Water Act Section 319 Program Upcoming Funding Opportunity!

The SWQB will be releasing a CWA Section 319 Watershed-Based Planning Projects funding opportunity in *Fall of 2025*. Our exciting announcement this year is that we are dropping our non-federal match requirement for CWA Section 319 funding to only 10% of the project cost! Matching funds may consist of cash expenditures on the project or in-kind project contributions of labor, equipment, and materials donations. We look forward to seeing your applications for the next round of projects to improve surface water quality in New Mexico.

CWA 319 Watershed-Based Planning Projects Request for Proposals (RFP)

- Anticipated Release Date: approximately Fall of 2025
- Funding Available: approximately \$200,000 for watershed-based planning projects
- Open for 60 days
- Only 10% match required!
- Eligible entities include local public bodies, non-governmental organizations, businesses, tribes, pueblos, and other non-federal agencies.

Watershed-Based Plans (WBP) are written to address water quality problems for watersheds with impaired streams. NMED monitors ambient water quality conditions in surface waters in New Mexico. Water bodies with water quality that exceed the limits set in the water quality standards for that surface water are listed as impaired, as detailed in the Clean Water Act 303(d)/305(b) Integrated Report (https://www.env.nm.gov/surface-water-quality/303d-305b/) published by NMED every other year. Once a stream is listed as impaired, NMED develops a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for the pollutants exceeding water quality standards. WBPs are then developed to describe sources of impairment(s) and recommend actions to reduce pollution in impaired waters.

Most WBP are written as an avenue to CWA funding for projects to protect or improve water quality. Once a plan is created, any organization (private, county, tribal, federal, etc.) can apply for funding to implement the plan's recommended projects.

Pollutant sources can vary greatly, and WBPs are written to address the specific water quality impairments of the streams they cover. WBPs funded by NMED must address at least one impairment that has a TMDL, but a plan does not have to address every impairment on a stream- plans can focus on one or two specific impairments of interest to stakeholders or for which the authors have expertise.

Once a draft WBP is reviewed by NMED it must be reviewed and accepted by EPA Region 6 before projects can be funded using Section 319 funds under its scope. All WBPs have to meet the nine elements in the Nonpoint Source Program and Grants Guidelines for States and Territories to be accepted by EPA.

New Mexico EPA accepted WBP can be found on the NMED SWQB webpage, https://www.env.nm.gov/ surface-water-quality/wbp/. Additionally, you can view the WBPs by location on the <u>SWQB mapper</u>. A project summary of two of the most recent accepted WBPs, *Sapello River Watershed Based Plan* and *Wolf Creek Update to the Watershed-Based Plan for the Mora River – Upper Canadian Plateau*, are highlighted on pages 14 and 15.

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Sapello River Watershed Based Plan (19-C) Project cost: \$132,642 (Section 319 funds), \$93,655 (matching funds and in-kind)

This project developed a WBP for the Sapello River watershed by the Hermit's Peak Watershed Alliance (HPWA). The Sapello River Watershed covers approximately 293 square miles (187,764 acres) mostly in San Miguel County and in a small part of Mora County.

The main objectives of this project were to meet all nine elements of WBPs in EPA's *Nonpoint Source Program and Grants Guidelines for States and Territories*. The specific water quality impairments of concern at the beginning of this project were sedimentation/siltation in the Sapello River and low flow alterations in its tributary the Rito San Jose. During the project term SWQB interpreted new data and recognized additional impairments of dissolved oxygen, and temperature. The project identified pollutant sources and management measures to reduce pollutant loading in a technically and scientifically sound manner, with participation from watershed residents and cooperating agencies.

The WBP was developed before the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Fire, which was the largest wildlife recorded in New Mexico's history. The wildfire burned from April through June of 2022. During that period, the WBP was already in review. While the identified management measures are still relevant for long-term water quality improvement, the plan does not specifically address impacts of the wildfire.

HPWA engaged with several key stakeholders including the Tierra y Montes Soil and Water Conservation District, NM Office of the State Engineer, Natural Resources Conservation Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the US Forest Service. Educational components included a ranch road workshop and creation of a land stewardship video series with information on stormwater treatment systems, green infrastructure, and partnering with beavers. The videos were particularly helpful due to the COVID pandemic, which occurred during two of the most active years of this project. The educational videos were an excellent addition to HPWA's and NMED's educational toolbox.

The management measures proposed in the WBP are specific to the Sapello Watershed. These management measures included Livestock Management with Planned Grazing Systems and Agricultural Management which are the primary activities occurring in this watershed. The development and implementation of planned grazing systems that maintain the integrity and function of vegetation and soils in riparian areas and in uplands is paramount in the Sapello Watershed. Agriculture and watershed health can be compatible and complementary if potential farming impacts to water quality and watershed health are understood, and techniques are modified to eliminate impacts.

Wolf Creek Update to the Watershed-Based Plan for the Mora River – Upper Canadian Plateau (20-E) Project cost: \$75,574 (Section 319 funds), \$94,591 (matching funds and in-kind)

The goal of this project was to develop a watershed-based plan with stakeholder involvement for the Wolf Creek watershed in Mora County, New Mexico. Currently, Wolf Creek does not support its designated aquatic life use because of flow regime modification. The project area consisted of the entire drainage basin of Wolf Creek, including all tributaries, downstream to its confluence with the Mora River. The watershed area is approximately 121 square miles from its headwaters near

Laguna Salada downstream to its confluence with the Mora River at Valmora, NM.

The condition of the Wolf Creek Watershed was assessed during this project to establish baseline conditions, confirm low flow/flow impairment, identify watershed-wide sources of impairment to guide the development of management plans and restoration strategies.

The project assembled existing watershed data including land use, land cover, topography, hydrology, National Wetlands Inventory, soils, past studies, and past watershed related enhancement activities. In addition to electronic data, water quality data was collected. Flow measurements and multiparameter sonde data were collected during this project to determine if any flow could be measured.

HPWA conducted a social assessment to detemine landowner/ manager willingness to cooperate on future projects. Several meetings were held with the Fort Union Ranch/Union Land and Cattle Company, the single most important stakeholder in the Wolf Creek Watershed.

The Wolf Creek Update to the Watershed-Based Plan for the Mora River – Upper Canadian Plateau was approved by the EPA on May 18, 2023. Management and Restoration Measures (MRMs) were developed with the help of HPWA staff, Bill Zeedyk, Fort Union Ranch staff, and other stakeholders. These MRMs will be for future projects to help improve land management and restore healthy watershed conditions. MRMs that result in substantial gains to flow or wetted area in Wolf Creek Watershed or tackle multiple watershed improvement goals simultaneously wil be considered high priority for future projects.



<u>Watershed Protection Section</u> <u>Staff Updates</u>



Jocelyn Harimon has relocated from the SWQB Point Source Regulation Section where she was working on the development of the Surface Water Quality State Permitting Program and has recently joined the Nonpoint Source Section as the new Project Officer in the WPS in November 2024.

Prior to joining NMED and the state of New Mexico Jocelyn worked as a Landscape Ecologist in landscape planning, design and project management both in New Mexico and formerly in Northern Germany. Jocelyn received her Masters of Science in Landscape Ecology and Nature Conservation from the Ernst Moritz Arndt Universität Greifswald in Germany. Her Master's thesis focused on identifying effective conservation farming practices and resource needs with agricultural land users in the Biosphere Reserve Rügen. During this time, she was also working as a research assistant in a water ethics working group at the Institute of Botany and Landscape Ecology where she developed a trans-European youth coalition for the protection of European Rivers and the development of regional policy for the implementation of the European Water Framework Directive.

Ashlie Carabajal joined the WPS as a Project Officer in the Ruidoso Field Office in February 2025. She comes to SWQB after more than 8 years with the Village of Ruidoso with her final position as the Water Resource Manager. She worked on the Village's 401/404 permits, managed riparian and wetland restoration projects, managed the Village's water rights portfolio, conducted the annual water audit and water conservation plan, helped to manage various grants, and managed the GIS for the utility department and the South Fork/Salt Fire/Flood incidents. Ashlie's in-depth knowledge of the Ruidoso area, Sacramento Mountains, and the recent fire and flooding disasters will be invaluable in developing new partnerships and projects for SWQB in Southeastern New Mexico. Before working with the Village of Ruidoso, she was a summer temporary employee with the Forest Service. This took her to the White Mountain National Forest on the trail crew, the Gila National Forest as a wildlife biologist, and the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest on the range crew. While attending school, she also worked for the Jornada Experimental Range in a work study position.

Ashlie obtained her Bachelor's degree in Wildlife Science with a minor in Range and Conservation from New Mexico State University. She recently completed her Master of Science degree from Fresno State University in Water Resource Management. Ashlie has also added to her continuing education by becoming a Project Management Professional through the Project Management Institute, a Level 1 New Mexico Certified Water Sampler, a Certified Floodplain Manager, and earned an ArcGIS Desktop Associate certification. She also attended the Swamp School to become certified in National Ordinary High Water Mark Field Delineation and Wetland Delineation.

The next time you are in the Ruidoso area, pop into the Field Office at 1216 Mechem Dr. Building 2 to meet Ashlie!



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Shabana Shoukath joined the SWQB at NMED as a Wetlands Program Project Officer.

Originally from India, Shabana's passion for nature and environmental conservation shaped a foundation for a future career. Shabana holds dual degrees in Marine Science and Nautical Science, providing a unique blend of ecological expertise and operational experience for managing research and conservation projects. Shabana had the privilege of leading teams as a ship captain and skipper on research vessels, contributing to various environmental and marine research initiatives.

Shabana gained hands-on experience with a wide range of environmental assessment techniques, including population assessments and using radar, sonar, echosounders, and GPS for mapping and monitoring marine ecosystems. Fieldwork, including trawling, longlining, and purse seining, has been integral in studying and managing marine species and habitats. Memorable experiences include spending a month at sea conducting research with the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute and the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology. Shabana worked closely with the team to collect data, assess



populations, and analyze marine resources, while monitoring ecosystem health and human impact on biodiversity.

In addition to marine research, as a Senior Project Manager with the Fisheries Department of Kerala, Shabana led complex projects focused on ecological restoration and community development. Managing several environmental restoration projects, such as wetland conservation, mangrove restoration, coral restoration, marine conservation, invasive species management and aquaculture. This included multi-disciplinary teams, ensuring regulatory compliance, engaging stakeholders, and monitoring project progress, all while improving the livelihoods of local communities.

Shabana is eager to apply skills in ecosystem management, restoration, and research at NMED, and collaborating with the team to protect and enhance New Mexico's wetland and water resources.

<u>New SWQB Outreach Coordinator</u>

In public meetings and hearings like the Outstanding National Resource Water Designation hearing, and in SWQB's day to day, it is obvious that New Mexicans understand how important and precious water is in the state. While everyone at SWQB lives and breathes water, SWQB is only one small part of the community in New Mexico that is so passionate about protecting our surface waters. SWQB recognizes that working together with the community is the best way to utilize every resource available. SWQB is excited to announce our new Outreach Coordinator, Nate Kamm.



In his new role, Nate looks forward to working with local, state, federal, and tribal agencies, organizations, everyday New Mexicans and to leverage resources towards understanding and protecting our waters. A born and raised New Mexican, Nate is most excited to empower people from across the state to become active stewards of local waters and he looks forward to growing and creating opportunities for volunteer monitoring and educational programming.



Water Quality Control Commission Designates Outstanding National Resource Waters (ONRWs)

In the Fall 2024 issue of *Clearing the Waters*, SWQB informed you about our Nomination of ONRWs. Since then, on December 10th, 2024, the Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC) held a public hearing to consider NMED SWQB's Nomination for ONRWs. The result of the hearing was the WQCC accepting the nomination and designating over 240 miles of New Mexico's streams and rivers as ONRWs. The ONRW designation became effective for state purposes on March 15, 2025. The designation was sent and accepted by the EPA and became effective for federal CWA purposes on April 10, 2025. SWQB would like to thank everyone that made public comments for the hearing and participated in the rulemaking process.

You can see the recorded hearing and access the meeting materials on the WQCC's webpage at https://www.env. nm.gov/opf/water-quality-control-commission/.



An ONRW is a stream, lake, or wetland that receives special protection against future degradation under New Mexico's Standards for Interstate and Intrastate Surface Waters (Surface Water Quality Standards or WQS, 20.6.4 NMAC). ONRW designation affords the highest protection of water quality under the State's antidegradation policy (i.e., Tier 3) which mirrors the protections established under federal regulations at 40 C.F.R. § 131 and the federal CWA.

Map of 2024 ONRW Designation Nomination viewable from SWQB's Mapper, available at: https://gis.web.env.nm.gov/oem/?map=swqb.



ONRW designations are intended to protect surface waters from future degradation for the immediate and future benefit of the local community, and the State. ONRW designations benefit the state of New Mexico because enhanced water quality protection will help maintain and support:

- 1. a clean water supply for present and future generations of New Mexicans,
- 2. healthy, functioning ecosystems, preserve habitat, and support biodiversity,
- 3. the recreational benefits in these areas, and
- 4. the designated uses of these waters as detailed in 20.6.4.101 through 899 NMAC.

2025-2026 Surface Water Quality Surveys

Rio Grande

The SWQB Monitoring, Assessment and Standards (MASS) Monitoring Team will begin 2-year rotational, ambient water quality surveys in the Middle Rio Grande (including the Santa Fe River) Watershed, the Canadian River and Dry Cimarron River Watersheds, and selected tributaries and lakes in these survey areas. Monitoring focuses primarily on chemical, physical, and biological conditions in perennial waters, and includes sampling for many pollutants that have numeric or narrative water quality criteria in New Mexico.

Monitoring staff develop and implement Field Sampling Plans (FSPs) to ensure all data needed to determine attainment of New Mexico's water quality standards are collected during watershed surveys. The Bureau conducts monitoring of watersheds on a rotational schedule. Monitoring generally occurs in non-winter months from March through November over two years. The Monitoring Team will sample selected locations for water quality constituents 4-5 times over the two years, as well as deploy monitoring devices to gather long-term data sets and conduct physical habitat surveys and Hydrology Protocol surveys where appropriate and warranted as resources allow. The total number of sampling events for each location is determined through the CWA §303(d)/ §305(b) Integrated Report (IR) assessment categories, presence of point source discharge(s), TMDL status, WPS Restoration Projects, as well as other considerations including resources and funding.

Data collected during these water quality surveys will be verified and validated to ensure quality assurance and then assessed according to the <u>Consolidated</u> <u>Assessment and Listing Methodology (CALM)</u> to determine if they meet state water quality standards. These data assessments are then used to develop the State of New Mexico Clean Water Act §303(d)/305(b) Integrated Report and subsequent Total Maximum Daily Load planning documents.

More information regarding exact monitoring location for each survey can be found in the most up to date FSP available at https://www.env.nm.gov/ surface-water-quality/water-quality-monitoring/. StoryMaps of the survey areas are also available at the provide link for an interactive view of the planned surveys. For more information regarding surveys, please contact Miguel Montoya, Miguel.montoya@ env.nm.gov or 505-819-9882 or Lynette Guevara at Lynette.guevara@env.nm.gov or 505-629-8811.

EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

NOW - JUNE 14th

2025 Spring Ecosystem Restoration Weekend Workshop Series Hosts: SYNERGIA RANCH & ECOTONE Location: South of Santa Fe

This is series of workshops on building green restoration structures which can be attended in full or for select sessions. For more info and to register: https://synergiaranch.com/workshop-registration/

APRIL 29th

Thinking Like Water Films Screening Organizers: TCA & AMIGOS BRAVOS Location: Taos

Tickets at:

https://tcataos.org/film/#start date=2025-04-01;categories=677485275,677486877



2025 upcoming Albuquerque Wildlife Federation's (AWF) Service Projects Calendar:

- April 26Galisteo BasinMay 16-18Turkey Mountains, Ft. Union RanchMay 30 June 1Rito Peñas Negras
- June 20- 22 Rio Cebolla, Jemez Mtns
- July 11-13 L Bar Ranch near Laguna
- Aug 15-17Midnight Meadows near Questa
- Aug 29-31 Limestone Canyon, San Mateo Mtns

More information can be found on their website: https://abq.nmwildlife.org

May 7-9, 2025

The 2025 New Mexico Watershed and Dam Owners Coalition Annual Conference and Business Meeting

Location: Sagebrush Inn - Taos, NM

Conference Theme: "*What's the Dirt on Soil??!*" This year's conference, we plan to provide an exchange of information about how soils and their health effect watersheds and flood control structures and how that impacts communities, municipalities, floodplains and floodplain managers, agricultural producers, irrigation districts, soil and water conservation districts, public works agencies, engineers and designers, county managers, land management agencies, tribes, regulators, suppliers, contractors, and individual citizens across NM. The conference will also strive to provide information about funding opportunities including grants, loans, and cost sharing to improve soil health, structure maintenance, and dam safety while advocating for improved watershed management and dam design, operations, maintenance and safety across NM.

NMWDOC: https://nmwdoc.org/conference

May 15, 2025

The NM Water Dialogue 30th Statewide Meeting Engaging New Mexicans in the Water Planning Process – Strategizing for Action will be held at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center in Albuquerque. https://nmwaterdialogue. org/.

June 5-6, 2025

Next Generation Water Summit

The theme of the 2025 Next Generation Water Summit is "Increasing Resilience in an Unpredictable Climate."

The Next Generation Water Summit brings together the building and development community, water reuse professionals and water policymakers in a collaborative setting to share best practices and learn about innovative water conservation and water reuse techniques that can be used to comply with water conservation restrictions spreading across the southwest. <u>2025 Next Generation</u> <u>Water Summit</u>