



TOTAL MAXIMUM DAILY LOADS FOR THE RIO CHAMA WATERSHED

What is a TMDL?

A Total Maximum Daily Load, or TMDL, is a calculation of the maximum amount of a pollutant that a waterbody can receive and still meet water quality standards.

A TMDL is a planning document that establishes specific goals to meet water quality standards. It includes current pollution loadings, reduction estimates for pollutants, information on probable sources of pollution, and suggestions to restore or protect the health of the waterbody.



The New Mexico Environment Department-Surface Water Quality Bureau (NMED-SWQB) conducted water quality monitoring in the Santa Rio Chama Watershed in 2012 as part of a regular scheduled water quality survey (summary report at <https://www.env.nm.gov/surface-water-quality/water-quality-monitoring/>). Additional data were collected in 2014. Three stream reaches were determined to be impaired due to excess bacteria (*E. coli*) levels. Three stream reaches were determined to be impaired due to excess sedimentation/siltation of the streambed. Two stream reaches were determined to be impaired due to high water temperature. Therefore, TMDLs were developed.

A 30-day comment period for the draft TMDL document opened on May 1, 2020 and will close on June 1, 2020 at 4:00 p.m. MST. A virtual public meeting will be held via WebEx remote meeting software on Wednesday, May 6, 2020 from 5:30-7:30 pm. All public comments submitted in writing to SWQB staff will be responded to and included as an additional appendix in the Final Draft TMDLs that will be submitted to the Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC) for their approval at their next available meeting. Once WQCC approval is received, the TMDLs will be submitted to EPA Region 6 for final approval.

TMDL NEXT STEPS

Stakeholder public outreach and involvement in the implementation of these TMDLs will be ongoing. A Watershed-based Plan (WBP) is a written plan intended to provide a long-range vision for various activities and management of resources in a watershed. It includes opportunities for private landowners and public agencies in reducing and preventing nonpoint source impacts to water quality. This long-range strategy will become instrumental in coordinating efforts to achieve water quality standards in the watershed. The WBP is essentially the Implementation Plan, or Phase Two of the TMDL process. The completion of the TMDLs and WBP leads directly to the development of on-the-ground projects to address surface water impairments in the watershed. SWQB can potentially provide Clean Water Act §319(h) or §604(b) funding to assist in the development of WBPs and on-the-ground projects. For impacts related to point sources in the watershed, SWQB will continue to coordinate with EPA Region 6 on the implementation of the TMDLs through the NPDES program and permits issued in the watershed.

