



STATE OF NEW MEXICO

## Environment Department

**MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM, GOVERNOR**

James C. Kenney, Cabinet Secretary

### **NEWS RELEASE** For Immediate Release

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*The Environment Department's mission is to protect and restore the environment and to foster a healthy and prosperous New Mexico for present and future generations.*

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### **New Mexico announces \$26 million for brackish water projects** *Grants part of \$40 million appropriated to support Strategic Water Supply*

SANTA FE – The New Mexico Environment Department and Office of the State Engineer today announced more than \$25.9 million in grant funding to advance the exploration, production and treatment of brackish water projects across the state — a major investment in developing new water sources while preserving New Mexico's freshwater resources.

Today's announcement marks the first step in awarding \$40 million appropriated by the Legislature this year for Strategic Water Supply projects. The state expects to award an additional \$13 million in contracts in the coming months to create new sources of clean, reliable water in New Mexico.

The grants support implementation of Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham's 50-Year Water Action Plan through the newly created Strategic Water Supply Program — a groundbreaking initiative designed to develop new water sources and protect New Mexico's freshwater supply as climate change intensifies water challenges statewide. House Bill 137, which created the program, was approved by the Legislature and signed into law during the 2025 legislative session.

"One of the key tenets of our 50-Year Water Action Plan is that New Mexico doesn't have to choose between water security and economic growth," said **Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham**. "By leveraging our state's brackish water reserves, cutting-edge technology, and the expertise of local governments, we can secure both. Today's grant recipients will serve as a prime example of what New Mexico's water future will look like."

"New Mexico is taking the challenge of preserving our most precious resource for future generations head-on," said **Environment Secretary James Kenney**. "Treating and using brackish water is an integral part of the Governor's 50-Year Water Action Plan, and the projects selected under the Strategic Water Supply Program will help turn that vision into reality."

"The projects selected provide a wide variety of examples of how the Strategic Water Supply Program can help our communities continue to thrive while protecting our precious freshwater

resources," said **State Engineer Elizabeth Anderson**. "We look forward to continuing to learn from the program projects and expand participation in the coming years."

"This investment represents confidence in rural New Mexico and in Cuba's future," said **Village of Cuba Mayor Denny Herrera**. "The Village is deeply grateful to the Legislature and state partners who recognized both the urgency of our water challenges and the opportunity to lead with innovative, responsible solutions."

A technical review committee led by the New Mexico Environment Department and the Office of the State Engineer selected seven applicants to receive a total of \$25,928,632 in grant funding. The grants support efforts to:

- Explore, produce, or treat brackish water
- Enhance the state's freshwater resources
- Align with local, state, or tribal economic development goals
- Comply with water quality and other permitting requirements

The awards include one construction project, one design pilot project, one environmental documentation or demonstration project, two feasibility studies, and two research and development projects.

In total, 13 grant applications requesting more than \$94 million were submitted for consideration, along with \$40 million in private sector contract proposals. The Governor's fiscal year 2027 executive budget request will include additional funding to support future brackish water projects through the Strategic Water Supply.

### **Why brackish water?**

Brackish water is naturally salty groundwater found in underground reservoirs across New Mexico. While it cannot be used directly for drinking or certain agriculture crops without treatment, brackish water treatment units are able to create an alternative water source that can be used safely for a range of purposes such as manufacturing, cooling, dust control, and cement-making.

New Mexico is estimated to have up to 1.3 trillion gallons of brackish water stored underground statewide. If New Mexico continues with business as usual, scientists project the state will have a water shortfall of over 244 billion gallons in 50 years. Developing alternative water sources like brackish water through the Strategic Water Supply Program is one essential step toward ensuring long-term water security for New Mexico.

The development of brackish water resources is one component of the [Governor's 50-Year Water Action Plan](#), which takes a comprehensive approach to water management statewide. Other efforts underway include investments in water infrastructure improvements, aquifer mapping, and enhanced watershed protection.

To learn more about the Strategic Water Supply and see the full list of grant recipients, visit <https://www.env.nm.gov/strategic-water-supply/strategic-water-supply-grant/>.

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