



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.

State awards \$13M to develop brackish water projects *Contracts part of \$40 million appropriated to Strategic Water Supply*

SANTA FE — The New Mexico Environment Department and the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer today announced more than \$13 million in contracts to map, test and treat brackish water – naturally occurring salty water found in underground reservoirs – as part of the state’s strategy to build drought-resilient water supplies without further depleting New Mexico's limited freshwater resources.

The projects advance the Strategic Water Supply Program, a centerpiece of Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham’s 50-Year Water Action Plan. Scientists project the state will face a water shortfall of more than 244 billion gallons within 50 years. New Mexico is estimated to hold trillions of gallons of brackish water underground statewide.

“By advancing brackish water desalination, resource mapping, and real-world demonstration projects, we are building the technical foundation needed to unlock new water sources statewide,” said **Environment Secretary James Kenney**. “These investments move New Mexico closer to a future where every community has access to reliable, drought-resilient water supplies.”

“These contracts give us the data, tools, and experience needed to make long-term, science-based decisions about New Mexico’s water future. We are grateful for these new partnerships on this important work,” said **State Engineer Elizabeth Anderson**. “Understanding where and how we can responsibly develop brackish water resources is essential to easing pressure on our freshwater systems.”

The three contracts, funded through a \$40 million legislative appropriation establishing the Strategic Water Supply Program, are:

- **\$9.1 million — Water Systems Planning:** Albuquerque-based Water Systems Planning — a company with experience supporting water systems across the state — will evaluate brackish water availability in the Middle Rio Grande Basin and map water quantity and quality, assess feasibility and support future Strategic Water Supply

treatment, distribution and siting decisions.

Through drilling, testing, and mapping to fill data gaps, Water System Planning's work takes the essential first step in identifying sites for future desalination plant construction. These future facilities, ushered in by Water System Planning's work, will add economic development opportunities to local communities through jobs and preserve freshwater resources for non-manufacturing purposes.

- **\$3.7 million — Indewater:** Albuquerque-based Indewater will develop and deploy a mobile brackish water desalination pilot plant serving rural and Tribal communities. In partnership with a local manufacturer and New Mexico State University, the project will evaluate treatment performance, source suitability and additional potential deployments in New Mexico communities. The state will own the mobile plant and be able to deploy it in the coming years, giving us a tool to quickly determine whether desalination is an option for communities that are seeing their water supply become more brackish.
- **\$271,368 — Harmony:** Harmony, a Cambridge, Massachusetts company that was spun off from research at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), will use high-efficiency desalination technology to improve cattle health and business sustainability at Menefee Farms in Lake Arthur. The project will install a more efficient reverse osmosis system — improving water recovery from 62% to 90% — and support a model to scale-up regional agricultural water efficiency strategies.

These awards build on seven grant projects [announced in December 2025](#). The program received an additional \$35 million appropriation from the 2026 legislative session; grant and contract proposals for that funding will be solicited in early August.

Brackish water treatment systems can supply water suitable for manufacturing, cooling, dust control and cement-making, and even drinking water or agricultural uses. The Strategic Water Supply Program aims to develop these alternative sources while preserving freshwater for drinking and environmental needs.

To learn more about the Strategic Water Supply, visit <https://www.env.nm.gov/strategic-water-supply/>.

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