

30x30 *New Mexico*

PROTECTING NEW MEXICO'S LANDS, WATERSHEDS,

WILDLIFE, AND NATURAL HERITAGE



2023 ANNUAL REPORT



CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Overview of 30 by 30	4
30 by 30 Committee Membership	4
Recommended Conservation Definitions	5
Preparation of Draft Definitions	5
30 by 30 Process and Principles	6
Process	6
Foundational Principles	6
30 by 30 Outreach	7
Tribal Outreach	7
Public Requests for Information	7
Other Public Outreach	8
Outreach Findings	8
Program-by-Program Overview and Contributions to 30 by 30	9
<i>Programs That Permanently Protect Land</i>	
Land Conservation Incentives Act, Energy Minerals and Natural Resources Dept.	10
Natural Heritage Conservation Act (NHCA) Program, Energy Minerals and Natural Resources Dept.	10
Forest Legacy, Energy Minerals and Natural Resources Dept.	11
Habitat Management Fund, Dept. of Game and Fish	11
<i>Programs That Restore and Improve the Conservation Value of Land</i>	
Forest and Watershed Restoration Program, Energy Minerals and Natural Resources Dept.	12
Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Dept. of Agriculture	12
Strategic Water Reserve, Office of the State Engineer and the Interstate Stream Commission	13
River Stewardship Program, Environment Dept.	14
Restoration and Remediation Project Program, State Land Office	14
<i>Programs That Promote Access to Nature</i>	
State Parks, Energy Minerals and Natural Resources Dept.	15
Outdoor Equity Fund, Economic Development Dept., Outdoor Recreation Division	16
Outdoor Recreation Trails+ Grant, Economic Development Dept., Outdoor Recreation Division	17
<i>Programs That Increase Carbon Sequestration</i>	
Healthy Soil Program, Dept. of Agriculture	18
NMSLO Leasing, State Land Office	18
Next Steps on 30 by 30	19
Appendix A: RFI Analyses	20
Appendix B: Program Details	31



Executive Summary

This report constitutes the second report by the 30 by 30 Committee (the “Committee”) under Executive Order (E.O.) 2021-052 Protecting New Mexico’s Lands, Watersheds, Wildlife, and Natural Heritage, summarizing the Committee’s activities over the past year. The Committee developed a framework for accomplishing the State’s 30 by 30 goals, conducted tribal government and public outreach activities, and drafted a common set of definitions for “Conserved Lands” and “Climate Stabilization Areas” that can be used to measure our progress under the E.O. We conclude with a preview of work we expect to do in fiscal year 2024.

Conservation of natural resources is achieved through an ever-changing mosaic of social, legal, and environmental conditions. That is why the approach of the 30 by 30 committee recognizes the America the Beautiful Initiative while using a “Uniquely New Mexico” approach. In this report we present definitions for “Conserved Lands” and “Climate Stabilization Areas” with the intention of recognizing both traditional conservation practices while also keeping the door open for new ideas to take hold.

The geographic borders of the State of New Mexico contain 77.8 million acres. New Mexico

is a checkerboard of land ownership, including 27 million acres managed by various federal agencies, 5.8 million acres managed by 22 tribes, pueblos, and nations, nine million acres managed by the State Land Office, and 34 million acres of private land. Achieving our conservation goal of 30 percent of non-sovereign lands will require conservation of 21.6 million acres and a high level of cross-jurisdictional collaboration and cooperation across a wide variety of land uses and conservation methods. We must also recognize that state agencies’ 30 by 30 activities taken under the E.O. and described in this report are but one aspect of the 30 by 30 initiative, a broader national and global movement.

New Mexico has a rich history of cultural land management that continues in many communities today. All of the state is ancestral land to tribes, pueblos, and nations. The historic boundaries of Spanish and Mexican land grants once covered about 6 million acres of land. An estimated 1000+ acequias (traditional irrigation systems) crossed these lands and others and continue to form the backbone of New Mexico’s agricultural economy today. Cultural management of natural resources is deeply intertwined with environmental and economic outcomes on millions of acres across New Mexico.

Overview

Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham signed Executive Order 2021-052, Protecting New Mexico’s Lands, Watersheds, Wildlife, and Natural Heritage, in August 2021. The order begins by identifying the multiple values provided by conserved lands and waters:

New Mexicans rely on the State’s lands and watersheds to support our economy, sustain traditional ways of life, provide our drinking water, ensure food security, preserve biodiversity, and provide recreation opportunities that promote the health and wellbeing of all who call New Mexico home.

These values guide the work of the Committee, comprised of seven state agencies and the State Land Office. Agencies are directed to individually review and utilize existing programs, funding, and authorities to reach the ambitious conservation targets of conserving at least 30 percent of all lands in New Mexico by 2030, with an additional 20 percent of lands designated as climate stabilization areas. The scientific basis for 30 by 30 goals¹ were considered in drafting clear definitions for these terms, inclusive of the values outlined in the Executive Order. The definitions will influence which lands count toward conservation targets and guide the implementation and coordination of programs contributing toward those targets.

Defining what conservation means for New Mexico is an opportunity to bring together diverse people—ranchers and farmers, sovereign nations, outdoor recreation interests, and conservation organizations—under a common purpose. For each of these groups, collectively and individually, the Committee believes that conservation must be a benefit, not a burden. Redefining conservation also serves a practical purpose, helping to ensure New Mexico’s vision for conservation is accurately represented in the American Conservation and Stewardship Atlas², which is being developed to track conservation progress nationally as part of the America the Beautiful initiative.

¹ Dinerstein, Eric, et al. "A "Global Safety Net" to reverse biodiversity loss and stabilize Earth's climate." *Science advances* 6.36 (2020): eabb2824.
² <https://www.usgs.gov/mission-areas/ecosystems/science/bipartisan-infrastructure-law-ecosystem-restoration-american>

30 BY 30 COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Energy, Minerals & Natural Resources Dept.
Sarah Cottrell Propst, Secretary

Department of Agriculture
Julie Maitland, Designee for Jeff M. Witte, Secretary

Environment Department
Sydney Lienemann, Designee for James Kenney, Secretary

Office of the State Engineer
Julie Valdez, Designee for Mike A. Hamman, State Engineer

Indian Affairs Department
Michael Chacon, Designee for James Mountain, Secretary

Department of Game and Fish
Michael B. Sloane, Director

Outdoor Recreation Division of EDD
Alyssa Renwick, Acting Director

State Land Office
Will Barnes, Designee for Stephanie Garcia Richard, Commissioner of Public Lands

Committee Staff
Dylan Fuge, EMNRD General Counsel
Laura McCarthy, EMNRD State Forester
Jacob Pederson, EMNRD Forest Restoration
Allison Swartz, EMNRD
Max Henkels, Policy Analyst, NMDA
Josett Monette, IAD
Jonas Armstrong, NMED



Recommended Conservation Definitions

The following “Uniquely New Mexico” definitions for Conserved Lands and Climate Stabilization Areas have been developed with the goal of improving the effectiveness and impact of existing public programs. They provide a new way of cohesively evaluating the outcomes of our state programs. Feedback from three Requests for Information (RFIs) and other outreach activities highlight that the definitions can be revised periodically. They exist to help us understand how state programs are performing and how program managers and administrators can continue to adapt to changing economic, societal, and climatic conditions in the years ahead.

Alternative definitions considered by the Committee were presented in the second and third public RFIs conducted in 2023 (see appendix A).



THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING DEFINITION FOR “CONSERVED LANDS”:

“Conserved Lands” means any land in a primarily natural or traditionally managed condition that is both durably protected and managed to provide or maintain ecosystem services, climate resiliency, or cultural values. These services and values include supporting New Mexico’s economy, protecting traditional ways of life, providing drinking water, ensuring food security, enhancing biodiversity, and providing equitable and inclusive recreational opportunities to promote the health and wellbeing of all who call New Mexico home.

THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING DEFINITION FOR “CLIMATE STABILIZATION AREAS”:

“Climate Stabilization Areas (CSAs)” means any land in a natural or semi-natural condition that lacks durable protections but is nevertheless actively managed using either modern or traditional practices to maintain or enhance ecosystem services, land-based carbon sequestration, or climate resiliency.



Process & Principles

PROCESS

The 30 by 30 Committee is an advisory group responsible for providing advice and recommendations to the Governor on issues raised in the 30 by 30 Executive Order (E.O.) and the federal government's America the Beautiful Initiative. The Committee meets quarterly to discuss:

- Coordination between agencies and programs,
- Progress toward goals,
- Use of best available science,
- A commitment to equity,
- Robust stakeholder engagement,
- Timely recommendations on state and federal policies, and
- Ensuring the State's efforts are accurately reflected in the "American Conservation and Stewardship Atlas."

The 30 by 30 Committee does not review or approve individual projects or program operations. Those remain the responsibility of existing agencies under existing authorities and approval processes. The Commissioner of State Lands is an invited member of the Committee and as an elected official may take independent action to achieve 30 by 30 goals consistent with the State Land Office's governing statutes.

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

The following principles guide the Committee's work:

- Respect for tribal sovereignty and self-determination. The Committee acknowledges the sovereign authority of tribal nations and will work in partnership with tribes to honor Indigenous perspectives on equitable land stewardship. The Committee is committed to working with New Mexico's tribes, nations, and pueblos to identify their priorities for conservation.
- Respect for private property rights. The Committee is charged with using existing programs and authorities to carry out the goals of the E.O. Consistent with established practice, all conservation activity on private land will continue to occur on a strictly voluntary basis through willing landowners. The Committee's focus will be on developing incentives that expand land management options available to those landowners and ensuring the good work they do is recognized.
- Maintaining adaptability in a changing climate. The best science tells us that active land management plays an essential role in mitigating and adapting to climate-related risks like drought and wildfire.
- A role for natural and working lands. Active management of farms, ranches, and forests promotes several of the conservation values specified in the E.O. Therefore, the contribution of these lands must be accounted for when defining what conservation means in New Mexico.



Outreach

From the outset of its work the Committee adopted the idea of supporting a “uniquely New Mexico 30 by 30” that recognizes the contributions and efforts of the thousands of individuals engaged in conservation, stewardship, and responsible land management. The Committee quickly identified the need for robust public outreach and engagement with tribal governments, farmers and ranchers, land grants, acequias, environmental groups, local governments, and the general public.

TRIBAL OUTREACH

The Committee prioritized Tribal engagement in the first phase of outreach beginning in January 2022. These outreach efforts were organized by the Indian Affairs Department (IAD) and the Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD). Presentations were made at the IAD Tribal Leaders Bi-weekly Meeting, the EMNRD Forestry Division Tribal Working Group, and the All-Pueblo Council of Governors. Letters sent to all tribal governments in New Mexico in 2022 and 2023 invited open engagement.

Engagement with tribes, pueblos, and nations emphasized respect for sovereignty and self-determination and included discussions on if and how sovereign lands will be counted toward the statewide 30 by 30 conservation targets. Through these engagements tribal representatives have expressed a variety of perspectives about 30 by 30, including an interest in expanding opportunities for co-management of public lands and concerns about what information might be shared. The Committee will continue to pursue opportunities to partner with sovereign nations to promote restoration and responsible land management both on and off tribal lands.

PUBLIC REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

Three public Requests for Information (RFIs) conducted in 2022 and 2023 provided an opportunity for all New Mexicans to provide input on what conservation means to them and comment on the development of draft definitions of Conserved Lands and Climate Stabilization Areas.

The first RFI (Summer-Fall 2022) collected broad perspectives on conservation in general, including opinions of conservation activities occurring locally across New Mexico. There were 280 responses. The second and third RFIs (Fall 2022-Spring 2023) presented working definitions for “Conserved Lands” and “Climate Stabilization Areas” and asked how they can be improved. These included lists of example management scenarios that would count toward their respective goals. RFI 2 received 101 responses and RFI 3 received 211 responses (72 of which were identical). In-depth analyses of all three RFIs are provided in Appendix A.

OTHER PUBLIC OUTREACH

In addition to the tribal outreach, the Committee received several requests for meetings from local governments and other organizations. We accepted each of these requests and made presentations to the following groups:

- New Mexico Counties
- Water and Natural Resources Interim Committee of the NM Legislature
- Curry County Commission
- Rocky Mountain Farmers Union
- San Juan County Commission
- New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau
- Northern New Mexico Roundtable
- NM State Game Commission
- The Nature Conservancy
- Audubon New Mexico
- Trout Unlimited
- New Mexico Acequia Association
- Sierra Club, Rio Grande Chapter
- Conservation Voters New Mexico
- Soil and Water Conservation Commission
- New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute
- New Mexico Municipal League
- The Wilderness Society
- NM Wild
- National Parks Conservation Association
- Western Resource Advocates
- Friends of Organ Mountains Desert Peaks
- Amigos Bravos
- Teddy Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Presentations have all featured similar content, including: a summary of E.O. 2021-052, the role of the Committee and its core principles, background on the federal America the Beautiful Initiative, discussion of draft definitions for “Conserved Lands” and “Climate Stabilization Areas,” and an overview of existing state agency programs positioned to contribute to 30 by 30.



OUTREACH FINDINGS

Public outreach activities collectively highlighted:

- Equity and inclusion in conservation efforts and programs is important and deserves a place in 30 by 30 implementation;
- The need to clearly define durably vs. permanently protected lands;
- The variety of programs related to conserving and enhancing natural landscapes is large and inclusive definitions are important;
- While federally owned lands have a clear role in counting toward conservation goals, ownership and management of these lands continues to be controversial for many communities;
- There is strong passionate support for increased stringent requirements for land to be defined as conserved;
- There is also passion for recognizing the conservation contributions of a broad range of land uses and management scenarios on both public and private lands;
- There is concern that 30 by 30 will infringe on private property rights and restrict economic uses of public lands; and
- Significant public opinion regarding the 30 by 30 initiative relates to areas that are outside the authority of existing state programs and the 30 by 30 Executive Order.

The 30 by 30 Committee remains dedicated to listening to and respecting the views of all New Mexicans and acknowledges that the history of conservation is complex. The Advisory Committee encourages the public to continue to send in comments and questions on 30 by 30 by emailing 30by30@emnrd.nm.gov.





Program-by-Program Overview & Contributions

PROGRAM-BY-PROGRAM OVERVIEW & CONTRIBUTIONS TO 30 BY 30

The following state programs and authorities contribute toward 30 by 30 goals via preservation or enhancement of conservation values on lands across the New Mexico. Several programs offer grant opportunities that allow stakeholders to submit projects and become directly involved in 30 by 30, while some involve direct purchase of land or easements. All programs are strictly voluntary and fee purchases of land by the state are controlled by public processes established by preexisting statutes (the 30 by 30 Committee does not control these activities).

The 30 by 30 Committee will be focused on the coordination and effective utilization of these programs in the coming years—work that will depend on continued public outreach and stakeholder engagement. While there is overlap as to how programs contribute to 30 by 30 goals, programs are placed in categories that:

- a) permanently protect land,
- b) restore and improve the conservation value of land,
- c) promote equitable and inclusive access to nature or
- d) increase carbon sequestration.

PROGRAMS THAT PERMANENTLY PROTECT LAND³

LAND CONSERVATION INCENTIVES ACT, ENERGY MINERALS AND NATURAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

Charitable donations of land – or an interest in land (conservation easement) – to public or private conservation agencies for conservation purposes are eligible for a state tax credit through the New Mexico Land Conservation Incentives Act (NMAC 3.13.20). Applications are accepted three times per year and reviewed by the Natural Lands Protection Committee. The maximum tax credit is 50% of the appraised value of the donation and a maximum of \$250,000 per individual donor.

Selected Accomplishments:

Since 2020, 405,847 acres have been put under easement with a tax credit awarded, and since the start of 2023, 8,654 acres under easement have been approved for a tax credit award. For example:

- **El Valle Conservation Easement (21.5 acres)**- This property is located in Taos County and contributes to protection of wildlife habitat and cultural values. The appraised value was \$310,000 and the conservation incentive tax credit was \$116,500.
- **Astral Valley Conservation Easement (13,823 acres)**- This property protects the Galisteo Basin located in Santa Fe County and contributes to wildlife habitat, recreation, cultural and scenic open space value. The appraised value was \$1,352,000 and the maximum conservation incentive tax credit was awarded.
- **Los Trigos Ranch Conservation Easement (490 acres)**- This property is located in San Miguel County and contributes to protection of wildlife habitat and recreational values as well as scenic open space. The appraised value of the donation was \$603,000 and the maximum conservation incentive tax credit was awarded.

NATURAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION ACT (NHCA) PROGRAM, ENERGY MINERALS AND NATURAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

The NHCA program (Chapter 75-10-1 to 75-10-9 NMSA 1978) protects New Mexico's natural heritage, customs, and culture by funding conservation and agricultural easements and land restoration projects. NHCA protects the land and water available for forests and watersheds, natural areas, wildlife and wildlife habitat, agricultural production on working farms and ranches, and outdoor recreation including hunting, fishing, and trails.

Selected Accomplishments:

- This program will receive its first funding in FY25 through the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund.



³ Additional program details are provided in Appendix B

PROGRAMS THAT PERMANENTLY PROTECT LAND³

FOREST LEGACY, ENERGY MINERALS AND NATURAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

Forest Legacy is a conservation program that encourages the protection of privately owned forest lands through conservation easements or land purchases. The program is administered by the U.S. Forest Service (authorized through the federal Farm Bill) in partnership with state agencies to work with landowners, local governments, and land trusts to identify and protect environmentally important forest lands that are threatened by present or future conversion to non-forest uses. Conservation easements are held in perpetuity by the state and effectively retire the rights to subdivide and develop the properties for non-forest uses. Participating landowners retain all other rights to their properties including occupancy, use for enjoyment or profit, and transfer to heirs or sale to new owners. These private forests continue to produce wood products, provide wildlife habitats and open space, contribute to watershed integrity, help combat climate change through carbon sequestration, and protect against urban sprawl.

Selected Accomplishments:

- There are no recent completed forest legacy projects. However, one project in Rio Arriba County is nearing completion.

HABITAT MANAGEMENT FUND, DEPARTMENT OF GAME AND FISH

Money in the Habitat Management Fund (17-4-34 NMSA 1978) is expended for the improvement, maintenance, development and operation of State Wildlife Management Areas. State Wildlife Management Areas provide access to outdoor recreation including hunting, fishing, wildlife watching, hiking, and an array of other activities. In addition, State Wildlife Areas support high biological diversity as they are specifically managed to conserve wildlife habitats.

Selected Accomplishments:

- **Edward Sargent Wildlife Management Area (WMA) Habitat Enhancement:** The Sargent WMA encompasses over 20,000 acres north of Chama, New Mexico in Rio Arriba County. The WMA consists of montane meadow habitats at 8,000 feet above sea level rising into ponderosa-oak woodlands, large aspen woodlands, and dry mixed conifer to elevations of over 9,500 feet. Reduction of riparian vegetation at lower elevation has created an absence of beavers and beaver dams necessary to hydrate the montane meadow to maintain vegetation growth for a host of wildlife species. To restore proper hydrological function to the meadow until riparian vegetation can be restored and beavers can naturally return, the Department installed 28 beaver dam analogues (BDAs) and erected large herbivore exclusion fencing. In addition, the Department created fire breaks along existing roads and trails and performed limited thinning of adjacent forest to protect the Wildlife Management Area from a catastrophic wildfire. These fire breaks will also help protect the bordering Village of Chama as the fire breaks can be used to stop an incoming fire. It is estimated that this work impacted both the immediate cleared areas and adjacent edge habitat within, thus improving forested habitat to benefit fish, wildlife, their habitats, and recreation. Further, these improvements could potentially protect tens of thousands of acres of forest and wildlife habitat in the event of a future wildfire.
- **Bernardo Management Wildlife Area (WMA) Wetland Improvements:** The Bernardo Wildlife Area consists of ~1,800 acres along the Rio Grande and provides habitat for tens of thousands of migratory and wintering birds. The Department just completed a wetland and moist soil restoration project on Bernardo WMA. The enhancements improved habitat for waterfowl and other Species of Greatest Conservation Need that depend upon the riparian habitats within the Middle Rio Grande Valley. The enhancements will allow the Department to independently manage different wetland units depending on water availability, soil condition, and wildlife species management goals. In addition, removing hundreds of acres of invasive tamarisk and Russian Olive, and replacement with native cottonwoods, willows and other vegetation occurred, benefiting numerous wildlife species that utilize these riparian habitats.

PROGRAMS THAT RESTORE & IMPROVE THE CONSERVATION VALUE OF LAND

FOREST AND WATERSHED RESTORATION PROGRAM, ENERGY MINERALS AND NATURAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

EMNRD's Forestry Division selects high-priority forest and watershed restoration projects each year to receive funding made available through the [Forest and Watershed Restoration Act](#) ("FAWRA") [68-4 NMSA 1978]. The project proposals are reviewed by the FAWRA advisory board who recommend projects based on their public benefits including water source protection, wildfire risk reduction and fish and wildlife habitat conservation. FAWRA projects utilize large landscapes to preserve biodiversity, protect drinking water and support carbon storage via wildfire prevention, ultimately restoring large areas of land for New Mexicans.

Selected Accomplishments:

Following are large-scale projects in high-priority watersheds that were recommended by the FAWRA advisory board. Implementation of these large-scale projects is spread over 10 years because to date there has not been sufficient funding to complete the projects in a shorter time.

- **Santa Clara Restoration, Rio Arriba County (2022):** Tribal land wetland and bosque restoration treatments that will restore seeps, springs, and riparian areas along Santa Clara Creek that were severely damaged by Las Conchas fire in 2011 and post-fire flooding. The project removed invasive trees in the Rio Grande bosque. This project used prescribed burning, mechanical thinning, installation of erosion control features, and enhanced water quality for communities downstream of the confluence of Santa Clara Creek and the Rio Grande.
- **Cimarron Range, Colfax County (2022-2023):** Strategic private land thinning of 10,000 acres using a broad range of forestry treatments focused on reducing risk of wildfire, repositioning woody biomass for erosion control, soil health and moisture retention, and the improvement of drainage conditions is completed. Strong landowner involvement will provide training opportunities and capacity building for private forestry management. Wood from this project will be used by existing value-added manufacturers in Raton and Maxwell and a new sawmill facility in development in Cimarron.
- **Quemado Lake/El Caso, Catron County (2022):** Strategic thinning on over 1,200 acres of private lands bounded by National Forests lands that have already been restored in the Quemado Lake basin. This project will re-establish natural meadow and Ponderosa pine savannah, reduce wildfire risk, and create conditions for safer use of prescribed fire.

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS, DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs) are independent political subdivisions of state government, governed by boards comprised of local landowners and residents who are either elected or appointed (Soil and Water Conservation District Act; 73-20-25 to 73-20-48 NMSA 1978). SWCDs are authorized to perform a variety of functions: conserving and developing the natural resources of the state, providing for flood control, preserving wildlife, and protecting the tax base. SWCDs coordinate assistance from all available sources — public and private, local, state and federal — in an effort to develop locally driven solutions to natural resource concerns. Forty-seven SWCDs encompass the majority of New Mexico's land area.



Selected Accomplishments:

The following projects were implemented by EMNRD in collaboration with SWCDs:

- **White Peak/Black Lake:** Colfax SWCD; invasive plants treatment and forest thinning across private and state lands; \$230,000.
- **East Mountains:** Ciudad SWCD; 220 acres of thinning on city and private property adjacent to USFS lands; \$600,000.
- **Nogal Canyon:** Upper Hondo SWCD; 350 acres of thinning in populated canyon below Little Bear burn scar; \$600,000.

PROGRAMS THAT RESTORE & IMPROVE THE CONSERVATION VALUE OF LAND

STRATEGIC WATER RESERVE, OFFICE OF THE STATE ENGINEER AND THE INTERSTATE STREAM COMMISSION

The Strategic Water Reserve (Chapter 72-14-3.3B.2 NMSA 1978) is a water reserve composed of leased, purchased, or donated surface or groundwater, water rights, and storage rights. The Reserve is to be used for two purposes: to assist the State in complying with interstate stream compacts and court decrees, and to assist the State and water users in water management efforts to benefit threatened or endangered species. The Reserve has been and continues to be essential to meeting the requirements of the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), 16 U.S.C. §§ 1531 to 1599, in the Middle Rio Grande and the Lower Pecos River reaches, and for future ESA compliance in the Canadian River reach below Ute Reservoir. In addition, through a long-term lease agreement with the Jicarilla Apache Nation and The Nature Conservancy, the Reserve is playing a critical role on the San Juan River related to both species and compact purposes.

Selected Accomplishments:

The Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) received funding this legislative session (2023) for the purchase of water rights to meet compact obligations, protect endangered species and maintain healthy rivers. Since creation of the Strategic Water Reserve in 2005, the ISC has received approximately \$7 million from mostly legislative appropriations, and other sources, for implementation of the Reserve. The ISC has allocated most of the funds to acquire water rights/leases on the Lower Pecos River and the Middle Rio Grande. Through December 2022, the Commission had expended approximately \$5.5 million. Examples of how water rights leases and purchases have been used are presented below:

- **San Juan River (2022):** The ISC in partnership with The Nature Conservancy executed a lease of up to 20,000 acre-feet per year with the Jicarilla Apache Nation. The leased water will be released from Navajo Reservoir to the San Juan River in New Mexico to help achieve the statutory purposes of the Reserve.
- **Middle Rio Grande (2022):** The ISC used water rights in the Reserve both to benefit endangered species in the Middle Rio Grande and to assist with Rio Grande Compact administration. In 2022, flows in the Rio Grande were very low and therefore, only a small portion of the Reserve water rights were used to offset increases in depletions related to habitat restoration projects, with the balance of the water rights being used for river augmentation and for compact compliance.
- **Rio Grande Valley State Park (2022):** New Mexico General Services Department Lease: Under a 2008 lease agreement with the Property Control Division of the New Mexico General Services Department, the ISC leased and transferred into the Reserve 23.87 acre-feet per year of consumptive use groundwater rights (Atrisco water rights). In 2022, the ISC used the Atrisco water rights both to benefit endangered species and to assist the State's compliance with the Rio Grande Compact. The ISC used 1.0 acre-feet to offset surface water evaporation at the Atrisco Habitat Restoration Project. The ISC is implementing this project to enhance habitat ponds on the west bank of the river in the Rio Grande Valley State Park. The ISC applied the remaining 22.87 acre-feet per year of the Atrisco water rights towards compliance with the Rio Grande Compact.
- **Lower Pecos River (2022):** Under a 25-year lease agreement signed in 2015 with VP Bar LLC, the ISC leased water rights for 3,553 acre-feet per year of diversion (2,326.18 acre-feet per year consumptive use) at an initial price of \$100 per acre-foot. These water rights have been deposited in the Reserve to benefit the Pecos bluntnose shiner and support Carlsbad Project compliance with the ESA. The ISC and The Bureau of Reclamation have entered into a separate contract under which the Commission can deliver the consumptive portion of the leased water to the Lower Pecos River via the Vaughan Conservation Pipeline to benefit the shiner. Use of 1,704 acre-feet of these leased water rights were required in 2022.

PROGRAMS THAT RESTORE & IMPROVE THE CONSERVATION VALUE OF LAND

RIVER STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM, ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

The goal of the River Stewardship Program 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 statewide. This effort addresses water quality problems and effects of nonpoint source pollution including impacts from wildfires, floods, and drought; engages local stakeholders in restoration of their waters; supports New Mexico small business both directly for those contracted to do restoration work and indirectly via increased tourism and recreational opportunities; and ensures the necessary match for approximately \$2.25 million per year in federal Clean Water Act funding for New Mexico. River Stewardship Program projects improve New Mexico's surface water quality, restore function to rivers and streams, provide access to floodplains to mitigate the effects of flooding downstream, create and restore wetlands adjacent to streams to properly function and sequester carbon, and enhance biodiversity of aquatic and riparian habitats. Funding is from annual appropriations from the New Mexico Legislature; subject to restrictions of funding sources including New Mexico capital outlay and Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund [75-12 NMSA 1978].

Selected Accomplishments:

- **Buffalo Pasture and Rio Lucero, Taos Pueblo, Taos County (2023):** Without a strong connection to the floodplain and with loss of wetland habitat, this area (and many others like it in New Mexico) does not have properly functioning floodplains and river hydrology to help maintain stream flow during droughts and provide protection against floods. This project restored approximately 200 acres of slope wetlands and two miles of the Rio Lucero within Taos Pueblo. Project improved stream channel function by increasing channel stability and floodplain access, raised the water table through increased meandering and raising the channel grade, and enhanced the Buffalo Pasture Wetland by restoring the wetland hydrology and connection to the Rio Lucero.
- **Gallinas River, San Miguel County (2015 and 2020):** The Gallinas River provides more than 90% of potable water for Las Vegas, the largest municipality in northeastern New Mexico. This project improved 0.75-mile of the Gallinas River channel and approximately 14-acres of riparian area in the middle of Las Vegas, New Mexico over two phases. The projects restore healthy conditions to the river by creating drainage channels for stormwater to improve urban water quality in the Gallinas River, enhance stream function by installing floodplain benches and stream structures like pools and diversions to improve stream channel configuration, and enhance river and riparian habitat by removing non-native trees and shrubs and planting native vegetation along the river and stream banks, which are all signs of a healthy river.
- **Black Canyon Creek, Grant County (2022):** Black Canyon Creek harbors one of only four remaining populations of wild Gila trout. Monitoring since 1996 determined the creek exceeds state water quality standards for temperature, a component of High-Quality Cold-Water Fisheries, primarily caused by overgrazing and wildfires and the resulting loss of riparian vegetation. This project reduced stream temperatures, improved channel configuration, and increased aquatic habitat diversity in the Black Canyon Creek by installing in-stream structures, willow and cottonwood pole planting in four locations, and natural bank erosion control structures.

RESTORATION & REMEDIATION PROJECT PROGRAM, STATE LAND OFFICE

The NMSLO spends an average of \$1.5 million annually on restoration and remediation treatments on state trust lands (19-1-11 NMSA 1978; Restoration and remediation fund established: 19.2.23 NMAC). Projects emphasize work in priority landscapes and where clear needs have been identified internally or by partners. Collaboration across boundaries and with NGOs, non-profits, and other community groups has been key to success. The program aims to leverage resources to remediate lands impacted by hazardous materials and restore and protect ecosystem services including but not limited to: water quality and quantity, fuelwood, soil health, biodiversity, wildfire and flood regulation, and cultural services.

Selected Accomplishments:

- **Railrock Abandoned Mine Reclamation, Hidalgo County:** 212 acres in the project area, eleven of seventeen pits remediated to date; \$578,717; remediation ongoing.
- **Chupadera Mesa landscape scale grassland and habitat restoration with fire risk management, Torrance and Socorro Counties (2019-2022):** 2672 acres treated; \$736,740; treatments ongoing.
- **Southeast region landscape scale mesquite and creosote treatments for Lesser Prairie Chicken habitat restoration and watershed health, Roosevelt, Chaves and Lea Counties (2019-2022):** 67,981 acres treated; \$2,147,087; treatments ongoing.

PROGRAMS THAT PROMOTE ACCESS TO NATURE

STATE PARKS, ENERGY MINERALS AND NATURAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

Established in 1933, the New Mexico State Parks Division (State Parks) has grown into a 35-park system that manages 189,942 acres and is dedicated to protecting and enhancing natural and cultural resources, providing first-class recreational and education facilities and opportunities, and promoting public safety to benefit and enrich the lives of visitors. State parks can be found in 25 of New Mexico's 33 counties and attract over 5 million visitors annually.

Selected Accomplishments:

- **Cerrillos Hills State Park:** In September 2009, State Parks entered into a Joint Powers Agreement with Santa Fe County to manage the 1,116 acres that comprise the Park. The Park visitor center is located on approximately one acre of State Parks-owned land in the Village of Cerrillos. This park sits at 5,900 - 6,100 ft and is a year-round day-use park located off the Turquoise Trail National Scenic Byway between Santa Fe and Albuquerque. Five miles of trails explore a history of mining and spectacular views of the Sandia, Ortiz, Jemez, and Sangre de Cristo Mountain Ranges. On average, nearly 10,000 people visit this Park annually.
- **Pecos Canyon State Park:** Established in 2019 through a Memorandum of Agreement between State Parks and the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, the Park is in San Miguel County within the Pecos Canyon and provides recreational access to the Pecos River and adjacent riparian and forest ecosystems. Set within the headwaters of the 926-mile Pecos River, the canyon has been extremely popular for outdoor recreation purposes for generations. The Park itself is 378 acres and extends across three separate parcels ranging from 7,628 - 8,196 ft in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in north central New Mexico. On average, nearly 15,000 people visit this Park annually.
- **Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park:** In 2019 operations were resumed as a New Mexico State Park after a brief transfer to another state agency. Located near Las Cruces and the historic Village of Mesilla, this day-use state park was created in partnership with multiple agencies and nonprofits; in 2005, the Trust for Public Land secured 150 acres of private land at its northern boundary and, with State Parks, helped acquire the 13-acre visitor center site. The Park is an Audubon-designated important birding area and is a stop on the state birding trail. Park offerings include access to hiking trails as well as the visitor center complex. On average, over 16,000 people visit this Park annually.



PROGRAMS THAT PROMOTE ACCESS TO NATURE

OUTDOOR EQUITY FUND, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT, OUTDOOR RECREATION DIVISION

The Outdoor Equity Fund was created to help provide all youth equitable access to the outdoors (Chapter 9-1-1 to 9-1-10 NMSA 1978). The grant program supports transformative outdoor experiences that foster stewardship and respect for New Mexico's lands, waters, and cultural heritage.

Selected Accomplishments:

The program has granted \$2 million to 129 organizations throughout the state. These local leaders, working in cultural, recreational, conservation, and environmental fields, are actively introducing over 37,000 young New Mexicans to the outdoors through day hikes, bike rides, camping trips, whitewater adventures, conservation efforts, and more. For many of these youth, all 18 and younger, these transformational outdoor experiences are the first time they've participated in these kinds of outdoor recreation. Additionally, the NM Outdoor Equity Fund is the first-of-its kind in the nation. Recently California and Colorado passed legislation for their own state-funded Outdoor Equity Funds and those states are looking to NM for leadership and guidance on implementation.

- **Hozho Academy, Gallup:** Provides an outdoor classroom and greenhouse where students learn about and experience various planting and gardening techniques including traditional Native gardening to preserve the traditions and educate students on sustainable stewardship.
- **Yerba Mansa Project, Albuquerque:** The Yerba Mansa Project strengthened connectivity between people, plants, and the land in the Middle Rio Grande Valley. They are a volunteer-based, community-supported project dedicated to providing free educational programs and environmental service learning through restoration activities, specifically focused on the native edible and medicinal plants that stand at the center of New Mexico's biological and cultural landscapes. They work to restore some of our most legendary healing plants, teach youth and adults about their importance, and help to protect critical habitats and associated knowledge for present and future generations.
- **Vista Grande High School, Taos:** The "Place in Time" outdoor recreation program allows students to explore the region's natural resources while connecting to their cultural heritage. Students learn about the cultural value of a natural resource over time, how that resource is being threatened in our time of climate crisis, and ways to look to the past as we transition toward a more sustainable future. Students will connect with the cultural significance of natural resources and learn about the resiliency of indigenous land management systems.



PROGRAMS THAT PROMOTE ACCESS TO NATURE

OUTDOOR RECREATION TRAILS+ GRANT, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT, OUTDOOR RECREATION DIVISION

Outdoor Recreation Trails+ Grant (Section 9-15-4 NMSA 1978) helps fund the design and construction of trails and other conservation-minded outdoor recreation infrastructure and access projects that connect communities to outdoor spaces and expand existing outdoor recreation amenities across regions. This grant enables communities to proactively meet the demands of higher visitation with improved planning and sustainable outdoor infrastructure development (including construction of pit toilets, stewardship signage, trash cans, etc.) that all lend themselves towards conserving lands and waters.

Selected Accomplishments:

Overall, since the Outdoor Recreation Trails+ grant was created, over \$7 million has been awarded to 85 projects across the state. For 2022, Trails+ opened March 1 on a rolling basis with \$7 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act funding. Between 60-70% of the Trails+ funding has benefited Tribal or rural communities each award round in 2022. Overall, 2022 Trails+ funding will also create 500 new employment opportunities. See full lists of 2022 awardees here – [round one](#), [round two](#), [round three](#), [round four](#).



- **Black Range, Sierra County (2022):** Natural Curiosity endeavored to address deferred and routine maintenance on over 60 miles of trail within the Black Range Ranger District of the Gila National Forest (GNF). These trails provide access to hikers, backpackers, hunters, horseback riders, fire crews, and day or multiday users of the GNF. By restoring and maintaining these trails, this project increased opportunities for tourism, education, recreation, and conservation in Sierra County. Phase I of this project will focus on reopening 35 miles of trail within the 2022 Black Fire burn scar, while Phase II will reopen adjoining trails and address necessary reroutes in consultation with the USFS.
- **Santa Fe River Trail (2019-2023):** The Rio Grande Return (RGR) project goal was to conduct green stormwater infrastructure analysis, surveys, and design planning. The project also continued restoration efforts along the Santa Fe River Park and Trail by replanting native cottonwood and willow species. RGR is expanding on the work of three separate replanting efforts in the Spring of 2019, 2021, and 2022. RGR is now also working to design engineered GSI restoration approaches for arroyos feeding the river whose soils, banks, and channels are rapidly degrading. Continued investments in these systems protect both our community and our environment.
- **Silver City, Grant County:** The Town of Silver City, in partnership with Southwest New Mexico Arts, Culture, and Tourism (swnmACT) completed all revitalization/restoration projects planned for the five-acre Waterworks grounds. The Waterworks Site is an outdoor recreational and educational hub that connects Grant County communities and businesses with economic, cultural, educational, and entrepreneurial opportunities for the entire region. It serves as a southern trailhead terminus for the Continental Divide Trail.

PROGRAMS THAT INCREASE CARBON SEQUESTRATION

HEALTHY SOIL PROGRAM, DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

The Healthy Soil Program (HSP, Healthy Soil Act; 76-25-1 to 76-25-5 NMSA 1978) promotes and supports farming and ranching systems and other forms of land management that increase soil organic matter, aggregate stability, microbiology, and water retention to improve the health, yield, and profitability of New Mexico's soils. Each year, NMDA awards grants to implement on-the-ground projects that involve one or more of the five soil health principles outlined in the Healthy Soil Act:

1. Keeping soil covered
2. Minimizing soil disturbance on cropland and minimizing external inputs
3. Maximizing biodiversity
4. Maintaining a living root
5. Integrating animals into land management

HSP also supports soil health through assessment, education, and research.

Selected Accomplishments:

During the program's four years, nearly \$1.7 million has been awarded to 112 soil health projects. In fiscal year 2023 (FY23), NMDA awarded grants to 50 projects in 17 counties across the state. Past projects have included:

- Taos Pueblo (2022): The Pueblo of Taos supported the Red Willow Center's project to plant a cover crop in order to address erosion, lack of organic matter, and soil compaction. One of the Center's goals is to see improvement in the nutrition of the food grown on its farm.
- Tomé Land Grant (2022): The Town of Tomé Land Grant established an organic vegetable garden to share with land grant community members, as well as native wildflower habitat to support pollinators and biodiversity.
- Vigil y Romo Acequia, Taos (2022): Vigil y Romo Acequia created a "land lab" to test soil for acequia parciales and regional land managers in order to help them address compaction, erosion, and other resource concerns on their land.



NMSLO LEASING, STATE LAND OFFICE

The NMSLO holds nine million acres of surface estate and 13 million acres of mineral estate in trust for its beneficiaries, which include the public schools and universities of New Mexico. Our mission is to generate revenue for our beneficiaries while protecting natural resources in perpetuity. We provide a wide variety of leasing opportunities on state trust land, not only for extractive uses but also for stewardship and conservation. Our leasing rules (Commissioner's authority: NM Const., art. XIII, and 19-1-1 NMSA 1978; most relevant leasing rules: 19.2.8 NMAC (Agricultural leasing); 19.2.9 NMAC (Business leasing), 19.2.10 NMAC (Easements and Rights of Way); ADM-04-01 (Policy related to Land Use Restriction Code) allow us to create flexible instruments that may include both prescriptive management practices and/or proscriptions against specific types of activities. We are currently developing leases that allow for participation in ecosystem service or carbon credit markets through stewardship practices, that allow for restoration and protection of riparian or wildlife corridors, that provide access for recreation, and that protect critical plant or wildlife habitat through direct leasing or mitigation banking.

Selected Accomplishments:

This is a new program with no completed projects. Projects in development:

- Tharp's Bluestar, Eddy County: This long-term conservation lease (in development) restricts new surface disturbance on 640 acres of critical habitat for state endangered plant Tharp's bluestar (compatible with current existing uses and future mineral uses).
- Rio Puerco, Sandoval County: This long-term conservation lease (in development) allows restoration of riparian corridor and adjacent uplands along the Rio Puerco (compatible with agricultural lease).



Next Steps

The definitions of Conserved Lands and Climate Stabilization Areas presented in this report provide a basis for evaluating the programs and authorities of 30 by 30 agencies and the State Land Office. Utilizing these definitions, the Committee will turn its attention toward:

- Completing a baseline analysis of acres defined as “Conserved” and “Climate Stabilization Areas”;
- Conducting assessments of agency programs and identifying specific project and policy opportunities to contribute to attainment of Conserved Land and Climate Stabilization Area goals;
- Establishing a system to track and report progress toward “Conserved Lands” and “Climate Stabilization Area” goals;
- Continuing to engage with tribes, nations, pueblos and the public on 30 by 30 opportunities and concerns;
- Continuing to engage with the America the Beautiful Initiative to ensure that New Mexico conservation activities and accomplishments are accurately reflected in the Administration’s National Conservation and Stewardship Atlas.





APPENDIX A: RFI ANALYSES

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION 1

The first Request for Information (RFI) was released on July 27, 2022, and has since collected 280 responses. The purpose of RFI 1 was to gather broad public input on the conservation activities and topics most important to New Mexicans.

Basic statistics for RFI #1

- Respondent general feelings about conservation (279 responses):
 - Very Positive - 47.7%
 - Positive - 30.1%
 - Neutral - 12.5%
 - Negative - 5.0%
 - Very Negative - 3.2%
 - No response - 1.5%
- Respondents came from 29 of 33 New Mexico counties (missing counties were Harding, Hidalgo, Luna, and Roosevelt).
- Respondents represented 110 different organizations and more than 150 private individuals.

The definition of ‘conservation’ and ‘conserved lands’ – main categories of response Question #4, which asked respondents to define in their own words both ‘conservation’ and ‘conserved lands’, received a wide range of responses, with both positive and negative connotations. Our analysis concludes that these responses fall mainly into the categories below, each of which is exemplified by the anonymized quotation(s) from responses.

1. **(42.3%) “ecosystem first”**. These responses describe conservation as a process which protects and/or restores a non-human ecosystem and prevents it from being degraded in the future. They fall into two main groups: a group which associates conserved lands with the absence of human activity, and a group which includes humans as part of the ecosystem.
2. **(25.7%) “sustainable use”**. These responses describe conservation as a process that results in the sustainable use of nature and natural resources to meet environmental and human needs, now and in the future. Respondents include members of the agricultural community, soil and water scientists, and representatives from major environmental NGOs. These respondents often mentioned the recent catastrophic wildfires in northern New Mexico.
3. **(12.1%) “private ownership”**. These responses identify conservation as something best performed by private landowners or other “traditional stewards of the land”. They deemphasize public access and government-designed conservation designations. Respondents in this group had the highest likelihood of expressing a ‘negative’ or ‘very negative’ opinion of conservation. They also draw the clearest distinction between the concepts of ‘preservation’ and ‘conservation.’ Many respondents in this group also mentioned the recent catastrophic wildfires in Mora County.
4. **(11.4%) “traditional use/future generations”**. These responses describe conservation as a land management process which respects traditional uses, enables the land to provide benefits to communities into the future, and supports ecological and watershed function. These responses are highly correlated with respondent membership in a land grant, acequia association, indigenous group, and/or the agricultural industry.
5. **(1.5%) “indigenous control”**. These responses identify conservation primarily as returning land to the indigenous peoples of New Mexico.
6. **(2.6%) “wise use”**. A number of responses directly quoted the “wise use” definition of conservation that is commonly associated with members of the sportsman community.
7. **(4.4%) Other/refused.**



APPENDIX A: RFI ANALYSES

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION 2

Definitions Presented in RFI 2:

Conserved Lands

“Conserved Lands” means any land in a natural or semi-natural condition that is durably protected and managed to provide ecosystem services, climate resiliency, or cultural values. These services and values include supporting New Mexico’s economy, protecting traditional ways of life, providing drinking water, ensuring food security, enhancing biodiversity, and providing recreational opportunities to promote the health and wellbeing of all who call New Mexico home.

The following Land Management Designations meet the definition of Conserved Lands (note to commenters: the designations below are illustrative; we encourage you to identify additional designations that would provide durable protections and provide a rationale including those designations):

PRIVATE LANDS

- Lands enrolled in voluntary conservation programs (such as the USDA Conservation Reserve Program)
- Private lands governed by voluntary conservation easements that limit uses to protect and enhance conservation values

CONSERVATION DESIGNATIONS THAT APPLY TO MULTIPLE FEDERAL OWNERSHIPS

- Designated Wilderness Areas
- Wilderness Study Areas
- National Monuments
- Lands conserved through co-management programs with sovereign nations

US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

- Wildlife Refuges

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

- Habitat Management Areas
- Backcountry Conservation Areas
- Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
- Withdrawn Lands

US FOREST SERVICE

- Inventoried roadless areas
- “Management areas,” “designated areas,” and “geographic areas” as defined under the 2012 planning rule with a conservation emphasis
- Backcountry areas and primitive and semi-primitive recreation areas that are designated in national forest plans
- Conservation Watershed Networks, Priority Watersheds and/or Key Watersheds

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

- BOR lands leased by State Parks
- Other BOR lands under development restrictions that benefit conservation values

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

- White Sands Missile Range (WSMR) undeveloped lands

STATE LANDS

- Wildlife Management Areas
- State trust lands serving conservation purposes (under lease or subject to conservation restrictions), which includes a multiple-use approach on working lands and voluntary partnerships with agricultural lessees and others to enhance ecosystem services and climate resiliency through soil and watershed health projects, soil carbon capture, protection of cultural properties, wildlife and habitat projects, and the development of recreational opportunities
- Undeveloped lands within State Parks



APPENDIX A: RFI ANALYSES

COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL LANDS

- County and municipal lands managed for conservation purposes that are determined to be durably protected
- Designated county and municipal parks in a natural or semi-natural state

SOVEREIGN LANDS

- Lands managed for conservation purposes voluntarily nominated by sovereign tribal nations

Climate Stabilization Areas

“Climate Stabilization Areas (CSAs)” means any land in a natural or semi-natural condition that lacks durable protections but nevertheless provides ecosystem services, climate resiliency, or cultural values.

CSAs include public lands that meet this definition and private lands or sovereign lands that are voluntarily nominated to be counted as CSAs.

The second RFI was released on October 3, 2022. It presented draft definitions of Conserved Lands and Climate Stabilization Areas for comment. The drafts were developed between March and September 2022 and attempted to respond to issues raised during the 30 by 30 presentations to various stakeholders. The Committee also considered information submitted in response to RFI 1 during the drafting process.

As of December 1, 2022, 101 responses have been submitted to RFI 2, and the Committee has begun reviewing these responses.

30x30 Committee RFI #2: Overview of Ratings

As of November 22, 2022: 101 total responses to RFI #2

Conserved Lands Definition

- Rating of Committee’s definition (96 responses to Question 1)
 - Very Good: 18.1%
 - Good: 34.4%
 - Neither Good/Bad: 15.6%
 - Bad: 14.6%
 - Very Bad: 16.7%
- A majority of respondents (53.1%) rated the Committee’s proposed definition for “conserved lands” as good or very good. Less than a third of respondents (31.3%) had a negative impression of the proposed definition.

Climate Stabilization Areas Definition

- Rating of Committee’s definition (95 responses to Question 4)
 - Very Good: 13.7%
 - Good: 24.2%
 - Neither Good/Bad: 22.1%
 - Bad: 20.0%
 - Very Bad: 20.0%
- Responses to the Committee’s definition for “climate stabilization lands” were much more evenly split. A slight plurality had a negative opinion of the Committee’s definition: 37.9% of respondents rated the definition as good/very good, while 40.0% rated it bad/very bad and 22.1% remained neutral.

Other Notes

- Nearly two-thirds of respondents (63.2%) were consistent in their support for or opposition to the Committee’s definitions. Of the 93 respondents who rated both definitions, 36.6% rated both as either good or very good, while 28.0% rated both as either bad or very bad.

APPENDIX A: RFI ANALYSES

Analysis of Responses to Draft Conserved Lands Definition

There were 79 total responses to Question 2 on how the Committee’s draft definition for conserved lands could be improved. Comments were placed into the following categories and then grouped by distinct themes:

- a) General feedback on Committee’s draft definition
- b) Major themes from comments on Committee’s draft definition
- c) Specific terms or elements identified as missing from definition
- d) Proposed wording changes to Committee’s draft definition (with edits in context)
- e) Proposed alternatives to Committee’s draft definition

Eight comments that were more relevant to the list of conserved lands designations than to the draft definition were added to the responses to Question 3.

a) General feedback on Committee’s draft definition

- **No improvements needed (7.6%):** Six extremely favorable commenters felt that the proposed definition was satisfactory or excellent without any changes.
- **Definition is too vague, ambiguous, or broad in scope (7.6%):** Four commenters felt that the proposed definition was generally too vague, unclear, or self-contradictory. Two respondents criticized the draft definition as overly broad and complicated, arguing that it should be condensed and better focused. One felt that the draft definition was “trying to be everything to everybody,” rendering it meaningless.
- **Definition is product of government group think, needs more citizen input (3.8%):** Three very negative respondents objected to the bureaucratic nature of the 30x30 process and definitions. They advocated for more citizen involvement, less government jargon, and less “political pandering” to certain groups.

b) Major themes from comments on Committee’s draft definition or 30x30 Initiative

- **Committee should focus on conserved lands rather than preserved lands / Working lands and multiple use lands should be included in definition (29.1%):** Nearly a third of respondents emphasized the need for the definition to include multiple use, actively managed, and economically productive lands under the umbrella of conserved lands. This group included several key subthemes:
 - **Multiple-use lands can support conservation (7.6%):** These primarily negative respondents were concerned that the Committee’s definition conflates conserved lands with preserved ones. They felt that multiple-use lands support conservation values without the need for formal protections or limits on human management.
 - **30x30 must balance human and environmental needs (7.6%):** These commenters emphasized that environmental needs must be balanced with cultural values and that some areas in “non-natural” condition may still contribute to 30x30’s objectives. Land grant-mercedes and other traditional communities were cited as examples of sustainable long-term land management.
 - **Conserved lands should remain in production and economic use (6.3%):** For some, this meant supporting cultural uses and traditional economies. Other commenters argued that energy production and extractive resource uses were not necessarily incompatible with conservation, given their economic value to the state.
- **Committee needs to define or clarify terms used in definition (13.9%):** Many respondents unfavorable to the definition felt that several of terms used in the definition were too ambiguous, or subjective. The following terms were specifically identified as needing clarification or justification:
 - durable protections (8 responses);
 - climate resiliency (8);
 - ecosystem services (6);
 - natural/semi-natural lands (5);
 - cultural values (1);
 - food security (1).



APPENDIX A: RFI ANALYSES

- **Definition needs clear metrics to measure desired outcomes (10.1%):** Eight respondents who rated the definition as bad or very bad felt that the draft lacked clear, measurable criteria for how lands would be assessed. This includes a lack of metrics for specific terms in the definition, such as climate resiliency or different ecosystem services. A subgroup of respondents noted that any metrics should remain flexible, since conservation is not a one-size-fits-all approach.
- **Definition needs more emphasis on wildlife conservation, habitat connectivity, and biodiversity (10.1%):** This generally favorable group of respondents requested that the Committee refocus the definition to explicitly emphasize wildlife conservation and habitat protection. Some noted that preserving biodiversity is one of the foundational goals from the federal 30x30 initiative (America the Beautiful) and the original inspiration for 30x30, A Global Deal for Nature. Specifically, respondents argued that conserved land designations should prioritize maintaining large, unfragmented landscapes, habitat connectivity, migration corridors, and native ecosystems in order to protect biodiversity and species of high concern.
- **Definition needs to include conserved waters (8.9%):** This group noted that the definition was missing the waters referenced in the Governor’s 30x30 Executive Order. This theme includes reference to “waters” in the sense of geographic areas, such as wetlands or Wild and Scenic River areas, and “water” in the sense of the physical substance itself and associated rights. These respondents felt that the definition should address threats to water quality and quantity that impair human and ecosystem uses.
- **30x30 should value and reward agriculture (7.6%):** This group of generally neutral respondents felt that agricultural producers should be recognized and rewarded for their current and past conservation efforts. They noted that agricultural lands, including those on private property and land grants, support conservation by providing food security, maintaining rural economies, preserving open space, and supporting a wide range of ecosystem services. Many of these respondents expressed concern that agricultural lands are currently being lost to development, drought, and wildfire. Two respondents felt that 30x30 could support farmers and ranchers by providing voluntary incentives for additional conservation measures.
- **Cultural and economic uses can be detrimental to conservation (5.1%):** These respondents argued that certain economic activities and cultural practices, including livestock grazing, are detrimental to biodiversity and climate stabilization. They felt that lands open to these human uses should not count as conserved unless ecosystem function and climate resiliency are prioritized.
- **Government-led approaches to land stewardship and conservation are ineffective (5.1%):** This group of commenters felt that government agencies have a poor track record of land management in New Mexico. There was specific criticism of the federal government in light of the 2022 fire season. Some noted that agencies are under-resourced or have misdirected guidance, and that too much focus is put on official designations (“words”) rather than on-the-ground conservation efforts.
- **Active restoration is needed for the conservation of many lands (3.8%):** Three respondents emphasized the need to restore degraded landscapes in NM to a healthier condition in order for them to be considered “conserved.” These commenters identified a diverse list of restoration techniques, including reestablishing native plant communities, removing invasive species, utilizing regenerative land management practices, and restoring historically beneficial fire regimes to the landscape.
- **Create flexibility for inclusion of private lands in 30x30 (3.8%):** These favorable respondents advocated for a broader consideration of voluntary conservation efforts on private lands and felt that the 30x30 should provide more avenues for private landowners to participate directly.
- **Per 30x30 goal, definition needs more emphasis on climate (2.5%):** Two negative respondents argued that the definition should narrow its focus to identifying and protecting lands that will mitigate the impacts of climate change. They note that along with protecting biodiversity, addressing the climate crisis has been the overarching goal of the 30x30 concept.
- **Durable protections are necessary standard for conserved lands definition (2.5%):** A couple commenters advocated for only including lands with permanent protections from land cover change rather than focusing on human values and benefits. One respondent argued that the Committee model their definition of conserved lands after the criteria for US Geologic Survey Protected Areas Database of the United States (PAD-US) GAP Status Codes 1 & 2.



APPENDIX A: RFI ANALYSES

- **Other themes:** These themes only appeared in individual responses.
 - Conserved lands should reflect a balance of natural process, not human designations
 - A single definition of conservation is impossible
 - What if state definition of conserved lands conflicts with federal definition?
 - 30x30 has already been achieved, since state and federal governments own over 40% of NM
 - Definition should emphasize the importance of maintaining natural vegetation for soil cover and include restoration and monitoring requirements
 - Need transparency for 30x30 process related to conflicts of interest

c) Specific terms or elements identified as missing from definition

- Include “conserved surface waters” with conserved lands
- Include terms “working lands” and “active management”
- Include a time element, for example “in perpetuity”
- Include “protect important cultural and historical land” (ex. Chaco trail and roadway systems)
- Include “habitat for wildlife species of conservation concern” with listed ecosystem services
- Include “visitor and tourism uses associated with conservation ethic” with listed ecosystem services
- Change “durable” to “sustainable”
- Change “sovereign lands” to “tribal lands”
- Emphasize monitoring

Analysis of Responses to Draft CSA Definition

There were 73 total responses to Question 5 on the Climate Stabilization Areas (CSA) draft definition. These responses were put into the following categories and then grouped into distinct themes:

- a) General comments
- b) Specific suggestions for CSA draft definition
- c) Proposed wording changes to Committee’s draft definition (with edits in context)
- d) Proposed alternatives to Committee’s draft definition

a) General comments

- **Definition is too broad, vague or inclusive / CSAs need clearer parameters (23.3% of total responses to Question 5):** Many respondents who felt negatively about the Committee’s draft proposal argued the definition was too broad or vague to have any real meaning or use. Many of these respondents felt that a more specific definition should clearly convey the Committee’s desired outcomes and the associated parameters for this designation. They also expressed a preference for less technocratic jargon.
- **Confusion over CSAs’ place in state’s 30x30 Initiative / CSA definition is too similar to Conserved Lands (12.3%):** These generally neutral responses questioned the place and purpose of CSAs in the 30x30 initiative and why they must be designated in addition to conserved lands. Specifically, there is a lack of clarity about the relationship of CSAs to conserved lands: how they differ, how the counting of the two designations will be handled, why the goal of 20% was set for CSAs, and whether CSAs counts towards the 30% goal for conserved lands. Some felt that the Committee’s draft definitions for the two designations were too similar and should be differentiated.
- **CSAs are not necessary, achievable, or desirable (9.6%):** Seven respondents, all of whom rated the proposed definition as “bad” or “very bad”, opposed the premise that the Committee should designate CSAs. These commenters strongly disagreed with either the purpose and need for such designation or the scientific basis of such designation, including ability of land management to influence climate.
- **No improvements needed (5.5%):** Four favorable respondents felt that the proposed definition was adequate without any changes.

APPENDIX A: RFI ANALYSES

b) Specific suggestions for CSA draft definition

- **Committee needs to define terms used in definition (19.2%):** Many respondents felt that some of terms used in the definition were too unclear, ambiguous, or subjective. The following terms were specifically identified as needing clarification:
 - durable protections (9 responses);
 - natural/semi-natural lands (4);
 - climate resiliency (2);
 - cultural values (1).
- **Definition needs to focus more on climate stabilization and/or carbon sequestration (11.0%):** A mixed group of respondents, some favorable to the draft definition and others not, felt that the proposed definition did not match its implied focus of “climate stabilization.” They suggested that the definition specifically reference carbon sequestration, climate change mitigation, assisted adaptation, and climate change refugia or that CSAs be scientifically identified as key areas for the climatic stability of their ecoregion.
- **CSAs should include working lands, but should not impose new restrictions on cultural/economic uses (11.0%):** A number of mostly neutral respondents felt that working lands should be recognized as CSAs for their role in conserving resources and maintaining traditional uses, whether or not they are considered “natural or semi-natural.” These working lands include land grants-mercedes. However, a significant portion of these respondents also felt that this designation should not place any future restrictions on management practices or resource use.
- **Question the inclusion of cultural values under “climate stabilization” (5.5%):** Contrary to the previous theme, another group of respondents questioned why the definition for CSAs included cultural values. Some felt this could lead to the inclusion of lands with human uses that are detrimental to climate stabilization. One respondent suggested broadening the term to “Climate Stabilization and Cultural Preservation Areas.”
- **CSAs should include preserved lands and lands with durable protections (4.1%):** These respondents disagreed with the Committee’s decision not to include or require lands with durable protections. One commenter advocated using US Geologic Survey’s GAP Status 3 as a model for CSA protection criteria.
- **CSAs should value wildlife conservation and biodiversity (4.1%):** Two respondents favorable to the proposed definition felt that CSAs should specifically include lands inhabited by threatened/endangered species or consider connections with other CSAs/conserved lands via wildlife corridors.
- **Federal government is poor land manager; private landowners are better stewards (2.7%):** A couple negative commenters voiced opposition to federal land mismanagement, especially related to forestry and fire risk. They argued that private lands are often better maintained.
- **Other themes:** These themes also appeared in individual responses.
 - CSAs don’t need durable protection—they should be defined as self-resilient
 - CSA category should be about lands that provide conservation values but are at risk of development
 - Concern over family economic impact of conservation easements
 - CSAs should be annual evaluated to account for land management changes



APPENDIX A: RFI ANALYSES

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION 3

Alternative Definitions Presented in RFI 2:

Conserved Lands

“Conserved Lands” means any land in a natural, semi-natural, or traditionally managed condition that is both durably protected and managed to provide or maintain ecosystem services, climate resiliency, or cultural values. These services and values include supporting New Mexico’s economy, protecting traditional ways of life, providing drinking water, ensuring food security, enhancing biodiversity, and providing recreational opportunities to promote the health and wellbeing of all who call New Mexico home.

“Durable protection” includes a variety of resource management and legal contexts that contribute to the above services and values, including but not limited to explicit legal protections, voluntary conservation programs, or co-management agreements on state and federal lands. Timelines for durable protection may vary according to the type of agreement, arrangement, or program.

The following land management designations meet the definition of Conserved Lands:

Federal Lands

- Lands conserved through co-management programs with sovereign nations or land grants (on federal lands)
- Designated Wilderness Areas (federal lands)
- Wilderness Study Areas (federal lands)
- National Parks, Monuments, and Recreation Areas (federal lands)
- Wild and Scenic River Corridors (federal lands)
- Wildlife Refuges (USFWS)
- US Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Habitat Management Areas
- BLM Backcountry Conservation Areas
- BLM Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
- BLM Withdrawn Lands
- Inventoried roadless areas on US Forest Service lands
- US Forest Service lands which have been designated as Management Areas, Designated Areas, and Geographic Areas as defined under the 2012 planning rule with a conservation emphasis (example: Research Natural Areas)
- Backcountry areas and primitive and semi-primitive recreation areas that are designated in national forest plans on US Forest Service lands
- Conservation Watershed Networks, Priority Watersheds and/or Key Watersheds on US Forest Service lands
- National Parks, National Preserves, National Recreation Areas (National Park Service); and
- National Conservation Lands, including National Conservation Areas, Cooperative Management and Protection Areas, Outstanding Natural Areas, Forest Reserves, and National Scenic Areas (Bureau of Land Management).
- Habitat Protection Areas (HPA), National Conservation Areas, (NCA), National Grasslands, Wildlife Management Areas, (WMA).
- US Bureau of Reclamation lands leased by State Parks
- Other BOR lands under development restrictions that benefit conservation values on US Bureau of Reclamation lands
- Department of Energy (i.e. Los Alamos National Laboratory) undeveloped lands
- Department of Defense (i.e. White Sands Missile Range, Kirtland Air Force Base) undeveloped lands
- Outstanding National Resource Waters

APPENDIX A: RFI ANALYSES

State, County, and Municipal Lands

- New Mexico Department of Game and Fish Wildlife Management Areas
- State trust lands serving conservation purposes (under lease or subject to conservation restrictions), which includes a multiple-use approach on working lands and voluntary partnerships with agricultural lessees and others to enhance ecosystem services and climate resiliency through soil and watershed health projects, soil carbon capture, protection of cultural properties, wildlife and habitat projects, and the development of recreational opportunities
- Undeveloped lands within State Parks
- Durably protected county, municipal, and public district (for example the lands managed for conservation purposes, for example county and municipal parks in a natural or semi-natural state)
- US International Boundary and Water Commission habitat restoration sites

Private Lands

- Private lands enrolled in voluntary conservation programs (such as the USDA Conservation Reserve Program or USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program)
- Private lands governed by voluntary conservation easements that limit uses to protect and enhance conservation values
- Land Grant Ejidos (Common Lands)

Climate Stabilization Areas

“Climate Stabilization Areas (CSAs)” means any land in a natural or semi-natural condition that lacks durable protections but is nevertheless actively managed using either modern or traditional practices to maintain or enhance ecosystem services, land-based carbon sequestration, or climate resiliency.

For example, lands under the following voluntary management scenarios may be considered:

- Privately owned forest lands under active Forest Stewardship Plans
- Urban areas with high tree canopies
- No-till agriculture
- Lands participating in NMDA’s Healthy Soil Program
- Lands being restored through invasive weed (Tamarisk removal) projects
- Restored abandoned mine sites
- Lands participating in Soil and Water Conservation District projects
- Lands served by Acequias
- Other lands nominated for consideration as a CSA

Basic statistics for RFI #3

- The survey received 211 anonymous responses.
- 72 responses (34.1%) were identical to one another.

Questions 1-4 – regarding the revised definition of ‘conserved lands’

Question #1 asks respondents to rate their general feelings about the revised definition of “conserved lands”. There were 211 responses to this question, which broke down as follows:

- Very Good – 12.8%
- Good – 11.4%
- Neutral - 6.6%
- Bad – 19.5% (of which 30% are identical form responses)
- Very Bad - 46% (of which 61.9% are identical form responses)
- No response – 4.3%

The distribution of responses is skewed towards the negative by identical responses submitted to the survey. This skew will be reflected throughout the survey analysis, and may not be representative of the opinions of interested New Mexicans overall.



APPENDIX A: RFI ANALYSES

Question #2 asks if the revised definition has been improved from the original definition. Answers of ‘yes’ correlate to opinions that the new definition is ‘Very Good’ or ‘Good’; answers of ‘no’ correlate to opinions that the new definition is ‘Bad’ or ‘Very Bad’.

Question #3 asked respondents to provide improvements to the new definition of ‘conserved lands’. There were 177 responses to this question. The vast majority of the responses were given by those who found the new definitions ‘Bad’ or ‘Very Bad’ (though 2.3% of responses praised the new definition). Responses fall mainly into the categories below, each of which is exemplified by anonymized quotation(s). Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

1. **(10.7%) “permanent protection”**. These responses want the definition of ‘conserved lands’ to emphasize permanent protections above all other considerations – except for climate resilience. Requests for an explicit inclusion of climate resilience are highly correlated with this group.
2. **(49.2%) “permanent protection/natural state”**. These responses include all of the form responses (40.7%). They request that the definition of conserved lands emphasize both “permanent protection” and that the lands are in a “natural state”. This group also includes a group who emphasize that conserved lands must lack human activity (4.5%), and a group who emphasize that conserved lands must minimize landscape disturbance (3.9%).
3. **(5.1%) “expand agricultural uses”**. These responses request the definition be broadened to include more working lands. This type of response correlated strongly with a desire to have less government involvement in land management.
4. **(9.1%) “definitional issues”**. These responses are requests, of one kind or another, to change the definition or redefine it. The requested changes included:
5. **(1.5%) “indigenous control”**. These responses identify conserved lands as being primarily Indigenous lands, or request a larger and more defined role for indigenous people in the definition.
6. **(5.1%) “improve equity/Justice40”**. A number of responses, all with similar language, held that the revised definition was not adequately equitable.

Question #4 asked for additions to the ‘conserved lands’ definition. All 72 of the form responses answered this question by stating that the current definition was too broad. Additional responses (27) also said the definition was too broad, with 14 of those requesting that the definition be limited to formal designations only. There was a high correlation between the request for formal designations only and the request for more equity considerations in Question #3. The other 13 responses centered around ‘permanent’ protections not being in the definition.

Other additions were suggested as follows: connectivity for wildlife (4); private lands under responsible agricultural or range management, especially via a Soil & Water Conservation District (4); Wild and Scenic Rivers (1); city and local parkland (1); ‘re-wilding areas’ or ‘areas of future conservation’ (2); ‘completed conservation projects’ (1); and National Forests (as opposed to National Grasslands only) (1).

The following were suggested for removal: Water Conservation Networks (1), Priority USFS Watersheds (1).

Questions 5-8 – regarding the revised definition of ‘climate stabilization areas’

Question #5 asks respondents to rate their general feelings about the revised definition of “conserved lands”. There were 211 responses to this question, which broke down as follows:

- Very Good – 12.8%
- Good – 11.4%
- Neutral - 15.2%
- Bad – 10.4% (of which 36.7% are identical form responses)
- Very Bad – 46.4% (of which 79.6% are identical form responses)
- No response – 4.3%

APPENDIX A: RFI ANALYSES

The distribution of responses is skewed towards the negative by the form responses to the survey. This skew will be reflected throughout the survey analysis, and may not be representative of the opinions of interested New Mexicans overall.

Question #6 asks if the revised definition has been improved from the original definition. Answers of ‘yes’ correlate to opinions that the new definition is ‘Very Good’ or ‘Good’; answers of ‘no’ correlate to opinions that the new definition is ‘Bad’ or ‘Very Bad’.

Question #7 asked respondents to provide improvements to the new definition of ‘climate stabilization areas’. There were 158 responses to this question. The vast majority of the responses were given by those who found the new definitions ‘Bad’ or ‘Very Bad’ (though 3.8% of responses praised the new definition). Responses fall mainly into the categories below, each of which is exemplified by anonymized quotation(s). Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

1. **(59.5%) “robust protections against the loss of land cover”**. These responses include all of the form responses (54.4% of all responses, and 91.5% of responses in this category). These responses all provide the following definition or request that the definition of climate stabilization area include protections against the loss of land cover.
2. **(5.7%) “permanent protection”**. A smaller group of respondents requested that the definition of CSAs require permanent protection of the area in question.
3. **(7.6%) “all positive conservation actions”**. A group of respondents, identical to the group which requested further equity provisions in Question #3, provided the following:
 - “Please take all examples under ‘conserved lands’ not designated as Gap 1 or 2 and properly place them under ‘climate stabilization areas’ to ensure continuation of recognition and incentivization of conservation at many scales and across all ownerships and management types so that all positive conservation actions count toward the goals of 30x30”.
4. **(3.8%) “too broad”**. This group of respondents found the definition of CSAs to be too broad for environmental protection reasons.
5. **(2.5%) “too narrow”**. This group of respondents found the definition of CSAs to be too narrow, for reasons of too much government involvement being required.
6. **(10.1%)** Around ten percent of respondents made requests for additions or deletions.
 - Additions: wetlands and riparian buffer (1); completed watershed restoration (1); urban water collection projects (1); all indigenous land (1); “properly managed” farms and ranches (3); urban recreation areas (1); ‘biological refuges; (2).
 - Deletions: land used for grazing (2); urban areas with high tree canopy (1).

Question #8 asked respondents to comment on good candidates for land management activities which would qualify as CSAs under the revised definition. The following are suggested activities:

- Flood irrigation practices (1)
- Outdoor education projects (1)
- Urban forestry (6)
- Only ‘natural’ activities (5)
- Wetland and riparian area management (4)
- Wildlife refuges (1)
- Invertebrate protection (1)
- Free-range grassland grazing (1)
- Farming and ranching (4)
- Invasive species/noxious weed removal (5)
- Permaculture (1)
- Reforestation (1)
- All indigenous lands (1)
- Urban riparian area work (1)
- Land conservancy programs (1)



APPENDIX B: PROGRAM DETAILS

FOREST LEGACY, ENERGY MINERALS AND NATURAL RESOURCES DEPT.

General Requirements: Landowners who choose to sell conservation easements to the state may sell the development rights to all or part of their properties are encouraged to form partnerships with land trust organizations that can help them with their property appraisals, and tax or estate planning. Up to 75% of the easement purchase is provided through a federal grant, but the other 25% must be funded by non-federal sources or donated by the landowner.

Contributions to EO 2021-052:

- Prevents conversion of environmentally important forest lands from non-forests uses.
- Protects forested landscapes from conversion to other uses thereby protecting water quality sources, biodiversity and wildlife habitat and high carbon sequestration areas.
- Provides timber, fuel wood and other forest products.

NATURAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION ACT (NHCA) PROGRAM, ENERGY MINERALS AND NATURAL RESOURCES DEPT.

General Requirements: Project selection through a competitive process to qualified entities that include state agencies, tribes, pueblos, and nations, and non-governmental conservation entities with projects recommended by the Natural Lands Protection Committee.

Contributions to EO 2021-052:

- Preserving and conserving water quality and quantity and providing for water source protection and long-term water security
- Protecting agricultural production on working farms and ranches
- Restoring New Mexico's forests and watersheds to withstand catastrophic wildfire and build resiliency to climate change
- Conserving wildlife habitat
- Maintaining natural areas that sequester carbon
- Providing outdoor recreation opportunities including hunting and fishing
- Preserving cultural and historic sites with natural resource heritage value

LAND CONSERVATION INCENTIVES ACT, ENERGY MINERALS AND NATURAL RESOURCES DEPT.

General Requirements: A donation is eligible for state tax credit if it 1) provides public outdoor recreation of reduction; or 2) preserved important wildlife habitats or ecosystems; or 3) protects a historically important land area; or 4) contributes to open space preservation goals of a clearly delineated public policy or significantly provides for the scenic enjoyment of the public.

Contributions to EO 2021-052:

- Durable protection and conservation of natural areas, wildlife habitat and high carbon sequestration areas
- Durable protection of historically important areas
- Provides outdoor recreation and scenic open spaces to the public.



APPENDIX B: PROGRAM DETAILS

HABITAT MANAGEMENT FUND, DEPT. OF GAME AND FISH

General Requirements: Any individual purchasing a hunting or fishing license must also purchase a Habitat Management Stamp.

Contributions to EO 2021-052:

- Wildlife Management Areas are open to the public for some portions of the year and provide a wide array of outdoor recreation activities.
- Money used on Wildlife Management Areas is outside of the State General Fund and instead relies upon a fee associated with all hunting and fishing licenses.
- Conserve wildlife habitats and the wildlife that depend upon them.
- Enhance biological diversity.
- Create economic activity in rural communities where Wildlife Management Areas are located.

FOREST AND WATERSHED RESTORATION PROGRAM, ENERGY MINERALS AND NATURAL RESOURCES DEPT.

General Requirements: The FAWRA defines an eligible project as “a large-scale forest and watershed restoration project on any lands in the state that increases the adaptability and resilience to recurring drought and extreme weather events of the state's forests and watersheds; protects water sources; reduces the risk of wildfire, including plans for watershed conservation; restores burned areas or thins forests; and includes a related economic or workforce development project or a wildlife conservation or habitat improvement project.” Interested parties work directly with EMNRD Forestry District Offices to develop proposals, which are then reviewed by the FAWRA advisory board on an annual basis.

Contributions to EO 2021-052: FAWRA provides stable funding to develop and implement well-planned, watershed- scale projects that provide a variety of benefits, included wildfire risk reduction, watershed and riparian health, wildlife benefits, and support for natural resource economies. FAWRA projects serve as “anchor” projects within large landscapes that attract federal grant dollars at a 1:1 match. Supplementary funding for FAWRA provides taxpayers with assurances that any additional funds will be invested in vetted projects located in high-priority watersheds and with funding that is highly leveraged.



SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS, DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

General Requirements: The basic statutory requirement of SWCDs is to conserve and develop natural resources of the state. SWCDs receive operational support from the state based on a point-system for funding distribution. The Soil and Water Conservation Commission (SWCC), comprised of seven governor appointees, approves the point-system spreadsheet each year and awards annual grants for water quality and conservation projects through a request-for-proposal (RFP) process open only to the SWCDs.

Contributions to EO 2021-052: SWCD capacity is crucial for delivering local-led conservation in New Mexico. Specific benefits include preservation, conservation and development of natural resources; control and prevention of soil erosion; prevention of floodwater and sediment damage; conservation, development, beneficial application and proper disposal of water; promote of the use of impounded water for recreation, propagation of fish and wildlife and for urban and industrial needs; flood control; wildlife preservation; and protection of the tax base of the state.



APPENDIX B: PROGRAM DETAILS

STRATEGIC WATER RESERVE, OFFICE OF THE STATE ENGINEER AND THE INTERSTATE STREAM COMMISSION

General Requirements: The general statutory requirement is to utilize water management for the benefit of threatened or endangered species and compact compliance.

Contributions to EO 2021-052: Ensuring compliance with ESA and compact requirements protects all other water users in the relevant surface water and groundwater basins.

RIVER STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM, ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

General Requirements: River Stewardship Program funds are distributed to projects across the state and include planning, design, monitoring, and construction activities to improve surface water quality and/or riparian habitat. Project selection occurs through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process for qualified entities, including towns, cities, counties, soil and water conservation districts, irrigation districts, private for-profit and not-for-profit organizations, and pueblos, tribes, and nations. Projects are evaluated by a multi-agency evaluation committee consisting of subject matter experts in surface water quality, aquatic habitat, and restoration work. Evaluation criteria ensure that projects are technically sound, community-based and stakeholder driven, and favor projects that improve water quality, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, support local economies, and reduce downstream flood hazard.

Contributions to EO 2021-052: The River Stewardship Program:

- Improves surface water quality statewide to support fish and other aquatic life as well as human use for recreation, irrigation, and municipal water supplies.
- Enhances economically important activities that depend on rivers and streams, like hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, camping, and boating.
- Reduces flood hazard in downstream communities and mitigates impacts from climate change, such as wildfires and drought, by enhancing the natural function of rivers and their watersheds.
- Provides required match to ensure approximately \$2.25 million per year in federal funds are awarded to New Mexico under federal Clean Water Act programs for watersheds, surface water quality and wetlands.

RESTORATION AND REMEDIATION PROJECT PROGRAM, STATE LAND OFFICE

General Requirements: Project proposals for watershed health, restoration or remediation of state trust land may be initiated by the commissioner or by outside individuals or entities in accordance with NMSLO rules. The Commissioner's prior written approval is required for all expenditures.

Contributions to EO 2021-052: Watershed health, restoration and remediation projects benefit local communities and local economies, leverage resources, restore ecosystem function and build more resilient ecosystems for all New Mexicans.

APPENDIX B: PROGRAM DETAILS

OUTDOOR EQUITY FUND, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPT., OUTDOOR RECREATION DIVISION

General Requirements: Funding to eligible applicants to invest in transformative outdoor recreation experience programming, particularly for youth from underserved communities. Both capital and noncapital projects are eligible.

Contributions to EO 2021-052:

- Empowers communities to create their own solutions for getting kids outdoors.
- Directly addresses barriers to recreating outside that many communities, in particular communities of color, face.
- Contributes to public health gains (via physical, mental, and social-emotional health) among young people.
- Educates young people about climate change, conservation, and environmental stewardship.

OUTDOOR RECREATION TRAILS+ GRANT, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPT., OUTDOOR RECREATION DIVISION

General Requirements: Funding to eligible applicants to design and build outdoor recreation infrastructure, with a long-term aim of economic growth, conservation, public health benefits, and increased quality of life.

Contributions to EO 2021-052: The River Stewardship Program:

- Builds shovel-ready, community-led projects.
- Attracts new residents and visitors to communities by providing new recreational amenities.
- Invests in proven economic impact of outdoor infrastructure and access, which is especially acute in rural and tribal areas.
- Improves livability and quality of life.
- Improves public health.
- Contributes to overall conservation goals with well-managed, sustainable access for New Mexicans.

HEALTHY SOILS PROGRAM, DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

General Requirements: HSP project grants are available to two types of applicants: individuals or eligible entities. Individuals include farmers, ranchers, or other land managers. Eligible entities are local government entities with “proven land management capacity to support healthy soil”, including pueblos, tribes, nations, land grants, acequias, soil and water conservation districts, and NMSU’s Cooperative Extension Service. Projects are recommended for funding by the HSP’s technical review committee, comprised of representatives from eligible entities and technical experts.

Contributions to EO 2021-052: The Healthy Soil Program improves soil health across the state, supports agricultural production, enhances soil carbon sequestration, and builds relationships among individuals and entities committed to improving soil health. Investment in the Healthy Soil Program supports the development and implementation of best agricultural and land management practices for arid and semiarid regions.

NMSLO LEASING, STATE LAND OFFICE

General Requirements: Anyone may submit an application to lease state trust land in accordance with Land Office Rules.

Contributions to EO 2021-052: Revenue generated by the NMSLO provides significant support for public education and to the citizens of New Mexico. Conservation and stewardship leases support local economies, sustain traditional ways of life, restore wetlands, and preserve biodiversity.