

N E W M E X I C O



Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department

A photograph of a desert landscape at sunset. In the foreground, a dirt road with tire tracks leads towards the horizon. On the left, several wind turbines are visible. On the right, a large metal power line tower stands prominently. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright glow and long shadows. The sky is a clear, deep blue.

# ANNUAL REPORT 2024

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Message from Cabinet Secretary Designate 3

---

Energy Conservation and Management Division 5

---

Forestry Division 17

---

Mining and Minerals Division 36

---

Oil Conservation Division 53

---

State Parks Division 60

# Message from Cabinet Secretary Designate - Melanie A. Kenderdine

I was appointed Secretary-designate of the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham in May of 2024. It was immediately clear that EMNRD plays a vital role in ensuring that New Mexico's abundant natural resources are both protected and used in environmental responsible and economically impactful ways. One of the first things I did after starting this job was schedule meetings with the staffs of the department's five operating divisions. I wanted to personally meet with them and learn more about them and how they go about their jobs.

I had not completed those meetings when the South Fork and Salt Fires started burning in the southwestern part of the state, devastating parts of the communities of Ruidoso and the Mescalero Apache Reservation. The first responders to these fires included fire crews from EMNRD's Forestry Division, two of which were newly formed and in the early stages of training to become official Interagency Hot Shot Crews. These crews' performance in battling these two highly destructive blazes—as well their efforts in assisting with fires in the Pacific Northwest later in the summer—proved that New Mexico has a formidable wildland firefighting force that will only get better as its training progresses.

A few weeks later, I was proud to present an award from EMNRD's Mining and Minerals Division (MMD) to two companies for their outstanding work on reclaiming the site of an old, abandoned coal mine that was threatening to irrevocably damage a stream channel near Raton in northern New Mexico. This is just one of the many sites that MMD's Abandoned Mine Land Program cleans up every year. MMD also ensures environmentally responsible mining, including copper mining in the southwest part of the state. This copper is critical for a clean energy future where it is used for electric vehicles, transmission towers and lines, and a range of other technologies that are essential for the clean energy transition.

The Abandoned Mine Land Program had quite the year in 2024. First, it won its own award from the federal Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement for cleaning up coal waste piles that were threatening to pollute a stream and damage a road, also near Raton. It followed that up by extinguishing two long-simmering underground coal fires that were emitting toxic gas and threatening to disrupt construction of a new water supply line that will serve the City of Gallup and parts of the Navajo Nation.

Shortly after Labor Day, I spoke at a public event at which Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, Sen. Martin Heinrich and Albuquerque Mayor Tim Keller were among the dignitaries celebrating an \$87 million federal grant awarded to EMNRD's Energy Conservation and Management Division to help New Mexicans make their homes more energy efficient. This same EMNRD division also received a \$156 million federal grant in 2024 to enable low-income New Mexicans to install solar generation to power their homes. That grant will help many New Mexicans to make major contributions to the state's clean energy transition, including those in rural and tribal communities.

As this year progressed, I also supported the Oil Conservation Division's successful efforts to prevent tens of millions of cubic feet of methane gas emissions by continuing to enforce its nation-leading methane waste rules. The Oil Conservation Division has also further reduced environmental hazards by plugging nearly 150 orphan wells over the past two years. My introduction to EMNRD has also included visiting several of the 35 magnificent parks managed by the State Parks Division. These spaces are true representations of the landscapes that help make New Mexico the Land of Enchantment and provide locations where New Mexicans and tourists from across the country and the world can enjoy and appreciate the spectacular beauty of our state.

I would be remiss if I did not note that the work each EMNRD division does—from plugging orphan wells to reclaiming mine sites and promoting solar energy development and welcoming visitors to state parks—creates good-paying jobs in multiple New Mexico communities, bolstering the state's economic health.

This report details these and many of EMNRD's other accomplishments in the last year. I look forward to continuing this critical work in 2025 and beyond.



MELANIE A. KENDERDINE  
Cabinet Secretary Designate



*The Office of the Secretary (OFS) oversees all divisions within the Department, and includes the Office of Information Technology, the Public Information Office, and the Office of General Counsel. OFS provides overall policy direction, strategic direction, and measures program performance for the Department. OFS is also the main liaison between the Department and the Governor, other state agencies, and legislators.*

**| PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE**

The Public Information Office fields media requests, creates and approves of all marketing materials, and works closely with all Divisions to promote programs. This office writes speeches for public events, distributes press releases, and promotes the work of the Department through the website, publications, and events. The Public Information Office also provides guidance to Divisions on overall communications messaging.

**| OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL**

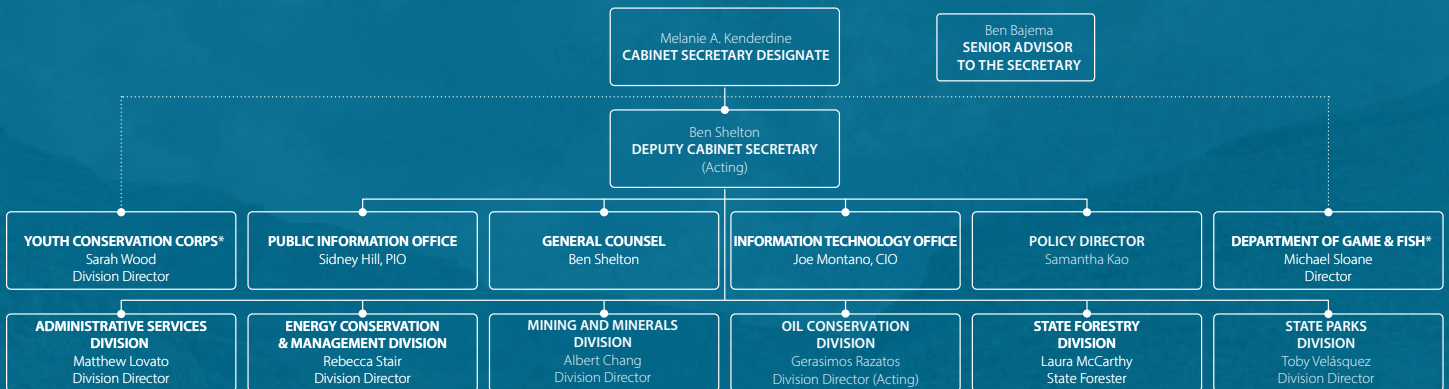
The Office of General Counsel manages the legal affairs for the entire Department. This office reviews contracts, represents the Department in administrative and judicial proceedings, drafts and analyzes proposed legislation and rules, and assists with other legal matters as necessary.

**| INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY OFFICE**

The Information and Technology Office (ITO) is the central information technology and information systems provider for the Department’s employees across the state. It employs 21 technical positions that are responsible for maintaining and supporting the Department’s computer systems, network telecommunications infrastructure, and application development needs.

**| ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES**

The Administrative Services Division (ASD) supports the day-to-day functions of the Department. Responsible for EMNRD’s finances and property, the Division manages the budget, procurement, accounting, grant reporting, and processes payment vouchers, travel documents, purchase orders, and more. Crucially, ASD coordinates the annual financial audit and prepares the annual financial statement. ASD also manages the HR Department and is the primary liaison between EMNRD and the State Personnel Office.



\* Administratively attached with no direct budget support from EMNRD.

The background of the image is a semi-transparent photograph of a desert landscape. In the foreground, there are several clumps of dry, yellowish-brown grass. A dirt road or path leads from the bottom center towards the middle ground. In the middle ground, there are several wind turbines and a large metal lattice tower for power lines. The sun is positioned behind the tower, creating a bright, hazy glow and casting long shadows. The sky is a clear, light blue. The overall scene represents renewable energy and infrastructure in a natural setting.

# ECAM

ENERGY CONSERVATION  
AND MANAGEMENT

# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Energy Conservation and Management division (ECAM) is leading the state's charge toward clean energy adoption. ECAM has positioned New Mexico as a leader in the implementation of innovative clean energy programs, which are generating quality jobs, attracting investment, raising standards of living, and diversifying the state's economy. According to a DOE study, New Mexico ranked third of all states in clean job creation.

What a year!

In 2024, ECAM:

- Helped update building codes to incorporate energy efficiency measures.
- Was the first state to apply for both US Department of Energy Home Rebates Programs—Home Electrification and Appliance Rebates (HEAR) and Home Efficiency Rebates (HER), bringing \$87 million in federal grants for distribution to New Mexico households.
- Was the third state to launch HEAR – and the first state to offer retail (point-of-sale) discounts for low-income residents on the purchase of energy efficiency home improvements and electric appliances.
- Updated the rules on the state's Solar Market Development Tax Credit.
- Implemented tax credit programs for both clean cars and electric vehicle chargers.
- Began setting up a geothermal office within the division.
- Received a \$156 million Solar for All Award from the US EPA and launched the five-year program to make solar energy accessible in the state's rural and low-income communities.
- Applied for and received several green jobs grants.
- Launched a one-stop-shop clearinghouse website, [CleanEnergy.nm.gov](https://CleanEnergy.nm.gov), to help New Mexicans find and apply for all the above-mentioned energy-efficiency grants and tax credits.
- Grew and restructured the department to streamline operations and better accommodate an increased workload. Hired staff for grant writing, financial management, administrative support, communications, and more.

ECAM continued helping New Mexicans by reviewing a record number of residential solar installations and developing metrics for quantifying energy efficiencies. Additionally, ECAM's subject matter experts participated in many forums and partnerships, providing unbiased technical support, and helped advance many high priority projects and initiatives, from Albuquerque's Community Change grant to Navajo Transitional Utility Authority.

Looking ahead, ECAM plans to implement grant programs to help launch a geothermal industry in New Mexico and serve as the state's State Energy Finance Institution (SEFI). The SEFI designation will help secure competitive loans from the DOE's Loan Programs Office for clean energy projects across the state. We are making great progress in ensuring that New Mexico has a Just Transition to a clean-energy future, and we are eager to build on that the momentum in 2025.



**REBECCA "PUCK" STAIR**  
Division Director  
Energy Conservation and Management Division



*The Energy Conservation and Management Division (ECAM) develops and implements effective clean energy programs — renewable energy, energy efficiency, alternative fuels, and safe transportation of radioactive waste — to promote economic growth, environmental sustainability, and wise stewardship of natural resources while protecting public health and safety for New Mexico and its citizens.*

44

Staff positions

4

Professional engineering for technical support and evaluation

5

Climate and resiliency

12

Program management in energy efficiency/security/resilience, renewable energy, alternative fuels, and climate change

6

To administer tax credits

3

WIPP to ensure safe transportation of transuranic waste

8

Administration and public services

2

Regulatory and legal

## STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES

- **RENEWABLE ENERGY:** Solar, wind, geothermal, biomass, and energy storage technology applications in all sectors; distributed energy technologies such as residential solar and co-generation (combined heat and power) systems.
- **ENERGY EFFICIENCY:** Technology applications such as energy control systems and efficient lighting, motors and appliances, as well as behavioral practices, that reduce energy use and costs in buildings and the transportation sector; residential and commercial building energy codes and standards.
- **ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION AND CLEAN FUELS:** Ridesharing and carpooling; park-and-ride programs; vehicles and infrastructure for electric vehicles, clean-burning fuels such as compressed natural gas (CNG), renewable natural gas, propane, biodiesel, and renewable diesel.
- **WASTE ISOLATION PILOT PLANT (WIPP) TRANSPORTATION:** Safe and uneventful transportation of transuranic (TRU) waste in New Mexico.

## OUTLINE OF STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Grid Modernization & Clean Electrification
- Climate Change Action
- Transportation Decarbonization
- Energy Efficiency
- Energy Diversification
- Energy Workforce Development
- Sustainability & Resiliency
- State Energy Security Planning
- Transuranic Waste Transportation Safety



## GRID MODERNIZATION & CLEAN ELECTRIFICATION

### | GRID MODERNIZATION

New Mexico cannot successfully transition to a clean-energy future without significantly upgrading its electric grid. A modern electric grid has to accommodate new types of power—particularly renewable sources such as solar and wind energy—generated by multiple entities across various locations. In addition to managing these new forms of power across a distributed network, a modern grid must be fortified to withstand cyber-attacks or other potential threats. And its operating costs must be kept to a minimum to ensure that power remains affordable for the average consumer.

With all this in mind, the legislature, in 2023, authorized ECAM to establish a grant program to fund pilot projects that demonstrate how a modern grid operates. In fiscal year 2024, ECAM funded two pilot projects:

- New Mexico State University (NMSU) received \$117,709 to support an economic choice study. The survey results will provide valuable insight about consumers' willingness to pay for electrifying New Mexico's transportation infrastructure. It should, for instance, yield a profile of the types of consumers—and their locations within the state—that are most willing to participate in electric vehicle (EV) programs. PNM, the state's largest investor-owned utility, has expressed interest in using this study to increase its understanding of consumer behavior.
- The City of Aztec Electrical Utility was awarded \$170,000.00 to support a \$360,000.00 feasibility and engineering study for the Aztec Clean Energy Transition Project. Deliverables included permitting and construction documents for a proposed ground based 2-megawatt photovoltaic system and 4-megawatt per hour battery energy storage system (BESS). The local grid will benefit by having dispatchable energy to help manage the middle-of-the-night winter peak along with adding renewable generation.

Grid Modernization program staff also completed the fourth round of project selection in the fourth quarter of FY 2024. Two projects with an aggregated total of \$900,000.00 were selected for funding in FY 2025.

### | LONG DURATION ENERGY STORAGE

The Long Duration Energy Storage Grant Program is intended to de-risk battery project development by bringing down capital costs, shortening utility planning horizon gaps and bringing new technology solutions to market by answering research questions. The program is funded through a one-time state allocation to EMNRD to support "advanced energy technologies." The funding will support two projects in FY25.

### | LOOKING AHEAD TO A MORE RESILIENT GRID

ECAM has received \$20,646,913.00 from the U.S. Department of Energy to cover three years of funding for the Preventing Outages and Enhancing Resilience (POWER) program, which is part of the Biden Administration's Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. The POWER program is expected to produce innovative methods for boosting the resiliency of the electric grid.

The state is required to match the Congressional allocation by 15 percent and the Legislature has awarded the \$3,097,036.65 match to cover the first three years.

In New Mexico, the ongoing POWER program directly supports electric utilities' installation of grid enhancing measures such as weatherization equipment, advanced monitoring and control technologies, utility pole management and vegetation management. ECAM issued a solicitation for the next round of POWER projects in the third quarter of FY 24 and selected one project to move on to the second phase of review to be completed by the DOE's Grid Deployment Office. ECAM will release a second round of solicitations in the first half of FY 25.



## CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION

In January 2019, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham issued Executive Order 2019-003 on Climate Change and Energy Waste Prevention, which created the state Interagency Climate Change Task Force and included directives for agencies to incorporate climate mitigation and adaptation practices into their policies and operations. ECAM supports the Task Force through coordination, technical assistance, planning, and policy development and supports interagency work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from electricity generation, transportation, industry, the built environment, and natural and working lands.



In April 2024, ECAM increased its Climate Policy Bureau to five positions. The Bureau is charged with coordinating interagency efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, building New Mexico's capacity to adapt to climate change, and developing and implementing a statewide Climate Action Plan. In 2024, ECAM's Climate Policy Bureau made important strides to develop the state climate adaptation framework.

EMNRD shared a significant award with NMED of \$3M under the EPA Climate Pollution Reduction grant. This new funding allowed the recruitment of two new staff members, and the start of a year-long process to draft a Comprehensive Climate Action Plan. The Climate Action Plan will build on the work of the Climate Change Task Force, support agency coordination, and lay the groundwork for future funding opportunities to continue New Mexico's progress towards meeting its climate goals.

The climate adaptation and resilience program hired a new Resilience Coordinator to work closely with other state agencies and contractors to gather valuable feedback on the initial draft of the Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan.

CPB staff engaged with local officials and tribal communities through a series of community climate adaptation and resilience outreach events. The events took place in Truth or Consequences, Roswell, Albuquerque, Farmington, Taos, Las Vegas, Santa Fe (Tribal outreach), and included a virtual event. A total of 176 participants attended these events, generating nearly 800 comments on the draft Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan.

## TRANSPORTATION DECARBONIZATION

### | CROSS-AGENCY COLLABORATION

In 2024, ECAM continued cohosting the Transportation Climate Action Team (TCAT) working group and added more agency representation to broaden opportunities for decarbonization of the transportation sector. The group is comprised of members from EMNRD, NM Department of Transportation, NM Environment Department, NM Tourism Department, NM Taxation and Revenue Department, Department of Workforce Solutions, NM General Services Department, NM Economic Development Department, Public Education Department and the Public Regulation Commission.

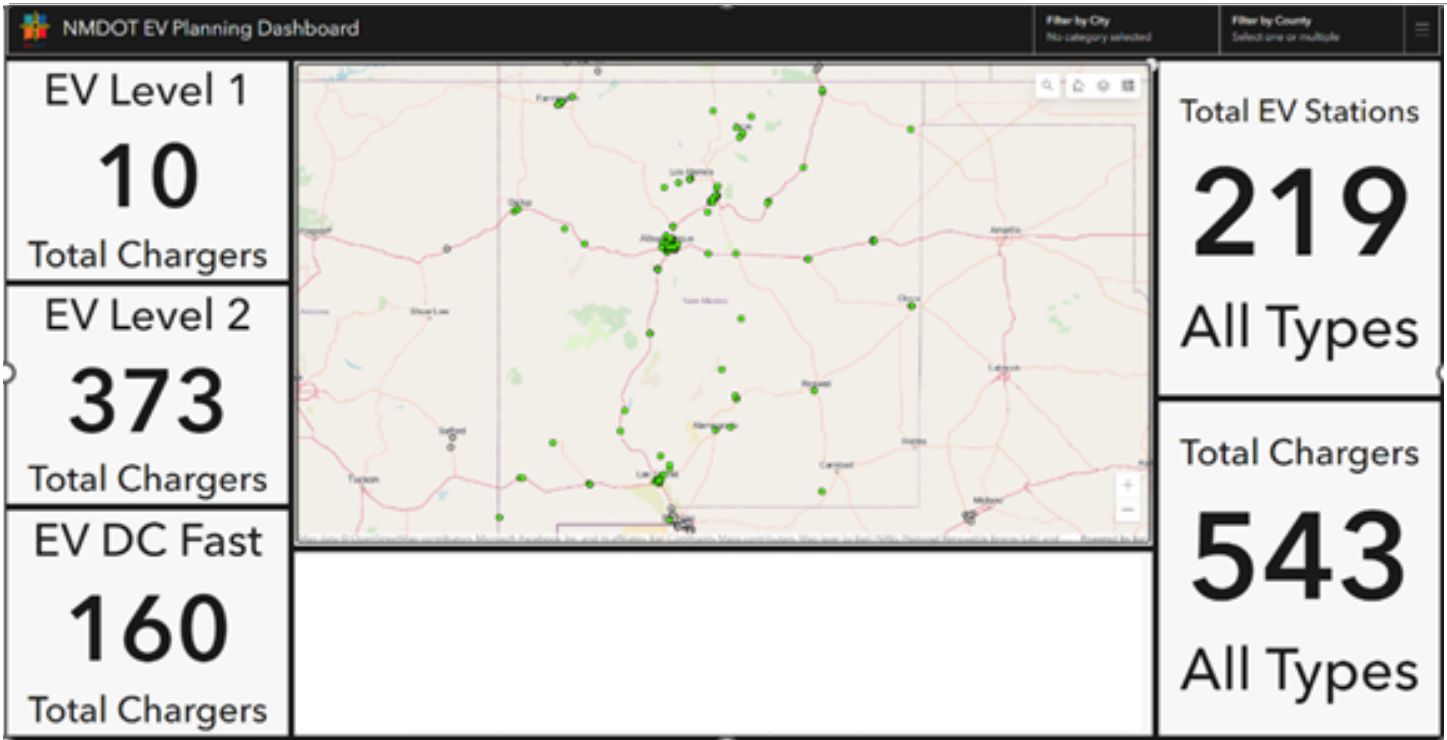
Monthly meetings provide the opportunity to host guest speakers such as the North Central Regional Transit District Blue Bus program. TCAT members also share expertise and support. For example, the ECAM tax team brought the draft Clean Car Tax Credit Rule to a TCAT meeting and team members from the Taxation and Revenue Department explained how the application process could be streamlined by connecting to a backend database of vehicle registrations.

TCAT also supported changing statewide price agreement provisions that were hindering many state agencies' efforts to fully embrace adding electric vehicles to their fleets.

In 2023, the types of electric, hybrid and plug-in vehicles available through the price agreement was expanded. Agencies no longer have to search specifically for electric or hybrid vehicles. Gas, diesel, electric, hybrid and plug-in hybrid vehicles are all listed on a single price agreement.

In addition to participating in the TCAT, ECAM also helped the NM Department of Transportation (NMDOT) begin distributing the \$38.3 million in distributing the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) funding across the state by 2026.

Between late 2023 and early 2024, ECAM helped NMDOT evaluate the first round of proposals for this funding. NMDOT received



17 applications and awarded \$11.9 million to six entities. These awards will pay for placement of 84 EV chargers at 20 locations across the state. It is significant to note that many of these charging stations will be in rural parts of the state. The entities that will install these chargers, and their locations, are listed here:

- EV Gateway (Las Cruces)
- Francis Energy (Raton, Socorro, Los Lunas, T or C, and Vaughn)
- Pilot (Jamestown, Moriarty)
- Red E Charging LLC (Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Grants, Maxwell, Bernalillo)
- SkyChargers LLC (Deming)
- Tesla (Lordsburg, Encino, Gallup, Wagon Mound, Las Vegas, Santa Rosa, Tucumcari)

NMDOT expects to begin reviewing additional funding applications in the Spring of 2025, and ECAM will continue to advocate for equitable siting of electric charging stations.

**| STATE FLEET TRANSITION**

To increase the purchase of EVs for state fleets, ECAM signed an MOA with the GSD Transportation Services Division and an IDA with State Parks to distribute money from the State Energy Program Bipartisan Infrastructure Law’s supplemental funds.

**| ALTERNATIVE FUELS**

Thanks to public and private investments in New Mexico, the network of EV chargers continues to expand.

FUEL TYPE	STATION COUNTS
Biodiesel	0
CNG	9
E85	13
Electric (station locations   charging ports   Level 1   Level 2   DC Fast)	317   754   2   435   317
Hydrogen (retail   non-retail   total)	0   0   0
LNG	1
Propane (primary   secondary   total)	46   12   58
Renewable Diesel	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>835</b>

EV CHARGING STATION	2023	2024	DIFFERENCE
EV Level 2 Chargers	373	435	+ 17%
EV DC Fast Chargers	160	317	+ 98%
Total EV Stations of all types	219	317	+ 45%
<b>Total Charging Ports</b>	<b>543</b>	<b>754</b>	<b>+ 39%</b>

**| INTERSTATE COLLABORATION**

ECAM is partnering with ChargeWest, a coalition of western states, on the proposed ZEV-Ready West Initiative, which is aimed at providing first responders in the West with specialized training for Zero-Emission Vehicle (ZEV) emergencies. This is needed to address the specific challenges posed by ZEV technologies, including battery fires and preparedness for hydrogen fuel cell deployments.

The ZEV-Ready West Initiative strategically addresses the need for specialized emergency response training by developing critical “train-the-trainer” sessions, which can greatly expand the impact and reach of the training resources across western cities and landscapes. Project deliverables also include accessible online curricula to provide immersive, modular training specifically for rural first responders. If the project is awarded federal funding, New Mexico would receive \$5k-10K for two trainers to attend centralized training along with about 60 other western state representatives. These trainers would receive the information and equipment needed to train other first responders in New Mexico.

**| OUTREACH**

Helping rural municipalities understand the challenges and how to facilitate the expansion of EV charging networks has been a primary focus of the Alternative Fuels Program this year.

In Spring 2024, ECAM presented at the annual meeting of the NM League of Zoning Officials about the proactive steps that local jurisdictions can take to ensure zoning and other land use regulations accommodate EV charger sites. Of the more than 100 zoning officials in the audience, many were unfamiliar with EV technologies, proving that outreach to more rural parts of New Mexico is crucial to widespread EV adoption.

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY

ECAM is leading several major initiatives to improve energy efficiency.

**| COMMUNITY ENERGY EFFICIENCY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

The Community Energy Efficiency Development (CEED) Program was established in 2022 after the NM Legislature passed the Community Energy Efficiency Development Block Grant Act. The CEED Program aims to facilitate energy efficiency projects in underserved communities by providing block grants to local governments in partnership with community organizations. The program provides funding for improvements to residential buildings to reduce energy consumption, energy-related operating costs, and/or the carbon intensity of energy consumption.

In 2023, the Community Energy Efficiency Development (CEED) Program Rule was promulgated to establish requirements and procedures for CEED Program grant applications. In the fall of 2023, ECAM issued a Request for Applications which closed in January 2024. Projects were selected for award in May 2024 and are currently in the contracting process. The awarded grants will expend the \$10 million allocated by the State Legislature and an additional \$1.76 million from the US Department of Energy’s Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant.



## SOLAR MARKET DEVELOPMENT TAX CREDIT

The New Mexico Solar Market Development Tax Credit provides a tax credit of 10% of the cost of a solar system, up to \$6,000. When it enacted this program in 2020, the legislature placed an \$8 million cap on the amount of credits that could be issued in a given year. It has raised that cap three times due to consumer demand. The current cap is \$30 million a year.

In January 2024, the legislature also provided a supplemental tax credit for tax years 2021, 2022 and 2023, for those New Mexicans who were denied the credit because the cap had been reached in those years.

### | CLEAN CARS TAX CREDIT

The 2024 legislature passed a Clean Car Tax Credit and Clean Car Charging Unit Tax Credit.

### | GEOTHERMAL GROUND-COUPLED HEAT PUMP TAX CREDIT

The 2024 legislature passed a geothermal ground-coupled heat pump tax credit. A New Mexico taxpayer who purchases and installs a geothermal ground-coupled heat pump system in New Mexico is eligible for a tax credit incentive. The credit would apply to a geothermal ground-coupled heat pump system that uses energy from the ground, water or, ultimately, the sun for distribution of heating, cooling or domestic hot water.

ECAM is currently in the process of a rulemaking on this credit, with an anticipated publication date during the second quarter of 2025.



## ENERGY SAVINGS PERFORMANCE CONTRACTS

As part of the state's climate and energy goals, ECAM is helping to make buildings across New Mexico state government more energy- and water-efficient. Energy Savings Performance Contracting (ESPC) has been available to New Mexico's governmental agencies since 1993 through the Public Facility Energy Efficiency & Water Conservation Act.

In 2024, the Guaranteed Energy Savings Performance Contracts (GESPC) Program reviewed and certified nine projects, totaling more than \$64 million in energy efficiency upgrades, of which \$51 million was financed through the GESPC process. DOE's State Energy Program formula funds staff time for review, evaluation of energy audits, certification of investment grade audits, and oversight of these projects. The nine projects certified during the project year will save the public entities more than \$3,200,000 per year in energy costs. In addition, the staff continues to monitor more than 40 projects that bring the GESPC Program savings totals to 1.6 million therms of gas, 98 million kilowatt-hours (kWh) of electricity, and 36.5 million gallons of water annually.

## ENERGY DIVERSIFICATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

### | SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION FOR ADVANCED BUILDINGS

New Mexico has adopted the 2021 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC), fulfilling a directive from the governor in Executive Order 2019-003. These updated codes went into effect for new buildings and major renovation projects in July 2024.

In 2024, to support the energy efficiency buildings sector workforce, ECAM staff trained over 350 workers on the new energy codes. This initiative is a partnership with Doña Ana Community College, Northern New Mexico College, San Juan College, and Santa Fe Community College, through support by the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy.



The training courses cover aspects of both the residential and commercial energy conservation codes and associated codes and standards. The courses are offered in both live and online formats.

The courses target both design/build industry professionals as well as code officials performing plan reviews and inspections. Professionals can fulfill Continuing Education Credit or Professional Development requirements.

**| CLEAN ENERGY WORKFORCE**

New Mexico’s clean energy workforce is expanding at an impressive rate, outpacing the state’s overall economic growth. In 2023, New Mexico had the third-fastest rate of clean energy job growth in the United States at 5.9%, according to the US DOE’s Energy and Employment Report.

ECAM has secured the following funding to support workforce development initiatives:

- \$1,533,830 from the Department of Energy for the Training for Residential Energy Contractors (TREC) program.
- \$2,000,000 for the New Mexico Home Energy Auditor Training (NM HEAT) program.

ECAM is also applying for an additional \$2,000,000 for the TREC Guided Access Pathways (TREC GAP) program. The TREC GAP program aims to fill the “gaps” in current training funding and will include training in more specialized and advanced green skills and wraparound services.

ECAM plans to achieve several key objectives with federal funding, including supporting the Home Efficiency Rebates (HER) and Home Electrification and Appliance Rebates (HEAR) programs, reducing training costs for both new and existing home energy contractors, making career entry and skill upgrades more accessible. The focus is on energy auditors, electricians, plumbers, and Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) professionals. To promote

diversity and inclusion, funding will expand access to training programs for underrepresented populations through advanced recruitment, hybrid instruction models, and wrap-around services.

Recognizing the need for coordinated partnerships, ECAM established quarterly Workforce Alliance for Green Energy (WAGE) stakeholder meetings. In 2024, three WAGE meetings brought together diverse participants, including educational institutions, businesses, labor unions, community organizations, state agencies, and trade associations. These gatherings serve to identify challenges and opportunities, increase public awareness, share best practices, and facilitate policy development.

Looking ahead, these initiatives and partnerships position New Mexico to continue its leadership in clean energy workforce development.

**| RENEWABLE ENERGY PRODUCTION TAX CREDIT**

The Renewable Energy Production Tax Credit (REPTC) provides a tax incentive for utility-scale renewable energy generation. Wind and solar facilities that were certified prior to January 1, 2018 are eligible to receive a tax credit for electricity generated upon being certified by ECAM.

NEW MEXICO RENEWABLE ENERGY PRODUCTION TAX CREDIT-STATUS-2024			
WIND SYSTEMS			
Tax Credit Status	Capacity (MW)	Annual Production (MWH)	Status/Comments
Post-Eligible Total	774.10	2,217,260	Operating
Certified	883.9	2,054,055	Operating
Waiting List	300.0	625,6077	Operating Non-eligible Tax Credit
SOLAR SYSTEMS			
Post-Eligible	252.6	624,818	Operating
Certified	149.6	387,637	Operating
Waiting List	902.8	1,824,469	Certified
TOTAL CAPACITY & ANNUAL PRODUCTION OF OPERATING SYSTEMS IN NEW MEXICO			
Wind & Solar	3,263.0	7,733,846	Operating in 2024

**| AGRICULTURAL BIOMASS TAX CREDIT PROGRAM**

The agricultural biomass tax credit began in 2011. It was originally to expire in 2020 but was extended to 2030. In accordance with the statute, a corporate or personal taxpayer that transports agricultural biomass to a qualified energy producing facility can request the department to issue a certificate of transportation

for a corporate or personal income tax credit. The tax credit is calculated at \$5/wet ton. Three dairies requested Certificates of Transportation for Tax Year 2024, for 38,156 wet tons or \$190,781.

### | GEOTHERMAL POWER PERMITTING PROGRAM

New Geothermal Resources Development rules went into effect in 2024, allowing for issuance of a facility-wide permit to the Lightning Dock Geothermal Facility in Hidalgo County. The new permit covers all wells and equipment on the site. In 2024, geothermal exploration continued at well 17B-7 at the Lightning Dock facility. The well was drilled to a depth of 18,000 feet, making it the deepest well ever permitted in New Mexico. The bottom hole temperature of 250° C was recorded.

The well owners are currently conducting studies of the data collected to decide how to proceed. A new corporation – Zanskar – purchased Lightning Dock in 2024. Zanskar has approached ECAM about increasing Lightning Dock’s geothermal electricity production from the current 4 MW generation capacity to a maximum of 15 MW capacity. ECAM granted this modification to allow for geothermal production expansion.

## SUSTAINABILITY & RESILIENCY

In 2023, ECAM began using Federal Emergency Management Agency Building Infrastructure & Resilient Communities (BRIC) funding to support climate change adaptation planning and climate awareness outreach. We convened state agencies to develop a climate mitigation and adaptation annex to the state Hazard Mitigation Plan, and a larger state Climate Resilience and Adaptation Plan. The climate change awareness grant is helping ECAM partner with stakeholders, local governments and Indian Tribes and Pueblos to build their respective capacities to plan for natural hazards exacerbated by climate change.

Communication tools, such as ECAM’s Climate Risk Map, help illustrate the hazards exacerbated by climate change. To raise awareness of the resource, ECAM made several presentations to interested groups including students, citizen groups, and professionals. ECAM continues to respond to Climate Risk Map questions and share data with researchers and consultants working on climate related issues in the state.

## STATE ENERGY SECURITY PLANNING

An Energy Security Program Coordinator has been hired, with a focus on enhancing the state’s energy security, resilience and preparedness. The coordinator will concentrate on building strong relationships with energy stakeholders and local and tribal governments by establishing monthly coordination meetings to ensure consistent communication and collaboration across the energy sector.

In addition to the coordination meetings, a series of regional energy exercises are planned for 2025 across New Mexico. These exercises will be designed to simulate real-world scenarios such as a winter storm causing a widespread power outage, a wildfire impacting energy infrastructure and a heatwave causing extreme demand on the electric grid.

These exercises will test collective response capabilities and communication. The exercises will help identify areas needing improvement and contribute to the state’s overall energy security framework. The exercises will involve a diverse group of stakeholders, including energy sector partners, government agencies, and local and tribal emergency managers, reflecting a whole-community approach. This inclusive strategy ensures comprehensive collaboration and coordination across all relevant entities to strengthen emergency response and resilience.





Gov. Lujan-Grisham speaks during the HER/HEAR launch event.

In June 2024, Emergency Support Function (ESF) 12 was activated during the Southfork and Salt Fires. In the State Emergency Operations Center (EOC), ESF 12 representatives played a key role in facilitating the flow of critical information between energy stakeholders, such as PNM and Otero County Electric Co-op, and helped manage power disruptions that affected the area. This activation highlighted the importance of a well-coordinated response and reinforced the value of ongoing efforts to strengthen energy security.

### | WHAT IS ESF 12?

Energy is a critical component of the state's emergency management framework, dedicated to managing and restoring energy systems during and after emergencies. At the state level, ESF 12 coordinates efforts among state agencies, local jurisdictions, and private sector partners to:

- **Assess Damage:** Evaluate the impact of disasters on energy infrastructure and services.
- **Prioritize Restoration:** Identify and prioritize critical energy needs and restoration efforts.
- **Facilitate Communication:** Ensure effective communication and information sharing between all relevant stakeholders, including government agencies and energy providers.
- **Support Recovery:** Assist in the restoration and recovery of energy services to support community resilience and operational continuity.

ESF 12 ensures that energy disruptions are managed efficiently, helping to stabilize the state's energy supply and support overall disaster response and recovery efforts.

### | ENERGY REBATES

The Home Electrification and Appliance (HEAR) program offers rebates to help low-income New Mexico residents—homeowners and renters alike—seeking to upgrade their homes with energy-efficient technologies, including insulation, heat pumps, and Energy Star-certified appliances.

New Mexico was the first state in the nation to launch the Inflation Reduction Act home retail rebates. This program allows rebates for home efficiency and electric appliances to be provided at the cash register. This initiative, funded by \$43 million from the U.S. Department of Energy, aims to advance clean energy adoption across New Mexico.

Eligible participants can receive up to \$14,000 in rebates per household, significantly reducing the financial barrier to making energy-efficiency upgrades. New Mexico's HEAR program is rolling out in phases, starting with rebates for self-installed insulation projects. Additional products and contractor-installed projects will be introduced in the coming months.

## TRANSURANIC WASTE TRANSPORTATION SAFETY

EMNRD has oversight of the Cooperative Agreement for moving hazardous waste to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP). The parties to this agreement include the New Mexico Environment Department, New Mexico Department of Transportation, New Mexico Department of Public Safety, and New Mexico Department of Health. The US DOE provides annual funding to ECAM to oversee the WIPP transportation program. The current five-year agreement is funded for \$6.2 million.

The WIPP Transportation Program is coordinating a full-scale exercise with the City of Raton, Colfax County, and the City of Trinidad, Colorado. The WIPP Transportation Exercise (WIPPTREX) is planned for October 2025. Fire service training to include hazardous materials response along with workshops and tabletop exercises will take place in the year leading up to the WIPPTREX. We have deployed the Law Enforcement Modular Response Radiological Transportation Training (LE MERRTT) developed by the State WIPP Working Group and accredited by the New Mexico Law Enforcement Academy.

**During the last five-year Cooperative Agreement, we have:**

- Trained over 20,000 responders, medical personnel, and volunteers.
- Provided over 425,000 radiation and hazardous material training hours.
- Funded 250 NMSP officers to be classified as Emergency Response Officers.
- Provided funding to certify six officers as trainers in Critical Incident Management (CIM).
- Assisted in training over 1,200 State Police Officers in CIM
- Provided funding for 39 Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Officers and Inspectors to become CVSA Certified Level VI Inspectors.
- Provided funding for two officers to become trainers for CVSA Level VI.
- Provided funding for CVSA Level VI recertification biennially
- Funded 15 local fire services jurisdictions through a Memorandum of Agreement.
- Provided funding for over 9,000 firefighters to be trained in Hazardous Materials Awareness and Operations, Hazardous Materials Technician, or Chemistry.
- Provided funding for seven fire departments along the shipping corridor to maintain certification for FEMA Typed Hazardous Materials Team.
- Implemented the in-state compliance review of the shipping carrier – placed on a biennial review process.
- Developed a law enforcement centric course (LE MERRTT) for first responders accredited through New Mexico Law Enforcement Academy to be delivered to all police, sheriffs, and BIA officers along the shipping corridor.

EMNRD continues to provide oversight of all transuranic waste transportation shipments in and through New Mexico. DOE averages 12 shipments a week, with the majority coming from Idaho National Laboratory. Shipments from Los Alamos National Laboratory made up the second largest percentage of shipments to the WIPP facility this year.

Total inspections conducted on WIPP shipments in New Mexico for this calendar year January 1 – August 29, 2024:

SHIPPER SITE	SHIPMENTS SENT TO WIPP
Argonne National Laboratory	4
Idaho National Laboratory	245
Los Alamos National Laboratory	33 (Point of Origin)
Lawrence Livermore Laboratory	0
Oak Ridge National Laboratory	8
Savannah River Site	47
Sandia National Laboratories	0
Waste Control Specialists	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>377 Inspections</b>

ECAM continues to work closely with NMDOT to review the primary and alternate designated routes to the WIPP for the National TRU Program Southern Transportation Corridor.

Currently, shipments from Savannah River Site and Oak Ridge National Laboratories use the designated alternate Southern Corridor approach entering New Mexico on US176 from Andrews, Texas, proceeding south on NM18, and then west on NM128 to the WIPP site. ECAM will continue to work with NMDOT and the DOE to determine the safest routes for all radioactive waste transports in New Mexico.





# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

The recurring theme of 2024 for the Forestry Division is growth, and growth cuts both ways when it comes to land management and wildfires. The full-time staff and emergency hires who work as the state's responders to wildfires are always evaluating growth potential as it applies to a new start. New Mexico's warm, dry climate is a perfect incubator for the expansion of fast-moving fires given the variables of fuel type (trees or grasses, or often both), terrain, and wind. Wind speed, terrain and fuels make the difference when the fire is 100 acres or in the tens of thousands of acres.

New Mexico's most significantly destructive fire this year was a one-two punch. The South Fork and Salt Fires began on a Monday in the middle of June, and by that evening, over 8,000 people in the community of Ruidoso, as well as the community of the Mescalero Apache Tribe, had been forced to evacuate their homes. With no time to collect their belongings and confronting a sluggish line of cars all pointed out of town, the two fires' rapid growth put all those residents in danger – not just of losing their homes, but their lives. Even by the time an early monsoonal rain cell parked itself over the fires and drenched them with 2 inches of water – three days into the efforts to get containment line around the fires – it was apparent the destruction would be severe and long-lasting. Two people lost their lives, and over a thousand homes and outbuildings were destroyed. This is a sobering example of the damage wildfire can do, no matter if it's caused by lightning or human activity.

The Forestry Division has a responsibility to protect the people of New Mexico from wildfires and to help people learn how to protect themselves before the fire ever starts. That is why the division's recent growth in staffing and its capacity to implement forward-thinking forest management and land conservation practices are instrumental, not just for the protection of people, but for the protection of our forests and watersheds.

This calendar year provided the Forestry division with a chance to grow its horizons. On the land management side, Forestry staff assisted communities throughout the state in several different ways. The division's hazard tree removal program is helping residents clear dangerous fire-weakened trees within the Hermit's Peak Calf Canyon burn scar. The Community Wildfire Defense Grants program brought in nearly \$30 million in federal funding - more than double the funding from last year - to assist non-governmental organizations and counties expand their wildfire protection efforts. The Forest Health Program monitored the increase of forest defoliation due to invasive insect spread. Reforestation efforts were bolstered by the selection of a site on which to build the New Mexico Reforestation Center, along with increased training opportunities to grow a workforce that can harvest, collect and plant seedlings in burn-scarred areas throughout the state. Conservation in northern New Mexico took a big step forward with the closing of the 6,780-acre Brazos Cliffs Forest Legacy easement, protecting the spectacularly beautiful Brazos Cliffs from development forever, allowing New Mexicans to enjoy their natural resources while hunting or hiking.

Two state-led wildfire crews were also formed this year and began their journey on the way to becoming official Interagency Hot Shot Crews (IHC). These crews worked on the devastating South Fork and Salt Fires, as well as other wildfires across the state. Forestry also deployed these new crews, along with long-time crews and engines, to assist other states as wildfires stressed resource availability to fight fires in Oregon and the Pacific Northwest. The effort of the people leading crew development becomes more impressive when you consider that New Mexico is just the third state in the U.S. to fund its own full-time wildfire crews.

I hope you enjoy reading the following highlights of Forestry's progress as a division, and the wide range of goals achieved by its two bureaus: Resource Protection and Resource Management. These accomplishments would not be possible without the long hours and hard work of staff. Each person's contributions result in significant outcomes with lasting value for future generations.



**LAURA MCCARTHY**  
Division Director  
Forestry Division





## DIVISION OVERVIEW

The Forestry Division is devoted to addressing the critical needs of New Mexico's forests and watersheds by reducing the fuels that increase the dangers of wildland fires, identifying invasive insects that lead to mortality and disease, conserving rare plants, and promoting healthy forests and watersheds for generations to come.

Forestry, headquartered in Santa Fe, supports nine satellite offices across the state, including the Albuquerque Fire Center, six district offices in Bernalillo, Capitan, Chama, Cimarron, Las Vegas and Socorro, the Wildfire Response Program and the Inmate Workcamp Program.

### | DIVISION OVERVIEW

- 43 million acres of wildfire suppression response area
- 24,700,000 acres of forest in New Mexico
- 10,700,000 acres of private forest
- 7,900,000 acres of National Forest
- 46 endangered plant species



Capitan District's N55 firefighters prepare water resources to respond to the Blue 2 Fire near Ruidoso. Photo by: Chris Hansen

*The New Mexico Forestry Division (Forestry) retains lead responsibility for wildland fire management on all non-federal, non-tribal, and non-municipal lands, maintaining fire suppression capacities and emphasizing public and firefighters' safety. Forestry promotes healthy, sustainable forests and watersheds in New Mexico for the benefit of current and future generations.*

## STAFFING

141

Staff Positions

74

Fire Protection, Prevention and Communication

40

Forestry and Natural Resource Management

27

Administration and Services



| STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES

**LAND MANAGEMENT:** Provide technical assistance to landowners across 33 New Mexico counties to improve forest and watershed health by developing resource management plans, providing insect and disease identification, facilitating forest health project funding, providing tree care training and distributing low-cost seedlings.

**WILDFIRE SUPPRESSION:** Respond to and suppress wildfires on 43 million acres of non-municipal, non-federal, and non-tribal land. Proactively mitigate wildfire risk by evaluating communities most at risk to wildfire, developing appropriate management programs, implementing fire prevention projects and managing disease and insect infestations.

**FOREST PRODUCTS:** Regulate the harvest of commercial forest species on private forestland and support the development of a restoration-based forest products industry to use the wood byproducts of forest and watershed treatments.

**CONSERVATION:** Conserve forested ecosystems by improving forest conditions and habitat through active management and acquisition of land and easements for conservation purposes.

**RARE AND ENDANGERED PLANTS:** Protect endangered plants by regulating their collection, maintaining a state list of rare and endangered plants, conducting inventory and research to document the state’s plant diversity; issuing incidental take permits to mitigate the loss of endangered plants.

| STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Implement the science-based, collaboratively developed state Forest Action Plan across ownership and jurisdictional boundaries.
- Recruit and train wildland firefighters across the state to increase response capacity to new wildfires and for staffing of long-duration wildfires.
- Increase the pace and scale of forest restoration projects with cross-boundary planning and contracting to restore as many acres as possible.
- Support the development and upgrading of the New Mexico Reforestation Center to increase the state’s capacity for reforestation efforts both within recent burn-scarred areas, and other locations throughout the state.



Overlooking the vast Chama District from atop the Canones uplift on Canyon Ridge Ranch. Photo by: Jose Carrillo

| LEGISLATION

Despite having a short legislative session in 2024, Forestry came away with two key pieces of legislation that will help firefighters and conservation efforts throughout the state. **Senate Bill 128** gives Forestry’s first responders access to the state public safety enhanced retirement plan. This game-changing initiative allows professional state firefighters, who put their lives at risk on each assignment, access to the same kind of retirement plan that public safety responders receive. From a workforce development perspective, this adds another significant arrow to the quiver of benefits that Forestry can offer recruits who might otherwise seek positions with federal agencies. **Senate Bill 9**, or the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund, directed an investment of \$300 million of additional funding into the fund’s interest-generating account. With a corpus of \$350 million, the annual interest income is projected to provide Forestry’s conservation efforts—through the Forest and Watershed Restoration Act and the Natural Heritage Conservation Act—\$1.4 million each year without the need to draw funds from the principle. Lastly, and of equal importance, the Governor signed **House Bill 1** this summer, which allows funds to be directed to recovery efforts in the Ruidoso and Mescalero areas affected by the devastating South Fork and Salt Fires and the destructive flooding that followed.

| RESOURCE PROTECTION BUREAU

- 8,170 acres burned on state and private land\*
  - 392 wildfires
  - 250 human-caused wildfires
  - 68 wildfires with undetermined cause
  - 74 naturally-caused wildfires
- \*As of 8/15/2024



New Mexico continues to experience hot and dry conditions brought on by climate change. Although this past winter brought a slightly above average snowpack, and the summer monsoons returned, fire response activity stayed consistent, with Federal lands and National Forests experiencing a significant amount of burned acres.

More than 8,170 acres burned in 2024 on state and private land. Human-caused wildfire remains a significant concern, with an estimated 250 wildfires started by people. Sixty-eight fires had an undetermined cause – and these were likely human-started. Seventy-four of these wildfires were confirmed to be naturally caused.

The South Fork and Salt Fires, which started June 17, dominated the headlines and caused massive destruction to the communities of Mescalero and Ruidoso. Over 25,000 acres were burned, more than 1,000 structures were destroyed, over 8,000 people were evacuated, and two people lost their lives. Although the South Fork Fire was found to have been started by lightning, the Salt Fire is suspected to have been human-caused, and an investigation into possible suspects is still on-going. These fires followed just weeks after containment was achieved on the Blue 2 Fire, which burned over 7,000 acres in the Lincoln National Forest, just a few miles north of Ruidoso.

Other major fires in the state began on federal land, including areas within the Gila, Santa Fe, and Cibola National Forests, as well as the El Malpais National Monument. In total, these fires burned approximately 102,000 acres. The maps on the following pages offer more insight into where these and other fires started across New Mexico in 2024.



Mimbres crew digs containment line on a fire assignment in Oregon. Photo by: Stephanie Finch

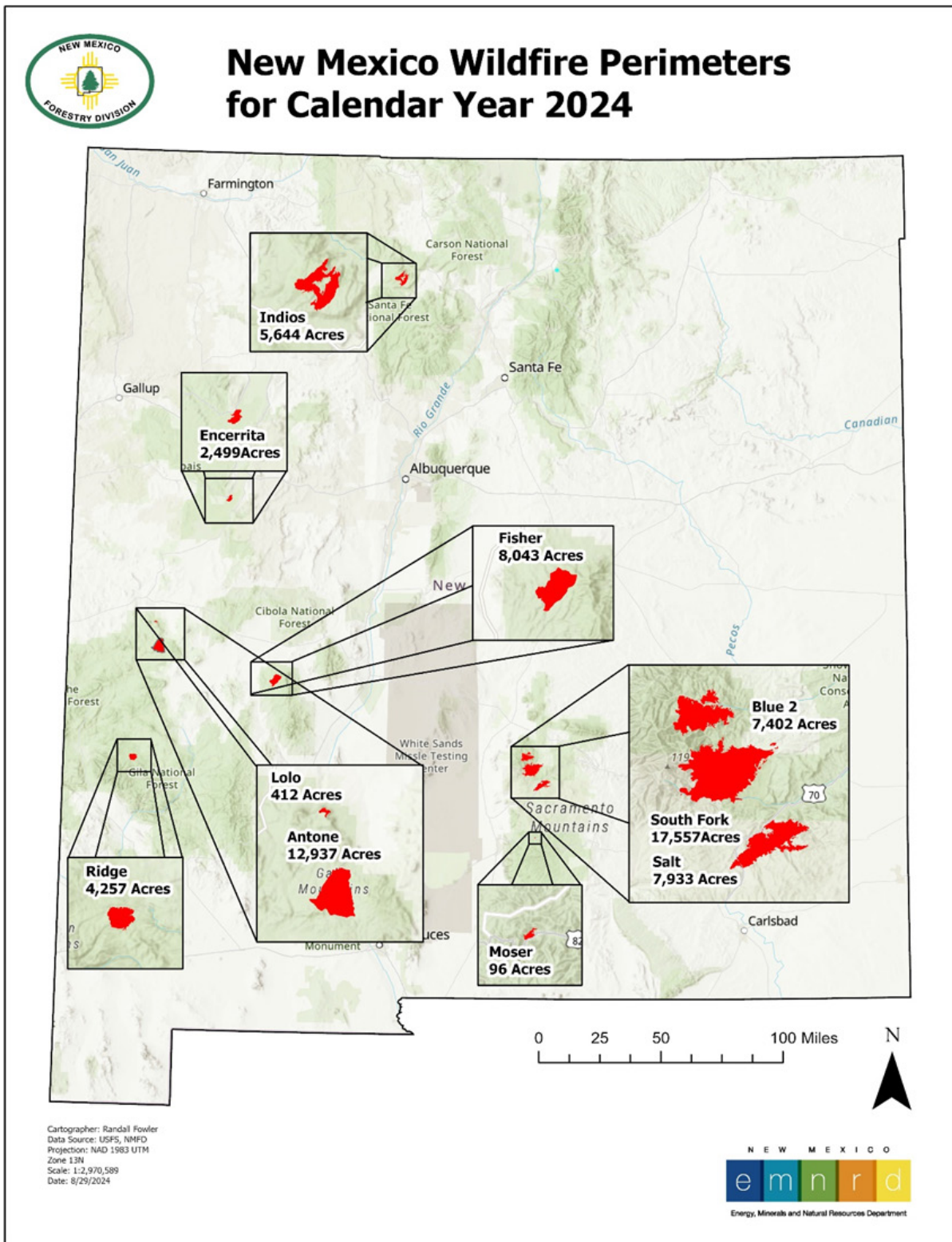


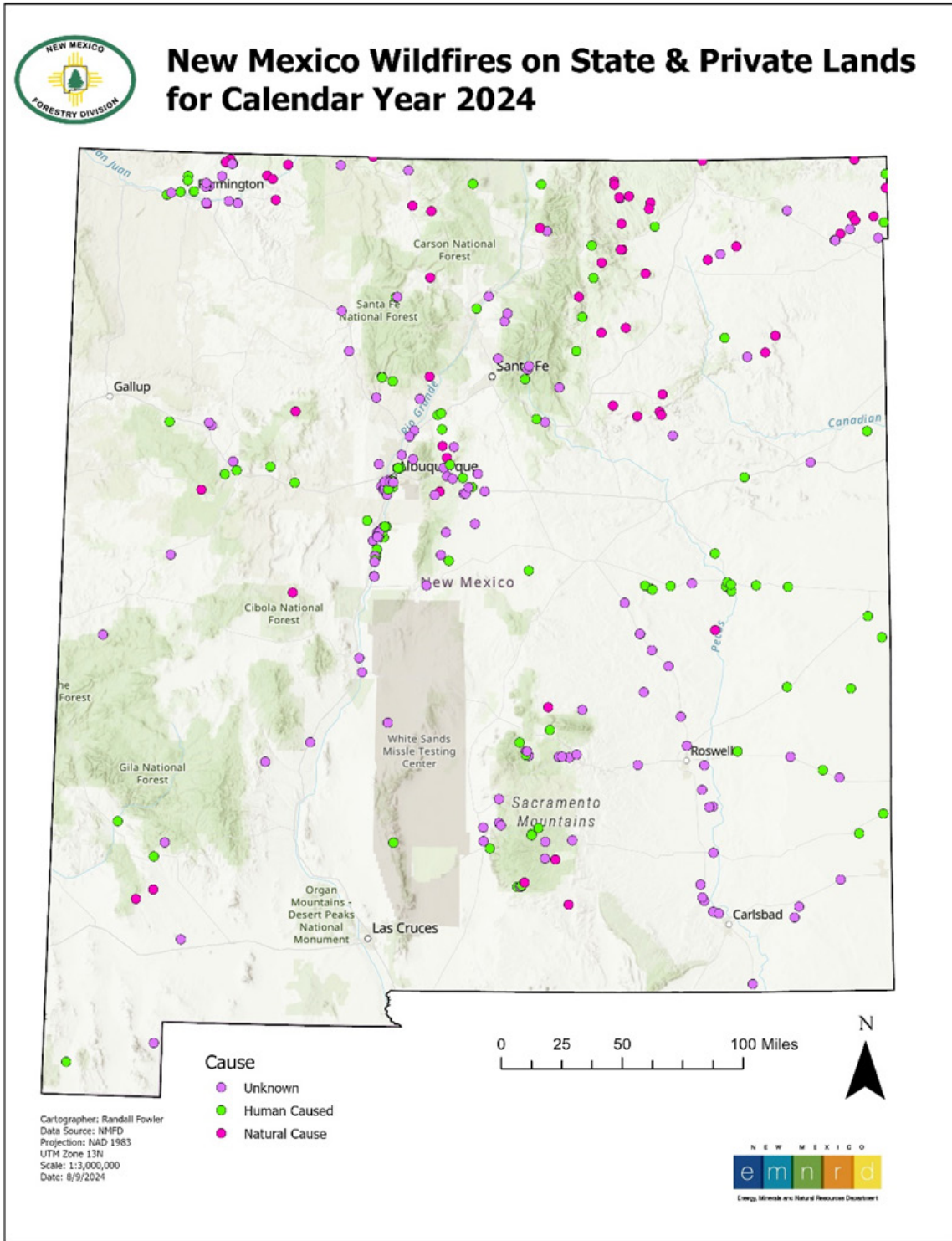
Division fire suppression resources on the Oakmont Fire in Timberon, NM. Photo by: Cody Phillips

**| FIRE TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT**

- 2,434 Firefighters trained
- 62 classes offered
- 35 volunteer fire departments provided with personal protection and firefighting equipment
- 5 wildland fire coordinator positions funded for counties

Forestry trains and hires hundreds of firefighters annually to combat wildfires each year in New Mexico. Entry-level and advanced training is provided free to students with support from state and federal funding. Forestry exceeded its annual training goal of 1,500 wildland firefighters, with 2,434 people trained at 62 classes held statewide. Forestry provided volunteer fire departments with 35 grants for personal protective equipment and funding for five Wildland Fire Coordinator positions in counties across the state. The coordinators assist with creating and implementing Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) and building wildfire response capacity of local volunteers.





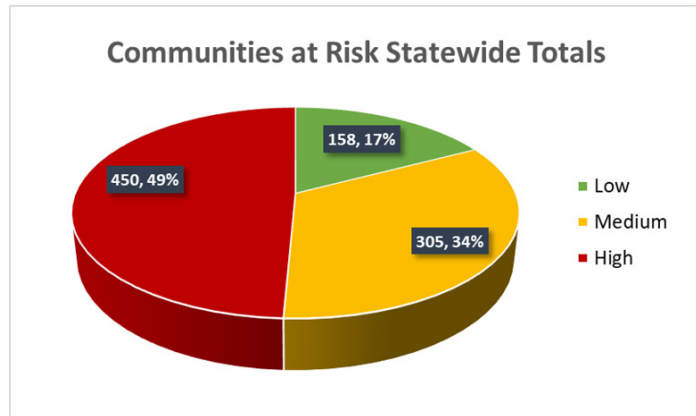
New Mexico Fires Calendar Year 2023



**| FIRE PLANNING TASK FORCE**

- 905 communities at risk
- 65 Community Wildfire Protections Plans (CWPP) completed

The New Mexico Fire Planning Task Force is made up of local, state, federal, and tribal cooperators who assist Forestry in identifying and protecting areas most vulnerable to wildfires. The Task Force meets once per year to approve CWPPs, develop model ordinances and standards for building codes, and consider the benefits of thinning, prescribed burns, and defensible space that can reduce the threat of wildfires to communities. As of December 11, 2023, 905 communities are listed at risk from wildland fire and 65 CWPPs are complete. Of the communities found at risk, 446 are listed as high risk, 303 are listed as medium risk, and 156 are listed as low risk from wildland fire (see pie chart).



**| COMMUNITY WILDFIRE DEFENSE GRANT PROGRAM**

- \$28 million awarded through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act
- 11 federally funded grants awarded to New Mexico organizations
- 16 public workshops

The Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG) program provides competitive grant funding to at-risk communities who wish to develop or revise a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) or who wish to carry out projects described in a CWPP that is less than 10 years old. This CWDG opportunity is authorized through the Infrastructure, Investment, and Jobs Act and provides \$1 billion for this program over a five-year period.

This year, New Mexico had eleven applications selected with \$28 million funded for project work and CWPP updates. Increased public workshops and outreach no doubt contributed to this 154% increase over 2023 awarded funds. Outreach continues for the next grant cycle with offers of technical assistance extended to tribal communities and rural electric co-ops within the state.



Wildfire Response Program staff lead a critical training pumps class for administratively determined firefighters. Photo by: Victor Lujan

**| CERTIFIED PRESCRIBED BURN PROGRAM**

- 9 elements of training created for online viewing
- 2 types of certifications – pile burns and broadcast burns

The Certified Prescribed Burn Program trains contractors and landowners to safely conduct pile burns and prescribed burns on private land, which help reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfires on the specific property and the surrounding community. Participants who receive their certification also are provided with



Chama District staff discuss priority areas and Communities at Risk with a Community Wildfire Protection Plan coordinator. Photo by: Gabe Kohler





protection against double damage claims, should the burns travel off their land. The certification training course can be accessed through Forestry’s website. The training is self-paced; applicants may train for certification in either pile burning, broadcast burning, or both.

The program established a draft model burn plan working group incorporating non-governmental organizations (NGO’s), emergency managers, fire chiefs, private landowners, and state personnel. Two certified burn managers were approved by committee, and the program’s promotional efforts are increasing with public notices, interagency meetings, community meetings, and producing a monthly flier.



Division staff discuss wildfire prevention with tribal collaborators at a community meeting in Chama.

**| WILDFIRE PREVENTION PROGRAM**

- \$69,078 invested by communities to reduce their wildfire risk with Firewise USA™
- 28 Firewise USA™ sites in good standing

The Forestry Division collaborates with local, state, federal, and tribal partners to educate New Mexicans about fire prevention and preparedness using programs such as Fire Adapted Communities (FAC), Ready, Set, Go! (RSG), and Firewise USA™. The flagship Firewise USA national recognition program encourages neighbors to act together to reduce the wildfire risk to their communities. Out of 28 active communities, Idlewild in Colfax County contributed the most significant community investment of volunteer hours and money at a total of \$53,644.

Communities had until the end of 2024 to submit or renew their Firewise USA™ application. In addition to the Firewise program, the monthly newsletter “Wildfire Preparedness Is Year-Round” is produced by Forestry in concert with fire prevention partners Forest Stewards Guild, the FAC Learning Network, and

the communications teams for each National Forest in New Mexico. Topics such as “Ember Awareness,” “Fireworks Safety,” and “Defensible Space,” remind New Mexicans that fire prevention and awareness begins at the personal and community level.



Staff from the Rio Grande crew of the Wildfire Response Program respond to the Battle Mountain Complex fire in Oregon. Photo by: Victor Lujan

**| WILDFIRE RESPONSE PROGRAM**

- 11 task books opened for trainees in multiple positions
- 11 wildland fire assignments completed on state and private lands in the state of New Mexico.
- 30 emergency wildland firefighters hired for the Rio Grande crew and engine crews.

The Wildfire Response Program (WRP) assists and provides a Type 2 Initial Attack crew to help rapidly respond to wildfires throughout the state. The program hires and trains emergency firefighters at the start of fire season to efficiently suppress fires in an adequate and safe manner. Once proper certifications and refreshers have been completed, the crewmembers are provided



work opportunities on the Rio Grande Crew and engine crews. During the 2024 fire season, crews responded to fires throughout the state as well as in the state of Oregon. When fires were not active, WRP staff planned and examined possible prescribed fire units, and assisted firefighters with training in several positions, including Firefighter Type 1, Incident Commander Types 4 and 5, Heavy Equipment Boss, Task Force Leader, and Crew Boss.

Future opportunities include working with the Carson National Forest on assisting with prescribed fires, as well as assisting on the Hermits Peak Calf Canyon burn scar suppression repair efforts. Last November, the program implemented a successful prescribed burn on 115 acres of the Blue Hole Cienega in Santa Rosa to help with regeneration of the state-endangered Pecos sunflower.

## | MIMBRES AND PECOS RIVER HOTSHOT CREWS

- 7 wildfire suppression assignments in New Mexico
- 2 assignments in Oregon
- 26 Crewmembers hired

Forestry's new wildfire crews came on board this summer and made great progress to increase their skills and qualifications. The Mimbres Crew, based in Socorro, and the Pecos River Crew, based in Las Vegas, have bolstered Forestry's capacity to respond to wildfires on state and private land, as well as support federal and tribal partners with fire suppression efforts. While they are not technically hotshots yet, over the next three years, these two crews will learn to function as independent wildland fire suppression units. Their goal is to undergo a review by the National Wildfire Coordination Group and earn certification as official Interagency Hotshot crews. The two crews have assisted on seven fire assignments within New Mexico, and both crews were mobilized for fire suppression efforts within the state of Oregon to assist on the numerous fires that burned there this summer.

## | INMATE WORK CAMP PROGRAM

Forestry's Inmate Work Camp Program (IWC) provides training and work opportunities for minimum-security inmates and contributes to forest health maintenance on public lands in the state. This year, IWC staff joined the Mimbres wildfire crew to fill the state's fire suppression needs. Forestry has put in extensive effort to continue negotiations with the Department of Corrections to have an updated memorandum of understanding and an IWC policy manual in place to continue the program and all the valued work it provides to other governmental agencies.

## | RESOURCE MANAGEMENT BUREAU

- 203,763 acres total with forest stewardship plans in NM
- 5,447 acres in new or revised forest stewardship plans
- 2,600 landowners participated in educational programs
- 586 technical assistance requests completed for landowners
- 9 new forest stewardship plans for private forest landowners



Pecos River crew digs a fire protection line on the Battle Mountain Complex Fire in Oregon. Photo by Adam Wisely.

Forestry works with private landowners and state and federal agencies through the Resource Management Program to improve healthy and resilient forests and watersheds, and to protect land from future development that isolates and fragments forested areas. Forestry administers several incentive programs to place conservation easements on large, contiguous tracts of land.



Kristen Sanders, Las Vegas District, sites a forest stand with NM Highlands University intern as part of the district's annual summer internship program. Photo by: Kristen Sanders



The Forest Stewardship Program also provides technical assistance and manages projects in partnership with sovereign Tribes, Pueblos and Indigenous nations. In 2022, the program supported a variety of projects from tree thinning and timber sales to firewood collection and wetland restoration.

The 2020 New Mexico Forest Action Plan provides Forestry and its partners with a roadmap for managing forests and watersheds to increase resilience to wildfire and other disturbances accelerated by climate change. The Plan’s ten strategies outline the range of actions required to restore forests, manage fire safely and effectively, and coordinate resource management and land conservation with Forestry’s sister agencies and stakeholders statewide.

### | FOREST & WATERSHED HEALTH PROGRAM

- 192 action items in the 2020 Forest Action Plan supporting 10 statewide strategies
- 100% of Forest Action Plan strategies have actions underway
- 80+ agencies and organizations attending the statewide Forest and Watershed Health Coordinating Group
- 20 Pueblos, Tribes, and Nations invited to participate in Coordinating Group meetings

In 2008, Forestry created the Forest and Watershed Health Coordinating Group, an advisory body of partners engaged in restoration with the objective of collaboratively planning, funding, and implementing the best restoration strategies in the right places. These concepts, updated with current knowledge of climate, fire, ecological and social sciences, were integrated into the 2020 New Mexico Forest Action Plan.

In 2024, the Forest and Watershed Health Coordinating Group held an in-person working session to track progress on the implementation of the Forest Action Plan ahead of the 5-year review period. Additionally, the Group held an industry roundtable and a Lincoln National Forest Industry meeting to address concerns with consistency of contractor work in the state. The group identified a need for improved transparency with upcoming work. In response, Forestry has prepared to launch an Active and Planned Project Directory online for contractors and the public to have better access to upcoming project information. Additionally, the US Forest Service has planned to announce stewardship agreements with its 6-month firm and tentative list, which previously only included timber sales. Forestry also filled the new staff position of Forest Markets Coordinator, to act as a forest markets industry liaison.

### | POST-FIRE RECOVERY

- 16 landowner visits to provide reforestation guidance in HPCC burn scar
- 12 post-fire restoration practice plans written for landowners impacted by HPCC
- 5 landowner visits to evaluate bark beetle damage in HPCC burn scar



Division staff measure tree diameters within the Rio Chama Stewards project. Photo by: Jose Carrillo



Mimbres type-2 hand crew assists with sandbags following the South Fork and Salt Fires in Ruidoso. Photo by: Stephanie Finch

The Salt and South Fork Fires in June of 2024 burned at least 1,400 structures, becoming the most des tructive wildfire in New Mexico’s history, and necessitated a robust response from multiple state and federal agencies to aid in post-fire recovery efforts. Forestry, in consultation with the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM), launched a hazard tree program to remove hazardous trees, assist with seeding and mulching activities, and, as funds allow, to utilize other slope stabilization measures to hasten watershed stabilization and reduce downstream impacts to communities across the state. Forestry continues to engage in partner coordination to ensure programs assisting landowners in watershed recovery are



Seedlings before distribution. Photo by: Luciane Coletti

complementary and address gaps as they arise. This has included engaging with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Farm Service Agency to request the Emergency Forest Restoration Program be enacted to restore property damaged by the fire and post-fire floods. The Forestry Division is prepared to provide technical assistance to New Mexico landowners who enroll in this program. In addition, Forestry filled a Burned Area Coordinator position, so that communities impacted by post-fire damage can be served by further coordination efforts.

Simultaneously, Forestry continues to engage in recovery efforts related to 2022’s unprecedented Hermits Peak-Calf Canyon Fire. The Las Vegas District staff continue to meet with impacted landowners and provide guidance on the restoration of their forest lands, including hosting a reforestation workshop this spring that discussed best-management-practices for post-fire recovery to reduce bark beetle impacts and soil erosion. The District also provided guidance on two large reforestation projects totaling 500 acres in the Galinas Canyon. These properties were treated with felling and mastication of standing dead tree, hauling of larger trees off site for milling, seeding with native forbs and grasses, and planting tree seedlings. Forestry launched its first private property hazardous tree removal program, hiring two contractors to coordinate and conduct this work and collecting landowner assistance requests. The contractors have begun site visits and treatments will prioritize removal of trees that threaten public or private roads, utility lines, and other infrastructure.

**| REFORESTATION**

- 24 new seed collection tree climber trainees for fall ‘24 training sessions.
- 150,000 conifer seedlings being grown at the New Mexico Reforestation Center for the USDA Forest Service.
- 125 tree planters trained, with 5000 seedlings planted in the course of these trainings.

Forestry’s Reforestation Coordinator works collaboratively with partners, specifically New Mexico Highlands University, New Mexico State University, and the University of New Mexico to create conditions for planting the right tree in the right place for the anticipated climate in 2100, as well as restoring burned lands to a healthy function for people and the environment.



Division members take a tour of the Mescalero Tribal seedling nursery. Photo by Polly Mullen

The current John T. Harrington Forestry Research Center in Mora was selected as the site of the New Mexico Reforestation Center (NMRC). To help increase seed supply, New Mexico Highlands University (NMHU) hired a Seed Collection Coordinator. The university also is developing a seed processing facility and was expected to offer another tree seed climber training and operational collection event in September of 2024. Additionally, NMHU partnered with American Forests to release an app through which personnel with partner entities, as well as citizen scientists, can upload cone crop observations and locations to improve efficiency of and participation in cone crop scouting. The app went live in July 2024 and is posted on Forestry’s Reforestation webpage.

A 100-acre pilot project on the Hermit’s Peak Calf Canyon burn scar is in progress with planting to take place in the fall. This pilot project will demonstrate the advantages of the most recent science-based reforestation techniques from all university partners. Workshops and training will be on-going to ensure that the state’s reforestation pipeline builds and maintains capacity in the areas of collection, planting and workforce development.



**| NATURAL AND WORKING LANDS**

- 39,754,624 metric tons of carbon estimated to be stored on private lands under Forestry Division jurisdiction
- 4,612,665 metric tons of carbon estimated to be stored on State Trust Lands.

The Natural and Working Lands (NWL) program was established in response to Governor Michelle's Lujan Grisham's Executive Order 2019-003 Addressing Climate Change and Waste Prevention. Forestry received funding through the United States Climate Alliance (USCA) Natural and Working Lands Technical Assistance Fund and United Nations Fund, Inc. (UNF) to partner with the University of Maryland and University of New Mexico to develop carbon monitoring capability and better understanding of carbon storage in New Mexico's natural lands.

The partnership with University of Maryland and the University of New Mexico achieved its first milestone this year with the development a Carbon Monitoring System (CMS) that is trained on New Mexico data and provides cutting-edge estimates of forest carbon for the state. Forestry is continuing to work with partners on the development of the CMS to more accurately detect dead and diseased trees using satellite data. Forestry staff attended the 2024 NASA CMS Science Team Meeting and Applications Workshop in Washington DC to present on how CMS models are used to evaluate impacts of fire, climate change, and forest and watershed restoration efforts on New Mexico's natural and working lands.

The Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund was created in the 2023 Legislative Session, establishing separate expendable and permanent funds designed to support existing conservation programs that foster natural working lands across several state agencies. Forestry programs supported by these funds include the Forest and Watershed Restoration Act program and the Natural Heritage Conservation Act (NHCA). At current fund levels these programs received \$1.4 million per year beginning July 2024. This is the first time NHCA has received an appropriation since it was established, and the first time Forestry has received consistent funding for conservation easements.

**| NATURAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION ACT (NHCA)**

- \$1.4 million allocated annually
- 1 agricultural easement project selected for funding
- 2 new conservation easement project proposals under review

Forestry oversees the Natural Heritage Conservation Act Program. This program funds acquisition of conservation and agricultural easements and land restoration projects. The goal is to protect the land and water available for forests and watersheds, natural areas, wildlife and wildlife habitat, agricultural production on working farms and ranches, outdoor recreation and trails and land, and conduct habitat restoration and management.



Water falls from the Brazos Cliffs near Chama, NM. Photo by Jose Carrillo.

**| 2024 FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM**

- 6,780 acres conserved in the Brazos Cliffs Forest Legacy Project

The Forest Legacy Program is a federal partnership program that supports states' efforts to protect privately owned, environmentally sensitive forest lands. The program encourages and supports the acquisition of conservation easements that restrict development, require sustainable forestry practices, and protect other values in perpetuity. Landowners who own a minimum of 40 acres with at least 75% forested land can receive up to 75% of the appraised land value with a 25% donation.

The Brazos Cliffs Forest Legacy Project closed in June, conserving 6,780 acres from development within the Brazos area of Northern New Mexico. Two new projects are currently being drafted in anticipation of submission for possible funding. One for FY2025 Forest Legacy Program Inflation Reduction Act funding, and the other for FY2026 Forest Legacy Program Land and Water Conservation Act funding.

**| 2024 LAND CONSERVATION INCENTIVES PROGRAM**

- 584,628 acres of forest and rangeland conserved with state tax credits from 2004-2024
- 15,661 acres were conserved with the tax credit program in 2024
- 13 tax credits were issued

Forestry oversees the Land Conservation Investment Program that provides state tax credits for charitable donations of land or an interest in land for conservation purposes to a public or private conservation agency. A taxpayer has a maximum of 20 years to fully use the tax credit following the taxable year in which the donation took place, or the tax credit may be transferred (sold)



**FORESTRY DIVISION LAND CONSERVATION PROGRAM**

	2024	2004 TO PRESENT	
Acres Conserved	15,661	Total Acres Conserved	584,628
Appraised Value	\$7,155,000	Total Appraised Value	\$157,897,844
Tax Credits Issued	\$2,357,327	Total Tax Credits Issued	\$39,011,614

to another taxpayer. In 2024, 13 tax credits were issued ranging from \$55,000 - \$250,000.

**| FOREST AND WATERSHED RESTORATION ACT**

- \$3.4M allocated annually
- Additional \$5M of capital funds were received for FY25
- 13,506 total acres completed with FAWRA funding since Act passage in 2019; utilizing approximately \$5M out of \$8M allocated since 2019
- \$4.6M additional funds have been leveraged on FAWRA projects
- 27 projects underway or completed
- 4 projects continued from prior year to expand the acres treated
- 1 new project selected for funding

The Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund now provides \$1.4 million annually for the Forest & Watershed Restoration Act (FAWRA); this increases the annual recurring funding to approximately \$3.4 million.

The FAWRA Advisory Board met three times in 2024 to review and recommend projects to enhance the adaptability and resilience of New Mexico’s forests and watersheds to climate change and wildfires, improve water quality and support economic activity associated with wood harvest.

Projects recommended for FY25 funding include restoration of approximately 6,000 acres in the state’s largest wildlife management area (WMA), Marquez/L Bar WMA, with an emphasis on meadow restoration. Another project would ensure steady pace and scale for improved ecosystem resilience and wildfire risk reduction in the Santa Fe Fireshed, a 107,000-acre landscape that includes critical infrastructure for several communities, including Pueblo of Tesuque and the City of Santa Fe. The funding will be used to provide required archaeological clearances, thinning and preparing for use of beneficial fire.

Currently, project development exceeds the FAWRA budget resulting in projects being supplemented with other funding sources. The needs for this program in New Mexico are vast and the additional funds secured through the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund will accelerate our ability to meet long term restoration funding needs.

**| FOREST HEALTH PROGRAM**

- 33,000 acres with bark beetle-killed trees in New Mexico.
- 224,000 acres with defoliation.
- 14 private landowners provided cost-share grants, totaling 9,709 acres of stewardship planning and 287 acres of forest health treatments.

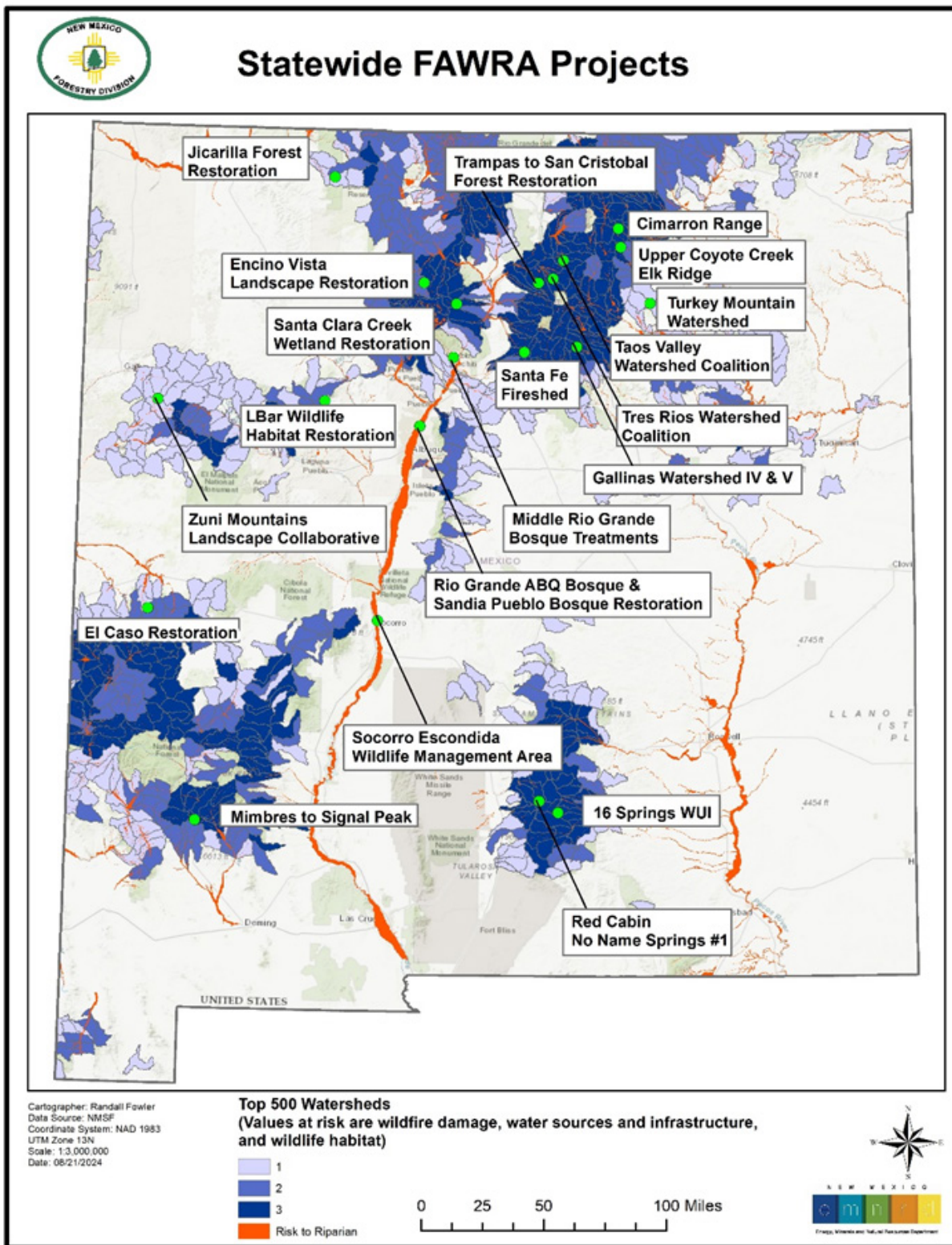
The Cooperative Forest Health Program delivers technical assistance and grant funding to landowners and managers to increase forest resilience to harmful insects and diseases. The program provides trainings, field visits, and education events that increase knowledge about native and invasive insect and disease outbreaks and improve management practices. Federal cost-share funding is administered to private landowners to improve forest resilience against bark beetles and other insects and diseases.

This year, extensive bark beetle-related mortality of ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir near burn scars throughout the state were observed and recorded from both ground and aerial surveys. Severe pinon defoliation caused by pinyon needle scale was severe in the areas east of Cloudcroft, Ruidoso, and in the Gila region. Douglas-fir tussock moth outbreaks were observed in Northern New Mexico near Taos, Santa Fe, Glorieta, Sandia Mountains, and Jemez Mountains, causing severe defoliation of



Left: Douglas-fir tussock moth defoliation of white fir at Hyde Memorial State Park.

Right: Trees killed by bark beetles near Gascon, NM by Hermits Peak Calf Canyon burn scar. Photos by: Victor Lucero





mixed conifer species. Western spruce budworm continues to be the primary defoliating pest of Douglas-fir, true firs, and spruce. The Tamarisk leaf beetle has caused widespread defoliation of salt cedar in riparian areas throughout much of New Mexico. Severe defoliation has occurred along the middle Rio Grande and Rio Puerco corridors.



Flowering *Hexalectris arizonica* (state endangered) individual at the new occurrence on private land in Cedar Crest, NM. Photo by: Marty Purdy.

**| BOTANY & ENDANGERED PLANT PROGRAM**

- 46 plants listed as state endangered
- 15 plants federally listed as endangered or threatened
- 25 Minimal Impact Exploration or Surface Disturbance Permit Applications or other project development reviewed
- 15 state endangered plants visited for monitoring or surveying
- 6 incidental take permits issued; 5 permits for Plant Collection or Scientific Study

Forestry’s Botany and Endangered Plant Program maintains and updates the New Mexico Endangered Plant Species List, gathers information on the status and distribution of rare plants, and develops conservation measures necessary for the survival of rare and endangered plants.

This year, Botany program staff located additional Zuni Fleabane (*Erigeron rhizomatous*) plants. These new populations are a significant western range extension from what was previously known for this federally listed and state endangered species. With the help of citizen scientists and a private landowner, a new

occurrence of the state endangered Arizona crested coralroot orchid (*Hexalectris arizonica*) was documented on private land in Bernalillo County. This occurrence represents a 150-mile northern range extension for the species and its first documentation in the county.

In 2023, data from long-term monitoring and survey efforts for seven federally listed and state endangered species found and reinforced declining trends for some species (e.g., Mancos milkvetch and Sacramento Mountains thistle), while other species’ trends improved. Holy Ghost ipomopsis (*Ipomopsis sancti-spiritus*), for instance, had the highest total number of plants recorded in transects since monitoring began in 2003. Major threats found to be impacting endangered plant species include drought, climate change, water diversions, degradation of natural wetlands, cattle grazing, and expansion of oil and gas and other energy projects. New funding was awarded by the US Fish & Wildlife Service for further monitoring of state and federally endangered species in 2024.

The State Botanist organized and hosted a meeting of the Rare Plant Technical Council to discuss collaborative efforts to improve rare plant conservation in New Mexico with partners from federal agencies, non-profits, universities and private citizens. The State Botanist is the chair of the Council and is responsible for the content on the New Mexico Rare Plants website and the listing of rare plants.

**| INVASIVE PLANT PROGRAM**

- 3 grants from 2022 have been successfully completed and closed out
- \$184,419 in active and current contracted grants with 8 entities
- 1 site visit and 6 progress check-ins completed and 2 check-ins awaiting reply

Forestry accepts grant applications for invasive plant management projects year-round. The U.S. Department of Agriculture regularly provides funds specifically to address areas where invasive plants threaten forested acres. If other federal money is not involved, eligible applicants can be non-federal governmental entities, including Tribes. Successful applicants are required to provide 1:1 matching funds.

Last year, processing and tracking methods for future Invasive Plant program applications were transferred to a new platform through the website Submittable. A new partnership with the New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) has been established to help potential applicants with raising matching funds for this program. NMDA has new funding for Noxious Weed projects and has set some funding aside for entities to apply for match assistance to meet the Invasive Plant Program 1:1 match requirement.





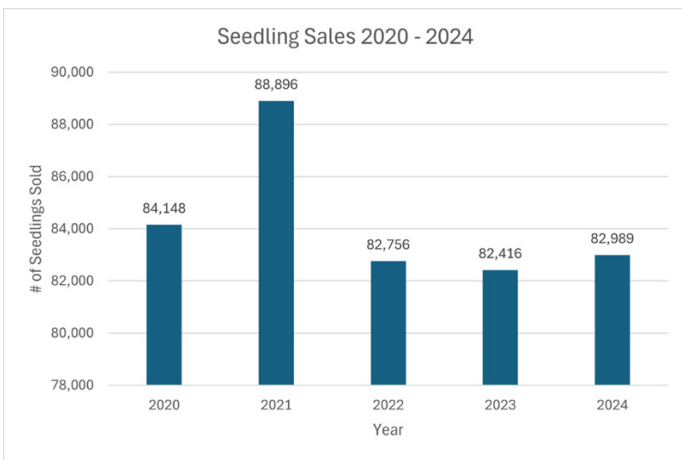
**| CONSERVATION SEEDLING PROGRAM**

- 82,989 seedlings sold
- 10,000 seedlings sold to Tribal organizations

Forestry’s Conservation Seedling Program provides economically priced tree and shrub seedlings to landowners who own one acre or more of land in New Mexico. Through the program, tens of thousands of seedlings are planted each year for the establishment of windbreaks, erosion control, reforestation, crop and livestock protection, improvement or creation of wildlife habitat.

Seedling sales continued at a rapid rate from the Santa Fe treehouse, though seedling availability was limited during the fall season due to a lack of greenhouse space at the John T. Harrington Forestry Research Center. Approximately 10,000 seedlings of Ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir were sold to Trees, Water and People to be planted on the Jemez and Cochiti Pueblos.

Seedlings continued to be sold to many landowners who suffered loss of forest due to the Hermits Peak and Calf Canyon fire, Cerro Pelado fire and the recent South Fork fire. Sales numbers reflect data as of October 2024.



**URBAN & COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROGRAM**

- \$1,500,000 Inflation Reduction Act funding awarded for tree planting projects in New Mexico
- \$112,616 grant funding distributed for training, planting, inventories and tree management
- 6,000 volunteer hours logged in support of urban forestry initiatives
- 116 communities with ordinances or policies protecting urban trees
- 86 communities with active community tree advisory boards or advocacy organizations
- 9 communities recognized for Tree City USA by the Arbor Day Foundation
- 2 universities recognized as Tree Campuses by Arbor Day Foundation



Socorro District staff planting 64 trees in Magdalena, NM with the Tree New Mexico organization. Photo by Sarah Baldonado.

More than half of New Mexico’s population lives in a community that manages or is developing an urban or community forest program. Forestry supports these communities’ efforts to develop and sustain healthy resilient community forests for the benefit of current and future citizens because the forests have significant, positive impacts on quality of life. The trees in urban and community forests improve the air, soil, and water, mitigate stormwater runoff, enhance energy conservation and property values, and contribute to human health and well-being.

Forestry provides technical assistance because the trees in urban and community forests are challenged by inhospitable environments, lack of strategic care, drought, climate change, urban heat island effects, the concentration of air pollutants, and lack of management or planning. Forestry provided more than 100 technical assists in 2024.

The Urban and Community Forestry Program is guided by the 2020 Forest Action Plan and the advisement of the New Mexico Urban Forest Council. The program established partnerships by serving on the Urban Waters Steering Committee Board, Arid LID Coalition Board, Let’s Plant Albuquerque Board, Think Trees Board, Western Urban and Community Forestry Co-Chair position, Arbor Day Foundation’s Tree City Strategic Planning Working Group, and



A member of the Pueblo of Acoma shares stories about a thinning project on Acoma land for the Tribal Forestry and Fire Working Group. Photo by: Natalia Shaw

International Society of Arboriculture's Rocky Mountain Chapter New Mexico Director position. More than 100 organizations participated in the Urban Forestry Advisory Council.

**| 2024 TRIBAL PARTNERSHIPS**

- 1700 acres of thinning planned for Durfee-Bolander Wildlife Habitat & Stand Improvement project in conjunction with a timber crew contracted from Alamo Navajo
- 1250 acres planned for an RX (prescribed) burn and 500 acres planned for thinning on Santa Clara Pueblo.
- 33 acres treated on Sandia Pueblo using prescribed goat grazing
- 19 incidents assisted by Cochiti Lake Fire Department; 12 incidents in which their type 6 engine was mobilized.
- 28 fires in-state assisted by Zuni Pueblo Administratively Determined (ADs)-Emergency Hire wildland firefighters; 1 fire in Oregon.
- 6 individuals hired from Alamo Navajo onto the Mimbres fire crew.
- 9 tribes consistently attending the Forestry Tribal Working Group

Forestry actively collaborates with Tribes and has a designated Tribal Liaison who serves as the focal point for Division- wide initiatives and communication with Tribes. A new position, Tribal Resource & Restoration Coordinator, was created and will support the Tribal Liaison in outreach and engagement, and assistance with developing additional projects with tribal partners. This position also coordinates with the Tribal Forestry and Fire Working Group in partnership with the Forest Stewards Guild.

A reforestation project with Jemez Pueblo calls for 4,000-6,000 mixed conifer trees to be planted across 20-40 acres of culturally important area. This project also includes hazardous fuels reduction treatments, along with seed collection and area monitoring for the project's duration. Hazardous fuels reduction will begin on 2 acres during the of fall 2024 which will also assist in site preparation for future planting efforts. Invasive species thinning projects are ongoing in the Sandia Pueblo bosque area using goat grazing focused on area burned in 2012's Romero Fire. More than 33 acres were treated. On the lands of Santa Clara Pueblo, a combined prescribed burning and thinning project was scheduled to begin in late 2024; 1250 acres were slated to be treated by prescribed burn and an additional 500-600 acres thinned.

Forestry has deployed Tribal fire crews on fires across the state and one fire out of state. As part of the Resource Mobilization Plan (RMP) the town of Cochiti Lake's fire department was mobilized on 16 incidents, including 12 incidents in which the town's type-6 engine was mobilized. Six emergency hire firefighters from Zuni Pueblo were mobilized on 28 fires in-state and the Battle Mountain complex in Oregon. Six individuals from Alamo Navajo are part of the nearly formed wildland fire crew in the Socorro District. A timber crew was hired from Alamo Navajo to assist with the off-reservation Durfee Bolander thinning treatment project.

Forestry developed a Cultural Connections training program to complement the State Personnel Office's Building Cultural Equity with Tribal Nations effort. This Forestry-specific training covers the State-Tribal Collaboration Act, New Mexico tribes and their unique history, cultural customs and other information specific to New Mexico tribes and how these dynamics interplay with consultation, communication and collaboration between the Forestry Division and tribal nations.

Forestry combined its efforts on the Tribal Working Group to create the Tribal Forestry and Fire Working Group in collaboration with the Forest Stewards Guild. This group will continue to provide a forum for tribes, state, federal and other agencies to communicate regularly. The group discusses state-wide natural resource planning and implementation of prescribed and cultural burns, and forest and watershed management efforts where tribal entities can share knowledge across boundaries.

**| SMOKEY BEAR HISTORICAL PARK**

- 20,627 visitors to Smokey Bear Historical Park in FY24
- 194 Smokey Bear Historical Park Junior Ranger Program participants
- \$11,600 in grant funding awarded
- \$10,010 worth of free advertising donated

Smokey bear Historical Park was built in 1976 to honor an American black bear cub rescued from the Capitan Gap Fire in 1950. The cub became the living symbol of the Smokey Bear Cooperative Forest Fire Prevention program, which continues to educate the public nearly 80 years later. Today, visitors come from all over to visit Smokey's gravesite, learn about his story, forest health, fire ecology, restoration, and the history of fire prevention.

The park hosted a number of Special Events in 2024, including the Yeti Trail Run packet pickup, Rudy Wendelin Smokey Bear art exhibit, and Smokey Bear's 80th birthday open house. Additional public outreach included Smokey Bear Days, and a 4th of July event, which attracted a combined 5,000 people to the Village of Capitan. Both events included cooperative wildfire prevention messaging from the Park staff and the Smokey Bear Ranger District prevention staff of the Lincoln National Forest. Additional "off-campus" education programs were offered at the Dragonfly Festival in Roswell, the NM Balloon Museum in Albuquerque, and Ft. Lone Tree Bible Camp for Special Needs youth and families. Non-profit support groups, including the

South-central Mountain Resource Conservation and Development, the Capitan Public Library, and the Smokey Bear's Hometown Association, were awarded grant funds to support the Park with exhibits, publications, landscaping materials, and items to distribute at Park events totaling approximately \$11,600. In addition, the Lindmark Companies provided approximately \$10,010 worth of free digital advertising on wildfire prevention and events at the Park.

The Fallen Wildland Firefighters Memorial, installed in 2019, honors those who lost their lives fighting wildfires in New Mexico. For the second consecutive year, a commemorative event honoring firefighters fallen in the line of duty was held on Memorial Day. Thirty-four family members and friends of the fallen attended the 2024 event.



Smokey Bear visits the Smokey Bear Stampede Rodeo on the 4th of July in Capitan, NM. Photo by: Mary Lavin



# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

The mission of the Mining and Minerals Division at EMNRD is to ensure the responsible use, conservation, reclamation, and safeguarding of land and resources affected by mining.

This past year, MMD welcomed EMNRD's new Cabinet Secretary Designate, Melanie Kenderdine, to her new role. Secretary Kenderdine holds extensive expertise in developing initiatives for researching and developing transformational clean energy policies, energy security policies, and policies for electric grid infrastructure modernization. She is keenly aware of the role that New Mexico's mineral resources can play in all of those policy areas and recognizes the importance of the American mining industry in our growing and changing economy. She has long advocated for strong policies to protect American supply chains for key metals and minerals, and she supports developing and enhancing our domestic supply chain of mining products.

The Secretary often points out that the push towards renewable energy and electric vehicles requires significant amounts of copper, for example. New Mexico's deposits of copper play a significant role in meeting this increasing demand and positions the state as a key player in the global transition to a sustainable energy future.

In addition, the Secretary is also focused on critical minerals that are building blocks for the green and digital economy. Wind turbines, for example, need manganese, platinum and rare earth magnets. Electric vehicles require batteries made with lithium, cobalt & nickel. It is therefore important for New Mexico to continue being part of a resilient minerals value chain that adheres to the highest environmental and social standards.

The Secretary is committed to supporting industry participation in voluntary sustainability initiatives like Copper Mark, or the Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance, among others. EMNRD is committed to playing our part in realizing the potential of New Mexico's mineral resources in a way that benefits stakeholders throughout New Mexico. MMD looks forward to working with Secretary Kenderdine in 2025 to foster a vibrant, sustainable, and responsible mining industry in New Mexico.

In 2024, MMD's Abandoned Mine Lands Program (AMLPL) used federal funding to safeguard and remediate the many hazardous abandoned mine features across New Mexico. AMLPL's accomplishments drew national recognition, winning this year's national Small Project Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Award given out by the federal Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement. The recent passage of the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law has been beneficial for AMLPL and New Mexico because it provides an additional \$2.4M/year for AMLPL to safeguard and beautify our state.

MMD's Coal Mine Reclamation Program implements Title V of the federal Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act within New Mexico to ensure that coal mining operations are conducted in an environmentally responsible manner and that the land is adequately reclaimed during and following the mining process. In the past year, CMRP processed bond release applications for various sections of land under reclamation at El Segundo, San Juan, La Plata, and Lee Ranch Mines. CMRP has also secured a contract with an outside environmental consultant to complete an independent study of the San Juan Coal Mine, as requested by the Legislature.

MMD's Mining Act Reclamation Program (MARPL) regulates hardrock mines on all non-tribal lands within New Mexico. Hardrock mines are all mines except for coal, potash, and construction aggregate mines. MARPL reviews and approves reclamation plans, approves cost estimates for reclamation, and collects and maintains sufficient financial assurance to pay for reclamation if needed. MARPL currently oversees over \$1.1 billion in financial assurance to ensure reclamation.

In the past year, MARPL has seen an uptick in exploration activities, including exploration for lithium and copper near Lordsburg, exploration for silver and gold near Mogollon, and an increase in placer gold mining near Chloride. The MARPL uranium coordinator position continues to assist MARPL to address difficult issues around remediation and reclamation of historic uranium mining waste.

Finally, the MRRSP Program gathers and compiles comprehensive information on mineral resources, mine registrations, reclamation, and other MMD activities related to New Mexico's mineral extraction industry and mineral resources. 2024 was a busy and productive year for New Mexico's Mining and Minerals Division, and we look forward to continuing to build on the Division's successes in 2025.



**ALBERT C.S. CHANG**  
Division Director  
Mining and Minerals Division





STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Ensuring responsible mine reclamation by restoring lands back to beneficial use
- Protecting the public from physical and environmental hazards of abandoned mines
- Developing proactive mining and mine reclamation initiatives to ensure reclamation and safeguarding of mine sites
- Providing annual operator-reported information for New Mexico mines on mineral production, production value, employment, payroll, and revenue.

*The Mining and Minerals Division’s mission is to ensure the responsible utilization, conservation, reclamation, and safeguarding of land and resources affected by mining. By statute, MMD enforces and administers laws and regulations relating to mine safety, coal surface mine reclamation, and abandoned mine lands reclamation, and annually collects statistical information from mine operators related to mineral extraction.*

STAFFING

3

Office of the Director

15

Abandoned Mine Land Program

5

Coal Mine Reclamation Program

1

Mine Registration, Reporting and Safeguarding Program

9

Mining Act Reclamation Program

PROGRAMS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

| OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

Formulates division resource development, policy, planning, and administrative and fiscal management. The Director administers laws and regulations pertaining to hardrock and coal mining, mine registration and safeguarding, and annual industry reporting. The Director represents New Mexico on the Interstate Mining Compact Commission and is an ex-officio member of the New Mexico Mining Safety Board.

ABANDONED MINE LAND PROGRAM

The AMLP works to identify and abate dangerous abandoned mines areas across the state. MMD estimates that more than 15,000 hazardous mine openings remain un-reclaimed throughout New Mexico. AMLP has started a comprehensive inventory of both coal and non-coal legacy mines in New Mexico, which will firm up the above estimated number of mine openings and better assess threats.

The U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) is AMLP’s primary source of funding through the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA). The law authorizing a fee on coal production to pay for reclamation work at abandoned mines expired on September 30, 2021. As part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021, the fee collection authority was reauthorized for 13 more years at a 20 percent lower rate. In addition, a one-time infusion



of \$11.3 billion was included for distribution to states and tribes based on historical coal production over 15 years. New Mexico's portion of this distribution is estimated to be \$2.4 million per year for coal reclamation work above and beyond the money received from the fee on coal production. In addition to OSMRE funding, the Program receives grants from the Bureau of Land Management to safeguard abandoned hardrock mines.

Since AMLP is federally funded, all project expenditures must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Due to this requirement, AMLP, at any given time, has multiple projects in various stages of development, including obtaining landowner access permission, conducting archaeological and biological surveys, obtaining state and federal permits, and holding public meetings. AMLP develops engineering designs by working in coordination with the NEPA process. This year AMLP completed Environmental Assessments and Categorical Exclusions to abate mine hazards, including coal fire and subsidence issues in Raton (Yankee Mines) and Madrid (Madrid Stormwater Erosion Control Project). AMLP staff also is working to complete EAs for the Red Hill (Caballo Mountains) and Capitol Dome Mine (Florida Mountains) Safeguarding Projects, and a Categorical Exclusion for the La Ventana maintenance project near Cuba.



New Mexico Abandoned Mine Land Program staff accepting the Small Project Award from OSMRE Principal Deputy Director Sharon Buccino (Left to right: Lloyd Moiola, Matt Peralta, Sharon Buccino, Mike Tompson)

AMLP was awarded the 2024 Small Project Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Award from the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement. This award recognized the Tin Pan Canyon Gob Reclamation Project located near Raton, New Mexico. The project was developed to stabilize steep slopes on two coal gob piles, approximately two acres in size, that had been contributing gob sediment to an adjacent ephemeral channel and to abate a head cut in the gob that was threatening the canyon access road. The construction work was carried out at the height of the COVID health emergency in 2020-2021. The award was presented to the AMLP team at the 2024 National Association of Abandoned Mine Land Programs Annual Conference held in Davis, West Virginia, in September.

## COAL MINE RECLAMATION PROGRAM

The CMRP enforces regulations and inspects all coal mines on federal, state, and private lands within New Mexico, excluding Indian lands. CMRP's mandate is to protect the public, adjacent landowners, and the environment from the effects of coal mining.

CMRP oversees 65,000 acres of permitted mine lands and \$277 million in financial assurance to ensure that these mines will be properly reclaimed. New Mexico has 100 percent third-party surety bonds for all five actively permitted coal mines, two of which are in complete reclamation.

Westmoreland San Juan Mining LLC, San Juan Underground Mine officially stopped mining coal in September 2022. Peabody's Lee Ranch Surface Mine and El Segundo Surface Mine are currently extracting coal, while Chevron's McKinley Mine, along



El Segundo Mine Active Reclamation 2024



El Segundo Mine Active Reclamation 2024



with Westmoreland San Juan Mining LLC’s La Plata Mine, are in reclamation.



McKinley Coal Mine reclamation vegetation, 2024

Evaluation of bond release applications continues to be a significant part of CMRP’s workload. Bond release occurs in stages throughout the life of a mine. A coal operator is eligible for Phase I partial bond release as the affected lands are backfilled, regraded and drainage control has been established in accordance with the approved reclamation plan. Lands are eligible for Phase II and Phase III releases upon successful establishment of revegetation (Phase II) and after the minimum 10-year liability period and successful demonstration of the reclamation’s capability to support post-mining land use (Phase III).

All current bond release applications are posted and available to the public on MMD’s website at (<https://www.emnrd.nm.gov/mmd/public-notices/>).

San Juan Mine submitted its 2024 permit renewal and bond estimate applications. MMD reviewed and approved the San Juan permit renewal.



McKinley Coal Mine, 1999

## MINE REGISTRATION, REPORTING AND SAFEGUARDING PROGRAM

This program provides comprehensive information on mineral resources, mine registration, reclamation, and safeguarding efforts, and other MMD activities related to New Mexico’s mineral extraction industry and mineral resources. Decision-makers throughout New Mexico benefit from the valuable information compiled and disseminated through this program. Mining sector information reported by more than 150 operators for calendar year 2023 (latest information available) is provided in the Mineral Resources section of this report.

MMD provides public online web applications to enhance transparency and outreach and provides daily updated information for New Mexico mines. MMD Online links to the Mine Registrations and Permits web application which allows users to search by an individual parameter, or a multitude of combinations, with results exportable to Excel or to an Earth browser such as Google. (By statute, production information is held confidential.) The other link from the MMD Online web application page, Coal Mines Query, provides more extensive coal mine information including coal geology and quality, notices of violation, and water quality. Additional web applications are linked from the Mining Data and Statistics page including Registered Mines Web Map, Map Gallery, Abandoned Mine Land Program Story Map Journal, and the Legacy Uranium Dashboard.

In 2019, New Mexico enacted House Bill 651 to enhance the sharing, integration, and accessibility of water data. The act mandates the creation and maintenance of a comprehensive water data platform that integrates data from various state agencies, making it publicly accessible for better decision-making and resource management. The New Mexico Water Data Initiative (WDI), a key component of the act, aims to develop this integrated water data platform. As part of this initiative, EMNRD has developed the Water Data Act API project. This project is creating tools—application programming interfaces (API)—that make it easier for agencies to share water-related information across their varied information technology platforms.

### | EXCELLENCE IN RECLAMATION AWARDS

The Excellence in Reclamation Awards are another important outreach program. Instituted in 1996, this program celebrates excellence and innovation in coal, hardrock and aggregate mine



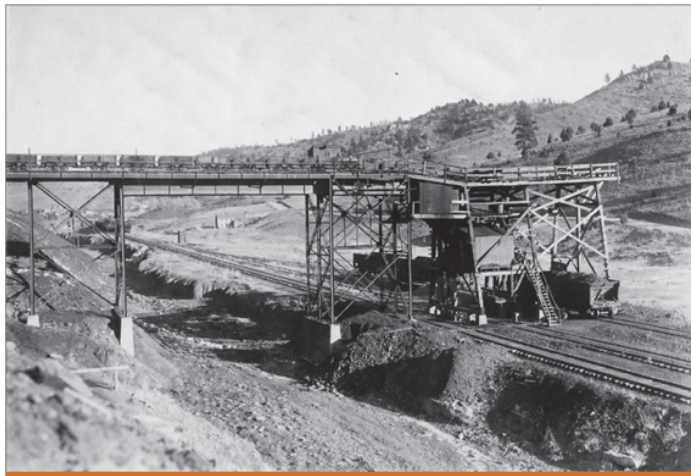


reclamation, abandoned mine land reclamation projects, and other related efforts or initiatives deserving special recognition. The awards are presented annually at the New Mexico Mining Association's convention.

The 2024 Excellence in Reclamation awards were presented in August for mine reclamation work deserving special attention. The "Dutchman Canyon Maintenance and Stream Restoration AML Reclamation Project" was recognized as a collaborative project between designer and contractor improving a stream channel affected by an abandoned coal mine.

Oxbow Ecological Engineering was recognized for creating an exceptional engineering design to restore a stream channel affected by historic coal mining. Sweatt Construction, Inc. was acknowledged for utilizing innovative construction techniques at a challenging site while implementing the plan.

The Dutchman Canyon Maintenance and Stream Restoration AML project is located within the Vermejo Park Ranch, approximately 4.5 miles northwest of Raton, in Colfax County. The project site was a coal mine that produced coal between the 1860s and the 1950s.



Dutchman Canyon coal mine that produced coal between the 1860s and the 1950s.

In 2012, the New Mexico Abandoned Mine Land Program undertook a project to reclaim the mine. Large earth-moving equipment buried the gob pile in areas up and down the stream channel. Nearly 200,000 cubic yards of coal gob were moved and buried with two feet of clean cover material. The stream was recontoured into a winding route, and the buried gob and clean soil cap contoured into a geomorphic surface that blended in with the natural topography.

In 2013, a major storm damaged the work done within the channel at this site. The storm walloped newly planted seedlings before they could take root and keep the soil from eroding. The storm also undercut the geotextile fabric that was supposed to protect the



Heavy equipment at Dutchman Canyon coal mine burying the gob pile near the stream channel



2012 photo shows the stream recontoured into a winding route, and the buried gob and clean soil cap contoured into a geomorphic surface that blended in with the natural topography.

stream banks from erosion. As time went by, the stream channel continued to cut into the banks and threatened to continue eroding until the buried coal gob material underneath became exposed. Therefore, in 2019, Oxbow Ecological Engineering LLC of Flagstaff Arizona joined this project and designed a solution for the erosion issues to provide long-term stability for the stream channel.

George Cathey at Oxbow Ecological Engineering designed rock structures for each portion of the stream channel and placed them on a map for a construction contractor to build. Oxbow also created plans to move the stream flow away from the eroding banks and allow the water to deposit sediment by slowing it down in designated areas. Those areas would then grow vegetation and not be adversely affected during high river flow events.



Damage caused by storm in 2013



Large boulders were brought in as part of the design structures to slow the water down.



Erosion caused the coal gob material underneath to become exposed



Construction of a cross-vane rock structure at the site, which is an engineered feature designed to create a pool, & slow water flow in the stream channel and prevent erosion.

Sweatt Construction Inc. of Artesia, NM, provided the construction services including earthwork, stream and upland stabilization structures, planting reclamation vegetation, seeding, and mulching. Before construction activities began, fish were moved from small pools to an unaffected area upriver. Large boulders were brought in as part of the design structures to slow the water down. The heavy equipment had very little room to work and maneuver at this project site. Therefore, heavy equipment guided by Global Positioning Systems had to be employed to ensure the construction was done with the necessary precision. Because this area was a historic coal mining community, there are historic cultural resources that also needed to be protected. The contractor took great care to avoid these archaeologically important areas.

Oxbow Ecological Engineering and Sweatt Construction did an excellent job with this project under particularly difficult conditions. This project was completed during the height of the COVID pandemic's most stringent social distancing restrictions, much of it during the middle of winter, which was exceptionally challenging. Reclamation projects that return mined lands back into thriving ecosystems are critical to this industry's social license to operate.



Photos were taken from the same vantage point before and after the project took place. Notice the increase in vegetation. The photo on the right shows wetland plugs planted in the stream channel.



Cabinet Secretary Designate Kenderdine presenting Excellence in Reclamation Awards to George Cathey of Oxbow Ecological Engineering, LLC and Brad Larson of Sweatt Construction Inc.

## MINING ACT RECLAMATION PROGRAM

MARP regulates and inspects all hardrock mines on federal, state, and private lands within New Mexico. MARP oversees the reclamation of all mining and exploration activities, excluding coal, potash, and aggregate mines. As of the end of 2022 (the latest data available due to operator reporting requirements), MARP has permitted approximately 682 mining and exploration projects and holds more than \$1.05 billion in financial assurance for active mines and mines in reclamation. The overall disturbed acreage under permit with MARP is approximately 26,903 acres as of December 2022. Since its 1994 inception the program has reclaimed approximately 7,609 acres. MARP permits and regulates new mining operations, exploration projects, and existing mining operations (both active and reclaimed).

### | PROPOSED NEW MINING OPERATIONS AND EXPLORATION PROJECTS

MARP staff continued review of two large-scale permit applications under Part 6 (New Mining Operations) of the New Mexico Mining Act: one uranium mine, Laramide Resources' La Jara Mesa Mine in Cibola County; and one copper mine, New Mexico Copper Corporation's (NMCC) Copper Flat Mine in Sierra County. The La Jara Mesa Mine project remains in the early stages of permit development as the federal government is conducting an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) evaluation and state permits are under review. Other proposed new projects are the Roca Honda Mine in McKinley County, the Summa Silver Mogollon Exploration Project in Catron County, and the Cibola Resources Cebolleta Exploration project in Cibola County.

### | COPPER FLAT MINE

New Mexico Copper Corporation (NMCC) proposed a new regular copper mine in Sierra County near Hillsboro in 2010. The mine is proposed to be an open-pit, truck and shovel operation with onsite processing facilities including crushing, milling, floatation concentration, and tailing deposition. The mine is projected to have a 12-year mine life at a proposed processing rate of 30,000 tons of ore per day. After issuance of the Final EIS in April 2019, a Record of Decision approving the 30,000 ton per day alternative was issued by the BLM in August 2019. To operate and reclaim the mine, NMCC must secure approximately 6,100 acre-feet of groundwater rights and approximately 16,382 acre-feet of surface water rights to offset anticipated depletion of water from the Rio Grande/Caballo system. NMCC's vested water rights portfolio for the Copper Flat Mine is currently less than that required to operate and reclaim the mine, although litigation is ongoing. MMD will evaluate the mining permit upon NMCC's demonstration that the total water rights required have been secured and upon NMCC providing financial assurance for reclamation of the mine.

### | LA JARA MESA MINE

After many years of dormancy, Laramide Resources Inc., approached the US Forest Service (USFS) and MMD to reinstate the permitting process to mine uranium in the Grants Mineral Belt. The original permit application was submitted in June 2009. MMD continues to collaborate with the USFS, NMED, and the operator on this mine. Laramide Resources conducted several agency meetings to restart the permitting process for state and federal agencies. MMD developed a Memorandum of Understanding with the USFS and NMED to coordinate federal and state permitting of the La Jara Mesa Mine. Coordination and resumption of review of the permit application began in the summer of 2023. The site is proposed as an underground uranium mine with above ground storage facilities and staging area comprising approximately 25 acres of surface disturbance.



Proposed La Jara Mesa Mine Location

**| OPERATIONAL EXISTING MINES**

MARP is processing permit applications for expansion and revised closeout plans at the state’s four largest copper mines in Grant County. Freeport-McMoRan Inc. (FMI) proposes expansions at four of its New Mexico operations. Applications for Chino, Tyrone, Little Rock, and Continental mines include expansions, continued operation, and reclamation. As these existing mines expand, they must comply with new regulatory standards designed to address new mining impacts.

**| CONTINENTAL MINE**

Mining at the Continental Mine continued in 2024 with much of Hanover Mountain removed. In 2024, the Continental Mine drilled exploratory holes for mining expansions at the Hanover Mountain and Continental Pit and continued to evaluate test plots with waste rock and tailing blends to evaluate performance of vegetation establishment over the next several years. An updated Closure/Closeout Plan was submitted for the Continental Mine in 2023, which will be under review by MARP and other state cooperating agencies.



Continental Mine Hanover Mountain, 2023

**| TYRONE AND LITTLE ROCK MINES**

MMD is processing a revision for the proposed approximately 337-acre Tyrone Mine Emma Project mine expansion. A public hearing was held in Silver City on August 16, 2022, where MMD received comments from the Gila Resources Information Project (GRIP) and the public. The public voiced concerns over the impacts of the proposed Emma project on private wells, noise, dust, and viewshed impairments. The proposed Emma Project must meet Part 508 Requirements for New Units that include more comprehensive operational and reclamation requirements than for the existing Tyrone Mine areas. MMD expects to complete its review of the Emma project application and closeout plan in late 2024 or early 2025

**MINES IN RECLAMATION**

MARP oversees reclamation in all stages, including planning, construction, monitoring/maintenance, and final release. MARP is also examining some of the state’s older mine sites that have been under reclamation for over 12 years for reclamation release.

**| MT. TAYLOR MINE**

Throughout 2024, a substantial amount of work continued toward reclaiming the former Mt. Taylor Mine. Rio Grande Resources submitted an updated and revised Closeout/Closure Plan (CCP) in June 2022 to address the completion of reclamation at the site including an expansion of the waste disposal cell. MMD is processing an updated CCP under Revision 22-1 for expansion of the disposal cell. The Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment (MASE) and Amigos Bravos requested a public hearing, which is expected to be held in late 2024 or early 2025.

**| QUESTA MINE**

In 2024, reclamation and remediation continued at Chevron Mining Inc.’s (CMI) permanently closed Questa Mine in Taos County, a listed Superfund site. Three agencies-MMD, NMED, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency are working with CMI to develop reclamation plans and agreements that comply with the federal Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) process. As part of the settlement between the U.S. Department of Justice, EPA, and the State of New Mexico, CMI will provide \$143 million for cleanup work. A portion of these funds were used to remediate Eagle Rock Lake. Other reclamation and remediation work will be implemented over decades. Completed projects include demolition of the mill area, construction of a water treatment plant, and removal and disposal of old mine waste (tailings) along the tailings pipeline corridor.



At the Questa Superfund site, 2024 marked the fourth growing season of a six-year monitoring program for the tailing facility cover demonstration project to evaluate a store-and-release cover of alluvial material placed over 275 acres of the 1,000-acre tailing facility. Soil cover performance evaluates vegetation success, soil chemistry, and water movement. The tailing pilot project results will shape the design and reclamation for the remaining unreclaimed tailing acreage.

A six-year monitoring period will take place to evaluate the effectiveness of the designed cover and, if successful, will be applied to the remaining portion of the tailings facility. In another area of the mine, CMI operates a water treatment plant and installed new, or upgraded existing, groundwater extraction systems. CMI continues operating a water treatment plant that decreases contaminants from the underground mine water, bedrock aquifers, alluvial aquifers, and impacted stormwater.

In the spring of 2021, CMI began construction of a pilot plot on two large waste rock piles, the Capulin and Goathill North, totaling approximately 109 acres, comprehensively named Group 1 Waste Rock Piles (Group 1 WRP). This study will determine best practices to reclaim the waste rock piles and will be used to address the remaining piles at the mine and will include the conversion of run-of-mine rock overburden materials to a viable store-and-release cover. By the fall of 2024, the pushdown of Capulin was complete and covering of Capulin with an evapotranspiration cover system is nearing completion. CMI anticipates submittal of a revised construction schedule that will delay the Group 1 WRP pilot project beyond its original 2024 completion date by two or three years.

EPA and MARP along with NMED are working toward a fourth amendment to the design administrative order on consent (4th Amendment-Design AOC). Once signed, the 4th Amendment-Design AOC will initiate submittals by CMI for agency review for areas not included in the existing pilot studies. These areas include the Dam 4 tailing regrade, soil contamination area south of the tailing facility, the long-term sludge repository, and the Group 2 Waste Rock Pile areas. The review of designs started in early 2024 and will likely continue throughout 2025.



Capulin waste rock reclamation, June 2024

## MINERAL RESOURCES: CY2023

New Mexico remains a leading United States mineral producer in the 2023 commodity rankings provided by reports from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and U.S. Energy Information Administration (coal):

- Potash: 1st (used primarily in fertilizer, and in lesser amounts for chemical and industrial applications)
- Perlite: 1st (used in building construction products, horticultural aggregate, and fillers)
- Zeolite: top 6 (used primarily in animal feed, odor control, and water purification applications)
- Copper: top 7 (used primarily in building construction, transportation equipment, and electrical and electronic products)
- Coal: 13th
- Nonfuel Mineral Production: New Mexico ranks 24th among the states, producing 1.38 percent of the U.S. total.



New Mexico Statute 69.26.2 states that mine operators shall submit an annual report to the Mining and Minerals Division regarding the previous calendar year’s mine activities.

The rule in New Mexico Administrative Code 19.7.1.9 provides that calendar year reports are due by April 30 of the following year. Accordingly, the following mineral resources report covers the most recently reported mining data – for the calendar year 2022.

Mine operators reported mineral production value of more than \$1.6 billion extracted from New Mexico mining sites, a 14 percent decrease from 2022.

**TABLE 1 New Mexico Summary of Commodity Production, Production Value, Employment, Payroll, Revenue, and Ranking: 2023**

Mineral	Production <sup>1</sup>	Production Rank <sup>2</sup>	Production Value \$	Employment <sup>3</sup>	Reclamation Employment	Payroll \$ <sup>4</sup>	Revenue Generated \$ <sup>5</sup>	
							State	Federal
Coal	7,987,232	13	\$ 226,590,974	736	168	\$ 65,943,771	\$ 6,981,779	\$ 1,222,326
Copper	192,131,219	3 *	\$ 741,134,649	1,455	8	\$ 106,239,349	\$ 6,162,712	\$ -
Gold <sup>6</sup>	8,677	-	\$ 16,854,876	-	-	\$ -	\$ 144,216	\$ -
Industrial Minerals <sup>7</sup>	2,214,946	-	\$ 198,056,823	197	11	\$ 8,292,018	\$ 212,575	\$ 661,207
Aggregates <sup>8</sup>	20,902,520	-	\$ 149,839,248	1,194	83	\$ 34,180,034	\$ 6,587,280	\$ -
Other Metals	-	-	-	-	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Molybdenum	-	-	-	-	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Potash	506,533	1	\$ 300,586,193	683	10	\$ 65,434,546	\$ 2,619,038	\$ 6,544,009
Silver <sup>6</sup>	157,022	-	\$ 3,675,263	-	-	\$ -	\$ 30,206	\$ -
Uranium <sup>9</sup>	-	-	\$ -	22	4	\$ 816,878	\$ -	\$ -
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$ 1,636,738,026</b>	<b>4,287</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>\$ 280,906,596</b>	<b>\$ 22,737,806</b>	<b>\$ 8,427,541</b>

Source: Operator reports submitted to the Mining and Minerals Division, unless otherwise noted

<sup>1</sup> Production is in short tons for coal, industrial minerals, aggregates, other metals, and potash; in pounds for copper; and in troy ounces for gold and silver.

<sup>2</sup> Production rank, where available, is based on 2023 production in relation to other states.

Sources: Copper and potash: Mineral Resources Program, United States Geological Survey;

Coal: Energy Information Administration, United States Department of Energy

\* NM Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources; Economic Impact of the Mineral Industry in New Mexico, 2024

<sup>3</sup> Employment category includes direct and contract employees.

<sup>4</sup> Payroll does not include benefits.

<sup>5</sup> NM State Land Office revenue: mineral lease royalties, rentals, bonuses; NM Taxation and Revenue Department revenue: severance, resource excise, and conservation taxes.

Federal revenue includes 50% state share of federal royalties.

Sources: State data: New Mexico State Land Office, New Mexico Taxation and Revenue Department

Federal data: Office of Natural Resources Revenue

<sup>6</sup> Gold and silver are by-products of copper production. Employment/payroll for gold/silver included in copper.

<sup>7</sup> Category includes brick clay, calcite, dimension stone, gypsum, humate, perlite, Portland cement, pumice, salt, silica, and zeolite; USGS ranks NM first in perlite and zeolite.

<sup>8</sup> Category includes base course, caliche, clay and shale, crushed rock, flagstone, fill dirt, gravel, limestone, red dog, rip-rap, sand, scoria and topsoil.

<sup>9</sup> Employment/payroll numbers are for reclamation activities/maintenance at closed mines and mills.



Total federal and state revenues generated by 2023 mineral production in New Mexico decreased 7.5 percent from 2022 levels, to \$31. million. State revenue information is provided by the Taxation and Revenue Department and the State Land Office and includes state trust land mineral lease royalties, rentals and bonuses, and associated taxes. Federal revenue information is provided by the Department of Interior’s Office of Natural Resources Revenue and includes a 50-percent state share of federal royalties. In any production year, these revenues only accrue if the lessee is mining and producing commodities on federal or state land.

Copper was the largest employer in New Mexico’s mining industry, followed by sand and gravel operations, and coal operations. Reported industry payroll (excluding benefits) decreased almost 2 percent from 2022 to \$280.9 million. . Overall, reported employment decreased or was maintained in 2023. By category, compared to 2022, direct employment increased 3.5 percent from 3,440 to 3,562 employees; contract employment decreased 5.1 percent from 764 to 725 employees; and reclamation employment increased 56 percent from 182 to 284 employees.

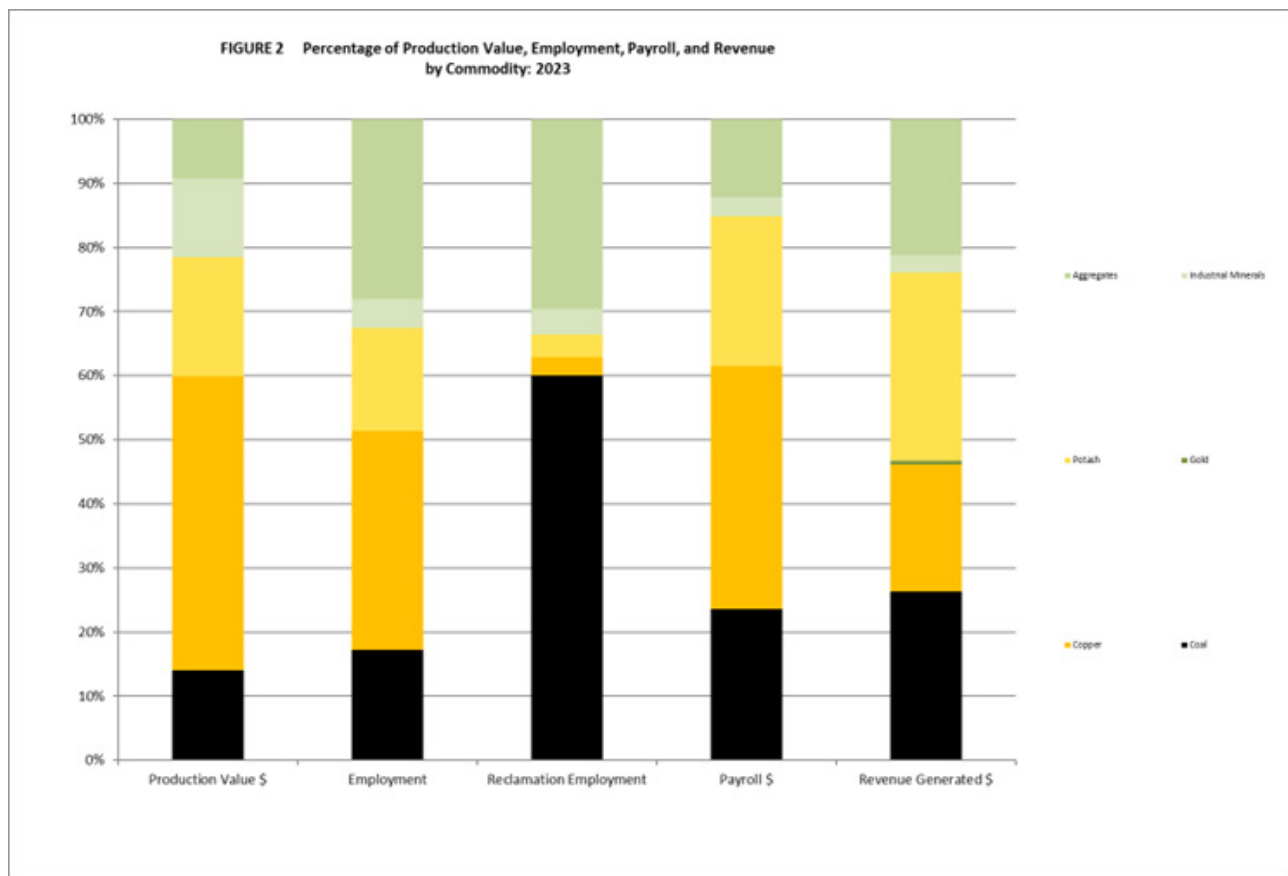




FIGURE 3 New Mexico Mineral Industry Employment, Payroll, and Capital Improvements: 2004-2023

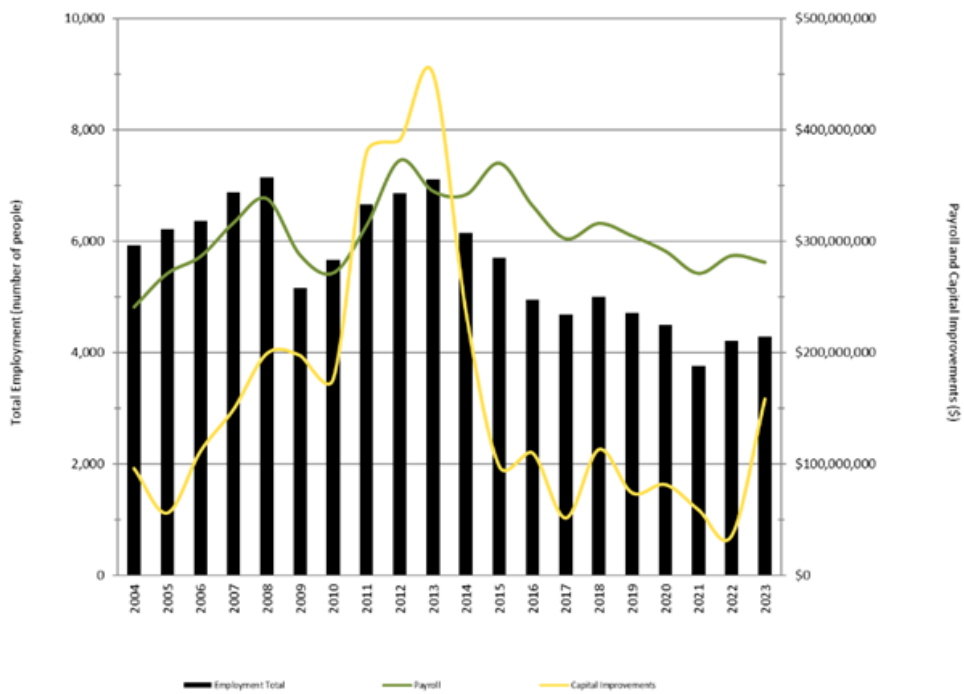
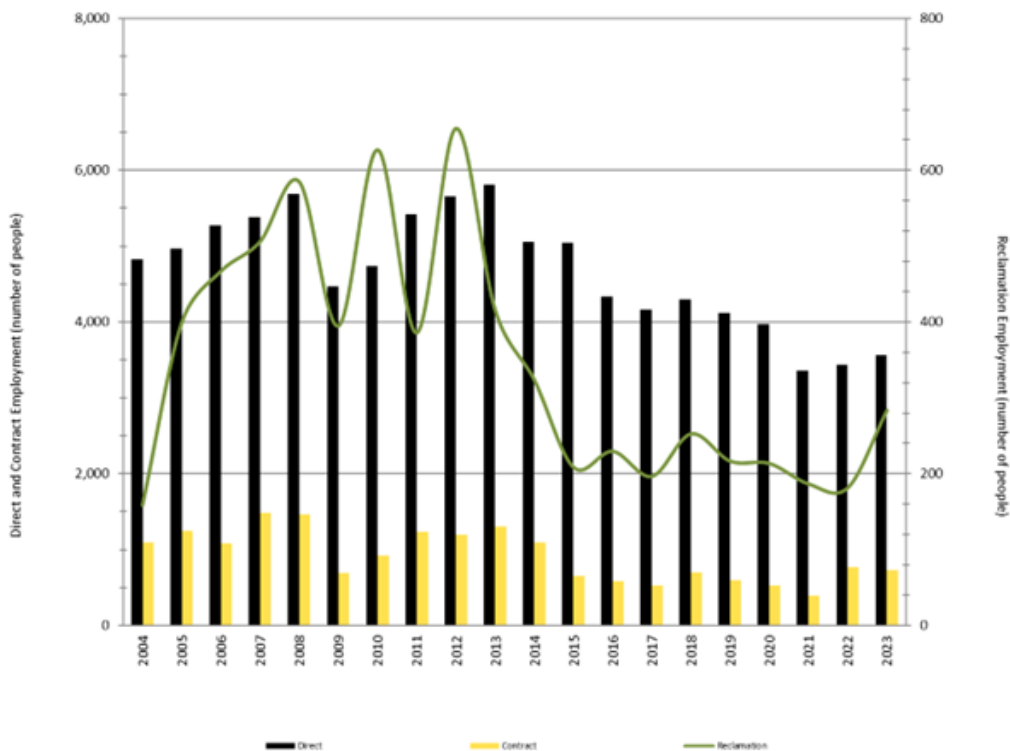


FIGURE 4 New Mexico Mineral Industry Employment: 2004-2023







Active mining and active reclamation-only operations in New Mexico in 2023 numbered approximately 401 including coal mines; potash operations (includes mines, refineries, and compaction plants); metal mines, mills, and solvent extraction and electrowinning (SX/EW – a copper extraction process) operations; industrial mineral mines and mills; stone and aggregate operations; and uranium mine reclamation operations.

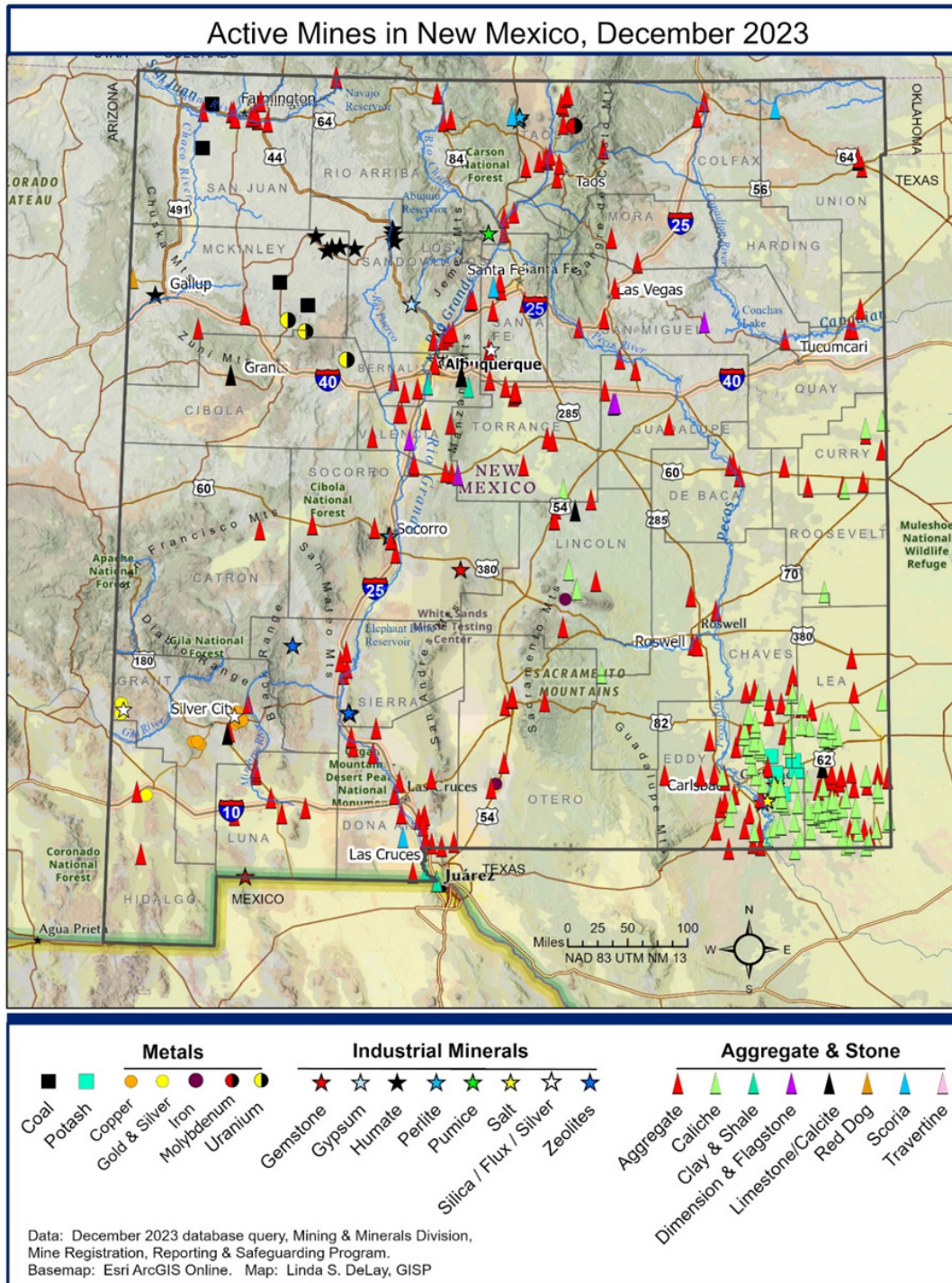


FIGURE 5 NM map of active mines (Any discrepancies are due to mine data run date)



Figures 6 through 10 provide 20-year snapshots of production amounts and sales values for coal, copper, potash, aggregate (base course, caliche, clay and shale, crushed rock, flagstone, fill dirt, gravel, limestone, red dog, riprap, sand, scoria, and topsoil), and industrial minerals (brick clay, calcite, dimension stone, gypsum, humate, perlite, Portland cement, pumice, salt, silica, and zeolite), respectively.

FIGURE 6 New Mexico Coal Production and Value: 2004-2023

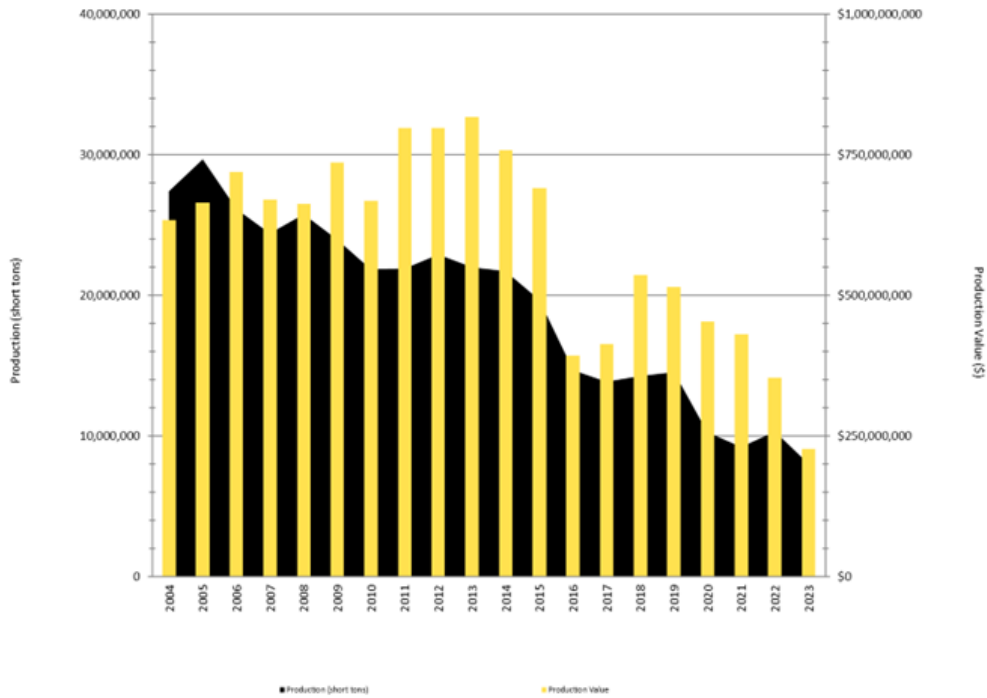


FIGURE 7 New Mexico Copper Production and Value: 2004-2023

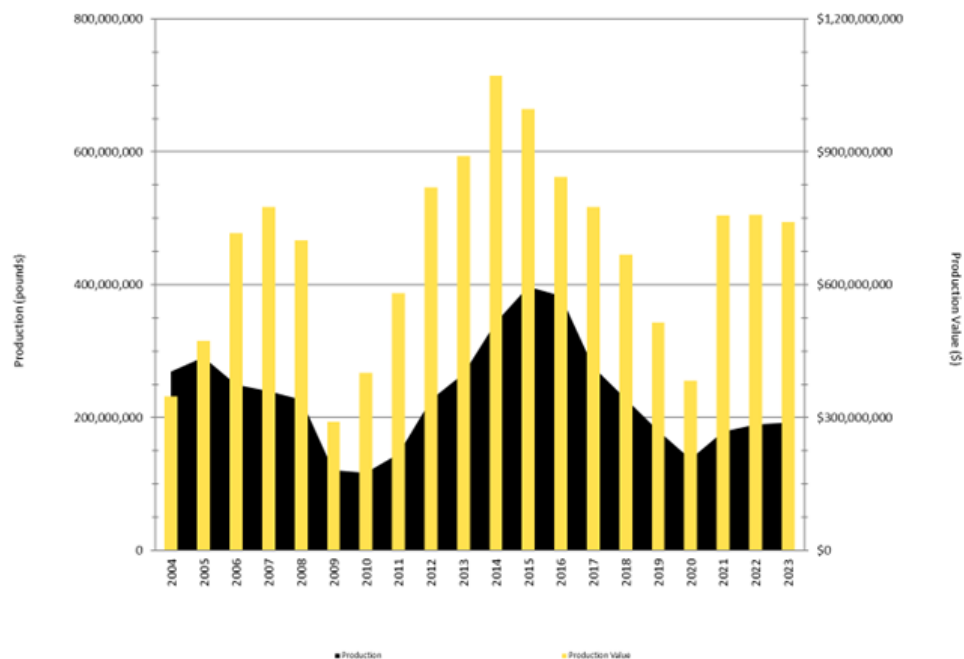




FIGURE 8 New Mexico Potash Production and Value: 2004-2023

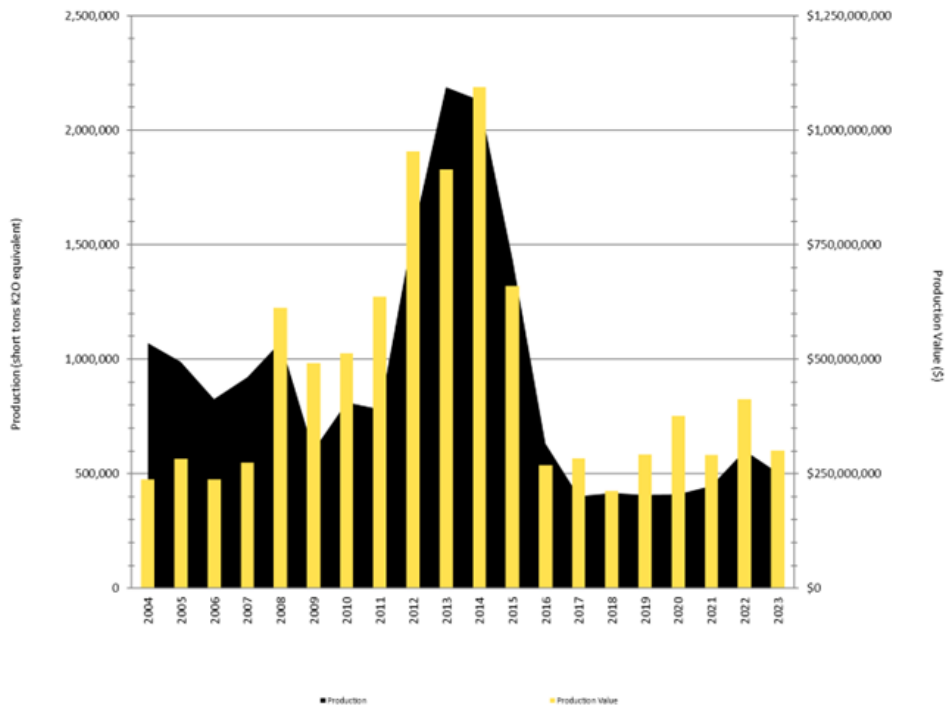
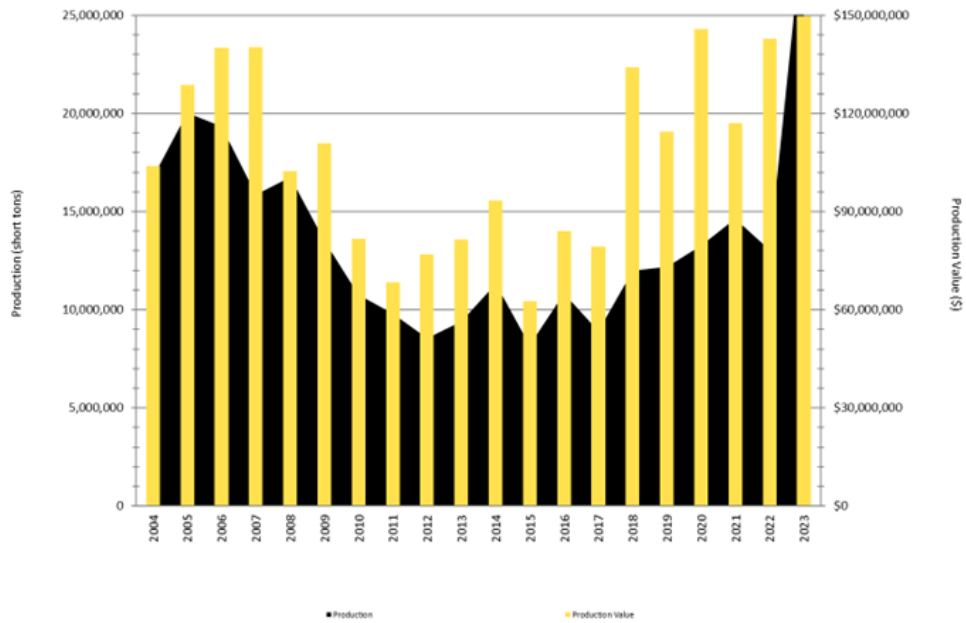


FIGURE 9 New Mexico Aggregate Production and Value: 2004-2023

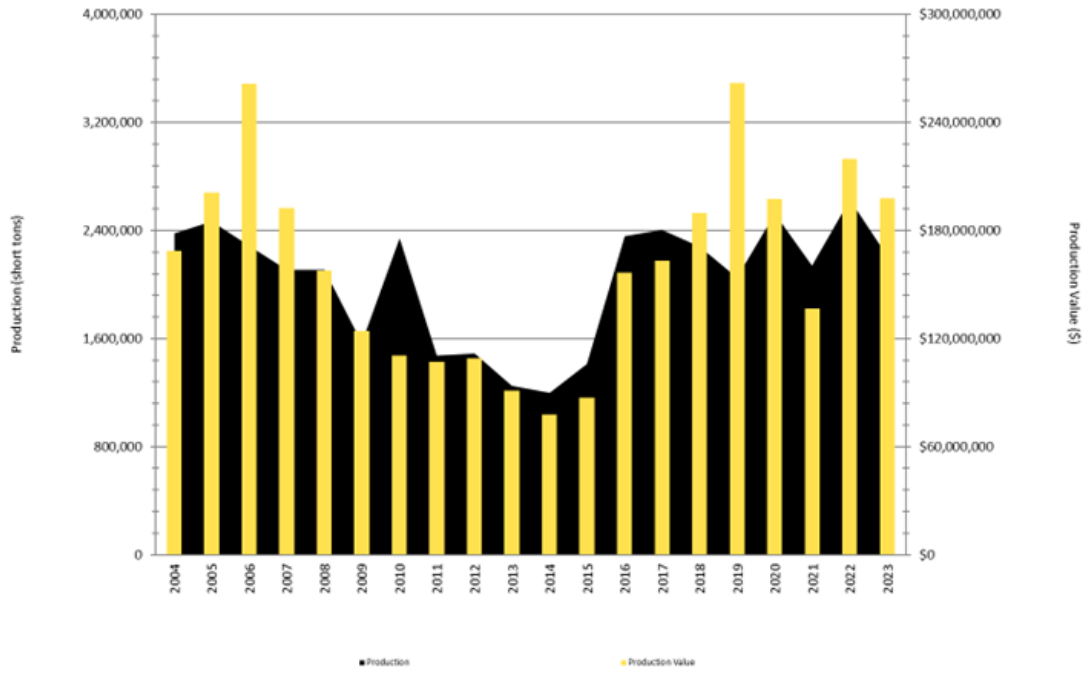
Aggregate includes base course, caliche, clay and shale, crushed rock, flagstone, fill dirt, gravel, limestone, red dog, rip-rap, sand, scoria, and topsoil





**FIGURE 10 New Mexico Industrial Mineral Production and Value: 2004-2023**

Industrial minerals include brick clay, calcite, dimension stone, gypsum, humate, perlite, Portland cement, pumice, salt, silica, and zeolite





# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

In the past year the Oil Conservation Division (OCD) has once again risen to the challenge of overseeing significant increases in New Mexico oil and gas production, while ensuring that such development occurs in a manner that protects both human health and the environment.

The OCD has been particularly focused on the following:

- Implementing and enforcing its nation-leading waste rules.
- Updating its spill rules and induced seismicity protocol.
- Expanding its program for plugging orphan wells and cleaning up abandoned oil and gas production facilities.

The OCD has received national recognition for these programs—particularly the methane waste rules and the orphan wells plugging initiative. And I continue to be proud that our employees' hard work is being recognized.

An infusion of federal funds, via the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), has allowed the OCD to accelerate the rate at which it plugs and remediates orphan wells and associated facilities. The BIL included \$4.8 billion in funding for states to clean up orphan oil and gas sites, with nearly \$100 million destined for New Mexico under the initial and formula grant programs.

New Mexico received a \$25 million initial grant on October 1, 2022. That enabled the plugging of 137 wells during the state's FY23 and FY24. In addition to the wells plugged using BIL funds, the OCD plugged an additional 13 wells in FY23 and 28 wells in FY24 using money from the New Mexico Reclamation Fund, and the Bureau and Land Management (BLM) provided grant funding to plug two wells in FY24.

Four of the wells plugged via the Reclamation Fund were Navajo allotted wells, which OCD plugged at the request of the Federal Indian Minerals Office (FIMO).

The OCD received an additional \$25 million through the BIL formula grant program in June 2024. The funding for these orphan well programs not only protect New Mexico's environment by preventing methane releases and protecting ground water, it also facilitates high-paying jobs in state's the oil and gas industry.

My vision for the Oil Conservation Division is to be an innovative, efficient, and transparent regulator serving the best interests of all New Mexico and ensuring oil and gas development continues to occur responsibly. I am proud of our accomplishments to date and look forward to the work still left to do.



**GERASIMOS RAZATOS**  
Acting Director  
Oil Conservation Division





# MISSION

The Oil Conservation Division (OCD) regulates oil and gas activity in New Mexico. It gathers oil and gas well production data, permits new oil, gas and injection wells, enforces the division’s rules, develops administrative orders to which operators are subject, enforces the state’s oil and gas statutes, ensures abandoned wells are properly plugged and that the land is responsibly restored once production activities are done. The OCD’s goals are to promote balanced, consistent, fair and transparent regulation of the oil and gas industry, to prevent the waste of oil and gas resources within the state, to protect the correlative rights of resource owners, to foster efficient development, and to protect human health and the environment.

The OCD is organized into five bureaus responsible for different aspects of regulating the oil and gas industry and its approximately 60,000 active wells in New Mexico. The five OCD bureaus are:

- Engineering
- Environmental
- Hearings
- Projects
- Administration

OCD has offices in Hobbs, Artesia, Aztec, Albuquerque, and Santa Fe.

*The Oil Conservation Division regulates oil and gas activity in New Mexico. The Division gathers well production data, permits new wells, enforces the division’s rules and the state’s oil and gas statutes, makes certain abandoned wells are properly plugged, and ensures the land is responsibly restored*

Over the past several years oil and gas production within the state has increased significantly. In 2022, New Mexico alone was responsible for half of all U.S. production growth, resulting in record high production levels, and that trend continued through 2023 and 2024. The US Energy Information Agency (EIA) estimates Eddy and Lea Counties are responsible for nearly 30% of all oil production growth in the Permian Basin.

NUMBER OF WELLS		
WELL TYPE	APPROVED PERMITS	COMPLETED WELLS*
Carbon Dioxide	734	730
Gas	29,105	26,388
Injection	3,148	3,097
Misc	135	114
Oil	38,339	27,920
Salt Water Disposal	923	818
Water	46	45
Acid Gas Injection	18	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>72,430</b>	<b>59,112</b>

\*Active, approved temporarily abandoned, expired temporarily abandoned, and plugged not released status

\*\*Not included in well count total.

NUMBER OF WELLS BY LAND TYPE		
LAND TYPE	APPROVED PERMITS	COMPLETED WELLS*
Federal	42,168	31,233
All Tribal	2,602	2,541
Private	10,862	10,348
State	16,798	14,990
<b>Total</b>	<b>72,430</b>	<b>59,112</b>

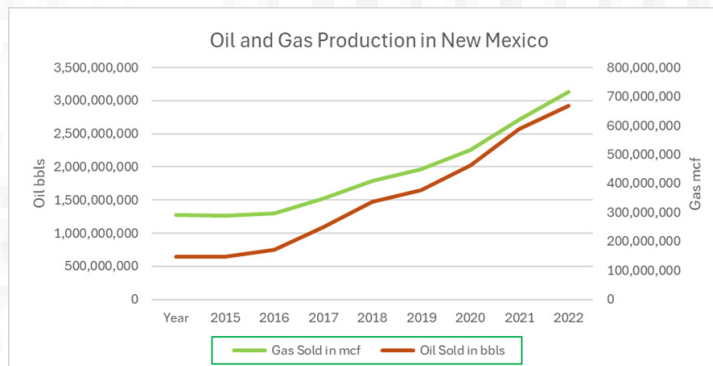
\*Active, approved temporarily abandoned, expired temporarily abandoned, and plugged not released status



## OIL & GAS SOLD BY VOLUME BY CALENDAR YEAR

YEAR	GAS SOLD*	YEAR	OIL SOLD**
2015	1,275,105,301	2015	148,094,993
2016	1,264,414,225	2016	146,633,625
2017	1,294,217,612	2017	172,347,962
2018	1,516,892,565	2018	249,249,982
2019	1,795,463,615	2019	336,542,268
2020	1,967,270,010	2020	376,294,649
2021	2,261,348,796	2021	463,261,037
2022	2,709,040,288	2022	588,028,568
2023	3,128,445,386	2023	667,222,633

\*Measured in MCF      \*\*Measured in BBLs



## OCD BUREAUS

### | ENGINEERING BUREAU

Manages the OCD’s administrative permitting, Underground Injection Control (UIC), and inspections programs. The bureau’s primary objective is ensuring program goals and regulatory objectives are met. The bureau provides the technical expertise needed to:

- Design and develop programs that address new issues arising from advances in the oil and gas industry.
- Process administrative permit applications pursuant to the New Mexico Oil and Gas Act.
- Act as technical examiners for protested applications and for applications requiring an adjudication process.
- Oversee activities such as application processing for the UIC program.
- Inspecting facilities to ensure industry activities comply with OCD rules and regulations, and do not result in the waste of oil and gas resources while protecting human health and the environment.

The Engineering Bureau monitors and enforces the UIC program in coordination with personnel from the Field Inspections group, who conduct inspections and document conditions for UIC wells.

### | ENVIRONMENTAL BUREAU

Manages the administrative permitting, incidents, and projects and compliance programs of the OCD to ensure program goals

and regulatory objectives are met. It enforces both the State’s Oil and Gas Act and Water Quality Act to protect public health, groundwater, surface water, and the environment in relation to the activities of the oil and gas industry in New Mexico. This involves complex technical issues of geology, hydrology, and engineering.

### | HEARINGS BUREAU

Manages the OCD and Oil Conservation Commission hearings, organizing the dockets for protested applications and for applications requiring an adjudication process, acting as hearing examiners and assisting in the preparation of orders.

### | PROJECTS BUREAU

Plans, coordinates, and evaluates the day-to-day operational and administrative activities of multiple OCD programs. Current projects this bureau is managing include the Carlsbad Brine Well remediation project, implementation of the federal orphan well grant programs, establishment of the marginal well plugging program (also federally funded) and any projects assigned by the Engineering and Environmental Bureau program coordinators.

### | ADMINISTRATION BUREAU

Manages the administrative compliance program and the administrative functions within the OCD. As part of these responsibilities, the Administration Bureau works with operators to develop agreed upon orders to attain compliance with rules and regulations. The bureau tracks statistics, provides administrative support, tracks operator financial assurance, and production reports.





## OCC & RULEMAKING

### | OIL CONSERVATION COMMISSION (OCC)

The OCC is a three-member commission chaired by the OCD Director with a designee of the Commissioner of Public Lands and a designee of the Cabinet Secretary of the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department. The OCC promulgates rules governing oil and gas production in New Mexico, conducts hearings on matters of significant interest, and hears appeals of OCD examiner decisions.

### | OCD RULEMAKING

The OCD works with representatives from diverse groups to identify areas where rules need to be updated. The Division is actively involved in federal, state, and industry organizations to share information on new technologies and discuss best practices on issues such as hydraulic fracturing and horizontal well drilling. We are committed to promulgating regulations based on science and technology and include university researchers in workgroups as needed for rule modification and development.

In 2023, a third-party petitioner filed a petition for rulemaking that, if granted, would prohibit the use of PFAS chemicals in oil and gas drilling and would impose changes in certain rules concerning disclosure. The Oil Conservation Commission held a hearing on the petition in November 2024. The commission could render a decision in 2025.

## OCD PERFORMANCE

### | INSPECTION & PLUGGING

In fiscal year 2024, the OCD performed 39,640 inspections on oil and gas wells and facilities out of 59,107 completed wells in the state. Inspections consist of site inspections of oil and gas wells, associated facilities, releases, and general site conditions. UIC well inspections are conducted to meet the goals set by the federal UIC program, overseen by the US Environmental Protection Agency. These inspections are performed to verify wells are operating under the terms of their permits and are tested to ensure integrity of the well bores for the protection of underground sources of drinking water.

The OCD has made great strides in the overall effectiveness of inspections. This has been done by prioritizing inspections using a risk-tiered system. The higher risk inspections include but are not limited to public complaint responses, witnessing well work and testing, and following up on compliance issues. This resulted

in 5,138 compliances issued to operators in fiscal year 2024. In FY24 the OCD plugged 104 abandoned oil and gas wells, exceeding the legislative goal of 50 wells during the fiscal year. This represented a significant increase over prior year and OCD expects to accelerate that pace in the coming year, thanks to the \$25 million in grant funding that came at the end of 2022 and the additional \$25 million in 2024 under the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

OIL & GAS INSPECTIONS BY YEAR				
	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
Yearly Total	35,757	35,757	29,522	39,640

### | APPLICATIONS FOR PERMIT TO DRILL

In FY24, the OCD approved 72.82% of all APDs within 10 business days of receipt.

### | CARLSBAD BRINE WELL REMEDIATION

Since 2009, EMNRD has been the lead agency in characterizing and monitoring a large and unstable brine well cavern that had threatened a developed portion of the City of Carlsbad in Eddy County. This cavern was created beginning in 1978 when the operator began injecting freshwater into the subsurface salt formation to produce saturated brine used for oil and gas operations. The most recent operator, I&W, went bankrupt while failing to monitor or remediate the cavern.

Given the size and characteristics of the cavern, the potential for catastrophic failure was significant and could have resulted in serious disruption to local infrastructure, tourism, oil and gas logistics, and agriculture, as well as contaminating groundwater. Using the Oil Reclamation Fund and I&W's liquidated bankruptcy estate, OCD completed an assessment of the cavern in 2014 using multiple geophysical techniques. The OCD also installed and maintains an automated ground movement monitoring system integrated directly into the local emergency response infrastructure.

During the 2017 and 2018 legislative sessions a fund to remediate the cavern was established, along with the creation of the Carlsbad Brine Well Remediation Authority, to oversee future actions relating to the brine well. The Authority has representation from the City of Carlsbad, Eddy County, the Carlsbad Irrigation District, the Office of the Attorney General, the Office of the State Engineer, the Department of Transportation, and the Environment Department, with the Secretary of the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department serving as chair.

OCD's contractor successfully completed primary remediation



activities in 2022. In 2023, OCD's focus was on successful brine well depressurization, demobilization, site restoration, the implementation of the post remediation monitoring, and the restoration of prior traffic flow patterns. Active work on site has been completed with the leased parcels restored and returned to the landowners. Monitoring continues for any potential ground movement. Oil and gas exploration and development activities have been allowed to conditionally resume in the area. In 2024, the bulk of activity associated with the brine well was monitoring long-term stability after backfilling was completed. The remaining void has remained stable.

## | PLUGGING OF ABANDONED WELLS

Unplugged and improperly plugged oil and gas production wells which are no longer in use can be a source of methane emissions into the atmosphere and potentially impact groundwater. Methane is a potent greenhouse gas adversely contributing to climate change. The OCD requires the operators of idle wells to either properly maintain them or plug them. Unfortunately, a significant number of wells have been abandoned after their operators became financially insolvent.

The OCD can then step in to plug these abandoned wells using the financial assurance that is available along with a portion of the state production severance tax that is provided to the OCD's Reclamation Fund which was specifically created for this purpose. Historically, the OCD had been able to plug about 50 wells each year using the Fund and the small amounts of financial assurance it was able to forfeit in connection with such work. In the most recent year, OCD's cost to plug wells averaged \$164,000 per well, while remediation and reclamation costs are more variable and can cover a wide range from \$50,000 to restore the surface around a plugged well, to several million dollars for the cleanup of large tank batteries with extensive contamination.

In the Fall of 2021, the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law was enacted, providing New Mexico and other states a significantly greater amount of funding with which to plug abandoned wells and to remediate and restore associated facilities. New Mexico received an initial grant of \$25M with an additional \$72M to follow. The division currently estimates there are more than 1,700 abandoned wells located on state-owned or private surface.

A separate \$14M grant from the federal Department of Energy and the US Environmental Protection Agency was recently awarded to New Mexico to partner with operators of marginally economic wells with methane leaks where cost sharing with the operator can ensure the safe and permanent plugging of those wells. One of the goals of this program is to expend at least 40% of the funds in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities.

The OCD has also been awarded \$4M from the Bureau of Land Management to plug abandoned wells which previously produced oil and gas from federal mineral leases.



## PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

### | NEW MEXICO PRODUCED WATER RESEARCH CONSORTIUM

The New Mexico Produced Water Consortium is an effort with New Mexico State University, the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED), other state and federal agencies, our national labs, and the private sector to develop a basis for regulating the reuse of produced water outside of the oil and gas industry to ensure protection of public health and the environment. OCD is a member of the Governmental Advisory Board overseeing the Consortium's research and outreach. The Consortium is in its third year of operation and in February of 2022 published its Research



Plan and Gap Analysis for Produced Water Reuse in New Mexico. The plan discusses current needs and challenges in infrastructure planning and development, the collection of water quality data, toxicology, treatment technology performance, cost/benefit analyses, and public outreach. The New Mexico Produced Water Act (Chapter 70 NMSA 1978) requires a person to obtain a permit from the NMED prior to using produced water, even if treated, for activities unrelated to the production of oil and gas. Produced water utilized for completions operations within the oil and gas industry is allowed and regulated by the OCD.

*\*Data in the chart below represents the amount and types of water that are being used within oil and gas completions operations in New Mexico. Drinking water (water <1K mg/L) use has steadily decreased since tracking began.*

YEAR	PRODUCED WATER	TDS < 1K MG/L	TDS 1-10K MG/L	TDS > 10K MG/L	TOTAL WATER
FY24	8,565,078,235	640,081,207	2,717,029,962	3,089,833,498	15,012,022,902
FY23	11,804,198,946	751,162,100	4,451,222,892	1,974,215,042	18,980,798,980
FY22	10,773,747,111	1,073,025,670	5,420,686,646	1,076,253,321	18,343,712,748
FY21	4,770,499,985	1,647,963,778	3,300,893,115	357,241,217	10,076,598,095

## | NEW MEXICO BUREAU OF GEOLOGY AND MINERAL RESOURCES

The OCD provides funding to the New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources for a variety of projects that assist the OCD. These projects include:

- Development of a 3-dimensional model in ArcGIS of the Pecos Slope and Delaware basin aquifers containing information on the depth to groundwater, water quality, and volume. One of the benefits of this work is to reduce possible interference by the oil and gas industry with freshwater zones not only during the drilling and completion of production wells but also in the investigation and remediation of spills and releases. OCD also provides geologic data for the model from the online library of well logs.
- Mapping of the stratigraphic intervals from the Siluro-Devonian to crystalline basement in the NM portion of the Delaware Basin. This task is achieved through analysis of formation tops interpreted from OCD well logs and completion reports. The project supports the OCD in evaluating and minimizing the potential for induced seismicity.
- A spatial analysis of produced water injection. This project is a companion to the Siluro-Devonian mapping effort and aids in the OCD's ability to quantify and evaluate and further make decisions regarding disposal in the Delaware basin.
- The Bureau's Seismological Observatory for the monitoring and analysis of seismicity and induced seismicity in the NM Permian Basin. Additional seismic monitors have been installed to provide better fidelity of data within specific areas of interest.
- The scanning, cataloguing, and archiving of the OCD's legacy hearing orders dating back to the formation of the division.

## | GROUND WATER PROTECTION COUNCIL

The Ground Water Protection Council (GWPC) is a non-profit organization whose members consist of state regulatory agencies working together for the protection and conservation of groundwater. The GWPC promotes effective regulations and the use of best management practices with a focus on matters of energy, water quality, water availability, and sustainability. The GWPC has had a significant impact on national policies in underground injection.

## | INTERSTATE OIL & GAS COMPACT COMMISSION

The OCD Director represents New Mexico on the Interstate Oil & Gas Compact Commission (IOGCC) which was chartered in 1935 with New Mexico as a founding member. The Commission works to promote sound regulatory practices for the conservation and efficient recovery of oil and natural gas resources while protecting health, safety, and the environment.

## | US ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

The EPA funds and provides oversight of the state's UIC program initiated as part of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act. New Mexico has regulatory primacy to permit produced water disposal wells, brine production wells, refinery wastewater disposal wells, and remedial injection wells to ensure the protection of underground sources of drinking water.

## | NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

When requested, the OCD assists tribal entities on issues of oil and gas development and the response of operators to spills and releases.



# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

To the Citizens and Visitors of New Mexico:

As the New Mexico State Parks system completes its 91<sup>st</sup> year, it's timely to acknowledge that State Parks are a valuable and cherished resource with far-reaching benefits. For example, State Parks play a crucial role in bolstering local, regional, and state economies by offering multifaceted benefits that extend beyond outdoor recreational opportunities, and significantly impact various economic dimensions.

The 35 State Parks found in 25 of 33 counties across the state are vital economic engines, attracting visitors who spend money on entrance fees, camping and park activities. This spending extends to businesses, including hotels, restaurants, concessions, and retail shops, generating substantial economic activity. State Parks can stimulate job creation within the community, from park maintenance and management to service-related positions and capital improvement contracts. Furthermore, local governments benefit from increased sales tax revenues and economic diversification, enhancing the financial stability of smaller villages, towns, and communities.

State Parks contribute significantly to tourism and recreation industries. They serve as focal points for local, regional, and out-of-state tourism, drawing visitors from surrounding areas and creating a ripple effect of economic benefits. This influx of tourists supports regional infrastructure, including transportation networks, hospitality services, and other service industries. Additionally, State Parks can serve as venues for events and festivals that attract large crowds throughout the year, further stimulating regional economic activity. The increased demand for regional resources often leads to investment in infrastructure and service improvements, enhancing the overall quality of life in the region.

State Parks contribute to job creation across a range of sectors such as, environmental conservation and education, tourism, construction, and park management. Additionally, State Parks play a role in enhancing property values, and real estate development due to their attractive natural amenities. Moreover, residents and tourists benefit from improved wellness associated with increased physical activity and mental well-being, as parks promote healthy lifestyles and environmental stewardship.

The diverse landscapes and cultural heritage represented in State Parks are integral to the state's identity, enhance state pride, and offer residents and visitors a connection to the natural and cultural history of New Mexico.

This year, the New Mexico State Parks Division focused on initiatives that would better support and emphasize the economic value of State Parks. The following report reflects the division's accomplishments this year and recognizes the people, partners, and programs 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.



Sinceramente,

**TOBY VELÁSQUEZ**  
Division Director  
State Parks Division





## DIVISION OVERVIEW

Established in 1933, the New Mexico State Parks Division has grown into a 35-park system that includes 19 lakes and nearly 189,942 surface acres of land and water. State Parks' mission is to protect and enhance natural and cultural resources, provide first-class recreational and education facilities and opportunities, and promote public safety to benefit and enrich the lives of visitors. State Parks is committed to its mission, which it accomplishes by employing professional, dedicated staff to ensure that parks are cared for and preserved to the highest professional standards. State Park programs provide safe, fun, and educational experiences for the whole family.

State parks can be found in 25 of New Mexico's 33 counties where outdoor recreation is a driving force in New Mexico's economy. Connected to communities statewide, these 35 state parks attract on average 5.0 million visitors each year and are essential economic drivers for local businesses, towns, and cities. Many rural communities rely on a state park as a major source of economic development.



Coyote Creek State Park – First Cabin Campground in the New Mexico State Parks System.

*New Mexico State Parks mission is to protect and enhance natural and cultural resources, provide first-class recreational and education facilities, and promote public safety to benefit and enrich the lives of visitors.*

## STAFFING

328 Full Time & Seasonal Employees comprised of the following:

27

Operations, Administrative & Program Support located in the Santa Fe Office.

153

Field Operations Management at 35 State parks.

10

Operations & Administrative Support at 5 Region offices.

45

Field Operations positions that support up to 138 seasonal hires system wide.

## ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES BUREAU

The Administrative Services Bureau provides program support to personnel and programs that provide administrative, business service, policy, and mission support for the State Parks Division. The bureau is an essential piece of the Division's mission, as it provides staff who ensure that visitors are safe and have great recreational and educational experiences in parks. The bureau offers guidance, review, and support for revenue, visitation, procurement, fixed assets, property acquisition/disposition, telecommunication services, and fleet services. This bureau is a resource for the Division's 41 decentralized locations and departmental program support services and coordinates with other local, state, and federal agencies.

The bureau has six staff members with specializations supporting the Division. However, all work closely together toward the shared mission. The Administrative Service Bureau also issues park passes to the public. State Parks provided 2,157 Veteran Passes to support the Department of Veterans Services' mission to provide free day access to State Parks and three days of camping for New Mexico Resident Veterans rated 50% or more disabled.



Due to its central location in the state, the Santa Fe Office sells many Annual Camping Passes and Annual Day-Use Passes. Last year, State Parks sold passes to over 1,100 visitors at its Santa Fe location. The receptionist handles many daily calls regarding reservations, questions about campsites, the temperature of the water and fishing conditions, and various other questions related to recreating at any of the 35 State Parks.

State Parks participates in an annual auction to dispose of out-of-date, high-mileage property that has been replaced. Last year, the auction brought in \$235,000.00. The auction requires months of preparation and state-wide coordination to be successful.

The Administrative Services Bureau helped bring 31 new full-time employees on board last year. The bureau also helped with efforts to recruit by placing advertisements and participating in career fairs at local colleges and other venues across the state.

The bureau directly supports the Recreational Boating Safety, Education and Law Enforcement statewide programs by seeking out federal funding and overseeing the expenditure of any federal funds received.

The staff provides customer service to the public, including providing information and advise about tourism in New Mexico.

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## FIELD OPERATIONS BUREAU

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The Field Operations Bureau consists of 35 State Parks supported by five region offices each assigned a Region Manager and Region Administrator. The Field Operations Bureau Chief works with the Region Managers to oversee daily administration, management, and operation of State Parks to ensure that park resources, grounds and facilities are maintained, and that services are provided in accordance with established standards. The region offices are critical to success; they serve as the conduit for information transfer between parks and administration.

State Parks made significant progress in recruiting and retaining field personnel in 2024. One successful strategy has been to ensure that all field positions are appropriately classified and compensated for the work they perform. These measures ensure employees are appropriately compensated, which improves recruitment and retention.

In addition to classifying positions appropriately, State Parks increased its presence at career fairs across the state. Division staff participated in career fairs and recruiting events at universities including New Mexico State University, New Mexico Highlands University, and Eastern New Mexico University. The Division also coordinated with the Department of Workforce Solutions to bolster recruitment.

The Field Operations Bureau continues to develop training strategies to ensure institutional knowledge is passed on through the years. The Division continues to hold its annual fall training and a weekly training session for all staff. The weekly sessions are targeted 30-minute trainings focused on a specific topic. These sessions are recorded and added to a training library that staff can access at any time.

In 2024, the State Parks Division completed a study to evaluate park fees. The study revealed New Mexico park fees were significantly lower than neighboring states and were not keeping up with inflation. Division charges and compare them to surrounding states and inflation. This study revealed our fees were significantly behind our neighbors and needed adjustment to keep pace with inflation. Division management used this information to propose a new fee schedule.

An outreach campaign, which included 12 in-person information session around the state, was developed to inform the public about the proposed fee changes. More than 400 people attended the information sessions and more than 900 submitted written comments on the initial fee proposal.

That feedback prompted the division to present a revised fee schedule at second series of information sessions. The revised proposal was well received, and the new fees were scheduled to take effect on January 1, 2025.

The division is now developing an economic impact study of the State Park System. This study will be coordinated with the NMSU Arrowhead Center and will evaluate the economic impact, both at the state and local level, related to visitors coming to state parks.

### | LAW ENFORCEMENT AND BOATING SAFETY BUREAU

In 2024, State Parks partnered with the National Safe Boating Council to host the International Boating and Water Safety Summit (IBWSS) for the first time ever in New Mexico. The IBWSS attracted boating safety professionals from all over the world to discuss trends, technology updates and best practices related to boating and water safety.



Manuel Overby, retired Chief, Law Enforcement & Boating Safety Bureau, accepts a plaque on behalf of NM State Parks from the National Safe Boating Council (NSBC) for recognition of the Division’s commitment and contribution to recreational boating safety. Photo courtesy: NSBC.

State Parks also partnered with the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) to host an Officer Water Survival Train-the-Trainer course in Albuquerque. This course is the national standard accepted by the United States Coast Guard to prepare marine law enforcement officers for survival in the water—from either an unexpected fall or an altercation. This course enabled State Parks to certify new instructors and bring new approaches to training from outside agencies and other states.

In addition to NASBLA’s Officer Water Survival Instructor course, State Parks delivered two Officer Water Survival courses to twelve law enforcement staff across the state. State Parks also delivered a Boating Under the Influence course that introduced the seated battery of Standardized Field Sobriety Tests to six law enforcement staff across the state.



Rangers entering pool

State Parks delivered its annual Inland Boat Operation and Marine Patrol Fundamentals Course at the Richard Cooper Training Center at Elephant Butte Lake State Park. In recent years this curriculum has become the national standard in training for inland boat

operations and patrol. Through this course, nine state parks employees received instruction in how to safely operate a state parks motorboat.



MEO basic training

Finally, the Law Enforcement and Safety bureau is working with NASBLA to host Boating Incident Investigations training in Carlsbad in January 2025. This course will provide State Parks marine law enforcement officers the opportunity to develop and refine their skills to conduct a thorough and comprehensive recreational boating incident investigation.

Higher than normal run-off levels statewide translated into increased use of other bodies of water outside of and within the State Parks system in 2024. As a result, marine law enforcement officers spent additional time patrolling and educating the public on bodies of water such as the Rio Grande and Chama River, Cochiti Lake, Santa Cruz Lake, Abiquiu Lake, and Carlsbad Lake. In support of statewide recreational boating safety, education, and enforcement, State Parks will continue to work with external agency partners such as the New Mexico State Police, county law enforcement, local fire departments, Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Land Management, United States Forest Service, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, and the Bureau of Reclamation.

This year, park law enforcement officers spent just over 1,000 hours patrolling navigable waters across the state. Some of the highlights from these dedicated efforts include:

- 1,713 Recreational Boating Safety Compliance Inspections
- 285 Vessels Assisted; 798 Persons Assisted
- 44 Boater Education Courses
- 905 Boater Education Students (online and in-person)
- 1,601 Citations Issued





Scott Chalmers, Boating Safety & Education Program Coordinator, presents information on the proper use of a life jacket during a boating safety press conference next to the Rio Grande in Albuquerque.

State Parks continues to upgrade law enforcement field equipment with the purchase of 16 new Law Enforcement vehicles. The emblems have been upgraded on the units which now display the Law Enforcement badge on each door.

The division purchased new firearm accessories and flashlights for all officers. Fifteen new Park Law Enforcement Officers (9 Recruits and 6 laterals) were added with more new hires expected.

The Law Enforcement and Safety Bureau continues to focus on providing growth and training opportunities for officers. Three new general police instructors, 5 Reality Based Training Instructors, and 3 new Boating Crash Investigators were added to the list of certified instructors for the agency.

## DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT BUREAU

The Design and Development Bureau is responsible for the planning, design and construction of park facilities and infrastructure statewide, including park buildings and recreation facilities, roads, trails, and water-wastewater projects. The following are key construction projects from 2024.

### | BROAD CANYON RANCH

#### Feasibility Study

**DESCRIPTION:** The State Parks Division prepared a feasibility study considering the establishment of a state park at Broad Canyon Ranch, a property owned by State Parks and comprised of three parcels in Doña Ana County along the Rio Grande in southern New Mexico, approximately 20 miles north of Las Cruces. The Feasibility Study assesses natural and cultural resources, potential recreational opportunities, and the suitability of lands for recreational development within each parcel. The study presents three development and management alternatives.

The alternative selected by State Parks involves the development of two parcels as either a day-use state park or a recreation area that functions as a satellite of Leasburg Dam State Park, with multiple non-development options for the third parcel. This alternative meets the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) goals identified when Broad Canyon Ranch was purchased, which include permanent public access to the property with parking and comfort station, non-intrusive trail alignment with the proposed Rio Grande Trail, and future development of additional trails to support wildlife viewing. This alternative also allows for phased development if State Parks decides to pursue further recreational development of Broad Canyon Ranch in the future.

**Total project cost: \$73,185.00**



View from Broad Canyon Ranch looking northeast to Selden Hills.

### | BOTTOMLESS LAKES STATE PARK

#### Lea Lake Recreation Area Renovations

**DESCRIPTION:** This phase of the renovations focused on the campground. Improvements included installation of a new wastewater lift station that services both the campground and the day-use area, along with a new wastewater line from the campground comfort station. New trash receptacles were installed in conjunction with a new trash dumpster enclosure. The electrical service was upgraded and new electrical campsite pedestals along with all the wiring, associated equipment, and enclosures were installed.

**Total project cost: \$2,399,758.62**



Renovated Lift Station at Lea Lake Recreation Area

**| BRANTLEY LAKE STATE PARK**

**RV Dump Station Septic System**

**DESCRIPTION:** Improvements to the existing RV Dump Station, including abandonment and plugging of two existing monitoring wells, removal and disposal of existing leach field, existing septic tank, and associated piping, and installation of a new 4,000-gallon septic tank and new evapotranspiration pond/leach field. The new system is powered by solar panels.

**Total project cost: \$809,641.88**



Foreground new 4,000-gal septic tank; background 120 ft by 120 ft evapotranspiration bed, underlain by impermeable liner



Evapotranspiration Bed end view of distribution bundles

**| CABALLO LAKE STATE PARK**

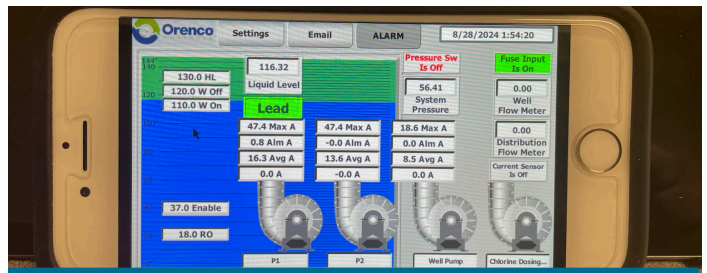
**Upgrade Water Treatment Plant**

**DESCRIPTION:** Upgrade of the existing water treatment plant and storage tank adjacent to the Palomino Campground at Caballo Lake State Park. This project involved replacing all the existing distribution supply equipment, including pressure tank, booster pumps, and associated valving, installing a new disinfection treatment system (sodium hypochlorite - NaOCl) and automatic control systems, and repairing the existing 10,000-gallon tank. The water treatment plant operations can now be monitored over a cell phone.

**Total project cost: \$420,481.85**



At Left: New pressure tanks  
At Right: Two new booster pumps and hypo chlorinator



Cellphone display of remote system monitoring showing four pump's operating status and level in storage tank

**| COYOTE CREEK STATE PARK**

**Electrical Upgrades**

**DESCRIPTION:** Electrical system renovations include relocating existing overhead electrical lines that traverse the length of the park to inground service that runs beneath the existing park roads. New transformers, meters, and conductors reconnect the existing and new facilities to the upgraded system.

**Total project cost: \$513,153.25**

**| ELEPHANT BUTTE LAKE STATE PARK**

**Lakeshore Drive Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) Project**

**DESCRIPTION:** State Parks, in partnership with the Bureau of Reclamation, and the Federal Highway Administration completed an \$18,800,000 road safety improvement project on Lakeshore Drive at Elephant Butte Lake State Park. Lakeshore Drive is a primary access route for the western side of Elephant Butte Reservoir, which is managed by New Mexico State Parks through a lease from the Bureau of Reclamation.

In addition to providing general access to the reservoir area, this road leads to several recreational areas that are popular with State Park visitors. Those areas include day-use facilities at the

South Monticello Campground and Rock Creek Marina. There also are private residences and businesses located along the road. Lakeshore Road also serves as an alternative route to I-25 in the event the interstate is closed for an emergency.

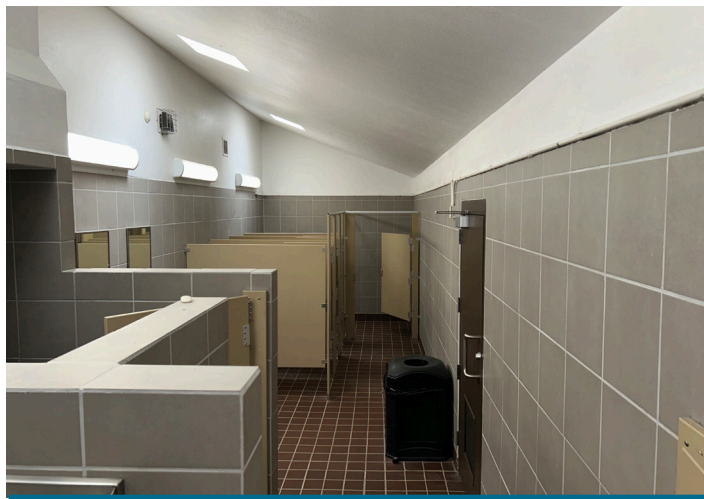
The project replaced undersized culverts at the Hot Springs Landing and Rock Canyon sites with larger box culverts and with a 110-ft-long span bridge at the Cedar Canyon site. The existing culverts at the Long Point site were replaced with a 70-ft-long span bridge and approximately 700 linear feet of the road will be reconstructed west of the current road alignment to straighten the roadway and improve the site distance.

**Total Project cost: \$18,800,000**

**Comfort Station Renovations**

**DESCRIPTION:** This project involved renovation of the comfort stations on Ridge Road and in the Desert Cove Campground, and the demolition of the comfort station at the main entrance because the building was in poor condition and the Division is working on plans to construct a new visitor point of contact at that location. Renovation of the comfort stations included replacement of the plumbing systems including drains and fixtures, new lighting, wall and floor finishes, restroom accessories, fencing, and signage. The Desert Cove comfort station also received a new roof.

**Total project cost: \$1,091,336.35**



Ridge Road Comfort Station Interior

**| FENTON LAKE STATE PARK**

**Vault Toilet Replacement Phase I**

**DESCRIPTION:** Five vault toilets were replaced on the north side of the park along the main park road and on the south side along Lake Fork Road including a total of two double vaults and three single vaults. The new vault toilets have a solar powered fan for venting and a downward directed low visual impact light for visibility at night. The work also included the installation of

accessible parking at some of the new vault toilet locations, concrete walkways, new bear proof trash receptacles, rock walls, swales and grading for positive drainage and reseeding with native grass mix for all disturbed areas.

**Total project cost: \$1,293,981.94**



Single vault toilet with sidewalk & trash receptacles



Double vault toilet with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) approved parking & trash receptacles

**Lake Fork Road Improvements**

**DESCRIPTION:** Regraded road for proper driving surface and drainage, spread, compacted and graded 800 tons of road base. Corrected drainage and cross-slope on the road to the day use area, installed erosion prevention measures and improved driving surface for ease of use and durability. Cut back bank to eliminate rockfall hazard and increase visibility for safety. Established low water crossing at ephemeral stream where culvert had been filled by debris from fire.

**Total project cost: \$39,136.06**



Lake Fork Road Improvements Looking South



Lake Fork Road Improvements Looking North

**Water Line Installation**

**DESCRIPTION:** A new waterline was installed from the existing well to the shop and office building, water hydrant near day use/boat launch parking area, two park staff mobile homes, hydrants at nearby campground and at the camp host site. The new line was needed due to constant discoloration, leaking and the deteriorating condition of the existing pipes. The work also included replacing the actual water hydrants at day use/boat launch parking area, five campsites and the camp host site.

**Total project cost: \$39,136.06**

**| HERON LAKE STATE PARK**

**Water Line Replacement**

**DESCRIPTION:** This project involved abandoning and capping an existing 2-inch potable water distribution line that had failed and replacing it with approximately 577 linear feet of new 2-inch DR-11 HDPE water line from the Dam Elevator Shaft House to the Water Treatment Building at Heron Lake State Park. The project included installing approximately 577 linear feet of ¾-inch Schedule 80PVC Conduit Pipe for Electrical Wiring offset from the waterline in the same location.

**Total project cost: \$150,621.67**



Heron Lake Water Treatment Plant in background

**| HYDE MEMORIAL STATE PARK**

**Road Improvements**

**DESCRIPTION:** Regraded roads and parking areas in main campground loop, Overflow Area and Group Shelter 2 for proper driving surface and drainage. Constructed extensive rock and brush check dams throughout Overflow Area to reduce erosion, increase infiltration of stormwater runoff, and create an opportunity to plant native species to improve wildlife habitat. Restored retaining wall and Campsite 31. Replaced culvert and restored bridge at Group Shelter 1.

**Total project cost: \$52,218.52**



Rock check dams to reduce erosion and increase infiltration of stormwater runoff

**| LIVING DESERT ZOO AND GARDENS**

**Install Fire and Intrusion Alarm Systems**

**DESCRIPTION:** A fire alarm system and intrusion alarm panels for security were installed within the park perimeter. The fire alarm system covers the visitor center, veterinary building, maintenance building, two cat exhibits, two hoof stock barns, animal kitchen and reptiles building and includes twelve months of fire alarm monitoring. The intrusion system includes the installation of intrusion alarm panels on the maintenance buildings, veterinary building and animal kitchen and the replacement of the panel at visitor center. Also includes the installation of cameras in parking lot and front courtyard of visitor center.

**Total project cost: \$247,277.00**

**Door and Hardware Repair and Replacement for Animal Exhibits and Facilities**

**DESCRIPTION:** This work included the repair and replacement of doors, hardware and locks for various animal exhibits, off exhibit

areas, and park facilities including Pronghorn, Bobcat, Mountain Lion, Aviary, Black Bear, Raven, Burrowing Owl, Nocturnal Building, Aviary dock and unloading area, and Animal Kitchen.

**Total project cost: \$129,727.42**



Cat Off-Exhibit Doors

**Electrical and Plumbing Repair work for Animal Exhibits and Visitor Center**

**DESCRIPTION:** This work included the repair and replacement of miscellaneous electrical and plumbing work for animal exhibits and park facilities including heated and automatic water bowls, electrical outlets in exhibit areas, transformer replacement and installation of lightening arrestor for hoof stock barn, bathroom fixture replacements for visitor center public and staff bathrooms, mini split replacement in reptile building, new shutoff valves, water line leaks and breaks throughout park, and repair of various animal exhibit, staff parking area and animal kitchen drains.

**Total project cost: \$120,253.24**

**| OLIVER LEE MEMORIAL STATE PARK**

**Visitor Center Roof**

**DESCRIPTION:** Replaced the roof on the Visitor Center with TPO membrane and metal roofing.

**Total project cost: \$152,966.52**



**| STORRIE LAKE STATE PARK**

**Road Improvements**

**DESCRIPTION:** Constructed a new wide radius road lane beyond the visitor center so the left turn to the campground would be easier and safer for visitors with RVs and large camp trailers.

**Total project cost: \$18,235.00**



New wide radius lane to improve access to the campground

**| SUGARITE CANYON STATE PARK**

**Cabins**

**DESCRIPTION:** This project included the construction of five log cabins in a meadow area off the Wapiti Trail near Lake Maloya. The five log cabins were constructed with standing dead spruce logs set on concrete piers to minimize disturbance to the project site. Each cabin contains four windows, woodstove, sleeping platforms, front porch with railing and a bench, an outdoor area protected by the roof overhang, picnic table, and storage unit for wood. The cabins will have a door with a coded lockset and shutters for safety and protection during off season.

**Total project cost: \$1,133,546.07**



Cabin Overlooking Lake Maloya



Cabin Interior



Cabin Front Porch

**Little Horse Campground**

**DESCRIPTION:** This project included the installation of eleven tent campsites, a parking area with twelve spaces, a single vault toilet, and a natural surface trail along Soda Pocket Road. The tent campsites were constructed along the edge of a meadow area with low modular block walls to create a level area for pitching a tent and each site contains a fire ring, bear proof storage locker, and an identification number post. The parking area, vault toilet and bear proof trash receptacles are located below the tent campsites along Soda Pocket Road and a trail connects the two areas as well as the individual campsites.

**Total project cost: \$585,848.11**



Little Horse Tent Campsite



Little Horse Tent Campsite

**| SUMNER LAKE STATE PARK**

**Accessible Campsite**

**DESCRIPTION:** This project included the renovation of an existing campsite to upgrade the facilities and make it more accessible. The original gravel driveway and two-pole shelter were removed and replaced with a concrete drive pad and picnic table/shelter pad along with a concrete sidewalk that connected the new shelter with an existing comfort station. A new shelter was built and includes a picnic table, fire ring, and water hydrant. All the site amenities were chosen for maximum accessibility and ease of use. A new upgraded pedestal amp was also installed. New

grading work and the installation of a naturalized channel around the project area facilitate positive drainage.

**Total project cost: \$266,742.92**



Eastside Campsite Accessibility Upgrade Shelter



Eastside Campsite Accessibility Upgrades

**PROGRAM SUPPORT BUREAU**

The Program Support Bureau consists of six primary areas of expertise that support state parks, as well as regional and Santa Fe offices. Those areas of support focus on volunteer engagement, natural and cultural resource protection and compliance, outdoor education, business enterprises, workplace safety and loss control, and the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) federal grant program.



The bureau chief also reviews and tracks research and film permit requests. For 2024, the bureau approved 26 research permits for parks. Most requests were for the Rio Grande Nature Center in the central region, although the northeast region is represented with one at Bluewater Lake and three for Navajo Lake.

This year was also busy for film permit requests at 13, with most associated with New Mexico True and the Tourism Department. One scene for a larger-scale independent film, "Gone in June", was shot along the river at Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park.

**| VOLUNTEER PROGRAM**

Park volunteers include camp hosts and day volunteers who assist with operational needs, staff visitor centers, provide educational programming, maintain landscape grounds and trails, clean camp sites, assist campers, staff gift shops, and many other critical needs.

This year park visitation increased, and our volunteers returned to the parks with great enthusiasm and effort. State Parks benefited from the work of hundreds of dedicated volunteers who contributed thousands of hours of service to park operations. For example, the volunteers at Rio Grande Nature Center State Park spent many productive hours this year planting young cottonwoods and willows in the park.

In addition, State Parks also received vital support from seventeen park Friends Groups throughout the year. Friends Groups hosted park events and raised funds to complete park projects. These efforts help offset budget and staff shortfalls.



Volunteer planting a Mexican elderberry tree sapling at Rio Grande Nature Center State Park

**| RESOURCE PROTECTION**

As part of its mission, State Parks documents and preserves the unique cultural and natural resources within its park system. This year, much of the focus was on a series of new, maintenance, and repair projects. State Parks staff and contractors reviewed multiple large and small park projects requiring compliance with various state and federal laws including the National Environmental Policy Act, National Historic Preservation Act, Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, and New Mexico's own Cultural Properties Act. In meeting these compliance requirements, Parks Resource Protection staff successfully coordinated with partner and regulatory agencies that were critical to the compliance process, in addition to coordinating with EMNRD's Tribal Liaison for compliance with related federal and state regulations and policies.

In addition to regulatory compliance, State Parks continued important resource protection projects and partnerships with a variety of local, state, and federal entities. For example, State Parks continues to work with the State Historic Preservation Office's SiteWatch program at several parks as a means of further protecting cultural resources. This important program pairs trained volunteers with archaeological sites that are at risk of damage from unauthorized excavations. The volunteers document any new damage at the sites they oversee and pass that information on to the State's Historic Preservation Division and State Parks. State Parks also continues to analyze many of the collections of cultural materials that are on display at various parks. This is an ongoing commitment to ensuring that interpretation is kept fresh and relevant and that the displays are up to date both in terms of information but also in the way they are cared for as new technologies become available to better manage our cultural materials. For example, the State Parks archaeologist and Program Support bureau chief are working closely with Design and Development staff on proposed renovations to the historic U.S. Customs House at Pancho Villa State Park and the historic Oliver Lee Dog Canyon ranch house at Oliver Lee Memorial State Park. Other projects include replacing vault toilets at Fenton Lake State Park, additional parking at the Ute Lake main boat ramp, and new entrance gates and RV turnarounds at Manzano Mountain State Park and Oliver Lee Memorial State Park.



Historic 1902 U.S. Customs House, Pancho Villa State Park



## | OUTDOOR EDUCATION PROGRAM

State Parks provide quality outdoor interpretive experiences and educational programming for visitors. In 2024, State Parks had over 450 formal programs presented to over 7,000 park visitors, including the April 3 partial solar eclipse event at those parks with the best viewing in the southeastern portion of the state (e.g., Living Desert Zoo and Gardens, Brantley Lake, Bottomless Lakes). Rio Grande Nature Center, an urban area state park in Albuquerque, alone had 4,700 visitors attend 44 different educational and wildlife programs.

State Park staff also draw on the expertise of two consultants, New Mexico Raptors and the New Mexico Wildlife Center—as well as volunteer groups such as the New Mexico Wildlife Rescue—to provide programming for park visitors and school groups.

NM Raptors provided 15 programs at parks across the state. The New Mexico Wildlife Center returned to providing programs for the parks this year and presented 18 programs at 11 different parks for over 380 kids and adults. The following information highlights just a few of the many special and popular state park outdoor interpretation and education programs that occurred this year:

- Oliver Lee Memorial State Park – Tularosa Elementary School students learning about the natural environment of Sacramento Mountains and Dog Canyon riparian area. The park hosted over 200 area school kids this year, and one group of 34 from the Canon City High School in Canon City, Colorado.
- Rio Grande Nature Center State Park – Albuquerque Public Schools brought 4th graders to the park to study the bosque to better understand water use and conservation. The park is a very popular destination for area schools, and many use the Kids 'n Parks transportation grants for these trips.
- Ute Lake State Park – Annual Chuck Wagon Cook-off, featuring the State Parks restored historic chuck wagon, always a very popular event in the northeastern part of the state!
- Cerrillos Hills, City of Rocks, Clayton Lake, and Leasburg Dam State Parks – A variety of ongoing Night Sky Programs at their observatories.
- Living Desert Zoo and Gardens – Annual Zoo Camp for kids split over two weeks (July 15-19 and July 22-26) due to public interest, plus two native New Mexican animal awareness events, Vulture Awareness Day on September 7 and Wolf Awareness Week from October 20-26. The fall season at the park also includes the always popular Boo in the Zoo on October 26 for the Halloween season.
- Oasis State Park – The park held its annual Catfish Derby event on August 31, with 122 derby entrants. Prizes were based on weight of the catfish in junior and adult categories.

State Parks was proud to provide the seventeenth year of Kids 'n

Parks Transportation Grants, a component of the highly successful New Mexico Outdoor Classroom Program (OCP). Kids 'n Parks gives teachers the opportunity to take their students on field trips to a state park, where hands-on, minds-on experiences introduce and reinforce the standards and benchmarks being taught in the classroom.

State Parks pays the transportation costs of such field trips, fully or in part through an outstanding partnership with the New Mexico Museum of Natural History Foundation and Sandia Mountain Natural History Center. These grants result in lasting partnerships with schools, providing teachers with consistent program planning support. In the 2023–2024 school year, the Kids 'n Parks Transportation Grants program awarded \$11,414.15 in grant funds to 15 school districts with awards ranging from \$180–\$2,500. In total, 717 school kids were able to enjoy state parks as part of their school's outdoor education programming, including a group of Taos high school kids at Sugarite Canyon State Park.

State Parks participated in the 6th Annual Girl Scouts Love State Parks national event again this year, which was held September 14–15, 2024. The theme for this year was “Creating a Cleaner Planet.” Seven state park locations offered programs and camping for the scouts over the September weekend, hosting 173 attendees who participated in wildlife and environment events, nature hikes, fishing, and other fun events. The Girl Scouts of New Mexico Trails manager noted that “the feedback on the [follow up] surveys has been very positive, girls loved the Rangers and the beautiful parks and said they had a great time.”

State Parks is proud to partner with the Girl Scouts USA to assist scouts in activities required to earn the Girl Scouts Love the Outdoors Challenge Patch among several other patches.

Today's children truly represent the next generation of outdoor recreation in New Mexico. The knowledge and experience gained through State Parks' OCP will shape the future of resource protection and recreation.



New Mexico Wildlife Center presenting a native animals of New Mexico program at Caballo Lake State Park.



Oliver Lee Memorial State Park hosting a school group from Tularosa Elementary.



Park volunteer Carol Belski and local school kids enjoying their time at Living Desert Zoo and Gardens State Park in Carlsbad for this year's annual Zoo Camp.

**| BUSINESS ENTERPRISE**

State Parks had another successful fiscal year working with the Reserve America online reservation system. State Parks continued to build its online inventory of reservable campsites on Reserve America with a goal of 84% of total campsite inventory available online. Some parks are now at 100% during their busy seasons. This increase was initiated to meet customer demand for making reservations online, and to reduce the amount of cash handling required by park staff.

State Parks through Reserve America accounted for 135,957 resident and 113,786 non-resident visitors, for a total of 249,743 camping visitors to our state parks, with an average stay of 2.67 nights. When in-park onsite camping and day-use visitor tracking numbers are added, more than 5,000,000 individuals visited a New Mexico state park in 2024. Revenue from online reservations and pass sales for FY 2024 was just over \$5.0 million compared to

\$3.6 million in FY 2023. Donations to State Parks through Reserve America were up for FY 2024, with \$35,391 donated compared to \$34,972 in FY 2023.

State Parks thanks everyone that donated through Reserve America. Lastly, the top five parks in total nights booked and revenue generated on Reserve America for FY 2024, in order, are Navajo Lake, Elephant Butte Lake, Caballo Lake, Bottomless Lakes, and Hyde Memorial; the latter two parks are new entrants this year compared to FY 2023. Clearly, New Mexico's lakes, reservoirs, and mountains are top draws for in state and out-of-state visitors. State Parks relies heavily upon relationships with private business concessionaires to provide services that would not otherwise be available. For example, a new operator took over the marina at Elephant Butte Lake State. Peter Meiusi (Marina Vista New Mexico) purchased the existing Marina del Sur operation and immediately began improvements and public welcome events at the marina. Contract and concession businesses generate important additional revenue for the agency.



The new Marina del Sur operator, Marina Vista New Mexico, holding a public welcome event at Marina del Sur on July 27, 2024.

State Parks currently administers 124 contracts and concessions, including 101 fishing and guide permits (who logged 743 trips), four marinas (and two inactive marinas), two boat storage yards, one boat service center, four food/food truck operations, one RV rental through AirBnB, four cell tower leases, one Internet provider, one ski rental shop, two shuttle service, and one septic service.

Total revenue from all contracted and concession sources was \$3,811,460. That breaks down as follows:

- Revenue from fishing guide permits: \$50,300
- Revenue from contracts and concessions: \$1,356,639
- Revenue from Reserve America: \$2,404,521.

These numbers indicate that revenue generated from use of the state parks is holding steady year-over-year.



Park volunteer Carol Belski and local school kids enjoying their time at Living Desert Zoo and Gardens State Park in Carlsbad for this year's annual Zoo Camp.

## | SAFETY AND LOSS CONTROL PROGRAM

The Division's Safety and Loss Control Program continued in its leadership role to provide a safe environment for staff and visitors. A new safety and compliance officer is busy conducting safety inspections, reviewing incident reports, and scheduling safety training events for park staff.

The Bureau continues to monitor and improve on all aspects of safety and loss control across the division by carrying out regular physical inspections; providing reporting and follow-up on sub-standard safety practices or conditions; tracking, coordinating, and providing required safety training (e.g., First Aid/CPR/AED); and coordinating with Risk Management on a variety of property loss claims. Overall, this program is critical to the safety of staff and visitors and benefits efforts to reduce and manage excessive property loss and related incidents. Two notable incidents occurred this year that involved the Safety and Loss Control Program, which are unique occurrences.

These are the removal and cleanup efforts associated with the removal of two sunken cars at Bluewater Lake and Bottomless Lakes State Parks. By working with the park staff, NMDOT, State Police, and contractors to safely remove the cars and clean-up minor fluid releases from the car at Bluewater Lake, State Park staff mitigated potential environmental and safety hazard risks at these two parks.



Removal of car from Lazy Lagoon sinkhole at Bottomless Lakes State Park by tying floats to it to raise it 60 feet to the surface.

## | LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

State Parks received its annual stateside apportionment from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) administered by the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service for federal fiscal year 2023 in the amount of \$3,193,100 and recently \$3,510,000 for federal fiscal year 2024.

Recent State Parks system infrastructure projects benefit greatly from this program, including campground and infrastructure improvements at Coyote Creek State Park and Eagle Nest State Park. In addition, these funds are used to support the re-establishment of New Mexico's annual LWCF Local Assistance Program, which provides matching funding opportunities to New Mexico municipalities, counties, tribal organizations, and other state subdivisions.

State Parks solicited proposals from eligible entities (state subdivisions and tribes) for the federal fiscal year 2023 and announced the opening of the 2024 application cycle on September 2, 2024. For 2023, State Parks received five applications requesting a total of \$1,589,309 in grant awards that have been reviewed by a scoring committee and are ready for processing by State Parks staff.

Applicants from the 2021 and 2022 rounds who received notices of award from the NPS in 2024, include the following entities:

- The cities and towns of Albuquerque, Bernalillo, Carlsbad, Farmington, Las Cruces, Red River, Santa Rosa, and Socorro
- Curry County



State Parks also processed an LWCF Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) program grant of \$858,644 to Albuquerque for its Officer Daniel Webster Park and submitted two applications from Albuquerque and Carlsbad for the most recent ORLP call for applications by the NPS.

## MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS BUREAU

The Marketing and Communications Bureau coordinates the advertising, marketing, promotional, and public relations efforts of the New Mexico State Parks System. The department currently employs two people in the Santa Fe office, including one Marketing and Public Relations Manager and one Assistant Marketing Manager/Art Director.

Administrative functions include coordinating radio and television public service announcements; preparing and distributing promotional literature; coordinating print and photographic material for publications; cooperation and coordinating with partners such as the New Mexico Department of Tourism.

### | ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Collaborated with the State Parks law enforcement program to fund and successfully complete two 30-second recruitment videos. Both advertisements are currently running on local television stations and websites in English and Spanish.
- Partnered with the State Parks Boating Safety Program to produce public safety messaging for television and radio stations, statewide publications, multiple websites, and social media. In 2024, advertising funding and frequency of messaging was increased to encourage the public to wear life jackets on New Mexico waterways.
- Maintained the State Parks website, which combined with the full EMNRD website, included the following.
  - Total Visitors: 622,970.
  - Unique Visitors: 425,527.
  - Top 3 Park Pages Visited: Elephant Butte Lake, Bottomless Lakes, City of Rocks.
- Social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, X/Twitter, and YouTube) continue to enhance the image of the parks and promote events and activities. Social media remains the primary means of sharing information and promoting State Parks events. The number of followers continues to increase year to year.

- Total Followers: 80,329 - 2% Increase.
- Facebook Followers: 45,955 - 3% Increase.
- Instagram Followers: 31,880 - 1% Increase.
- X (Twitter) Followers: 2,494 - 1% Increase.
- Distributed the monthly e-newsletter to more than 800,000 subscribers via the Aspira/Reserve America reservation system partnership.
  - Aspira sent 11 newsletters and delivered over 842,000 emails to subscribers.
  - Average unique open rate is 40%, which is above the 37% industry standard.
  - Average unique click rate is 3.12%, which is right around the 2% industry standards.
- Produced an updated State Parks bi-lingual overview brochure to be distributed to all 35 parks and various outlets across the state, including the NMTD, Discover Clayton NM, San Juan County, City of Albuquerque, and other tourism-related organizations to inform the public of the amenities and features offered at each park.
  - 70,000 overview brochures distributed
  - 10,000 to NM Tourism Department
- Partnered with Santa Barbara-based Entertainment Marketing Group to develop two educational brochures for children featuring Nickelodeon's Dora the Explorer and a new book called Finding Family about a mallard duckling raised by a pair of loons. This book is a good fit for New Mexico State Parks as the state is one of the major migration routes for hundreds of species of birds and many of our parks feature bird blinds and other wildlife viewing areas. The trifold-style pamphlets contain information about conservation, and outdoor recreation and provide interactive elements such as word finds and puzzles that children can work on with their families.
- Attended trade shows, conferences, and other events as an exhibitor to distribute marketing materials and New Mexico State Park branded giveaway items and to promote the parks. This includes the 2024 New Mexico State Fair which draws an estimated half-million visitors over a 10-day period.

### | FUTURE MARKETING EFFORTS

A State Park Ambassador Program is planned to encourage visitors to share their photos, videos, and blogs on social media to assist in promoting the parks. A Passport Program is also in the works to encourage visitors to get a special passport book stamped for each park they visit. Marketing our new and existing campgrounds and facilities will continue to be a priority as we encourage the public to get out and enjoy their State Parks on a year-round basis.