



United States Department of Agriculture



New Mexico State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting

5/28/2026

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center



Agenda

Welcome/Introductions- Kenneth Branch

State Conservationist- Xavier Montoya

Programs- NRCS Programs Staff

1. Intro to State Technical Advisory Committee/Section 1619- Kenneth
2. Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)- Lucas Montano
3. Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)/ HPCC Conservation Restoration Plans- Martin Meairs
4. Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)- Kenneth Lujan
5. Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) and Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)- Athena Cholas
6. Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP)- David Griego

Resource Technology – Ana Gomes and RTS Staff

1. CPA 52- Nick Goodman

Engineering - Elias Gnann

Partner Updates

- Farm Service Agency- Joilynn Gray
- Other Partners

Questions

Responsibilities of the State Technical Advisory Committee

- Provide information, analysis, recommendations to USDA on conservation priorities and criteria for natural resources conservation activities and programs, including application and funding
- Identify emerging natural resource concerns and program needs
- Recommend conservation practice standards and specifications
- Recommend State and national program policy based on resource data

Responsibilities (Cont)

- Review activities of the local working groups to ensure State priorities are being addressed locally
- Make recommendations to the State Conservationist on requests and recommendations from local working groups
- Assist NRCS with public outreach and information efforts and identify educational and producers' training needs



United States Department of Agriculture

Section 1619

**of the Food, Conservation and Energy
Act**

Section 1619

- NRCS's privacy protection obligations under Section 1619 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (codified as 7 U.S.C. § 8791(b)) ("Section 1619"). Agreement at § 3(e). Section 1619 strictly limits the USDA, its contractors, and cooperators from disclosing PII related to agricultural producers or landowners
- This includes:
 - Information about agricultural operations
 - Farming/conservation practices
 - Geospatial data about agricultural land or operations

Exemptions

- Despite the protections afforded by Section 1619, it allows for certain exemptions under which information can be shared
 - When providing technical or financial assistance related to agricultural operations, land, or conservation practices; or
 - In response to a disease outbreak or pest threat.
- When information is shared under these exemptions, the receiving agency is bound by the same confidentiality provisions of Section 1619 and thus prohibited from further disclosure



Section 1619 Intent

The statutory intent is to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the information submitted by individuals to participate in USDA programs, and to prevent subsequent disclosure which would undermine that goal.

Updated Program Deadlines

Program/Initiative	Application Deadline	Ranking	80% Obligation
EQIP Classic**	January 15,2026*	April 3,2026	May 29, 2026
CSP Classic	January 15,2026*	April 3,2026	May 29, 2026
2025 CSP Renewals	June 20, 2025*	Combined with CSP Classic	Combined with CSP Classic
CSP- GCI-1	TBA*	TBA*	TBA*
ACEP	January 15,2026*	February 27,2026	TBA*
CIG	TBA		
Deadlines are subject to change. Second Sign ups may be announced if needed			
* NHQ Established Deadline			



United States Department of Agriculture

Questions?

Email recommendations to

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Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

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Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Overview

- EQIP provides technical and financial assistance to agricultural producers and forest landowners to address natural resource concerns, such as:
 - Improved water and air quality
 - Conserved ground and surface water
 - Increased soil health
 - Reduced soil erosion and sedimentation
 - Improved or created wildlife habitat
 - Mitigation against drought and increasing weather volatility.
 - SWAPA+E (Soil, Water, Air, Plants, Animals, Energy)
- NRCS works one-on-one with producers to develop a conservation plan that outlines conservation practices and activities to help solve on-farm resource issues.
- EQIP is a voluntary program, and the intention of the program is to help producers make conservation work for them.

EQIP FY26 State Pools

- IMPAC changes reduced the number of fund pools in each State can have down to 5:
 - North Area
 - South Area
 - WME
 - Tribal
 - Disaster
- Each pool has categories within them to capture national, state, and local priorities:
 - BFR
 - SD
 - Wildlife
 - Urban
 - Source Water
 - WaterSmart
 - Regenerative Pilot Program
 - NWQI
 - Teams 1-11

EQIP FY26 State Pools: WME

- Water Management Entity categories (Irrigation Districts, Aquifer Recovery, and Acequia)
- Water Management Entities (WMEs) are defined as a state irrigation district, ground water management district, acequia, land grant-merced, or similar entity that has jurisdiction or responsibilities related to water delivery or management on eligible lands.
- WMEs can enter into a EQIP contract if all the following criteria is met:
 - WME is a public or semi-public agency or organization
 - The purpose of the WME is to assist private agricultural producers with managing water distribution or conservation systems
 - The water conservation or irrigation practices support a water conservation project that will effectively conserve water, provide fish and wildlife habitat, or provide drought-related environmental mitigation.



EQIP FY26 State Pools: Tribal

- To further our reach to Historically Underserved Participants, a Tribal Pool was created to focus on the following categories:
 - Tribal Forest
 - Tribal Grazed Range
 - Tribal Irrigated Crop

EQIP FY26 State Pools: Disaster

- Disaster Signup for Agricultural Producers Impacted by Invasive Noxious Weed and Locoweed
 - On April 28, 2026, an EQIP Disaster Signup was announced for Harding County
 - On May 4, 2026, the signup was extended to Union County
 - Signup closed on May 8, 2026
 - \$672,866 allocated for the signup
 - 10 contracts obligated to date

News Release

1400 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20250
FPAC.BC.Press@usda.gov

UPDATE: USDA's NRCS New Mexico Adds Union County to Area Eligible for Disaster Assistance Offered for Agricultural Producers Impacted by Invasive Noxious Weed and Locoweed.

Sign-Up Period will be Extended to May 8 for Harding and Union County.

ALBUQUERQUE, NM – May 4, 2026 – Severe contrasts between wet weather last fall and drier conditions this year have resulted in an invasive amount of noxious weed and locoweed. This has placed a strain and hardship on the ranchers of the area, with some reporting losses on cattle and horses. Harding County issued an Emergency Declaration on April 13th. Union County issued an Emergency Declaration on April 30th.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in New Mexico has extended the sign-up deadline to May 8th for producers in Harding County and Union County for disaster assistance funding through the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\)](#) to provide technical and financial assistance to agricultural landowners and producers recovering from invasive, noxious weeds and locoweed.

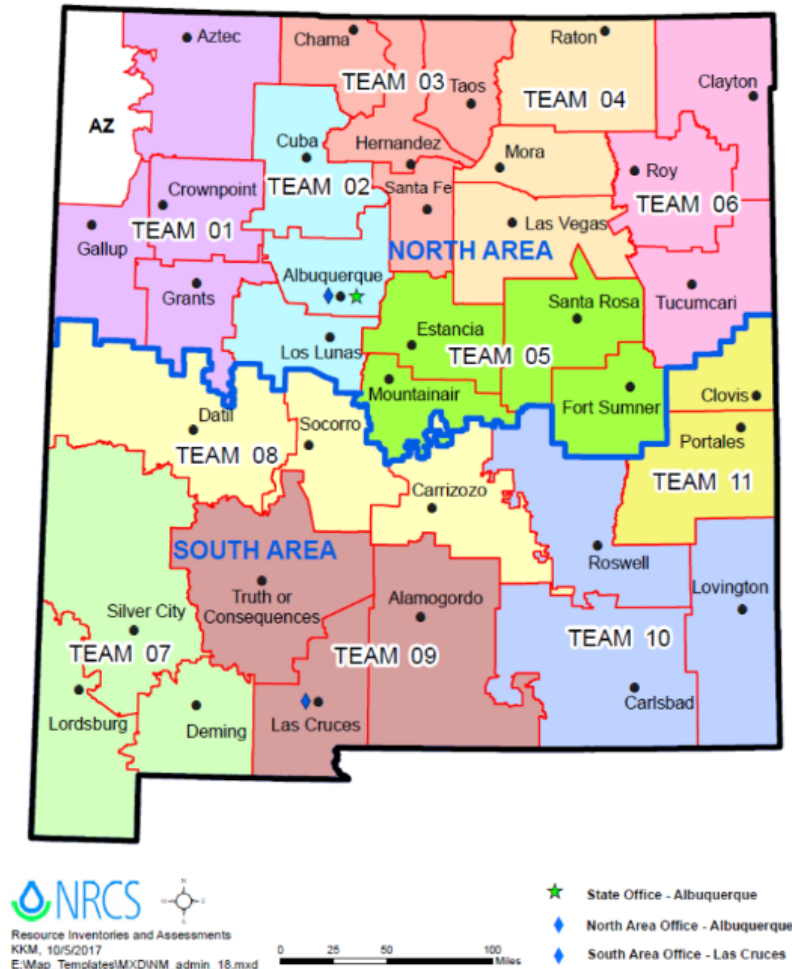
NRCS New Mexico will utilize "[Act Now](#)" to process applications more quickly. "Act Now" allows NRCS to pre-approve ranked applications when the ranking score meets or exceeds an established threshold. Applications will be batched and processed in the order received.

To apply, contact the [Roy field office](#) at 411 Chicosa St., Roy, NM 87743, (575) 485-2294 Ext. 3 or the [Clayton field office](#) at 20 N 2nd St, Clayton, NM 88415, (575) 374-9461 Ext. 3.

[More Information](#)

EQIP FY26 State Pools: Area

- There are 35 NRCS Service Centers located across the state that are broken up in 11 teams and 2 areas. A fund pool was created for each area (North and South).
- To ensure funds are spent the best way possible, the district conservationist of each team holds a local working group meeting to hear the public's recommendations.
- Allocations per team are determined based on land uses within their teams from the US Ag Census.



EQIP FY26 National Priorities

- National Water Quality (NWQI)
 - Animas River- Tucker Canyon
- Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP)
- Source Water - Priority areas in Team 1, 3, 7, and 10
- WaterSMART: (Funding length varies between 4 to 5 years depending on approved proposal)
 - Fort Sumner Irrigation District- (Year 5 of 5)
 - The Pueblo of Zia- (Year 2 of 5)

The 2018 Farm Bill requires specific targets for financial assistance (FA):

- 50% to livestock- related conservation practices,
- 10% to wildlife-related conservation practices,
- 5% to beginning farmers and ranchers (BFR),
- 5% to socially disadvantage farmers and ranchers (SD).

EQIP FY26 Local Categories

- Categories included in the Area Pools:
 - BFR
 - SD
 - Urban
 - Source Water
 - NWQI
 - WaterSmart
 - Regenerative Pilot Program
- Each of the 11 Teams have between 3-5 ranking categories that are focused on specific land uses:
 - Irrigated Crop
 - Dry Crop
 - Range
 - Forest
 - Animal Feeding Operations (AFO)s
 - Irrigated Pasture or Pasture



Source Water Protection Watersheds FY2026:

- Source Water Protection is focused on protecting sources of drinking water by identifying practices that have a significant water quality or water quantity benefit and implementing those practices in high priority areas.
- FY26, four different areas, located in Teams 1, 3, 7, and 10.

Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP)

- Regenerative Agriculture is a conservation management approach that addresses natural resource concerns through soil health, water management, and biodiversity to improve the productivity and prosperity of agriculture, communities, and ecosystems. Focusing on regenerative agriculture builds upon the Natural Resource Conservation Service's (NRCS) existing conservation work by helping producers restore land health, improve long-term productivity, and build resilient, future-ready operations.
- Offers financial and technical assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) to promote whole-farm planning and the voluntary development of regenerative agriculture conservation plans that are designed to address natural resource concerns.

RPP Continued

■ Requirements

- **Whole Farm Assessment:** A complete assessment of all resource concerns is required, with the goal of establishing a whole farm plan before the end of the contract period. At a minimum, whole farm plans must meet NRCS planning criteria in the soil and water resource categories. These plans may be developed by NRCS staff, partners, or technical service providers.
- **Primary Practices:** At least one primary regenerative management practice must be included in the contract. All practices identified in the conservation plan will be eligible for financial assistance; however, producers may select which practices they want to include in the financial assistance application based on their goals and objectives.
- **Soil Testing:** Participants must agree to perform soil testing in the first and last year of the contract (at a minimum) to establish a starting baseline and to record the resulting changes. Financial assistance for soil testing will be available to both producers who have not previously completed soil testing and producers who are already testing their soil.



RPP Primary Practices

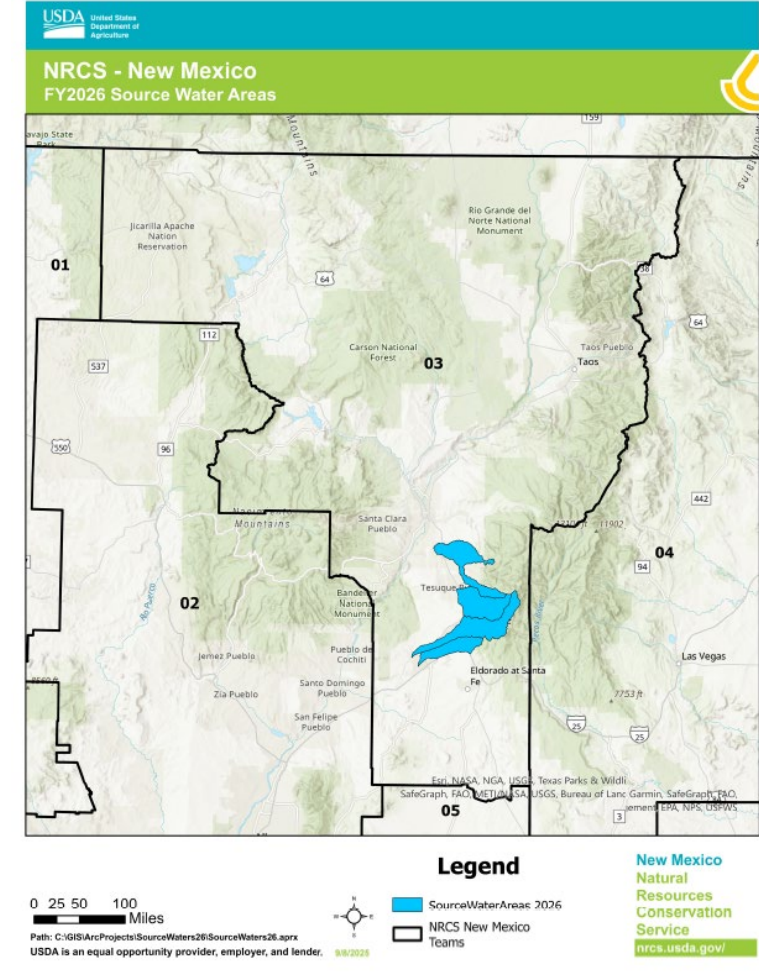
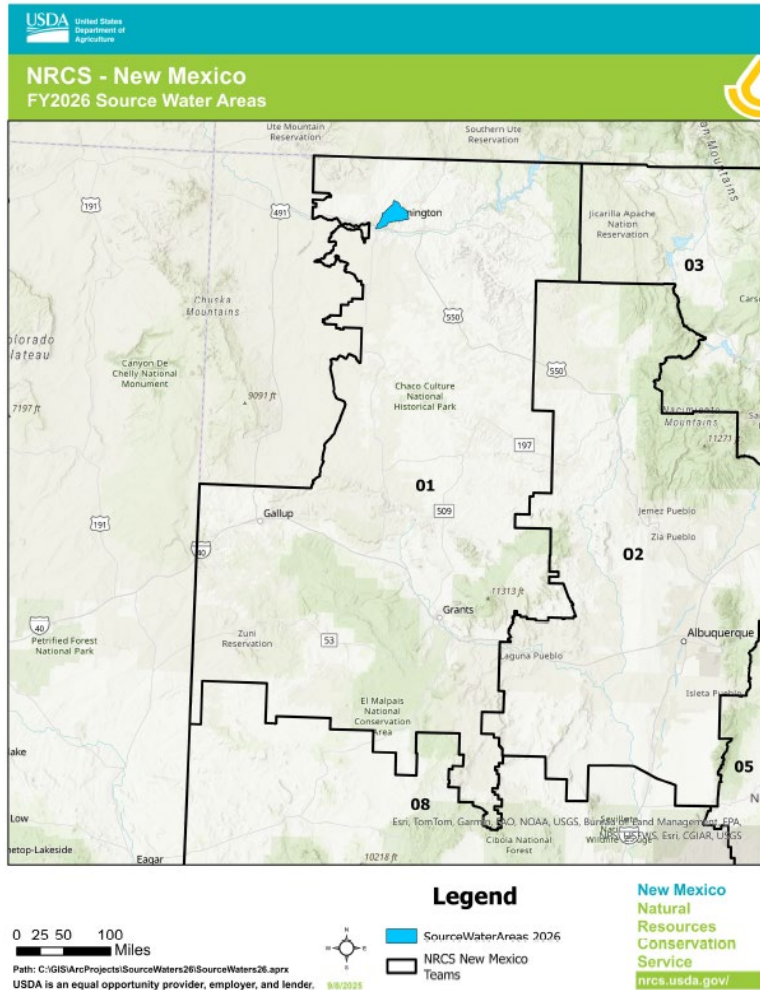
Code	Asset Name	Crop	Forest	Pasture	Range
328	Conservation Crop Rotation	Y	N	N	N
330	Contour Farming	Y	N	N	N
331	Contour Orchard and Other Perennial Crop	Y	N	N	N
340	Cover Crop	Y	Y	Y	N
554	Drainage Water Management	Y	Y	Y	Y
511	Forage Harvest Management	Y	Y	Y	Y
666	Forest Stand Improvement	N	Y	Y	N
449	Irrigation Water Management	Y	Y	Y	N
484	Mulching	Y	Y	Y	Y
590	Nutrient Management	Y	Y	Y	N
595	Pest Management Conservation System	Y	Y	Y	Y
528	Prescribed Grazing	Y	Y	Y	Y
329	Residue and Tillage Management, No Till	Y	N	N	N
345	Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced	Y	N	N	N
585	Stripcropping	Y	N	N	N

RPP Continued

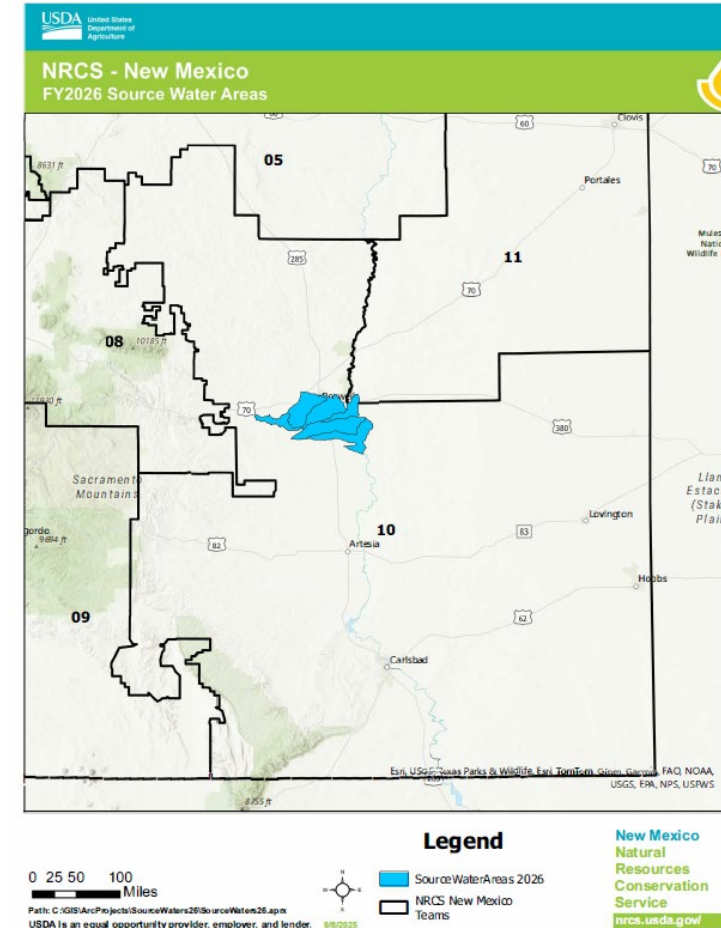
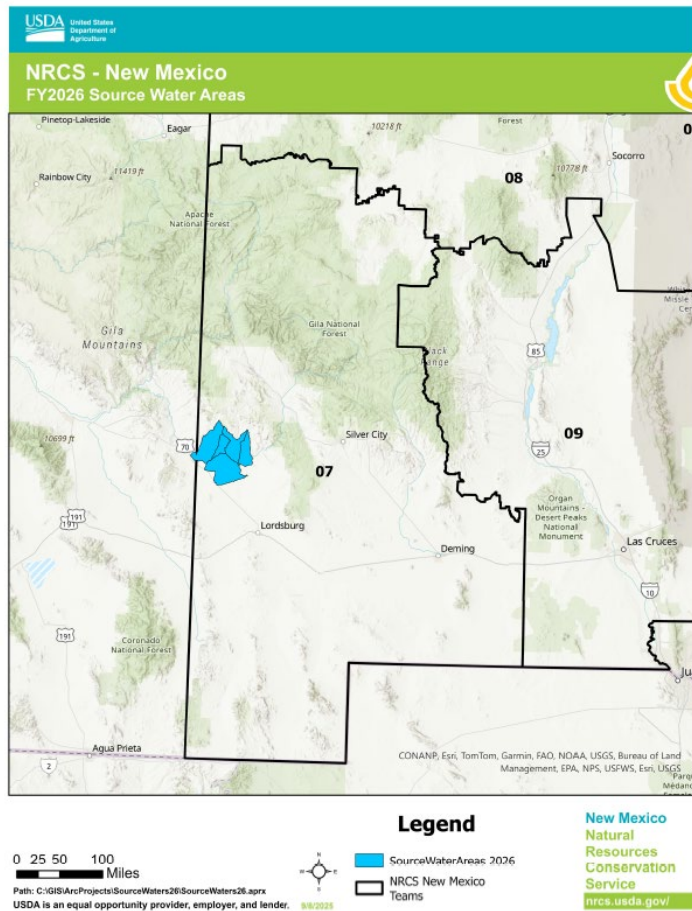
- Allocation
 - States are required to use 25% of their allocation towards RPP
 - New Mexico: \$7,058,500
 - 1 Contract Obligated
 - 28 applications Preapproved for Funding



Source Water Protection Watersheds



Source Water Protection Watersheds



Source Water Protection Watersheds Practices

- 313- Waste Storage Facility
- 316- Animal Mortality
- 317- Composting Facility
- 329- Residue and Tillage Management, No Till
- 340- Cover Crop
- 359- Waste Treatment Lagoon
- 360- Water Facility Closure
- 362- Diversion
- 366- Anaerobic Digester
- 367- Roofs and Covers
- 386- Field Border
- 391- Riparian Forest Buffer
- 393- Filter Strip
- 395- Stream Habitat Improvement and Management
- 410- Grade Stabilization Structure
- 422- Hedgerow Planting
- 449- Irrigation Water Management.
- 511- Forage Harvest Management
- 528- Prescribed Grazing
- 590- Nutrient Management
- 595- Pest Management Conservation System
- 620- Underground outlet
- 629- Waste Treatment
- 632- Waste Separation Facility
- 633- Waste Recycling
- 634- Waste Transfer
- 635- Vegetated Treatment Area.
- 384- Woody Residue Treatment
- 412- Grassed Waterway
- 550- Range Planting
- 643- Restoration of Range Planting
- 666- Forest Stand Improvement.
- 550-Range Planting

WaterSmart

- Active

- Fort Sumner Irrigation District- (Year 5 of 5)
- The Pueblo of Zia- (Year 2 of 5)
- <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/eqip-watersmart/priority-areas#newmexico>

- NRCS's EQIP WaterSMART Initiative (WSI) is a collaboration with the Bureau of Reclamation to coordinate investments in priority areas for improving water conservation and drought resilience. BOR: <https://www.usbr.gov/watersmart/>
 - Reclamation makes their WaterSMART programs available across the Western US and other areas to help states, tribes, and local entities plan for and implement projects that increase water supply by providing funds to modernize infrastructure and otherwise build resilience to drought impacts.
 - NRCS uses EQIP WaterSmart funds to complement Reclamation WaterSMART funded projects by helping eligible farmers and ranchers make improvements that align with the paired Reclamation WaterSMART project.
 - Eligible farmers and ranchers with operations in a selected priority area will be automatically ranked in the WSI category when they apply for EQIP funding.

National Water Quality Initiative

- NWQI was established in FY2012 as an initiative delivered jointly with state quality agencies and the Environmental Protection Agency to address agricultural sources of water pollution (nutrients, sediment, and pathogens) in priority watersheds.
 - All states must participate with at least three priority 12-digit HUC watersheds. The watersheds can either be in the planning or implementation phase.
- FY2026:
 - Animas River (Implementation Phase- Meaning FA funds provided to obligate contracts)
 - Flora Vista - 140801041005
 - Estes Arroyo- 140801041004
 - Tucker Canyon- 140801041003
 - Rio Grande (Planning Phase- Meaning a watershed plan needs to be developed with TA funds.)
 - Alameda Arroyo- 130301020608
 - Anthony Wash- 130301020803

NWQI Recommendations

- Participation in Animas River has also decreased. We kept this watershed for FY2026 but will reevaluate its use for FY2027.
- We are looking for recommendations for new implementation watersheds or planning watersheds.



High Priority Practices

- “High Priority Practices” are eligible for increased payments for conservation practices that:
 - Are underutilized
 - Address specific cause of ground or surface water impairment related to excessive nutrients
 - Address the conservation of water and declining aquifers and mitigate drought
 - Meet other environmental priorities and priority resource concerns identified in habitat or other area restoration plans
 - Are geographically targeted to address a resource concern in a specific watershed.
- “High Priority Practices” can overlap with the Source Water practices, but for High Priority Practices we are limited to 10.

High Priority Practices

FY2026: 10 High Priority Practices

- 329-Residue and Tillage Management, No Till
- 338-Prescribed Buring
- 340-Cover Crop
- 345-Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced Till
- 362-Diversion
- 410-Grade Stabilization Structure
- 420-Wildlife Habitat Planting
- 590-Nutrient Management
- 645-Upland Wildlife Habitat Management
- 64- Structures for Wildlife.

- Request
 - Do these 10 practices need to change? Are there any other practices that have high potential for conservation benefit but are underutilized?

EQIP FY26: TSP

- **National Bulletin [440-26-12](#)** released on May 7, 2026, notifying states that Technical Service Provider (TSP) specific technical assistance (TA) allocations for 900 series codes are available for FY 2026.
 - NM allocation: \$86,000
 - Establish a dedicated TSP TA Fund that incentivizes the States to promote more TSP use
 - Provides program participants a choice to receive their technical assistance from an approved third-party provider
 - Technical workload relief for field offices
 - Enhanced and personal experience for the customer
 - Expedited conservation program delivery

We need TSPs!

- New Mexico TSP Coordinator:
 - Samuel Fullen
 - Samuel.Fullen@usda.gov
 - Office Phone Number: 505-761-4450



Allocations

- Fiscal Year 2026:
 - EQIP General: \$28,234,000
- Fiscal Year 2025:
 - EQIP General: \$23,880,145.00
- Fiscal Year 2024:
 - EQIP General: \$24,226,924
 - EQIP IRA: \$30,619,000
 - Total: \$54,845,924
- Fiscal Year 2023:
 - EQIP General: \$23,742,000
 - EQIP IRA: \$4,851,452.97
 - Total: \$28,593,452.97
- Fiscal Year 2022:
 - EQIP General: \$26,320,085.08
- Fiscal Year 2021:
 - EQIP General: \$27,644,095.64
- Fiscal Year 2020:
 - EQIP General: \$20,880,044.69



Application Statistics

- FY26: 1,317 Applications
- FY25: 1,231 applications (IRA & General)
- FY24: 1,220 applications (IRA & General)
 - More than twice the number of applications from FY23.
- FY23: 608 applications (IRA & General)
- FY22: 662 applications (only General)
- FY21: 533 applications (only General)
- FY20: 537 applications (only General)



Contract Obligation Statistics:

- FY2025:
 - 158 contracts obligated

- FY2024:
 - EQIP General: 220 contracts, EQIP IRA: 260 contracts
 - Total: 480 contracts

- FY2023:
 - EQIP General: 291 contracts, EQIP IRA 62
 - 353 contracts obligated

- FY2022: 333 contracts obligated

- FY2021: 307 contracts obligated

Top 5 EQIP Practices in New Mexico for FY2024:

- Irrigation Pipeline (430)-\$4,305,913
 - Brush Management (314)- \$2,927,072
 - Sprinkler System (442)-\$2,847,099
 - Fence (382)-\$1,566,357
 - Forest Stand Improvement (666) -
\$1,434,121
-
- NRCS Financial Assistance Program Practices Data webpage. Open to the public.
 - <https://www.farmers.gov/data/financial-assistance-practices>

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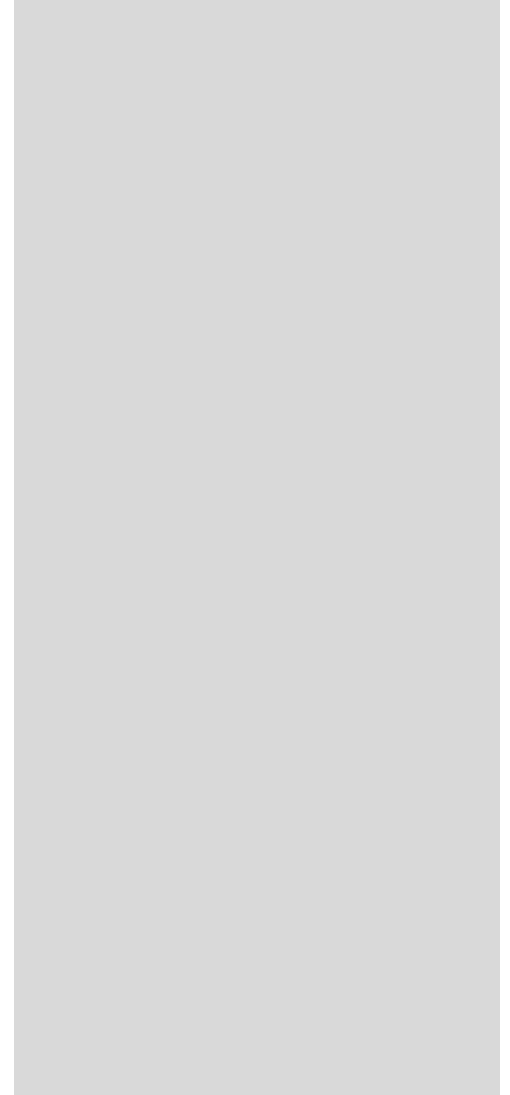
CSP Overview

Martin Mears, CSP Program Manager

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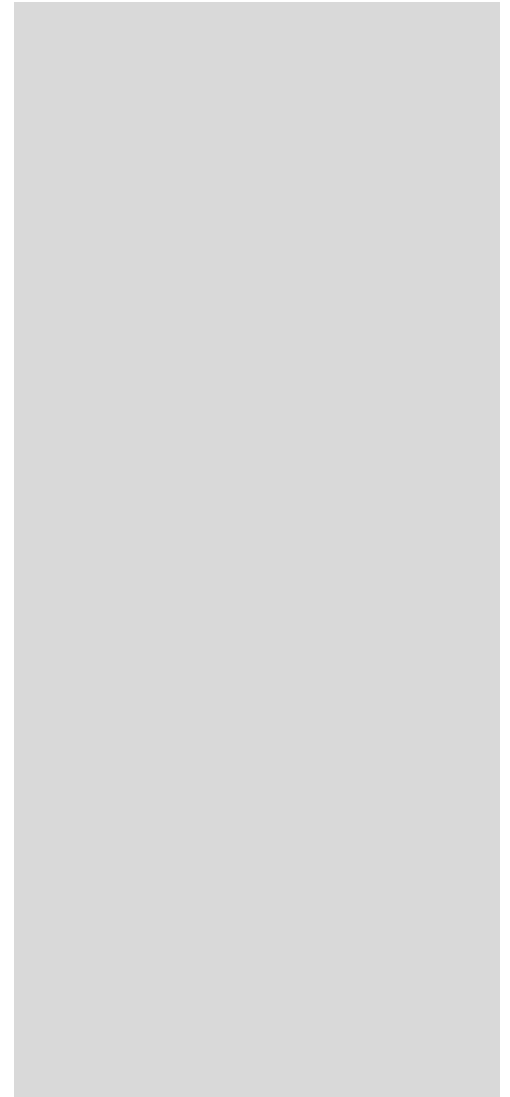
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- What is CSP;
- Offers technical and financial assistance to help agricultural and forest producers take their conservation efforts to the next level
- The program is designed to compensate producers who agree to increase their level of conservation



What are the benefits

- Can help producers:
 - Develop a grazing plan that will improve their forage base
 - Implement no-till to reduce erosion
 - Manage forested areas in a way that benefits wildlife habitat
- Encourages adoption of new technologies and management techniques



CSP Payments

- CSP is a 5-year contract with yearly payments
- Has an annual payment that consists of:
 - Payments to maintain the existing level of conservation
 - Payments to implement additional conservation practices

CSP Improvements

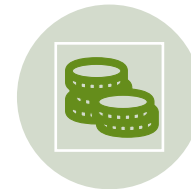
- CSP existing activity payments (E300EAP) will be \$4,000 per year
 - Removes issues with minimum annual payment adjustments
- Contract Limits for FY2026:
 - \$300,000 for individuals and entities (that are not joint operations)
 - \$600,000 for Joint Operations (Business Type 2 or 3)



increased costs



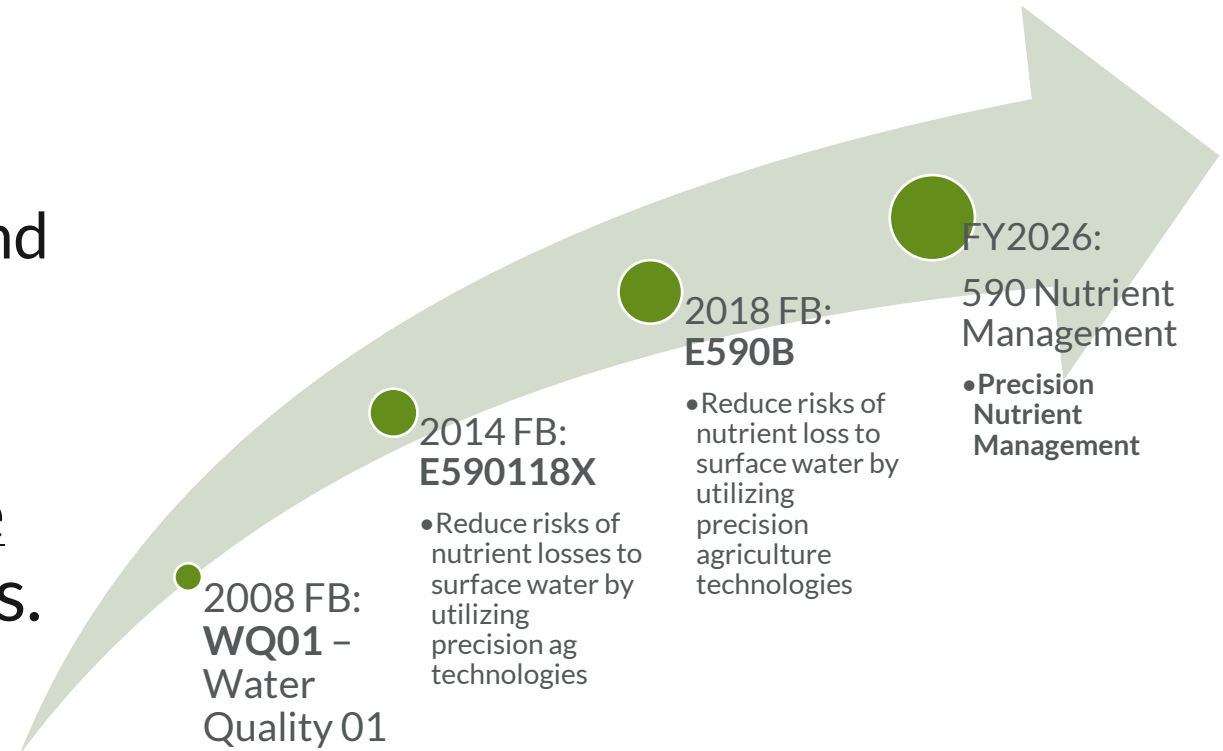
inflation



higher payment
rates for new
activities

CSP Payments - New Activities

- Unique enhancement codes (“E” codes) no longer used.
 - Allows program neutral planning and CART assessment.
- CSP is an opportunity to enhance practices and Ag/NIPF operations.
- **Old:** Enhancement
- **New:** Enhancing practices and the operation



CSP Pool Management

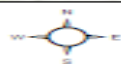
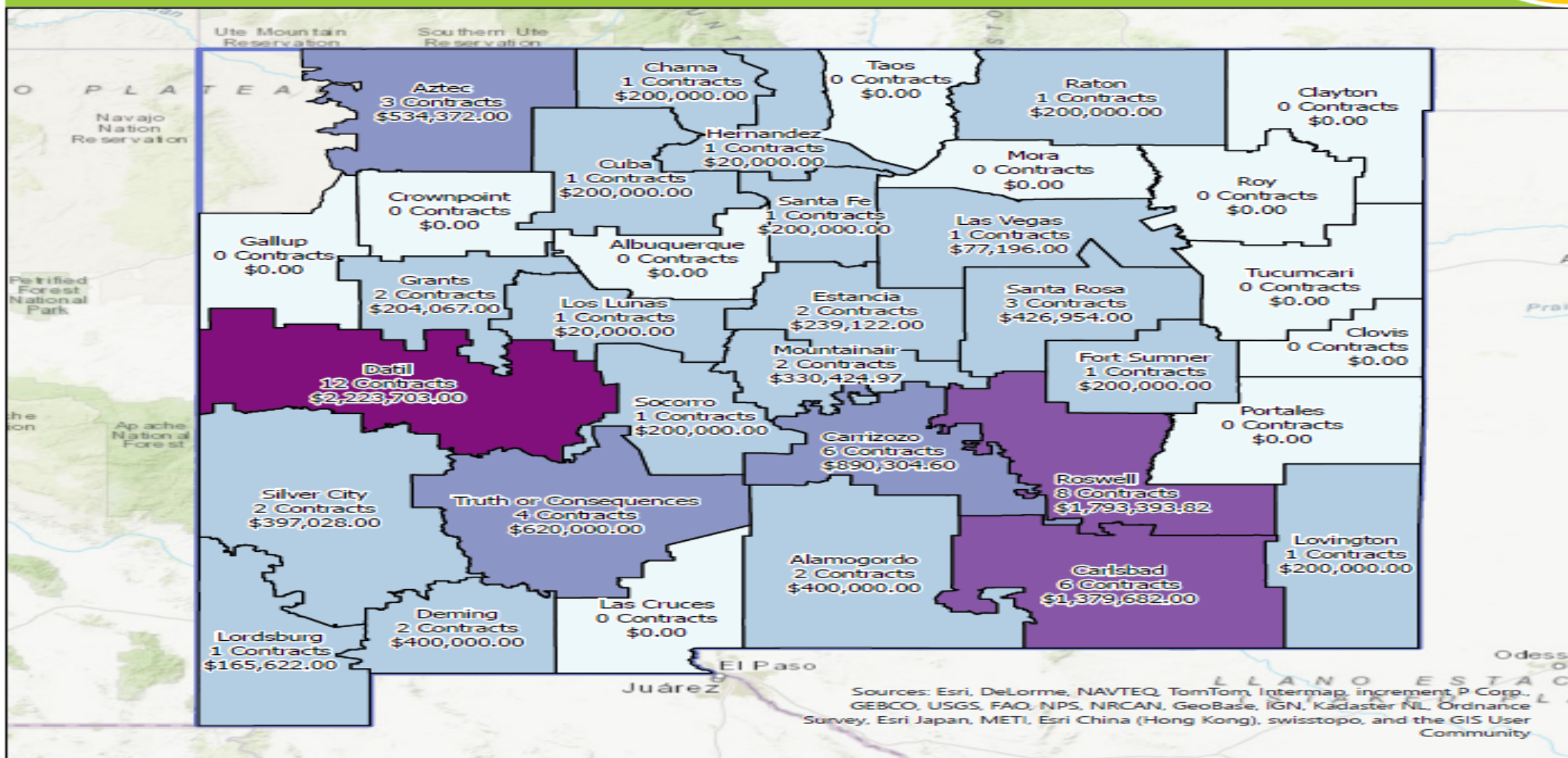
- Established separate ranking pools for the following:
 - Agricultural land (crop, pasture, rangeland)
 - Non-industrial private forest land (NIPF)
- Must target at least 5% of available funds to BFR and SDFR using separate ranking pool categories for each
- Must target at least 25% of available funds to RPP
- Must offer separate funding category for Organic producers



United States
Department of
Agriculture

NRCS - New Mexico

2024 CSP Farm Bill Obligated Contracts and Funds per Service Center



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CSP Farm Bill

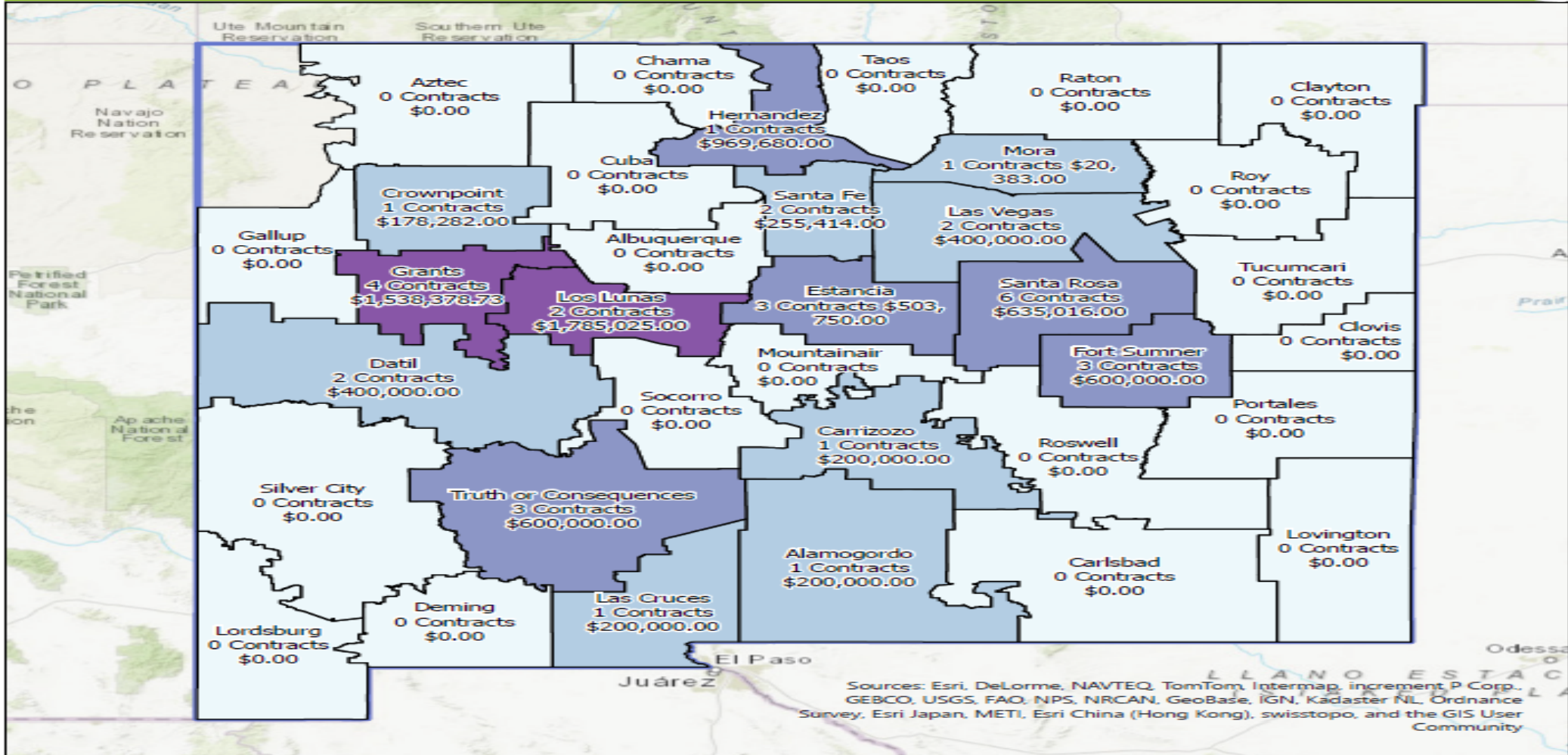
	\$0
	\$1 - \$500,000
	\$500,001 - \$1,000,000
	\$1,000,001 - \$2,000,000
	\$2,000,000 - \$3,000,000

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NRCS - New Mexico

2024 CSP Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Obligated Contracts and Funds per Service Center



Sources: Esri, DeLorme, NAVTEQ, TomTom, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), swisstopo, and the GIS User Community

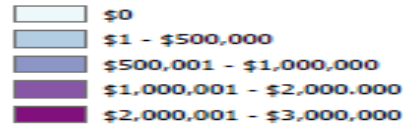


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CSP IRA Funds



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FY25 Obligated CSP Contracts Per Service Center

\$0 - \$400,000	Total Contracts
Hernandez	3
Deming	2
Lordsburg	2
Aztec	1
Carlsbad	1
Las Cruces	1
Las Vegas	1
Lovington	1
Mora	1
Roswell	1
Socorro	1
Tucumcari	1
Alamogordo	0
Albuquerque	0
Clayton	0
Crownpoint	0
Clovis	0
Cuba	0
Gallup	0
Raton	0
Roy	0
Santa Fe	0

\$400,001 - \$1,000,000	Total Contracts
Chama	6
Grants	5
Santa Rosa	5
Datil	4
Fort Sumner	3
Taos	3
Truth or Consequences	3

\$1,000,000 - \$1,500,000	Total Contracts
Estancia	12
Mountainair	7
Los Lunas	1

\$1,500,001 - \$2,000,000	Total Contracts
Carrizozo	10
Silver City	8



CSP Allocation for FY26

Categories	Amount	Notes
RPP	\$ 3,331,250	RPP must receive 25% of CSP General Allocation
BFR	\$ 666,250	
SD	\$ 666,250	
Source Water	\$ 1,332,500	Teams 1, 3, 7 & 10 each to receive \$333,125
Organic	\$ 50,000	
Team Allocation	\$ 7,278,750	Each Team to Receive \$661,704.55
Total CSP Allocation	\$ 13,325,000	

RPP CSP

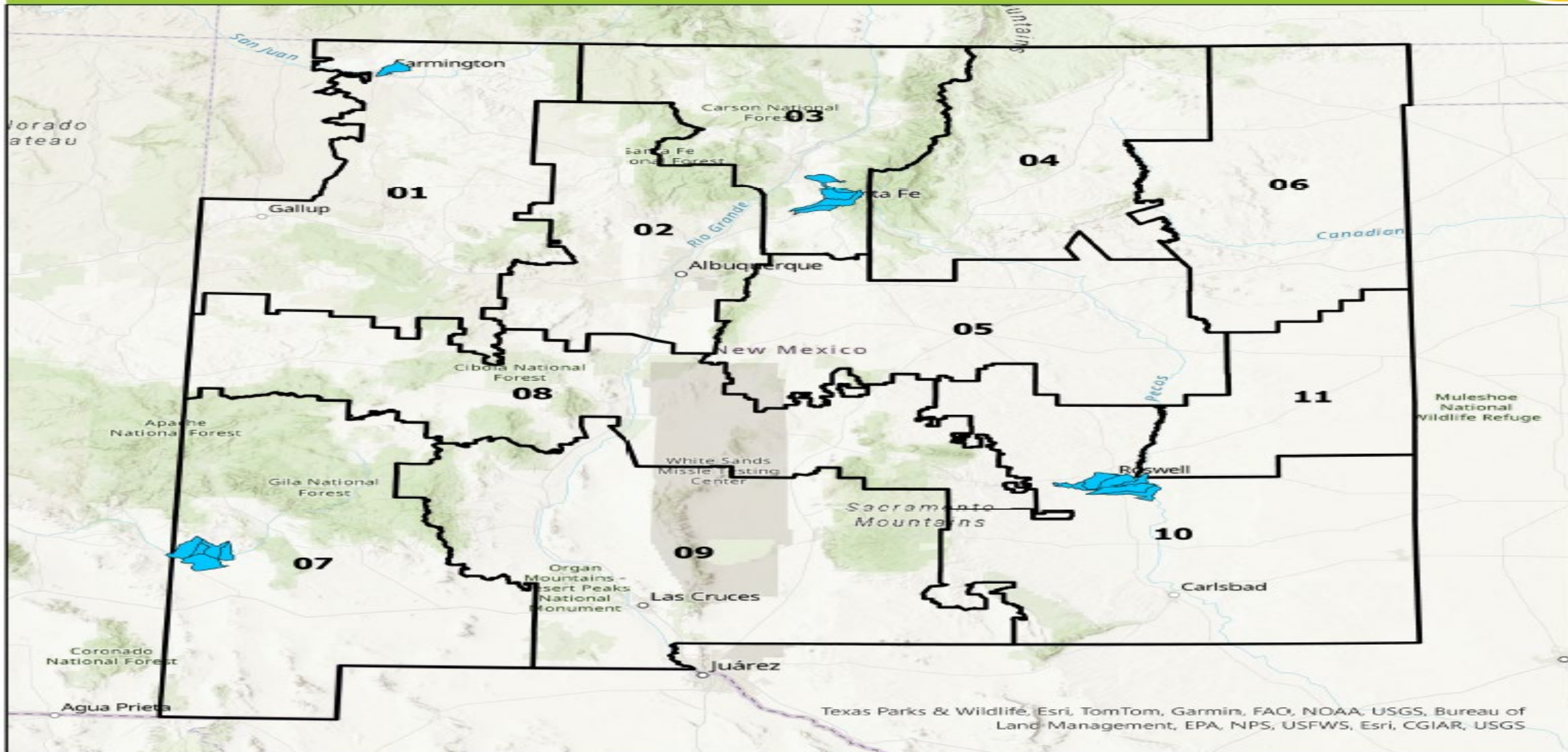
CSP

- To qualify for Regen Pilot Program:
 - All land under control for the life of the contract will be evaluated
 - All applicable Resource Concerns evaluated
 - Meet CSP Stewardship Threshold Eligibility
 - *RPP Addition* - Soil and Water RC thresholds are at met condition by end of contract On at least one land use (of range, pasture, crop, forest)
 - planned practices necessary to achieve outcome must be contracted
- and***

At least one land unit in the assessment must meet the following:

- One Primary Regen Practice planned or currently being implemented
- Soil Health Testing beginning and end of contract

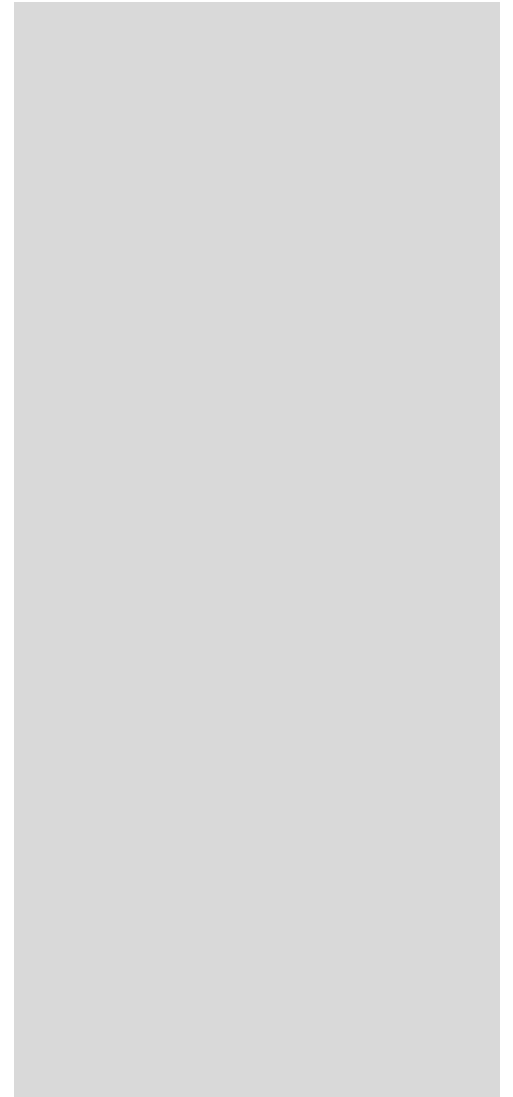
NRCS - New Mexico FY2026 Source Water Areas





CSP Renewals FY26

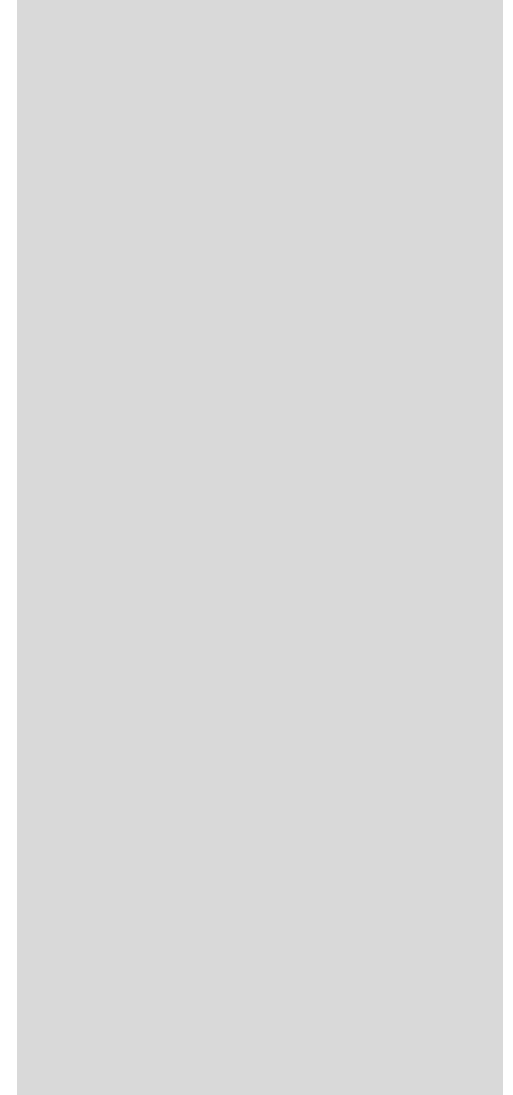
- Renewals were not offered in FY26
- Renewal Applications were moved to the CSP general signup





CSP FY26 Application Outlook

- 257 Applications on the books
- 52 in cancelled status
- 205 pending Applications
 - 51 Selected for Funding
 - 18 are RPP eligible
 - 16 are SD eligible
 - 7 are BFR Eligible



New Mexico Priority Resource Concern Categories	
Agland	Non-Industrial Private Forestland
Wind and Water Erosion	Wind and Water Erosion
Concentrated Erosion	Concentrated Erosion
Degraded Plant Condition	Degraded Plant Condition
Field Sediment, Nutrient, & Pathogen Loss	Pest Pressure
Livestock Production Limitation	Livestock Production Limitation
Terrestrial Habitat	Terrestrial Habitat
Source Water Depletion	Inefficient Energy Use
Soil Quality Limitations	Fire Management

- Other Resource Concern Categories that are not listed as State Priority Resource Concern
 - Air quality emissions, Aquatic habitat, Field pesticide loss, Salt losses to water, Storage and handling of pollutants, Weather resilience
- Ranking considers the number of priority resource concern categories met and addressed.



Ranking Weights By Resource Concern Categories

Categories			
Category	Min %	Default %	Max %
Air quality emissions	0	1	30
Aquatic habitat	0	1	30
Concentrated erosion	0	7	30
Degraded plant condition	0	15	30
Field pesticide loss	0	4	30
Field sediment, nutrient and pathogen loss	0	5	30
Fire management	0	1	30
Inefficient energy use	0	2	30
Livestock production limitation	0	10	30
Pest pressure	0	5	30
Salt losses to water	0	2	30
Soil quality limitations	0	10	30
Source water depletion	0	10	30
Storage and handling of pollutants	0	1	30
Terrestrial habitat	0	13	30



Hermits Peak Calf Canyon Conservation Restoration Plan Updates



HPCC Conservation Plan Details

What is it?

- On the ground conservation assessments used to document damages to the natural resources caused by the HPCC Fire and Flooding events.

What goes into these plans?

- Conservation/Restoration Plan
- Maps
 - Map of property boundaries
 - Map of burn severity
- NRCS CPA 1155
 - HPCC Payment Schedule
- Practice Specifications and/or standards



HPCC Common Practices to Address RCs

1. Woody Residue Treatment
2. Tree and Shrub Establishment
3. Herbaceous Weed Treatment
4. Critical Area Planting
5. Debris Removal
6. Access Roads
7. Fencing
8. Soil Erosion
9. Riparian Damage















HPCC Conservation Plan Requests

- Total Applications received **2,988**
- Completed and Delivered Plans – **2,224**
- New applications needing to be assessed – **224**

- Acres Assessed – **229,994**
- Total Dollars Planned - **\$1,936,893,905**









Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Kenneth Lujan, Acting RCPP Coordinator



By leveraging collective resources and collaborating on common goals, RCPP demonstrates the power of public-private partnerships in delivering results for agriculture and conservation.

State Technical Advisory Committee
May 2026

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What is RCPP?

A cost sharing program that is designed to be led by partners and implemented on an areawide 5-year-project level basis.

- **Requires an eligible “Lead Partner” (is responsible for the project)**
- **Proposal: Impact, Partner Contributions, and Partnerships/Management Capacity (will be evaluated based on these)**
- **RCPP Projects: Classic or Alternative Funding Arrangement (AFA)**
- **Funding Pools: Critical Conservation Area (CCA) and State/Multistate**
- **Funding Sources: NRCS RCPP Allocation and a match through various Partner Contributions (Non-Federal Funds and/or In-Kind Services)**
- **Land Management Contracts and Entity-Held Easements used in NM**

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NFO)

- Has not been released for Fiscal Year 2026
- Applicants can use the Grants.gov Search tool to find current RCPP Notices of Funding Opportunity (NFO)

Example:

The screenshot shows the Grants.gov 'Search Grants' page. The search criteria are set to 'rcpp'. The results show one matching opportunity: USDA-NRCS-NHQ-RCPP-23-NOFO0001304, titled 'Notice of Funding for NRCS's Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) for Federal Fiscal Year (FY) 2023', posted on 05/19/2023 and closing on 08/18/2023.

GRANTS.GOV FIND. APPLY. SUCCEED.™

SEARCH: Grant Opportunities ▾ Enter Keyword... **GO**

HOME | LEARN GRANTS ▾ | **SEARCH GRANTS** | APPLICANTS ▾ | GRANTORS ▾ | SYSTEM-TO-SYSTEM ▾ | FORMS ▾ | CONNECT ▾ | SUPPORT ▾

GRANTS.GOV > Search Grants

SEARCH GRANTS

BASIC SEARCH CRITERIA:

Keyword(s):

Opportunity Number:

CFDA:

OPPORTUNITY STATUS:

☒ Forecasted (0)

☒ Posted (2)

☐ Closed (5)

SEARCH TIPS | EXPORT DETAILED DATA |

SORT BY: Relevance (Descending) ▾

DATE RANGE: All Available ▾

1 - 2 OF 2 MATCHING RESULTS:

Opportunity Number	Opportunity Title	Agency	Opportunity Status	Posted Date	Close Date
USDA-NRCS-NHQ-RCPP-23-NOFO0001304	Notice of Funding for NRCS's Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) for Federal Fiscal Year (FY) 2023	USDA-NRCS	Posted	05/19/2023	08/18/2023

What is in the NFO?

Notice of Funding Opportunity. In the context of the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), it is the official solicitation document released to announce funding availability, criteria, and instructions for submitting project proposals.

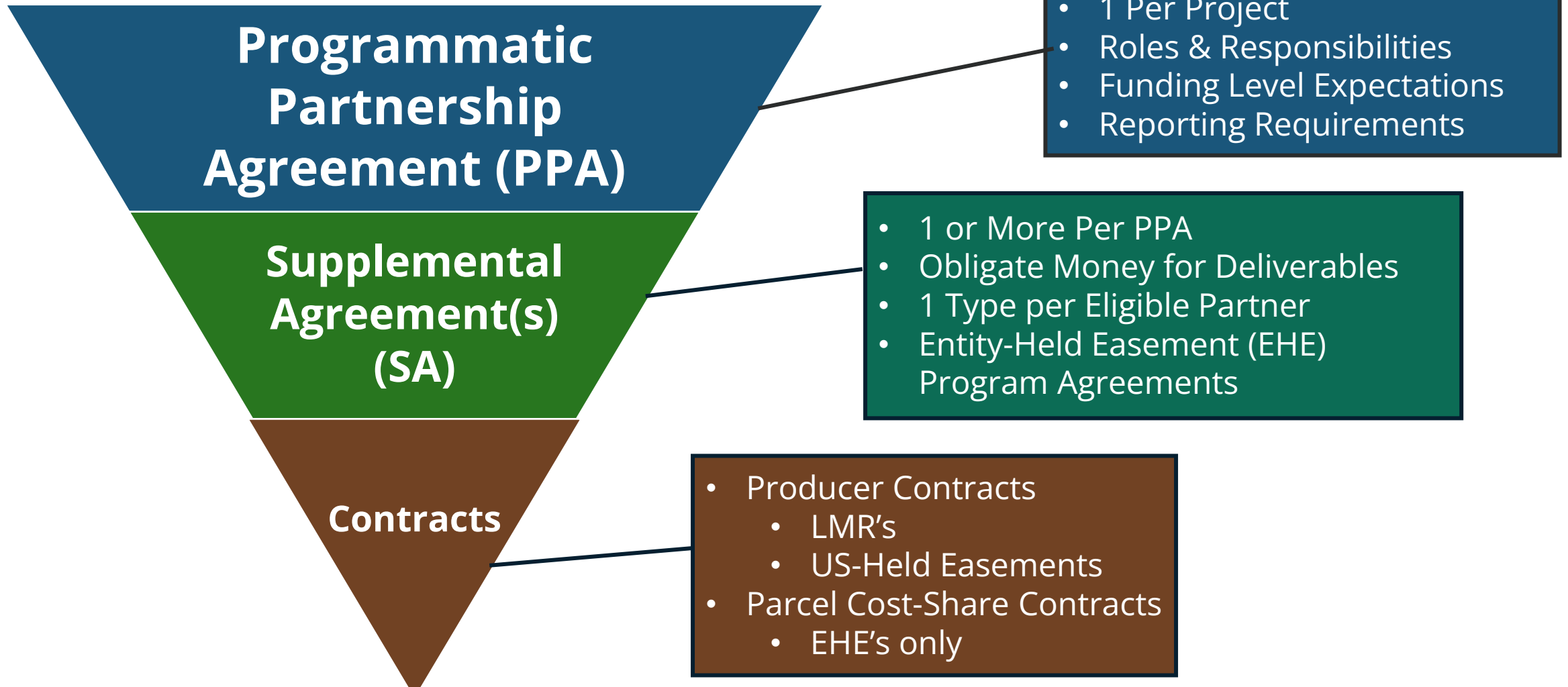
What the RCPP NFO Contains

- Every NFO provides vital information you need to structure a successful proposal, including:
- **Project Types:** Distinguishes between RCPP Classic (using standard NRCS contracts with producers) and RCPP Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFA) for unique project structures.
- **Application Deadlines:** Specific dates and times by which proposals must be submitted through the NRCS portal.
- **Proposal Requirements:** Mandated content, formatting rules, and guidelines for budget and partner contributions.
- **Evaluation Criteria:** How the NRCS evaluates and ranks proposals—usually based on Impact, Partner Contributions, and Partnership Management

RCPP Process



RCPP Agreements



New Mexico RCPP Active Agreements

San Juan Non-Native Phreatophyte Removal Program (1893)- Classic

- Lead Partner- San Juan SWCD
- Funding Amount- \$1,042,208
- Funding Pool- State
- Reduce wildfire risk by removing non-native Russian olive and Salt Cedar infestations in identified priority riparian areas

Producer Contracts-
12 @ \$700,000 total

Eastern NM Prairie Grassland Initiative (1905)- Classic

- Lead Partner- NMACD
- Funding Amount- \$2,025,974
- Funding Pool- CCA: Prairie Grassland
- Habitat improvements to meet needs of Lesser Prairie-chicken

Producer Contracts-
7 @ \$1,414,280

NM Restoration Initiative for Rangeland, Forestland, and Wildlife on Ranches with Federal Lands (2127)- Classic

- Lead Partner NMACD
- Funding Amount- \$4,000,000
- Funding Pool- State
- Utilize land management contracts with ranches whose operations include federal lands

Producer Contracts-
13 @ \$2,471,938 total



New Mexico RCPP Active Agreements

North Central NM Watershed Restoration Project (2137)- Classic

- Lead Partner- Claunch-Pinto SWCD
- Funding Amount- \$2,313,359
- Funding Pool- State
- Restoration treatments to improve watershed health and mitigate wildfire risk

Producer Contracts-
13 @ \$1,755,958 total

NM Ogallala Preservation and Conservation (2553)- Classic

- Lead Partner- NMACD
- Funding Amount- \$6,911,311
- Funding Pool- CCA: Prairie Grassland
- Contracts to help farmers convert from irrigated to dryland, pasture, or native grasslands

EHE- 3 @ approx. \$4 mil.
Producer Contracts- pending

North Central NM Watershed Restoration Project (2679)- Classic

- Lead Partner- Claunch-Pinto SWCD
- Funding Amount- \$969,225
- Funding Pool- State
- Restoration treatments to improve watershed health and mitigate wildfire risk

Producer Contracts-
2 @ \$710,877 total



New Mexico RCPP Active Agreements

Establishment of Grassland Strongholds across the Southern High Plains (2764)- Classic

- Lead Partner- The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
- Lead State- Colorado
- Partner States- KS, OK, NM, TX
- Funding Amount- \$10,000,000
- Funding Pool- CCA (Prairie Grasslands Region)
- Easements to create grassland resilience and habitat

Grazing Management and Non-Lethal Predator Risk Mitigation in NM and AZ (3093)- Classic

- Lead Partner- Western Landowners Alliance (WLA)
- Lead State- New Mexico
- Partner State- Arizona
- Funding Amount- \$6,665,854
- Funding Pool- State/Multistate
- Conservation activities to support livestock production in areas with recovering predator populations

Tribal Buffalo Restoration in the Southwest Region (3503)- AFA

- Lead Partner- InterTribal Buffalo Council (ITBC)
- Lead State- New Mexico
- Partner States- AZ, CO, UT
- Funding Amount- \$21,250,000
- Funding Pool- State/Multistate
- Support Tribes in restoring native grasslands for buffalo in the southwest region



QUESTIONS?



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Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

Athena Cholas, program manager



FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
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Agenda

- Announcements
- ALE Policy Updates
 - 10% limit on incidental land
 - Greater scrutiny of subdivision
 - Grasslands of Special Significance
- WRE input on compensation and wetland restoration criteria



Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

FY 2025:

- 3 ALE contracts, 5,770 acres, \$5,061,420

FY 2026:

- 7 ALE applications, 6,460 acres, \$7,590,830
- 2 WRE applications pending eligibility, \$1,000,000 returned

ALE and RCPP in process:

- 5 counties: Curry, Quay, Santa Fe, Socorro, Valencia
- 5 land trusts and 1 State agency
- 13 projects, 18,500 acres, \$17,319,600



ACEP-ALE funding

NRCS is providing up to \$200 million in additional funding for 2026. In April, NRCS had \$78 million in applications ready to fund.

The new deadline for entities to apply is May 29, 2026.

- To further the Chief's #1 Priority “**Preserve and Protect Agricultural Land**” through expanding targeted conservation easement programs to slow the loss of 5,000 acres of farmland per day.

Newsletters and success stories

- NRCS has published a story map with 2 ALE stories that feature easements in New Mexico: [ACEP-Agricultural Land Easement](#). Two other story maps are: [Sentinel Landscapes](#) and [ACEP Wetland Reserve Easements](#).
- NRCS is publishing a quarterly easement newsletter <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/ale-agricultural-land-easements>.
- A video of NM landowners with conservation easements held by RGALT is online at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/agricultural-conservation-easement-program>

Why We NEED Agricultural Land



Are YOU a Champion for Wetlands?



New Publications

- **“Why We Need Agricultural Land”** activity book is a free download at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2025-08/nrcs-ale-coloring-book-0825-compliant.pdf>
- **“Are You a Champion for Wetlands”** is another activity book found at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2025-08/nrcs-wre-coloring-book-0725-compliant.pdf>
- Hard copies can be requested from Heidi Brewer at heidi.brewer@usda.gov or Lori Valadez at lori.valadez@usda.gov.

Resources

- The American Farmland Trust (AFT) updated its Cost of Community Services (COCS) fact sheet, a resource used by farmland protection practitioners to help make the case for saving agricultural land. It makes the case that residential development is a net fiscal loss for communities due to the high cost of services.
- American Farmland Trust (AFT) released a Soil Health Toolkit, <https://farmland.org/soil-health-stewards-program>, that guides entities through ways to support farmers, ranchers, and landowners in improving soil health and lays out key considerations to encourage conservation goals through permanent conservation easements.

Farmland Transition Grants

- Farm & Ranch Transition Support Grants are accepted quarterly. These **\$10,000** grants to farmers, ranchers, and landowners actively working with a [Land Transfer Navigator \(LTN\)](#) can be used for professional services and equipment/infrastructure that directly support the transfer, access, or permanent protection of farmland or ranchland.
- Up to two grants per land-transfer scenario: one grant for outgoing owners and one grant for incoming owners/successors.

Policy Updates

- **Title 440 Conservation Programs Manual, Part 528, Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, updated March 2026**
 - Improve consistency with bulletins and other guidance.
 - **Part 527 – Easement Common Provisions, Subpart U**
 - Alternative Access for Entity Held Easements
- Alternative access may be over Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, or the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) only, not lands owned by other governmental entities.

Incidental Land- no ag production

Includes such land as farmstead areas, other areas with agricultural buildings and infrastructure, nonforested wetlands, and riparian areas.

The total acres of incidental land **must not exceed 10 percent** of the acres of otherwise eligible land. Must be

- a. Necessary for the efficient administration of an agricultural land easement; OR
- b. Significantly augments the protection of the associated farm or ranch land; OR
- c. Contributes to the grassland functions and values and related conservation values.

Grasslands of Special Environmental Significance (GSS)

- States must document technical criteria and guidelines before determining eligibility of a parcel under the grasslands of special environmental significance eligibility category.
- States must consult with the state technical committee.

GSS vs non-GSS

- GSS: Federal share may be up to 75% of easement value.
- Non-GSS: Federal share is up to 50% of EV
- GSS: crop cultivation is prohibited
- Non-GSS grassland enrollment: May be authorized by the deed in designated areas not to exceed 10% of easement area.

GSS Defined

7 CFR § 1468.3: grasslands that contain little or no noxious or invasive species, as designated or defined by State or Federal law; are subject to the threat of conversion to non-grassland uses or fragmentation; and the land is: (a) Rangeland, pastureland, shrubland, or wet meadows on which the vegetation is dominated by native grasses, grass-like plants, shrubs, or forbs, or is improved, naturalized pastureland, rangeland, or wet meadows.

(b) And the land provides, or could provide, habitat for threatened or endangered species or at-risk species, protects sensitive or declining native prairie or grassland types or grasslands buffering wetlands, or provides protection of highly sensitive natural resources as identified by the State conservationist, in consultation with the State technical committee.

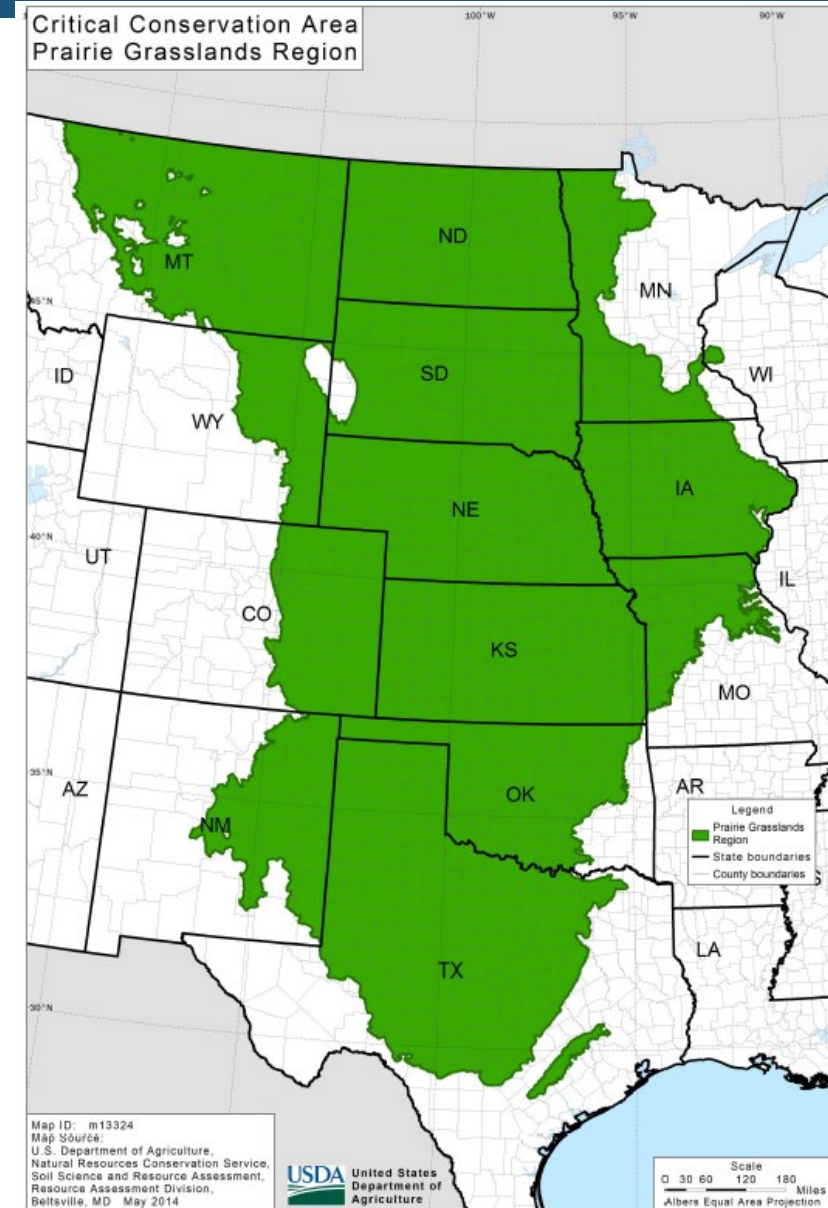
GSS technical criteria and guidelines

- attributes and locations (map) of such grasslands and list
- at-risk species or
- habitats, sensitive or declining grassland types in the state,
- and any highly sensitive natural resources on such grasslands that the state may seek to protect under this option.

A. Shortgrass Prairie

■ Map

The New Mexico portion of the USDA's Prairie Grasslands Critical Conservation Area (CCA) in the Southern High Plains



A. Shortgrass Prairie

- 1. At least 30% of the offered naturalized pasture or rangeland parcels have plant cover consisting of at least 30% blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*) and buffalo grass (*Buchloe dactyloides*). For example, for every 100-acres that are offered, at least 30 acres must consist of at least 30% cover of blue grama and buffalo grass. Associated graminoids may include *Achnatherum hymenoides*, *Aristida purpurea*, sideoats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*), *Bouteloua hirsuta*, *Carex filifolia*, *Carex inops* ssp. *heliophila*, *Eragrostis intermedia*, *Hesperostipa comata*, *Hesperostipa neomexicana*, *Koeleria macrantha*, ring muhly (*Muhlenbergia torreyi*), *Pascopyrum smithii*, *Pleuraphis jamesii*, alkali sacaton (*Sporobolus airoides*), and *Sporobolus cryptandrus*.

A. Shortgrass Prairie

- 2. Perennial and ephemeral waters found in streams, lakes, reservoirs, marshes, playas and springs.
- 3. Wetland and riparian plants associated with perennial and ephemeral waters.
- 4. Mesquite, shinnery oak, sand sagebrush and cholla, including dense thickets, may be included as they provide important diversity and restoration efforts can restore these areas to grasslands.

B. Chihuahuan Desert

■ Map

New Mexico State Wildlife
Action Plan.

Chihuahuan desert and
Madrean archipelago priority
areas.

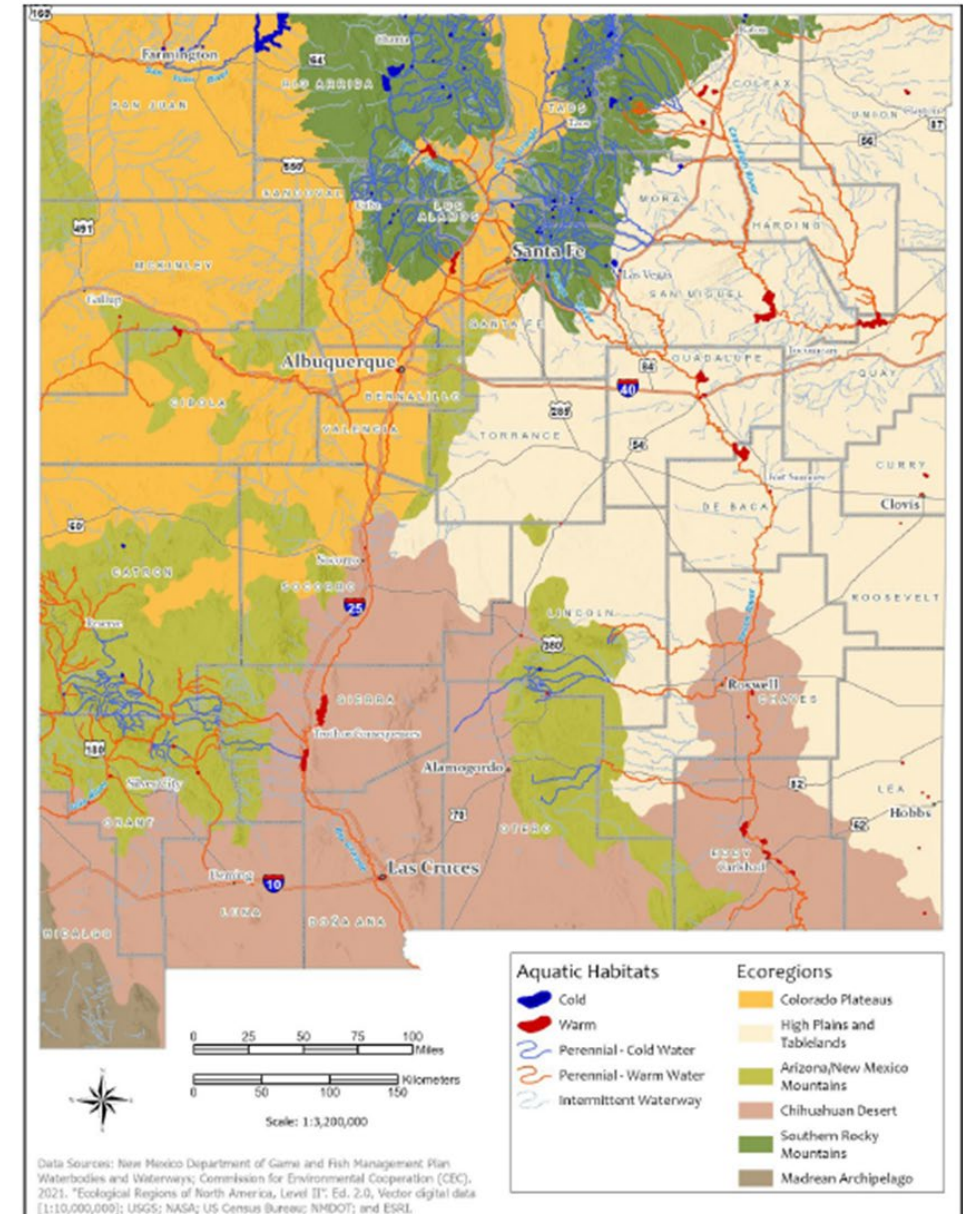


Figure 5. Aquatic habitats.

Data were from the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF 2022a).

B. Chihuahua Desert

- 1. At least 30% of the offered naturalized pasture or rangeland parcels have plant cover consisting of at least 30% tobosa (*Pleuraphis mutica*), black grama (*Bouteloua eriopoda*), alkali sacaton (*Sporobolus airoides*), big alkali sacaton (*S. wrightii*), mesa dropseed (*S. flexuosus*), blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), sideoats grama (*B. curtipendula*), hairy grama (*B. hirsuta*), slender grama (*B. filiformis*), chino grama (*B. brevista*), spruce top grama (*B. chondrosioides*), bush muhly (*Muhlenbergia porteri*), several three awns (*Aristida spp.*), and/or fluff grass (*Dasyochloa pulchella*). For example, for every 100-acres that are offered, at least 30 acres must consist of at least 30% cover of these grasses.

B. Chihuahua Desert grasslands

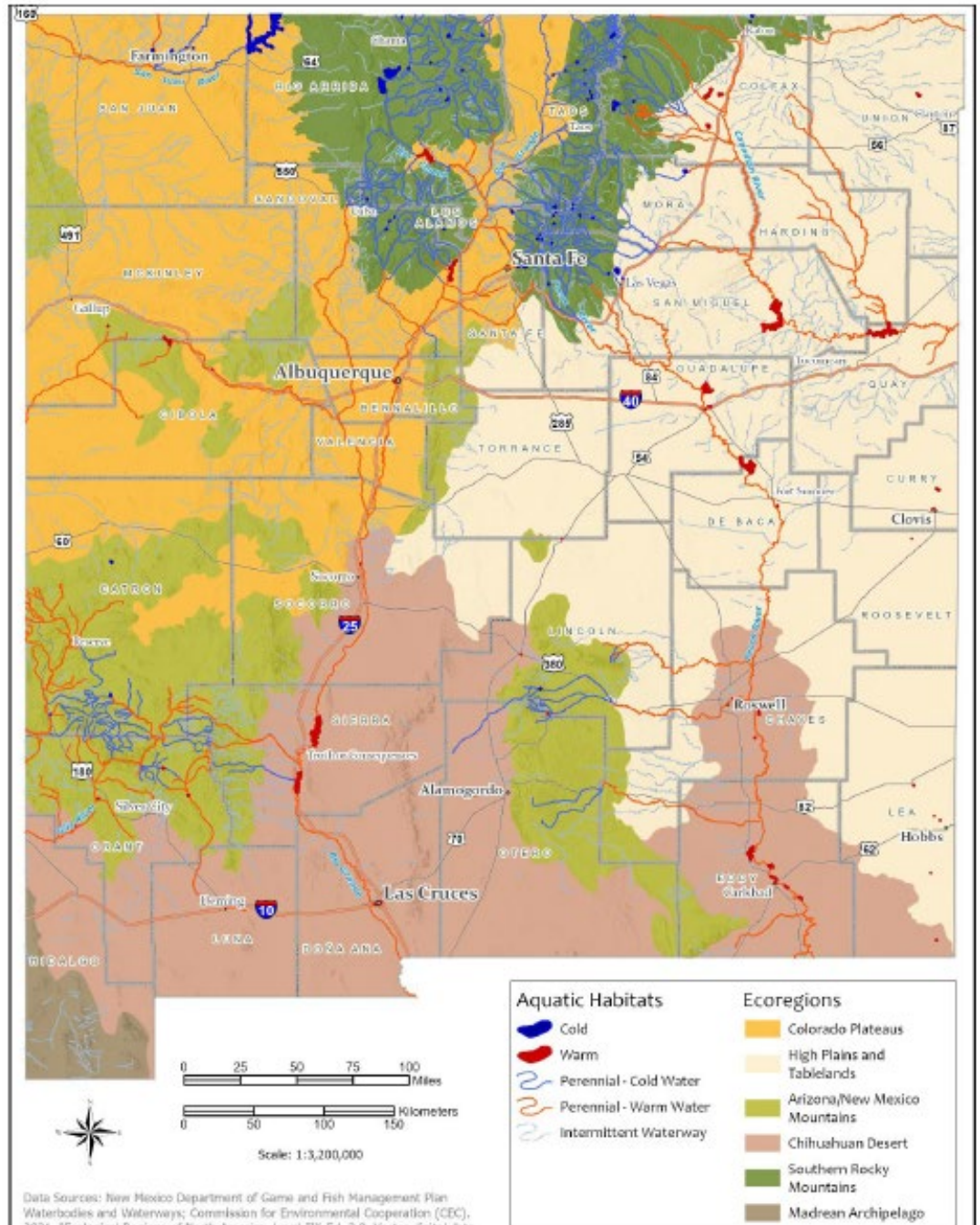
- 2. Perennial and ephemeral waters found in streams, lakes, reservoirs, marshes, playas and springs.
- 3. Wetland and riparian plants associated with perennial and ephemeral waters.
- 4. Yucca, creosote, mesquite, tarbush and cat's claw, including dense thickets, may be included as restoration efforts can restore these areas to grasses.
- 5. "Sky Islands" such as the Madrean Archipelago, Sacramento Mountains, Organ Mountains, Animas Mountains and Black Range that are surrounded by grasslands may be included up to 50% of the offered area since these provide important refugia and runoff for the associated grassland.

C. Blue grama dominated

■ Map

All the rest of New Mexico minus eastern plains and Chihuahuan desert?

Colorado Plateau and Arizona
New Mexico mountains?



C. Blue grama dominated

1. At least 30% of the offered rangeland has plant cover consisting of at least 30% blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*) and associated grasses such as galleta (*Pleuraphis jamesii*), western wheatgrass (*Pascopyrum smithii*), needle and thread (*Hesperostipa neomexicana*), Indian rice grass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*) and several species of three-awn (*Aristida* spp.). For example, for every 100-acres that are offered, at least 30 acres must consist of at least 30% cover of these grasses.



C. Blue grama dominated

- 2. Perennial and ephemeral waters found in streams, lakes, reservoirs, marshes, cienegas and springs.
- 3. Wetland and riparian plants associated with perennial and ephemeral waters.
- 4. Pinyon, ponderosa pine, douglas fir and other conifers, including dense thickets, where the cover of grasses is less than 30% may be included up to 50% of the offered area where grasslands, savannahs and forests are interspersed to provide a seamless protected area because many wildlife, such as the Mexico spotted owl and pinyon jay, travel between grasslands and forests.

“ *It will take unprecedented collaboration and resources to protect New Mexico’s prairie and desert grasslands.* ”



Some of North America’s largest and best remaining grasslands can be found in the prairies of eastern New Mexico and West Texas, and in the desert grasslands of southern New Mexico, southern Arizona and northern Mexico. However, **residential sprawl, energy development, agricultural conversion, groundwater withdrawal and climate change** jeopardize these landscapes.



Subdivision

In general, **the agricultural land easement deed should prohibit future subdivision of the protected property.**

If the landowner intends to subdivide a parcel in the future, individual applications should be submitted for the individual intended subdivided parcels and ranking conducted on the individual applications.

Subdivision

If instead of prohibiting future subdivision of the protected property, the eligible entity wants to provide for the future subdivision of the protected property, then the agricultural land easement deed must identify the maximum number of future parcels, the terms required for the future conveyance of approved parcels, and identify the boundaries of the proposed subdivisions as follows.

Subdivision

The individual parcels resulting from the proposed subdivision of the protected property must each meet the ACEP-ALE land eligibility requirements and program purposes, as determined by NRCS.

Both the approved number and boundaries of the proposed subdivided parcels as approved by the state conservationist prior to closing must be identified in the agricultural land easement deed.

Subdivision- State guideline examples

- Each subdivided parcel must be accessed directly from a public road or an existing ranch road. This reduces the need for new roads on agricultural land.
- Only one subdivided parcel can have a building envelope. This maintains scenic values. This encourages future ownership by landowners who have land that is adjacent or nearby.

Building envelopes- State guideline examples

- Building envelopes must be **reasonable in size, number, and location**, such that they are able to accommodate all existing building and structures and future construction, except for certain agricultural structures and utilities, while not being so large, numerous, or situated in a manner that may interfere with the agricultural operations or conservation values of the parcel.
- A significant amount of ranking points for applications that will allow one building envelope around existing structures.
- Building envelopes must start next to road or driveway that has been in place for at least 5 years.
- Be on non- prime farmland if prime farmland is present.



May is American Wetlands Month



Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) Geographic area rate cap (GARC)



New Mexico will compensate landowners up to 90% of the appraised fair market value for permanent easements with the following not-to-exceed rates:

No water rights	Not to exceed \$5,000
Land with water rights	Not to exceed \$13,000 per acre.



WRE Eligibility- NM criteria

- **Significantly degraded or modified:**

At least **25%** of the land offered for enrollment has been altered from its historic conditions.

In most of New Mexico, degradation can be attributed to long term grazing where wetlands were used as water sources for livestock. Alteration of the land with levees, dams, ditches, draining, tree clearing, land leveling, and cropping have also caused wetland degradation from historic conditions.



WRE Eligibility- NM criteria

- **Substantially restored**

At **least 25%** of the land considered to be significantly degraded or modified will be restored to historic conditions or to an acceptable alternative vegetative community.

Adjacent Land- NM criteria

- Ratio of **20:1 for playas, 30:1?**

NM will request a national waiver to allow 20 acres of upland area for every 1 acre of wetland found in a playa. The amount of hydric soils found in playas is very small yet the playas provide valuable habitat for migratory birds. Playas need a relatively large drainage area to pond water after a rain event.

WRE Maintenance- Mowing



May only occur after the end of the State Primary Nesting Season (PNS) identified for CRP and must be completed by September 1, unless alternative dates are identified and documented in the WRCG as follows:

(1) States may establish alternative PNS dates or haying/mowing completion dates that differ from the dates identified above. The establishment of alternative dates must be based on more specific evaluation of habitat types, species needs, and other technical factors along with input received from the USFWS, FSA, state technical committee, and state wildlife agencies. (2) The alternative dates, along with the technical rationale for establishing such dates and the locations or habitat types to which such dates are applicable must be identified and documented in the WRCG prior to issuing a CUA for haying or mowing subject to such dates. b. Must ensure there is adequate regrowth of vegetation to provide winter cover and early spring nesting cover. c. Must ensure maintenance of adequate wildlife habitat quality and other wetland functions and values.

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Wetland Restoration Criteria Guidelines



Restoration Requirements

- ❖ Milkweeds: should milkweeds be planted on wetland easements?
 - what species, density, wetland types?
 - Showy, horsetail, butterfly, whorled, broadleaf and swamp milkweeds are the most common ones used in NM by monarchs (there are @30 different kinds of milkweeds in the state).
 - Would an ideal stand consist of 500 milkweed stems per acre
 - (1 stem per 100 square feet)?





Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)



FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
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Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) State priorities

- Increased reliance on biodiversity to control pests.
- Soil health management systems.
- Water conservation.
- Fish and wildlife habitat.

Need input from soil and water conservation districts and other entities on state CIG opportunity for FY 2027.



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Conservation Innovation Grants Classic Program

Fiscal Year (FY) 2026

CIG Classic

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

No. USDA-NRCS-NHQ-CIGCLASSIC-26-NOFO0001449

DUE July 27

Minimum \$250,000

**Maximum
\$2,000,000**

Total \$15 million

Grants.gov

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
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Classic CIG priorities

- o Water Management
- o Conserving Ecosystems by Managing Pest Pressure
- o Soil
- o Habitat Improvement
- o Farmer-Focused Conservation Outcomes



Water Quantity

Projects including the following topics will be given higher priority:

- Identify alternate regional cropping systems (crops and crop rotations) that reduce water consumption.
- Explore mechanisms that allow the conversion of cropland to pasture or rangeland, such as using water banks or other mechanisms.
- Explore innovative local or regional technologies that help retain water in the landscape (such as groundwater recharge systems, water reuse technology, or beaver dam analogues) and demonstrate improvement to water quantity in a particular watershed.

Natural Resources Conservation Service

On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials



DUE July 27

Minimum \$250,000

**Maximum
\$5,000,000**

Total \$50 million

Grants.gov

Notice of Funding Opportunity
USDA-NRCS-NHQ-CIGOFT-26-NOFO0001447
Fiscal Year 2026

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
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On-Farm Trials CIG priorities

- Irrigation Water Management Technologies
- Nutrient Management
- Grazing Lands
- Soil Health Demonstration Trials



Webinars

CIG Classic - June 18, 2026, at 3 p.m. Eastern Time.

Register at

<https://events.gcc.teams.microsoft.com/event/397aeb03-fb5b-4d7b-803d-6753acad2a03@ed5b36e7-01ee-4ebc-867e-e03cfa0d4697>

On-Farm Trials - June 17, 2026, at 3 p.m. Eastern Time.

Register at

<https://events.gcc.teams.microsoft.com/event/d5892e45-05fb-40de-999b-a431e3871963@ed5b36e7-01ee-4ebc-867e-e03cfa0d4697>



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Emergency Watershed Protection
David Griego –State EWP Program Manager

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What is the EWP Program

- The **Emergency Watershed Protection Program** is available to communities whenever a natural disaster occurs and creates a sudden watershed impairment that poses a threat to life and/or property. A watershed impairment exists when the ability of a watershed to carry out its normal function is reduced to the extent of creating an imminent threat to life or property.

NRCS New Mexico

- **12 Active Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Projects around the State.**
- **1 Project was canceled**

McBride Fire and Windstorm EWP

- **Disaster Date: 4/12/2022**
- **Sponsor: Lincoln County**
- **Total Project Amount: \$1,804,760.00**
- **Estimated Percent Completed: 90%**
- **1 Remaining project - large acequia diversion dam**



Hermits Peak / Calf Canyon EWP

2 Agreements

- **Disaster Date: 4/22/2022**
- **Sponsor: NM Department of Finance and Administration**
- **Total Project Amount: \$310,699,180.00**
- **Estimated Percent Completed: 75%**
- **The complexity and of acequia work**



Corn Ranch EWP (Closed out)

- **Disaster Date: 5/30/21**
- **Sponsor: Chaves County**
- **Total Project Amount: \$3,727,935.23**
- **Estimated Percent Completed: 100%**

Cerro Pelado EWP

- **Disaster Date: 7/23/2023**
- **Sponsor: Sandoval County**
- **Total Project Amount: \$4,320,000.00**
- **Estimated Percent Completed: 95%**
- **Working on the last payment and close out**



Gila and Mimbres Flood EWP - 1 (Grant County)

- Disaster Date: 8/18/2022
- Sponsor: Grant County
- Total Project Amount: \$8,269,615.25
- Estimated Percent Completed: 80%
- Most of the designs are completed
- We have 2 projects remaining – construction will start in the fall



Gila and Mimbres Flood EWP - 2 (Hidalgo County)

- **Disaster Date: 8/18/2022**
- **Sponsor: Hidalgo County**
- **Total Project Amount: \$239,827.50**
- **Estimated Percent Completed: 50%**
- **The engineers have completed the designs**



Gila and Mimbres Flood EWP - 3 (Luna County)

Cancelled

- **Disaster Date: 8/18/2022**
- **Sponsor: Luna County**
- **Total Project Amount: \$587,430.00**
- **Estimated Percent Completed: 0%**
- **The designs completed – Landowner opted out**



South Fork and Salt Fire EWP - 1

- **Disaster Date: 6/16/2024**
- **Sponsors: Mescalero Apache Tribe**
- **Total Project Amount: 24 Million**
- **Estimated Percent Completed: 75%**
- **They have asked for additional money to expand the project**



South Fork and Salt Fire EWP - 2

- **Disaster Date: 6/16/2024**
- **Sponsors: Lincoln County**
- **Total Project Amount: \$64 Million**
- **Estimated Percent Completed: 90%**
- **Large acequia projects that will require major engineering**



NRCS / Lincoln County EWP Buyout

Largest Buyout in the County

- **Disaster Date: 6/16/2024**
 - **Sponsors: Lincoln County**
 - **Total Project Amount: \$211,184,227.80**
 - **Estimated Percent Completed: 10%**
-
- **Priorities 1 and 2 – received funding to purchase 449 homes which will be demolished or relocated.**
 - **Acquisition is handled by the sponsor, who then purchases the property and becomes the owner**
 - **A deed restriction is placed on the title limiting land use to open space and natural resource conservation.**



NRCS / Lincoln County EWP Buyout Con't

Status update for Buyout as of 5/27/26

- 337 Assessments completed
- 29 Not eligible
- 48 Vacant Land –
- 260 have been sent up as eligible

Rio En Medio EWP

- **Disaster Date: 10/07/2022**
- **Sponsor: Santa Fe County**
- **Total Project Amount: \$680,290.37**
- **Estimated Percent Completed: 90%**
- **Still have one change order remaining**



Rio Arriba Flooding EWP

- **Disaster Date: July 2024**
- **Sponsor: East Rio Arriba SWCD**
- **Total Project Amount: \$3,115,000.00**
- **Estimated Percent Completed: 90%**
- **Funded in FY 2025**



Chaves County Flood EWP

- **Disaster Date: 10/17/2024**
- **Sponsor: Chaves County**
- **Total Project Amount: \$15,285,968.75**
- **Estimated Percent Completed: 10 %**
- **High hazard PL566 Dams – Chaves County has awarded the 1st of 3 contracts. Construction will start this summer.**



Trout Fire EWP

- **Disaster Date: 10/17/2024**
- **Sponsor: Grant County**
- **Total Award Amount: \$7,208,757.50 Million**
- **Estimated Percent Completed: 10 %**
- **Sponsor is acquiring permissions and permits**





Questions



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Resources Technology Services- RTS

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RTS Staff

Art Ariaz- State Resource Conservationist (currently Acting AC-North Area)

Amanda Brown-Administrative Assistant to RTS

William “Bill” Volf- State Archeologist

Molly Murphy- State Field Archeologist

Ana Gomes- Natural Resource Specialist/State BT Coordinator

Nick Goodman- State Wildlife Biologist

Jim Armendariz- State Range Specialist

Sam Fullen- State Agronomist

Andrew Lee- State Forester

RTS



Some of what
we do!

- Developing and delivering trainings for field staff.
- Updating the e-FOTG
- Adopting/Editing Standards and Specifications
- Internal Review/comments of new National Practices
- Certifying planners/ Ecological Job Approval Authorities
- Cover the TSP Program/Payment Schedule for the state
- Covering all things Technical (non- engineering)
- Supporting Programs, ranking criteria and planning guidance, Assessments through CART
- Working with interagency & partners/Universities
- Agreements with partner agencies FSA- CRP and ECP

TSPs (Technical Service Providers)

- A TSP is a business, individual, American Indian tribe, non-profit organization, or public agency registered by satisfying national and state criteria to qualify for completing work to NRCS standards and specifications
- A TSP may be certified in Conservation Practices (in the Field Office Technical Guide), Conservation Planning Activities (**CPAs**), and/or Design or Implementation Activities (**DIAs**). We also have **CEMA's**



EQIP CPAs, DIAs, and CEMAs

[Home](#) > [Programs & Initiatives](#) > [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) > EQIP CPAs, DIAs, and CEMAs

Learn about EQIP Conservation Planning Activities (CPAs), Design and Implementation Activities (DIAs), and Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activities (CEMAs).

LINKS

To learn more about
the CPAs, DIAs, and
CEMAs.

For more on TSP:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/technical-assistance/technical-service-providers>

For more on CPA, DIA, CEMA:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/eqip-environmental-quality-incentives/cpas-dias-and-cemas>



TSP Application Resources- Video for applicants

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=usxJUorq9f0>

RTS Updates- Training

- Statewide Trainings- Travel has been lifted for some state trainings and therefore, we are working with Field Offices to update RTS Planner Certification (priority) Trainings;
 - **Annual Conservation Modules 1-8 Planner Training-Fall/Late Sum**
 - **Annual CD/CART Business Tools Training-Fall (?) pending**
 - **Partners (NMACD) Healthy Soils Grant Planner Training- April 2026**
- NHQ Requested by State from pool-NEDC-Trainings (no guarantee) satisfy level 3 & 4.
 - **Area wide (Watershed) Trainings- Pending**
 - **Working Effectively with Tribal Producers Training-Pending**
- NHQ Chief's Priority Training- to support RPP
 - **Back to Roots Soil Health Training/CEMA 216- Las Cruces- Sept 2026**



RTS Updates- Training Continued

TRAINING TO TEAMS AND OFFICES- Annual and as needed

- ☐ Rangeland Health Training- RHA
- ☐ Prescribed Grazing Training
- ☐ Planning Tools (Wind Erosion, Pest management, Agronomy)
- ☐ NEPA and Wildlife Habitat Guide Trainings
- ☐ Forestry Trainings
- ☐ CART Assessment and Planning Criteria Training



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RTS Ongoing Assistance

- Staff assisting with Payment Schedule Scenarios, CPA 52 NEPA, EWP support (seeding recommendations, check outs), HPCC Restoration Plan development, as well as other FO and AO needs.
- Two ECP (FSA Program) Disasters: **(Flooding in Chaves county and Line Fire in Quay County)** We do the technical, checkout, NEPA, Cost Lists.. etc..
- Planning tools for field work (irrigation, Range, Crop, Forest).
- CART (Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool) assistance.



Emergency Conservation Program Farm Service Agency

NRCS Involvement

- 1. Technical Support-NRCS provides technical expertise to determine the extent of damage to agriculture land caused by natural disasters.
- 2. Engineering Guidance-If engineering solutions are required, NRCS engineers may be involved in designing or reviewing plans to ensure they are effective.
- 3. Conservation Practice Standards-NRCS ensures that any recovery work funded by ECP addresses appropriate resource concerns to return them to pre disaster conditions.

County	Chaves
Disaster ID	1334
Date Implementation was Approved	December 2, 2024
Approved Signup Period	December 2 – January 27
Number of Affected Producers	Approximately 80
ECP Practices Approved	EC1 – Removing Debris from Farmland; EC2 – Grading Shaping, Releveling, or Similar Measures EC3 – Restoring Permanent Fences; EC4 – Restoring Conservation Practices.

As of April...

- 47 Total Applicants
- 42 site visits had been completed
- 2 applicant's have cancelled
- 10 plans have been reviewed, signed by producer and uploaded to FSA system.

Team 10 & South AO



- 190-H Parts 635 and 636
 - Previous handbook was from 2004
- Evaluation, treatment and management for forestry and agroforestry systems.





Questions?





United States Department of Agriculture



New Mexico

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NRCS 2026 Biology update

Nick Goodman-State Biologist

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Advancing Markets for Producers (AMP) initiative

- Formerly known as Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities program.
- The AMP initiative is built to advance the priorities of today's American Farmer.



This farmer first initiative :

- Prioritize Producers over NGOs by requiring at least 65% of a project's funds to flow to Farmers and Ranchers.
- Assisting famers by developing new markets, premiums, and value-added agricultural products.
- Streamlines reporting metrics to lower the paperwork burden on both producers and partners.



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Next Steps for AMP partners:

- Submit CPA-52s through the portal.
- CR and Biological reviews are conducted by NRCS.
- Once CR/T&E are cleared, CPA-52s are signed and sent back to partners.
- Reach out to state point of contact if you have questions.



Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG) update



- Lesser Prairie Chicken
- White-Winged Dove
- White Tail Deer
- Turkey
- Mule Deer
- Elk
- Pronghorn Antelope





Movement & Migration

4. Unobstructed pathways between distinct summer feeding grounds and winter ranges

.8-1.0

Wildlife friendly fences and small roads are small obstructions

.4-.7

Fences and highways are major hazards.

0-.3



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SCORING FOR TURKEY HABITAT

Component	<u>Bench Mark</u>	After Plan	Weight	Bench Score	After Plan Score
1. Nesting Areas			x2		
2. Cover			x3		
3. Feeding Areas			X4		
4. Food Sources			x3		
5. Water			x4		
6. Roost Trees			X4		
7. Distance			X5		
			Sum		

Take the Sum of the Benchmark Score and divide it by 25.

**Benchmark
Score to use in
Ranking**

Take the Sum of the Overall After Plan Score and divide it by 25.

**After Plan Score
to use in
Ranking**



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(1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights

1400 Independence Avenue, SW

Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

(2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or

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United States Department of Agriculture

Questions?



nickolas.goodman@usda.gov

505-280-0826



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Watershed Programs Update

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The “NRCS Watershed Umbrella”

WFPO	Rehab	Remedial	EWP
➤ Watershed & Flood Prevention Operations Program ➤ Helps units of Federal, State, and Tribal Governments (project sponsors) protect and restore watersheds	➤ Rehabilitation Program ➤ Helps rehabilitate aging dams that are reaching the end of their design life and/or no longer meet Federal or State Safety Criteria or performance standards	➤ Remedial Assistance Program ➤ Helps correct problems caused by an error during design/installation of a project. Structure must be within their design life	➤ Emergency Watershed Protection Program ➤ Helps reduce imminent hazards to life and property threatened by excessive erosion and flooding caused by a natural disaster



Watershed vs. Farm Bill Programs

- Agreements are with units of local Governments (Project Sponsors) rather than an individual landowner.
- Viable Project Sponsors can include:
 - Any entity legally organized under state law
 - State
 - County
 - Town
 - Soil and Water Conservation District
 - Irrigation Districts
 - Any Indian Tribe organization



NRCS-NM Active Watershed Projects

- **WFPO (1 Total)**

- Hermit's Peak & Calf Canyon Burn Scar

- **Remedial (2 Total)**

- Santa Cruz Dam Site 4
 - Cottonwood-Walnut Dam Site 6

- **Rehab (5 Total)**

- Tortugas Dam Site 1
 - Upper Rio Penasco Dam Sites 1, 2, & 3A
 - Santa Cruz Dam Sites 1



WFPO Planning - EISs

1 HPOC Burn Scar

Remedial - Dam Inspections

2 Cottonwood-Walnut Site 6

3 Santa Cruz Site 4

Rehab Planning - EAs

4 Tortugas Site 1

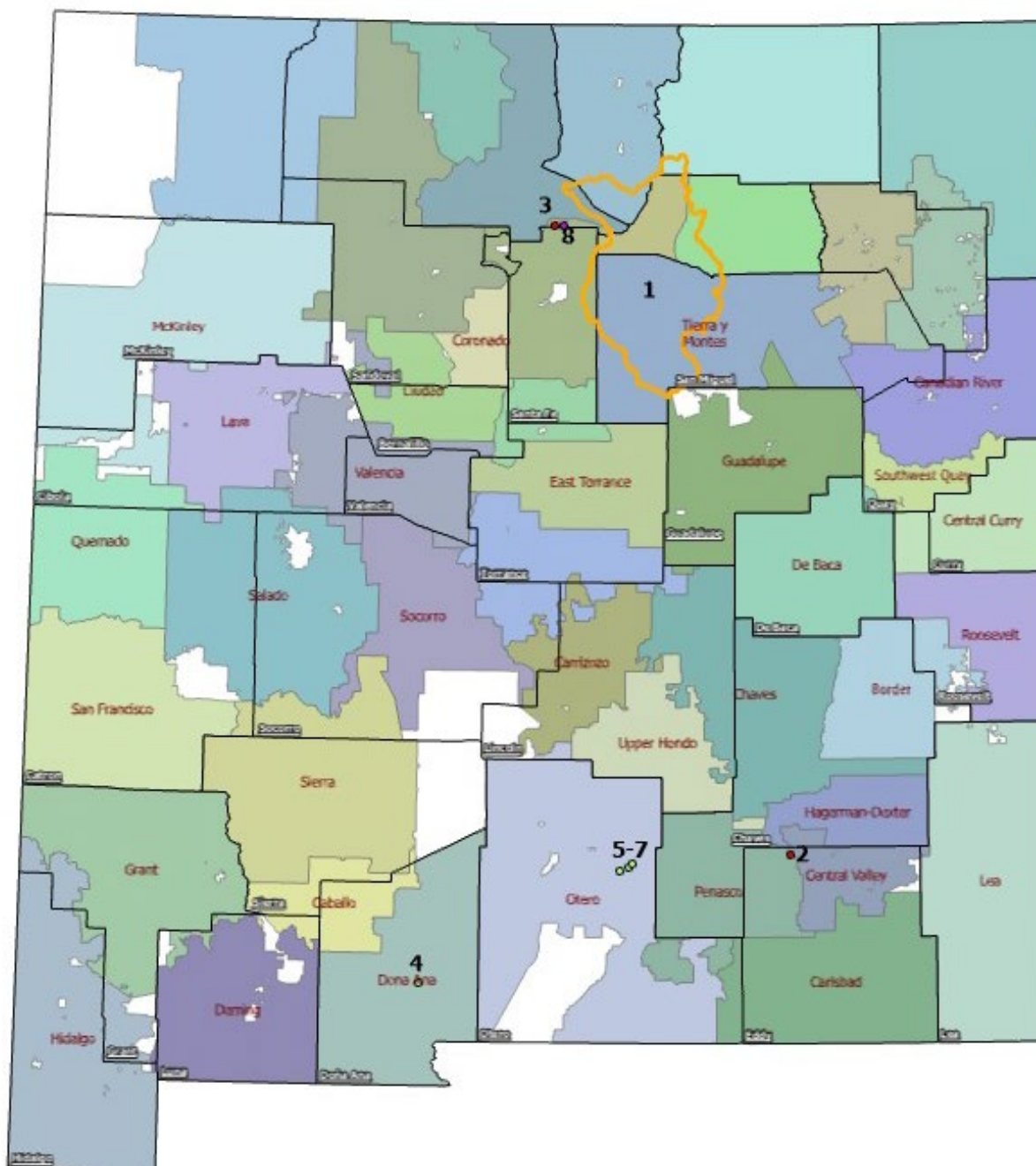
5 Upper Rio Penasco Site 1

6 Upper Rio Penasco Site 2

7 Upper Rio Penasco Site 3A

Rehab Design

8 Santa Cruz Site 1



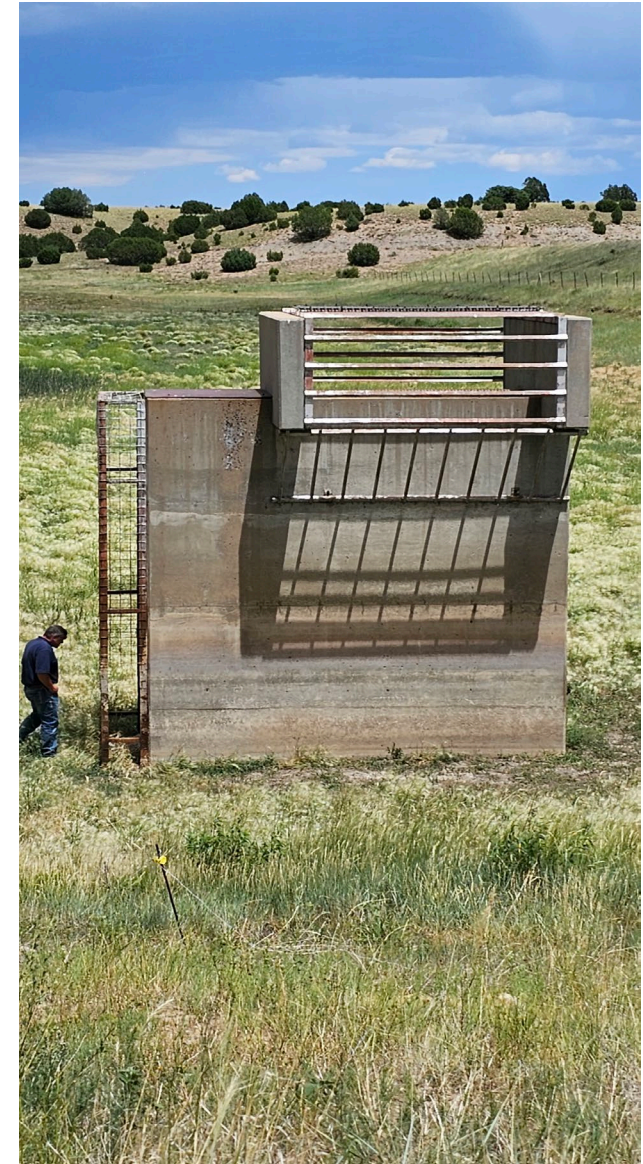
Watershed Program Expectations for 2026

- As funding allows, these are the goals for the year:
 - Funding of 18 new dam assessments
 - Funding of 1 new Rehab Plan
 - Funding for design phase of 1 active WFPO Project
 - Funding for construction phase for 1 active Rehab Project
 - Bring on new projects as Sponsors submit new requests



Questions????

- Watershed POCs
 - Elias Gnann – State Conservation Engineer
 - Email: elias.gnann@usda.gov
 - Phone: (505) 761-4490
 - Merceidez Fabok – Watershed Program Manger
 - Email: merceidez.fabok@usda.gov
 - Phone: (505) 761-4421





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Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Kenneth Lujan, Acting RCPP Coordinator



By leveraging collective resources and collaborating on common goals, RCPP demonstrates the power of public-private partnerships in delivering results for agriculture and conservation.

State Technical Advisory Committee
May 2026

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
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What is RCPP?

A cost sharing program that is designed to be led by partners and implemented on an areawide 5-year-project level basis.

- **Requires an eligible “Lead Partner” (is responsible for the project)**
- **Proposal: Impact, Partner Contributions, and Partnerships/Management Capacity (will be evaluated based on these)**
- **RCPP Projects: Classic or Alternative Funding Arrangement (AFA)**
- **Funding Pools: Critical Conservation Area (CCA) and State/Multistate**
- **Funding Sources: NRCS RCPP Allocation and a match through various Partner Contributions (Non-Federal Funds and/or In-Kind Services)**
- **Land Management Contracts and Entity-Held Easements used in NM**

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NFO)

- Has not been released for Fiscal Year 2026
- Applicants can use the Grants.gov Search tool to find current RCPP Notices of Funding Opportunity (NFO)

Example:

The screenshot shows the Grants.gov Search Grants page. The search criteria are set to 'rcpp' and the results show 2 matching results. The first result is a Notice of Funding for NRCS's Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) for Federal Fiscal Year (FY) 2023.

GRANTS.GOV FIND. APPLY. SUCCEED.™

SEARCH: Grant Opportunities ▾ Enter Keyword... **GO**

HOME LEARN GRANTS ▾ **SEARCH GRANTS** APPLICANTS ▾ GRANTORS ▾ SYSTEM-TO-SYSTEM ▾ FORMS ▾ CONNECT ▾ SUPPORT ▾

GRANTS.GOV > Search Grants

SEARCH GRANTS

BASIC SEARCH CRITERIA:

Keyword(s):

Opportunity Number:

CFDA:

OPPORTUNITY STATUS:

☒ Forecasted (0)

☒ Posted (2)

☐ Closed (5)

SEARCH TIPS | EXPORT DETAILED DATA |

SORT BY: Relevance (Descending) ▾

DATE RANGE: All Available ▾

1 - 2 OF 2 MATCHING RESULTS:

Opportunity Number	Opportunity Title	Agency	Opportunity Status	Posted Date	Close Date
USDA-NRCS-NHQ-RCPP-23-NOFO0001304	Notice of Funding for NRCS's Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) for Federal Fiscal Year (FY) 2023	USDA-NRCS	Posted	05/19/2023	08/18/2023

What is in the NFO?

Notice of Funding Opportunity. In the context of the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), it is the official solicitation document released to announce funding availability, criteria, and instructions for submitting project proposals.

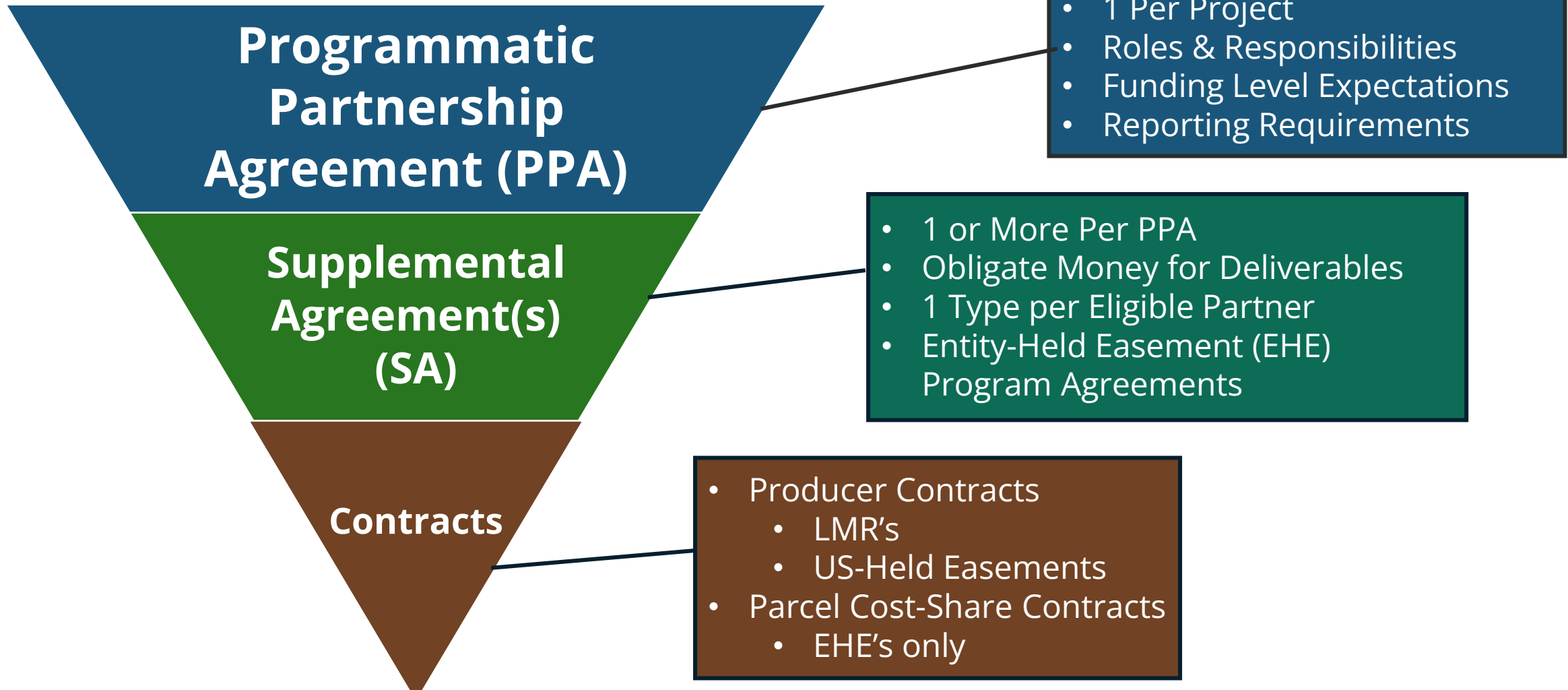
What the RCPP NFO Contains

- Every NFO provides vital information you need to structure a successful proposal, including:
- **Project Types:** Distinguishes between RCPP Classic (using standard NRCS contracts with producers) and RCPP Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFA) for unique project structures.
- **Application Deadlines:** Specific dates and times by which proposals must be submitted through the NRCS portal.
- **Proposal Requirements:** Mandated content, formatting rules, and guidelines for budget and partner contributions.
- **Evaluation Criteria:** How the NRCS evaluates and ranks proposals—usually based on Impact, Partner Contributions, and Partnership Management

RCPP Process



RCPP Agreements



New Mexico RCPP Active Agreements

San Juan Non-Native Phreatophyte Removal Program (1893)- Classic

- Lead Partner- San Juan SWCD
- Funding Amount- \$1,042,208
- Funding Pool- State
- Reduce wildfire risk by removing non-native Russian olive and Salt Cedar infestations in identified priority riparian areas

Producer Contracts-
12 @ \$700,000 total

Eastern NM Prairie Grassland Initiative (1905)- Classic

- Lead Partner- NMACD
- Funding Amount- \$2,025,974
- Funding Pool- CCA: Prairie Grassland
- Habitat improvements to meet needs of Lesser Prairie-chicken

Producer Contracts-
7 @ \$1,414,280

NM Restoration Initiative for Rangeland, Forestland, and Wildlife on Ranches with Federal Lands (2127)- Classic

- Lead Partner NMACD
- Funding Amount- \$4,000,000
- Funding Pool- State
- Utilize land management contracts with ranches whose operations include federal lands

Producer Contracts-
13 @ \$2,471,938 total



New Mexico RCPP Active Agreements

North Central NM Watershed Restoration Project (2137)- Classic

- Lead Partner- Claunch-Pinto SWCD
- Funding Amount- \$2,313,359
- Funding Pool- State
- Restoration treatments to improve watershed health and mitigate wildfire risk

Producer Contracts-
13 @ \$1,755,958 total

NM Ogallala Preservation and Conservation (2553)- Classic

- Lead Partner- NMACD
- Funding Amount- \$6,911,311
- Funding Pool- CCA: Prairie Grassland
- Contracts to help farmers convert from irrigated to dryland, pasture, or native grasslands

EHE- 3 @ approx. \$4 mil.
Producer Contracts- pending

North Central NM Watershed Restoration Project (2679)- Classic

- Lead Partner- Claunch-Pinto SWCD
- Funding Amount- \$969,225
- Funding Pool- State
- Restoration treatments to improve watershed health and mitigate wildfire risk

Producer Contracts-
2 @ \$710,877 total



New Mexico RCPP Active Agreements

Establishment of Grassland Strongholds across the Southern High Plains (2764)- Classic

- Lead Partner- The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
- Lead State- Colorado
- Partner States- KS, OK, NM, TX
- Funding Amount- \$10,000,000
- Funding Pool- CCA (Prairie Grasslands Region)
- Easements to create grassland resilience and habitat

Grazing Management and Non-Lethal Predator Risk Mitigation in NM and AZ (3093)- Classic

- Lead Partner- Western Landowners Alliance (WLA)
- Lead State- New Mexico
- Partner State- Arizona
- Funding Amount- \$6,665,854
- Funding Pool- State/Multistate
- Conservation activities to support livestock production in areas with recovering predator populations

Tribal Buffalo Restoration in the Southwest Region (3503)- AFA

- Lead Partner- InterTribal Buffalo Council (ITBC)
- Lead State- New Mexico
- Partner States- AZ, CO, UT
- Funding Amount- \$21,250,000
- Funding Pool- State/Multistate
- Support Tribes in restoring native grasslands for buffalo in the southwest region



QUESTIONS?



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