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2026 NEXT GENERATION WATER SUMMIT

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EXAMINING NM'S PRECARIOUS WATER FUTURE

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COVER: TOP: MIKE COLLIGNON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE GREEN BUILDER COALITION AT THE 2025 NEXT GENERATION WATER SUMMIT; THE RÍO GRANDE, DRYING UP NEAR ALBUQUERQUE, AUGUST 2025; NM CLIMATE INVESTMENT CENTER STAFF AT THE ELECTRIFY NM CONFERENCE, APRIL 2026; CENTER: THE RÍO GRANDE FLOWING THROUGH NORTHERN NM NEAR LOS ALAMOS; 2025 NGWS ATTENDEES; BICYCLING ALONG AN ACEQUIA; BOTTOM: AMANDA HATHERLY, KATHERINE MORTIMER AND CHRISTINE Y. CHÁVEZ AT NGWS RECEPTION; FARMERS AND ACEQUIA SUPPORTERS MARCH AT THE STATE CAPITOL ON ACEQUIA DAY 2026; MIDDLE RÍO GRANDE IRRIGATION

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Green Fire Times provides a platform for community-based voices—useful information for residents, businesspeople, students and visitors—anyone interested in the history and spirit of New Mexico and the Southwest. GFT's articles and storytelling document the interrelationship of community, culture, the environment and the regional economy, uniting people from all backgrounds to create innovative and sustainable solutions.

Some people write off GFT as just an "environmental publication." If you are a regular reader, you know that the environment is but one thread of a unique tapestry that highlights time-honored regional traditions of sustainability, while promoting culturally based economic development. You will also find articles on education, renewable energy, Indigenous solutions, growing a regional food system, and a lot more. You will find thought-provoking ideas, as well as passionate opinions. The wealth of article submissions we receive demonstrates the need for the unique platform that GFT provides.

Green Fire Times is owned by the nonprofit Southwest Learning Centers, Inc. (Est. 1973). Because of the ever-increasing financial challenges of maintaining a quality print/online magazine, it is uncertain how much longer GFT can survive. It is important for GFT to maintain the free print copies—still widely distributed from Albuquerque to Taos, including to some rural areas—because many people from rural and tribal communities contribute ideas, articles and images and really enjoy being able to share a hard copy. The print copies also provide exposure to people who wouldn't otherwise find GFT.

In order for GFT to build on its accomplishments and stay alive, we really need to upgrade our operations. We have reached out to potential funders and foundations, as well as advertisers. Mostly, we receive small donations from devoted readers. We have been operating on a shoestring for a long time—and it's not sustainable. As you're aware, this is an especially critical time for independent, nonprofit, community-centered journalism. If GFT matters to you and you value the work we do, a tax-deductible contribution or placing an ad in an upcoming issue would make a meaningful difference in helping us continue to publish and serve our community. A donation may be made through this QR code or via PayPal on www.GreenFireTimes.com. Or, send a check to Southwest Learning Centers (with a notation "for GFT") to P.O. Box 8627, Santa Fe, N.M. 87504-8627. Thank you.

GREEN FIRE TIMES
News & Views from the Resilient Southwest

WATER • ENERGY • BUILT ENVIRONMENT

NEXT GENERATION WATER SUMMIT
NEW MEXICO WATER DIALOGUE
ELECTRIFY NEW MEXICO CONFERENCE
MAIN STREAM NEW MEXICO

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COLORADO RIVER BASIN CHALLENGES

The Colorado River Basin contributes at least $1.4 trillion in GDP, serves more than 40 million people with water, and irrigates 5.5 million acres of farmland, producing tens of billions of dollars' worth of food for the entire country. Nearly 50 percent of the United States' food supply comes from the basin.

The seven states in the Southwest that rely on the Colorado River for much of their water supply are now facing an existential threat. Water levels in the two dams serviced by the river are falling to near deadpool status, where they will no longer be able to supply water or move hydropower plant turbines. As of early 2026, Lake Powell, behind the Glen Canyon Dam, was at roughly 27 percent capacity, and Lake Mead, behind Hoover Dam, was at 34 percent. This prompted mandatory water cuts for Arizona, Nevada and New Mexico. The federal government is considering more drastic interventions, mandatory cuts and rationing.

Lower-basin states of Nevada, California and Arizona want the upper-basin states of Colorado, Utah, Wyoming and New Mexico to use less, and vice-versa. Negotiations on voluntary agreements on water cutbacks have failed, so the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation may impose cuts of up to 77 percent, or in some scenarios, over 95 percent for Central Arizona Project (CAP) water, which would devastate the economies of Arizona, California and Nevada.

An equally complicated and profound issue is the water rights held by tribes. Tribal nations hold rights to about a quarter of the Colorado River's water (around 3.2 million acre-feet annually), but often lack the infrastructure to use it, making them key players in future water management despite historical exclusion by agreements like the 1922 Colorado River Compact.

Climate change has made the West's recurring droughts and heat waves far more likely, a process that will only intensify without efforts to keep the planet from heating more. That in turn will keep depriving Colorado of rain and snowmelt in the future. No allocation of the river's future resources can succeed if this fact isn't reckoned with. Meanwhile, states up and down the river must prepare for a future with much less water. ■

Hoover Dam's Lake Mead has hit its lowest water level since the 1930s.

WATER PROVIDERS COLLABORATE ACROSS COLORADO RIVER BASIN

The Colorado River Basin Water Efficiency Network

BY **JOAN HUGHES**

In the middle of increasingly dire drought and water supply challenges across New Mexico and the Colorado River Basin, a multi-state group of water providers and land-use planners are collaborating on meeting water needs at the local level. The Colorado River Basin Water Efficiency Network, or CRB Network, is facilitated by the Alliance for Water Efficiency and the Lincoln Institute's Babbitt Center for Land and Water Policy and is convening water and land practitioners across the CRB to share experiences, lessons learned and effective tools for stewarding water in these unprecedented times.

The Colorado River at Horseshoe Bend, Ariz., a few miles below Glen Canyon Dam. Credit: Pixabay/CC0

The City of Santa Fe and the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority are participating in the CRB Network, which is deliberately staying outside of the political battle around CRB water and focusing instead on local conservation, efficiency and reuse efforts that are critical in the midst of unprecedented challenges. This spring, for example, 96 percent of New Mexico is experiencing drought, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor, with over 75 percent of the state in severe to extreme drought.

Water and land practitioners share experiences, lessons learned and effective tools for stewarding water.

Threats to water supplies from outside the state are exacerbating the problem. Record low snowpack in the Rocky Mountains directly impacts New Mexico's water supplies. Even though the Colorado River doesn't physically flow in the state, New Mexico is allocated 11.25 percent of the CRB Upper Basin's annual allocation of 7.5 million acre-feet. Water from that allocation is used by cities like Farmington, which sits within the Basin and relies on water from tributaries of the Colorado River. However, most of the state's CRB water is used by much larger populations like Albuquerque and Santa Fe. Located well outside the Basin, they receive CRB water via the federal San Juan-Chama Project, which diverts Colorado River headwaters from the San Juan Mountains in the Rockies to the most populous parts of New Mexico.

Whatever the outcome of the ongoing political battles over future allocations of CRB water, one fact remains clear: Water demands across the CRB exceed supply, and this imbalance threatens the sustainability of communities, ecosystems and economies that depend on this shared resource.

The Alliance for Water Efficiency remains hopeful that the seven basin states will reach an agreement that, along with a significant federal investment, delivers long-term reductions in water use aligned with the declining supplies of the CRB. In the meantime, local action becomes even more critical to addressing these challenges. The CRB Network is working to connect those local actions across the Basin. Municipal water providers and water and land use planners that use CRB water are welcome to join the Network. For more information, email crbnetwork@lincolninst.edu . ■

Joan Hughes is the Alliance for Water Efficiency's director of programs and research. She is one of the presenters at the 2026 Next Generation Water Summit.

OP-ED: NORM GAUME

THE RÍO GRANDE HAS NEVER BEEN DRIER!

WHAT 85 YEARS OF COMPACT DATA SHOW

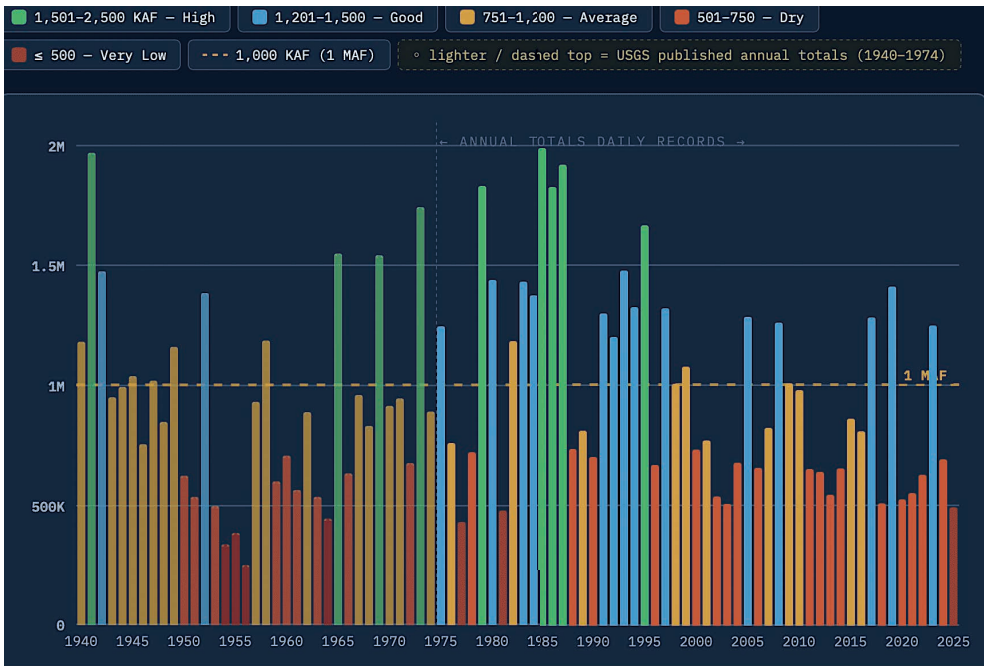
Every year since 1940, federal and state water managers have accounted for the Río Grande waters flowing past the Otowi highway bridge to Los Alamos. That annual volume determines how the river's flow is allocated under the Río Grande Compact—which is federal and state law that governs water-sharing among Colorado, New Mexico and Texas. The amount of water New Mexico must deliver for all uses downstream of Elephant Butte Reservoir—in New Mexico, Texas and Mexico—depends directly on how much water arrives at Otowi. The gauge is, in the most literal sense, where the Middle Río Grande's annual water-entitlement and delivery obligations are set.

Each of the three graphics below reveals important facts that are not well known. The first graphic spans the complete Compact era from 1940 to the present. It shows that the current drought is not without precedent; the infamous drought of the 1950s was comparably severe.

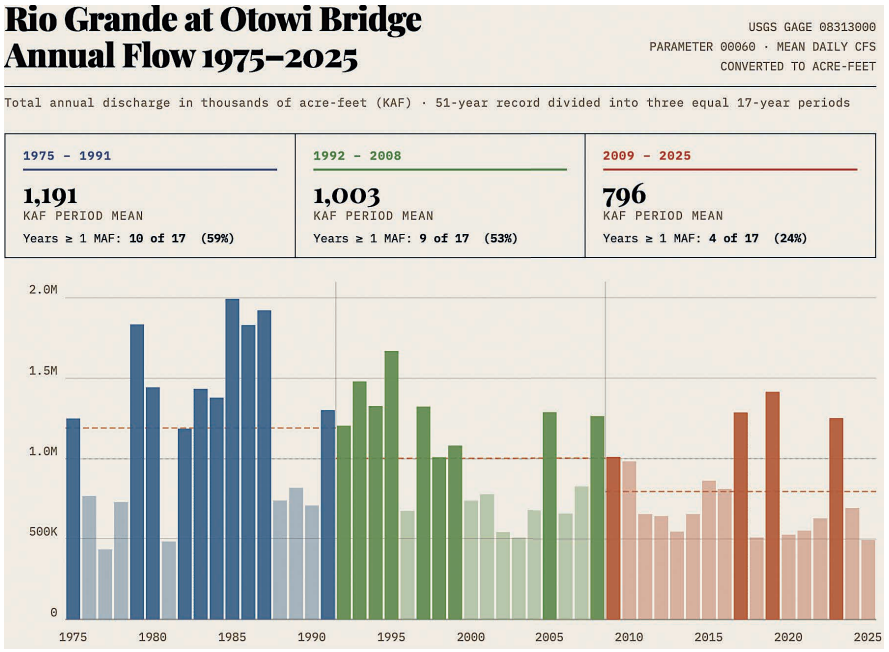
RÍO GRANDE ANNUAL FLOWS SINCE 1940

The second graphic examines the most recent five decades and reveals an alarming fact: New Mexico has lost roughly one-third of its Río Grande water supply over the past 50 years. The 1980s and 1990s were anomalously wet—a period that filled reservoirs and fostered a false sense of the river's water supply blessings. Since then, the basin has trended sharply dryer. El Vado and Elephant Butte reservoirs have been essentially emptied, and Abiquiu Reservoir has been drawn down by roughly half—all in an effort to sustain water supplies and meet new federal endangered species requirements.

It has not been enough. New Mexico entered the current dry era holding substantial accrued delivery credits under the Compact. All credits have been consumed. Since 2018, New Mexico's cumulative delivery deficit has risen to –132,000 acre-feet. This is a legally binding State of New Mexico water debt to Lower Río Grande.

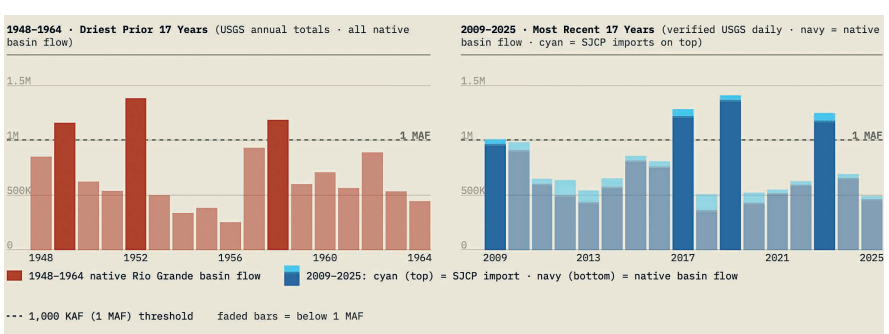


New Mexico has lost roughly one-third of its Río Grande water supply over the past 50 years.



EXAMINING THE MOST RECENT FIVE DECADES

The third graphic completes the analysis by placing the most recent 17 years in direct comparison with the driest 17-year period previously recorded under the Compact, with full accounting of San Juan-Chama Project imports, contractor entitlements and the graphically alarming storage history of Heron Reservoir. The data support two conclusions that the third graphic documents in detail.



COMPARING THE MOST RECENT 17 YEARS WITH THE DRIEST 17 YEARS HISTORICALLY

PRINCIPAL FINDING

The 17-year period 2009–2025 is, in terms of native Río Grande basin water yield,

Albuquerque's population in 1950 was roughly 97,000; today the metropolitan area exceeds 900,000.

as dry as the driest 17-year period ever recorded since annual Río Grande Compact water delivery accounting began. Native basin flows at Otowi averaged 716,000 acre-feet per year over the recent period versus 703,000 acre-feet per year from 1948–1964—a difference of only 1.8 percent. Both periods produced native flows above one million acre-feet in exactly three of 17 years. Strip out San Juan-Chama Project imports, and the two eras are hydrologically indistinguishable.

PRINCIPAL CONCLUSION

The effective water-supply stress today is far greater than the raw Otowi flow numbers suggest, or than it has ever been.

Groundwater pumping from aquifers hydraulically connected to the Río Grande exerts a persistent depletive effect on surface flows that were much lower during 1948–1964 historic dry period, making the effective water-supply stress today far greater than the raw Otowi flow numbers suggest or than it has ever been.

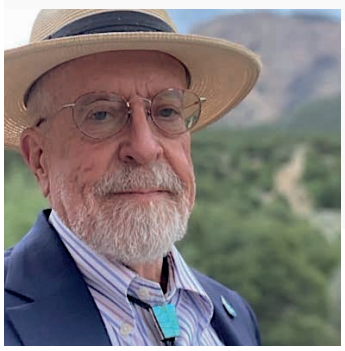
During the 1948–1964 historical driest period, the Middle Río Grande corridor had far fewer people, and cities were much smaller: Albuquerque's population in 1950 was roughly 97,000; today the metropolitan area exceeds 900,000. Municipal, industrial, agricultural and riparian water demands are dramatically greater today, and rising temperatures have increased evapotranspiration throughout the basin. Decades of heavy pumping from the hydraulically connected shallow alluvial aquifer and the underlying Santa Fe Group aquifer have drawn down water tables along certain reaches of the Middle Río Grande, causing greater losses from the river.

The third graphic is the most important. It presents this evaluation's bottom-line findings and conclusions, including the stark storage history of the San Juan Chama Project and the recent diminishment of its annual contributions to a reliable Middle Río Grande water supply.

If analyses similar to this one are publicly available, I am unaware, so I invested the time to laboriously assemble the data. One element of the third graphic, for example, required specific data from the second page of 17 Río Grande Compact annual accounting sheets posted as PDF images on the Office of the State Engineer/Interstate Stream Commission website. The same documents are available as images from Colorado and Texas institutions.

No compact state, or the Bureau of Reclamation, or the Río Grande Compact Commission has produced a digital dataset suitable for analysis of this rich data set. Note that the ISC's 2019 Water Data Act responsibilities would have the agency assemble all the pertinent annual terms for historical Río Grande Compact accounting into a digital data set.

To read the original article, visit: https://nmwateradvocates.org/rio-grande-driest-era-compact-history-otowi/ . ■



Norm Gaume, P.E., president of New Mexico Water Advocates, is a retired water resources engineer and a former director of the Interstate Stream Commission. New Mexico Water Advocates is focused on the state's water future and "successful adaptation to increasing water scarcity."

NM COUNTIES INCLUDED IN FEDERAL DROUGHT DISASTER DESIGNATION

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has designated 21 New Mexico counties as primary natural disaster areas, and seven counties as contiguous disaster areas, including Santa Fe and Mora, due to recent drought. According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, these counties suffered from severe, extreme, or exceptional drought conditions.

A disaster designation makes farm operators in primary and contiguous counties eligible to be considered for Farm Service Agency (FSA) emergency loan assistance, provided eligibility requirements are met. Farmers in eligible counties have until Dec. 10 to apply for emergency loans. FSA reviews each application on its own merits, considering the extent of production losses on the farm and the security and repayment ability of the operator. FSA offices can provide affected farmers with further information. Producers should contact their local FSA office to submit documentation of losses and applications. It is advised to apply as soon as possible.

CLIMATE CHANGE, OVERUSE SEND THE MIDDLE RIO GRANDE INTO 'DIRE' SITUATION

Former state official worries another court battle over water may be looming

BY **LAURA PASKUS**

Last summer, the Middle Río Grande through Albuquerque dried for about 50 days. This year, the river will dry again—as early as May.

Irrigation season will be short, fire danger will be high, and Albuquerque's largest drinking water utility will again switch from diverting river water to relying exclusively on groundwater. Long-term data reveals clear warming and drying trends, said Jason Casuga, the Middle Río Grande Conservancy District's chief engineer and CEO. And New Mexicans experience those changes in their daily lives. "People see a river drying that they didn't used to see dry, see mountains that are through their snowpack earlier than they've ever seen," Casuga said. "Maybe some folks can debate why that's happening, but the reality is there is less water here now."

With an early heat wave gripping the watershed, the Middle Río Grande might swell in the short-term, but by early May, Casuga said, things will "look very bleak." Systems are breaking down because the hydrology of the river is "just that bad." That calls for hard conversations, he said, about farming practices, managing invasive plant species in the bosque, complying with the Río Grande Compact, and much more. "Nobody has to agree, but we have to be willing to have the conversations and then push our leaders to make good decisions," he said. "We can't just go to sleep and hope it gets better tomorrow. We have to change, and that change needs to be flexible."

"This is not a drought, this is aridification." – Norm Gaume

In July 2025, drying in the Río Grande had reached the Montaño Bridge in Albuquerque. Photo by Laura Paskus

For more than two decades, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's Albuquerque Area Office leased and released water from upstream reservoirs for endangered species and to keep water flowing through Albuquerque. Supplementing the river that way "kind of masked the effects of drought, of a warmer climate," the agency's Water Operations Supervisor Carolyn Donnelly told Source NM. "For many years, we'd have a bad snow year but (people) still saw in Albuquerque, the river flow. So, they could think, 'It's not that bad,'" said Donnelly. "But really, it was that bad."

Now, there's no water to spare in the watershed's reservoirs. On the Chama River, a tributary of the Río Grande, in late March, Abiquiú Reservoir was 61 percent full; El Vado, 13 percent full; and Heron, 7 percent full. That's the lowest Heron Reservoir has been since it was filled in 1971.

The Río Grande Basin is coming off its warmest winter on record, with the mountains suffering a major snow drought. But overconsumption was already putting water security on the Río Grande at "grave risk," according to a study released late last year. That study of the watershed in the U.S. and Mexico revealed that 85 percent of the water used in New Mexico from the Río Grande is "fundamentally unsustainable."

Former New Mexico Interstate Stream Director Norm Gaume believes New Mexico's overuse of water in the Middle Río Grande "compromises the water security of the entire state." And he thinks New Mexico is headed into another "compact battle," like the 12-year-long U.S. Supreme Court battle on the Lower Río Grande. Under this year's "dire" conditions, the state will have an even harder time complying with the Río Grande Compact, said Gaume, president of New Mexico Water Advocates.

Already, the state is under-delivering to water users in southern New Mexico and Texas, creating additional legal restrictions for water managers. New Mexico's current debit to Texas exceeds 132,000-acre-feet of water, and it's expected to keep growing.

And while the state might experience a healthy monsoon or robust snowpack from year to year, the long-term trend toward less water in the region's streams, rivers and reservoirs is clear. "This is not a drought, this is aridification," said Gaume. "Droughts are climatic, but they're expected to end. This is not expected to end, and it's wishful thinking to imagine it will."

A coyote searches for water in the channel of the dry Río Grande in Albuquerque, August 2025. Photo by Laura Paskus

The public needs political leaders to tackle the Middle Río Grande's problems as an "existential threat," he said. "As a water resources engineer, I have that training, but I also have this deep respect and love for rivers," he said. "Water is a life force. It doesn't just come out of a tap. It exists naturally, and we are totally failing in our stewardship responsibilities—not only to our detriment and the detriment of the natural world, but to the detriment of our progeny."

The Middle Río Grande includes two "types" of water in the system: water native to the Río Grande watershed and its tributaries; and San Juan-Chama water, contributions from the Colorado River system diverted into the Río Grande via Heron Reservoir and the Chama River. After the San Juan-Chama Drinking Water Plant came online in 2009, and the Albuquerque Bernalillo Water Utility Authority could draw that water directly from the river, the aquifer

There's no water to spare in the watershed's reservoirs.

The Río Grande in Albuquerque, summer 2025. Photo by Laura Paskus

in Albuquerque "rebounded really well," according to Mark Kelly, the utility's water resources division manager. In certain parts of the city, groundwater levels rose by about 40 feet. Since the utility has regularly shifted back to groundwater pumping in the summer, that upward trajectory has "flattened off."

Climate change is "dealing us a bum hand" in terms of snowpack that makes it through the series of tunnels, diversions and siphons that moves water from the Colorado River system into the Río Grande's San Juan-Chama Project, said Kelly. Already, the utility's 100-year water resources management strategy accounts for a hotter, drier future. But the plan is being updated, Kelly said, "to make sure that some of the assumptions we've made in terms of climate change and demands are still aligned with our total water portfolio."

In the meantime, the Middle Río Grande will keep drying, often for longer expanses and durations. Fish, wildlife and habitats will suffer. The bosque's trees will die, dry and burn. And year after year, people will become more accustomed to seeing the dry riverbed. "It's a classic tragedy of the commons, where we are all guilty because nobody has taken leadership," said Gaume. "As a society, we should know better—and we do know better—but we haven't acted yet." ■

Laura Paskus is an independent reporter, editor and radio producer. You can read her recent writing at https://www.newmexicoriversrising.com/. This article was originally published by Source New Mexico.

The terminus of the state's largest river in Albuquerque, August 2025
Photo by Laura Paskus

MRGCD WARNED OF LIMITED WATER SUPPLY AS SPRING RUNOFF FELL SHORT

The Middle Río Grande Conservancy District (WWW.MRGCD.COM) operates, maintains and manages irrigation, drainage and river flood control in the Middle Río Grande Valley. The MRGCD serves approximately 11,000 irrigators, six pueblos and 100,000 parcels of land. MRGCD also works in cooperation with other local, state and federal agencies to protect the environment, wildlife and endangered species.

In April, MRGCD advised water users that river conditions were not consistent with a typical spring runoff, and water availability was becoming increasingly limited across the system very early. In early March, river flows had temporarily increased due to low-elevation snowmelt, allowing MRGCD to begin irrigation deliveries earlier than usual in many areas. However, flows subsequently dropped to approximately 30 percent of earlier levels, while demand continued to rise. "The first day of spring marked a turning point," said MRGCD CEO and chief engineer, Jason Casuga. "Incoming flows were no longer sufficient to meet both diversion needs and required river bypass thresholds."

It was uncertain whether the high-elevation snowpack would generate a secondary runoff pulse. Even if it did, MRGCD knew that the resulting benefit might be diminished by upstream storage under federal operations in the Río Chama system for prior and paramount use by pueblo lands, as well as by Colorado diversions.

The MRGCD told water users to expect that: deliveries would continue on a rotational basis, with limited flexibility in scheduling unless conditions improved; there would likely be longer wait times between deliveries; and fewer canals might operate at any given time. MRGCD strongly encouraged users to "take water when it is available, as future opportunities are uncertain." MRGCD's statement read,

"Given these conditions:" MRGCD urges all water users to proceed with caution when making farming decisions, carefully considering one's own water needs and those of others. Although hydrologic conditions and upstream activities are outside our control, our collective response is not. This season will require efficient use, strong cooperation, and a shared sense of responsibility from all of us."

Middle Río Grande District irrigation

Measuring Up New Mexico's Aquifers – A closer look with Katie Zemlick, OSE Hydrology Bureau Chief

From Main Stream New Mexico

PHOTOS BY **LEROY GRAFE**

Beneath New Mexico's landscapes is a hidden anatomy of sediment and rock that governs how we live on the surface. New Mexico's 39 groundwater basins—natural containers that house our aquifers—are crucial sources of water for most of New Mexico's population. Over half of the water New Mexicans consume annually comes from these underground sources. Yet, there is little known about our aquifers or how long they will last.

Part of the challenge is our landscape's geologic complexity. The other challenge is that aquifers vary widely based on the complex—and unseen—rock and sediment structures that compose them. Some, like the aquifer beneath Albuquerque, sit near the surface and are connected closely with surface water systems. These aquifers replenish at a faster rate. Others are more isolated, refilling so slowly that the water we draw today may have fallen as rain before human history.

"I think there are a lot of hard decisions that are going to have to be made, and it's better if we can come up with solutions before it's dire."

"We know we get very minimal recharge into some aquifers, so what you're doing in effect is mining them," says Katie Zemlick, hydrology bureau chief for the Office of the State Engineer. "If you think about mining water the same way you would think about a coal mine, at some point there's no resource left." Overmining not only depletes water volume, it can also collapse aquifers or separate previously connected systems by creating dried-out, unsaturated zones of soil and rock.

BUILDING 'A DETAILED PICTURE'

As regional water planning gets underway, and as scientists predict 25 percent less water in our state over the next 50 years, increased aquifer monitoring is a move that experts like Zemlick say will help prepare the state for a parched future. "It would be huge," Zemlick says. "We could actually have a conversation about how much water is left and come up with an approach toward sustainability."

Above: NM Office of the State Engineer Hydrology Bureau Chief Katie Zemlick

"We need accurate mapping of formations, and we need to know aquifer properties and how aquifers are connected to each other to try and get a sense for how much water is available," Zemlick says. "We don't have that. At least not yet."

Santa Fe Reservoir Basin channel
Photo by Leroy Grafe

Zemlick began her hydrology career at Sandia National Laboratories, culling water data and analyzing Western states' water policies with the Water Data Exchange (WaDE). The spirit of that work continues today with the New Mexico Water Data Initiative, the state's online hub that consolidates data from disparate sources across the state to provide the fullest picture yet of how much water we have, its quality, and how we use it.

But when it comes to groundwater, that picture is still unclear. Zemlick said much of the state's existing data comes from observations made by commercial and residential well drillers.

Katie Zemlick contemplates the watershed at a Santa Fe reservoir.
Photo by Leroy Grafe

"As the material is coming up at different depths, they log what the rock color looks like," she said. "That, I would say, is 99 percent of the data we have. The other 1 percent comes from actual geologists going out into the field, drilling, taking measurements with instruments, sending downhole cameras in. You can really get a detailed picture of what's happening."

OPTIMISM IN DIRE TIMES

The governor's 50 Year Water Action Plan calls for lawmakers to fully fund a Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources program that aims to drill 100 new dedicated monitoring wells and to fully characterize the state's aquifers by 2032. The additional wells will allow hydrologists and geologists to answer key questions about the state's underground water.

How porous is the aquifer? What percentage of it holds water versus sand, rock, or other sediment? How fast does water move through the system? How connected are our aquifers? Will pumping water out of one impact the amount of water in another?

"We have a database of those properties, but it's nowhere near as comprehensive as we would like," Zemlick says. "We need a lot of data to be able to estimate, 'We have 100 years of water,' or, 'We have 500 years of water.'"

Luckily, Zemlick says, crises often spur action, and public sentiment has shifted over the past decade to favor investments in planning, data collection, conservation and sustainability. Public support—and deep commitment from the scientific community—will have to continue for New Mexico to find balance again.

"New Mexicans are creative and resilient, and there are a lot of people in my profession who care deeply about this," she says. "There is optimism within us, … but my job is to think about the worst-case scenario day in and day out. That is what's most protective of the resource. I think there are a lot of hard decisions that are going to have to be made, and it's better if we can come up with solutions before it's dire." ■

A link to the source article at Main Stream New Mexico (NM Interstate Stream Commission)

‘FOUNDATIONAL’ NEW GROUNDWATER REPORT RELEASED

Groundwater levels in some areas of the Southwest have declined by over 80 percent, as wells, unregulated irrigation and production of water-intensive crops like alfalfa suck water out of the ground faster than rainfall can replace it. Moreover, wells are often polluted with manmade chemicals and naturally occurring arsenic, worsening health outcomes for rural residents. And, adverse climate has intensified. Record March heat melted most of the limited snowpack, exacerbating expected trouble for wildfire and summer heat seasons.

A foundational contribution to New Mexico’s water resources library, the 2026 New Mexico 360 Groundwater Report, was released in January by the New Mexico Groundwater Alliance. The report brings together hydrologic science, groundwater data, and legal and administrative tools into a single assessment of aquifer conditions. The report’s lead authors are Gretel Follingstad, Ph.D., Environmental Defense Fund senior manager, Climate Resilient Water Systems; and Maurice Hall, Ph.D., senior EDF senior advisor, Climate Resilient Water Systems.

Norm Gaume, president of the statewide nonprofit, New Mexico Water Advocates, said, “For the first time, the state’s water challenges and practical solutions have been brought together in one clear, comprehensive analysis, and the report recommends specific actions New Mexico must take to avoid a localized and statewide collapse of water security.”

The report documents a stark reality: In many regions, the state’s aquifers are being “mined” to the point of exhaustion. Seventy-eight percent of total groundwater use is for irrigated agriculture.

Key news from the report:

• **Extreme Dependence**: Twenty-four of 33 New Mexico counties use groundwater only; 19 of 23 nations, tribes and pueblos depend on it. Eighty-one percent of public water systems and over 170,000 private wells depend on groundwater.

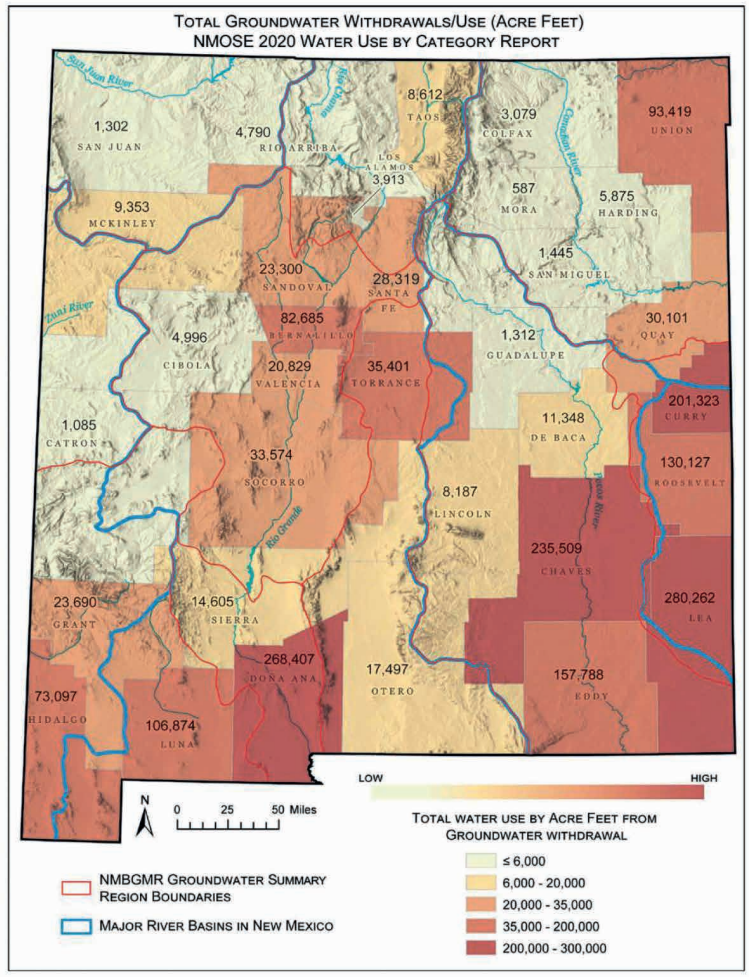
• **Urgent Depletion**: In areas like the Ogallala Aquifer, supplies may only last another 5 to 10 years without significant reductions in use.

• **Interconnected Systems**: Groundwater and surface water are not separate systems. Over-pumping aquifers directly depletes rivers, harming fish, wildlife and the availability of surface water.

• **Data Gaps**: Most of New Mexico’s 170,000-plus private wells are unmetered, leaving managers without the data needed to protect shared supplies.

The full report may be accessed via this link: https://www.nmgroundwateralliance.org/report .

New Mexico’s Groundwater Uses by River Basins (Valdez et al., 2024)



MAJOR ARIZONA DIARY AGREES TO REDUCE GROUNDWATER USE

A precedent for corporate accountability in water management

Following years of tension regarding agricultural water use in Cochise County, Arizona, Riverview LLP, a major dairy that operates across the Southwest and Upper Midwest, has agreed to a historic settlement with the state to reduce groundwater pumping. The deal is expected to save over 100,000 acre-feet of water by 2040 by taking 2,000 acres out of irrigation, impacting alfalfa and feed crops. The agreement, which may be the first of its kind in the country, aims to address rapidly declining groundwater levels in the Willcox Basin.

As part of the agreement, Riverview will contribute $11 million to fund water-hauling and well-drilling for residents, schools and local water systems whose wells have run dry, including $5.5 million managed by a third-party nonprofit for those outside a 1.6-mile radius of Riverview wells. In the Wilcox Basin, about 200 residential wells have run dry over the past decade.

Nearly 80 percent of Arizona has no regulations on the use of groundwater, which is the main source of water for most communities. That has led to industrial agriculture operations pumping unlimited amounts of water, leaving communities vulnerable.

“SEEING WATER” IN NM’S DRIER FUTURE: USING NEW TECHNOLOGY TO SUPPORT WATER MANAGEMENT

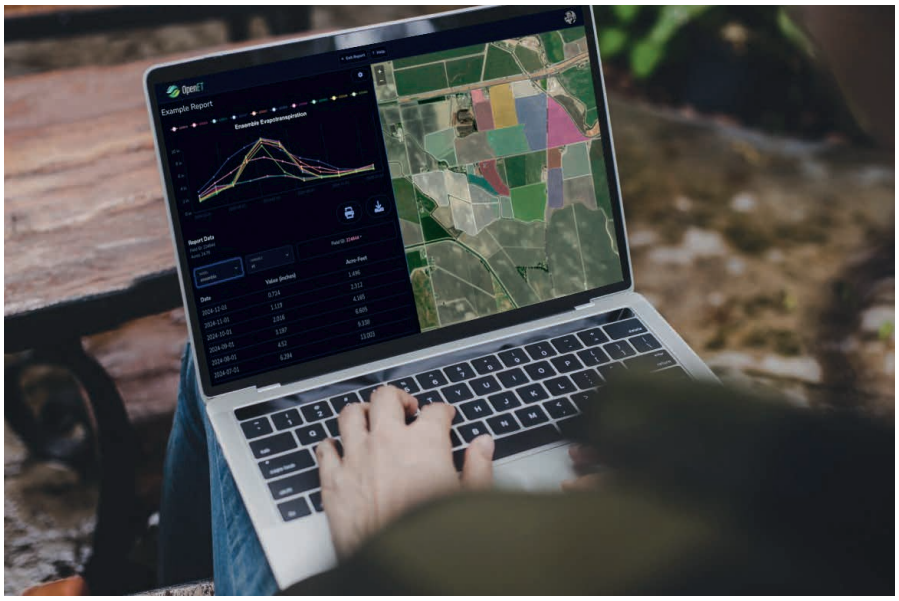
BY **SARA G. LARSEN, PE**

Across New Mexico, water systems are under increasing pressure. Groundwater—supplying the majority of drinking water statewide—is being depleted faster than it can naturally be recharged in many areas. Surface water supplies from rivers are also becoming more variable, with earlier snowmelt and reduced runoff.

At the same time, a portion of Santa Fe’s supply depends on imported water from the Colorado River Basin via the San Juan–Chama Project, linking the city to a broader multistate system facing severe water scarcity. Interstate tensions, including the Texas v. New Mexico dispute over Río Grande water deliveries, underscore how tightly constrained—and closely scrutinized—New Mexico’s water supplies have become, with legal outcomes now directly shaping how water is managed on the ground.

This creates a real confluence of risks around an uncertain water supply and a lack of understanding of where and when water is actually being used. And, unfortunately, this is not a future scenario—like much of the western U.S., water scarcity is an ongoing and increasingly pressing challenge across New Mexico.

Accurate measurement of how much water is being used is increasingly important.



OpenET’s Farm and Ranch Management Support Tool (FARMS), built to help farmers and growers have better access to their ET Data (HTTPS://ETDATA.ORG/FARMS-TOOL/)

NEW MEXICO’S WATER CONSERVATION CULTURE

One reason Santa Fe and New Mexico as a whole are well positioned to meet these challenges is their long-standing commitment to water conservation. Over the past several decades, Santa Fe and Albuquerque have significantly reduced per-capita water use through a combination of policy, infrastructure and public engagement, resulting in widespread adoption of water conservation as a cultural ethic. They consistently rank among the most water-efficient cities in the Southwest.

In addition, Santa Fe is investing in water reuse and return-flow systems designed to extend the usefulness of imported water. These strategies reflect a broader shift

Xeriscape and Water Conservation in Santa Fe, N.M. – Courtesy: Moriah Wolfe (Unsplash)

Santa Fe is investing in water reuse and return-flow systems.

from simply securing new water supplies to actively managing water as a limited, reusable resource.

At the same time, Santa Fe’s approach reflects deeper regional values around water. Acequia systems across New Mexico have long demonstrated community-based water governance rooted in equity and shared responsibility. New Mexico’s Indigenous communities continue to assert water rights tied to tribal sovereignty and to underscore an ethos of “water is life.” Together, these traditions reinforce that, for New Mexico, water management is not only technical—it is also cultural and ethical.

YOU CAN’T MANAGE WHAT YOU CAN’T MEASURE

As the climate in the Southwest continues to warm, and water becomes more constrained, accurate measurement of how much water is being used—which has historically been a large data gap–will be increasingly important. This is where tools like OpenET (HTTPS://ETDATA.ORG) are providing new capabilities.

MAIN STREAM MAGAZINE

Download Main Stream Magazine Volume 2

Main Stream Magazine features articles and interviews with water leaders in New Mexico.

We hope the insights and solutions in these pages inspire possibilities and shed light on our shared water future.

Office of the State Engineer
nm
Interstate Stream Commission

MAIN STREAM NEW MEXICO

For New Mexico, water management is not only technical—it is also cultural and ethical.

Snow in the Jémez Mountains – Courtesy: Raychel Sanner (Pexels)

OpenET uses satellite data to estimate evapotranspiration (ET)—the water consumed by crops and vegetation. By providing consistent, reliable, field-scale data across large areas, it enables water managers, farmers and agencies to better understand how much water is actually being used.

OpenET uses satellite observations from Landsat and other satellites, along with gridded weather data, to calculate ET at daily, monthly, seasonal and annual timescales using six well-established and trusted ET models. It computes ET for a variety of applications, delivering near-real-time results most useful to farmers and growers.

The OpenET platform launched in 2021 with free data covering 17 western states and, in December 2025, expanded to cover the contiguous 48 U.S. states. Today, OpenET has more than 15,000 users who routinely retrieve data for a wide variety of uses, ranging from irrigation scheduling for individual fields to water accounting across major U.S. river basins, to ET monitoring of forests and natural landscapes.

OPENET IN NEW MEXICO

Across the Río Grande, the Colorado River Basin, and even the entire West, this type of

Remote-sensing with Superimposed ET Data around Clovis, N.M. in the OpenET Data Explorer – Courtesy: OpenET

remote-sensing data is becoming increasingly useful. As western states work to manage limited supplies and meet interstate obligations, having a clearer picture of water use supports more accurate water accounting, improved conservation program design, better evaluation of efficiency measures and greater transparency in decision-making.

In New Mexico, where groundwater and surface water monitoring are highly variable, ET data offer a complementary tool for understanding water use across landscapes. These are the types of data that used to be available only to large agribusiness concerns, but with freely available OpenET data, farmers and growers can visualize the impact their operations have on water-use efficiency, productivity and crop yields over time. The mission of OpenET is to democratize this data and put it into the hands of those who can make the most difference in responding to water scarcity and climate challenges.

On larger scales, OpenET data are supporting climate resilience efforts in the Colorado River Basin, with OpenET partners working with the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer to better characterize "water budgets" and to provide historical water-use data for the Upper Basin's System Conservation Pilot Program (SCPP). The Bureau of Reclamation uses OpenET data to estimate water use for reproducible water accounting. The data also support the negotiated settlement of the Texas v. New Mexico case, ensuring the parties have a shared understanding of this critical component of their water budgets.

A CONNECTED WATER FUTURE

Importantly, OpenET does not replace existing management frameworks. It strengthens them by providing a shared, science-based dataset that can support a greater understanding of irrigation practices and defensible water-management decision-making.

Many water advocates in New Mexico have emphasized the need for stronger groundwater monitoring, more accurate measurement of surface water supplies and more comprehensive data systems. Without clear measurement, it is difficult to manage depletion or plan for long-term sustainability.

In this context, tools like OpenET, combined with local conservation efforts and traditional water governance approaches, represent complementary pieces of a more adaptive and climate-resilient system. New Mexico's water future depends on multiple interconnected systems: local snowpack and runoff, groundwater reserves, imported water supplies, and better understanding and data systems to manage them.

For more information about OpenET, contact MEDIA@OPENETDATA.ORG . ■

Sara Larsen, PE, CEO of OpenET, Inc., has more than two decades of experience in water resources management and data sharing. She is a presenter at the Next Generation Water Summit.

CONSERVATION, MODERNIZATION AND ACTION: AN INTERVIEW WITH STATE ENGINEER LIZ ANDERSON

From Main Stream New Mexico

PHOTOS BY **LEROY GRAFE**

In other Western states, the old maxim may ring true: "Whisky is for drinking; water is for fighting over." It's not surprising, perhaps, that it occasionally raises the temperature of public discourse, given water's scarcity in the arid Southwest. But in New Mexico, where we're facing an increasingly dry future, water managers have been leaning into planning and collaboration instead, with exciting results to show for it—and more progress on the way.

"We are way ahead of the game compared to a lot of places," says Liz Anderson, who leads New Mexico's Office of the State Engineer and serves as secretary of New Mexico's Interstate Stream Commission, the two state agencies that jointly manage and administer all of New Mexico's surface and groundwater. "Everybody in the Western United States is facing these same challenges, but we already have structures in place to help us share the water. And we have people working together."

Take the state's Active Water Resources Management statute. Passed in 2004, a few years into the state's ongoing multi-decade drought, the act helps water users outline how they'll share water in the case of scarcity.

Then there's Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham's 50-Year Water Action Plan, a comprehensive roadmap that lays out New Mexico's water use and conservation work for the next half-century while ensuring there's enough water available for economic development.

These structures are especially critical today, as climate scientists predict that the state will have 25 percent less water in its rivers, reservoirs and groundwater reserves over the next 50 years.

"Everybody in the Western United States is facing these same challenges, but we already have structures in place to help us share the water. And we have people working together."

Bicycling along an acequia

State Engineer Elizabeth Anderson

"Everything we're doing here [at OSE and ISC] is to provide a prosperous future for the state," Anderson says. "New Mexico is open for business, and we're prioritizing all the things we need to be a thriving community."

Anderson stepped into the state engineer role in 2024 when her predecessor, Mike Hamman, retired. She brings more than 20 years of water experience to the role—first as an environmental engineering consultant, and then as chief planning officer for the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority. In 2023, Anderson signed on to advise Hamman after the two met while collaborating on the Governor's Water Policy and Infrastructure Task Force. As state engineer, she's now working to modernize the agencies. That will allow current in-person tasks like permitting to take place online while also improving the efficiency of water administration tasks within the agency. And it will allow water managers and users more visibility into the state's water data and resources, and how they're being used.

"If you don't have a way of measuring how much water is being used in different parts of the system, then you can't figure out how to share that water," Anderson says. "You

"We need more tools that actually get that data into the hands of the people who are using the water day-to-day."

Photo by LeRoy Grafe

can't get people to take less when they need to. We need more tools that actually get that data into the hands of the people who are using the water day-to-day."

Anderson is also prioritizing Indian water rights settlements. Six have already been signed by Gov. Lujan Grisham and are awaiting approval by Congress—marking the most ever completed by a single administration. If approved as drafted, the settlements would bring about $3.2 billion of federal funding into the state to support not only tribal entities but also surrounding communities.

More work remains, including completing the water rights settlement with the six Middle Río Grande pueblos, an undertaking that Anderson describes as "challenging and critical."

"All of the settlements are incredibly important, and it's exciting to note the progress that has been made," she says.

Over the past 30 years, residents of Albuquerque and Santa Fe have cut per-capita water use in half.

Native American communities have been conserving and sharing water in New Mexico for generations—an ethos that residents, policymakers and water planners throughout the state have increasingly adopted. As an example, over the past 30 years, residents of Albuquerque and Santa Fe have cut per-capita water use in half.

Anderson hopes the state's regional planning efforts will spur on that ethos while helping policymakers identify and fund priority projects. Under the Water Security Planning Act's proposed rule, which recommends nine distinct regions, local stakeholders will have more power than ever to identify their regions' needs and prioritize projects based on local values — and our shared desire for a strong and sustainable water future.

Additionally, last year the Legislature allocated five million dollars to fund 41 pilot projects investigating innovations in agriculture throughout the state, supporting farmers and ranchers to implement techniques that increase resiliency, protect livelihoods and reduce water use.

"New Mexico has been dealing with drought for a long time," Anderson says. "In some places, people really take water for granted. Here in New Mexico, we cherish it, and we're already working on critical, long-term solutions to prepare for a hotter, drier future." ■

NEW MEXICO'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- A strong system of water-sharing agreements
- Regional planning is underway
- 50-Year Water Action Plan
- Indian water rights settlements are awaiting Congressional approval

WHERE THE OFFICE OF THE STATE ENGINEER IS HEADED

- Modernizing measurement and administration systems
- Enhanced data tracking systems
- Continued Indian water rights settlement work
- Resolution of Texas v. New Mexico is around the corner

NEW MEXICO WATER SECURITY PLANNING ACT RULE ADOPTED

The New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission (NMISC) has adopted a new rule implementing the Water Security Planning Act (WSPA), streamlining regional water planning and promoting a sustainable water future in New Mexico. The rule establishes a statewide framework for regional water security planning, including processes and criteria for convening regional water security planning councils and developing regional water security plans.

NMISC's action follows a three-day public hearing that concluded in October 2025, along with an engagement process led through the NMISC's Main Stream New Mexico campaign. In 2024, NMISC collected feedback from more than 2,300 New Mexicans at 16 in-person, open-house meetings across the state—including a virtual option. The adopted rule was published in the New Mexico Register on March 10. It became effective on April 9.

Next Steps—Regional Water Security Planning Councils

The NMISC is now beginning implementation, which includes supporting the formation of the planning councils and developing timelines and guidance for regional water security planning. The planning councils will include representative members, at-large members and non-voting members. The councils will hold regularly scheduled in-person and virtual meetings.

Representative members will be identified by the governing bodies of each municipality; county; irrigation district; conservancy district or water commission; Nation, Pueblo or Tribe; soil and water conservation district; regional acequia and ditches association; New Mexico Acequia Commission; active land grants appointed by the Land Grant Council; flood control agency; and water utility authority.

At-large members (up to 10) will represent ranchers, farmers, statewide or regional higher public higher education institutions, environmental or conservation organizations; mutual domestic water consumer organizations, water systems or cooperatives; commercial, industrial, mining and power entities in the region.

Non-voting members (up to 6) representing parties from outside the region with water interests will include three that own water rights in the region and up to three from other water security planning councils hydrologically linked to the region.

Projects, Programs and Policies

Some of the projects, programs and policies to be discussed include: watershed health and the impacts of wildfire on source-water protection; drinking water; stormwater; wastewater; water retention and delivery infrastructure; water conservation; education; water efficiency; reuse; aquifer storage and recovery; aquifer recharge and groundwater sustainability; agricultural water use resilience; development of new water resources; river, wetland and riparian habitat restoration and connectivity; livestock water management; alternative water administration strategies (i.e. water markets or banks, voluntary shortage sharing, etc.); scientific water studies, water-related natural or green infrastructure; funding to match state or federal; the ability to enhance regional water resilience; consideration of socioeconomic, environmental and cultural impacts; and the ability to meet multiple objectives.

INVESTMENTS TO HELP NM SAFEGUARD VITAL WATER PROGRAMS

New Mexico recently made its largest investment in freshwater programs to date. In the 2026 legislative session, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham and state lawmakers approved critical funding to help protect the state's rivers and water supply. The budget includes $10 million for the River Stewardship Program and $13 million for the Strategic Water Reserve—the state's largest investments in freshwater conservation and restoration programs to date. The new funding will strengthen the state's ability to keep water in rivers and support freshwater ecosystems, while respecting existing water rights and supporting local economies. Outdoor recreation across the state supports over 29,000 jobs. Fishing and boating alone contributed more than $92 million in state and local taxes.

The River Stewardship Program supports locally driven efforts to restore and maintain river flows and watershed health. The program enables the state and its partners to fund, plan and implement projects that improve river function, enhance habitat for fish and wildlife, and increase the resilience of rivers and communities to drought and climate change–all while working cooperatively with landowners, tribes, acequias and other water users.

The Strategic Water Fund also protects New Mexico's freshwater by replenishing a fund for the state to buy, lease, or accept donations of water rights for the benefit of imperiled fish and wildlife, cultural preservation, and to meet interstate stream formal agreements, also known as compact commitments. The fund is integral to keeping water in rivers and aquifers, and conserving important riparian habitat, while honoring landowner water rights.

New Mexico is also betting on data as infrastructure. It is pushing to fund the Aquifer Mapping Program at the Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources—the kind of investment that turns water management from guesswork into engineering. You cannot manage what you do not measure. Investing in mapping and monitoring aquifers with precision transforms a political fight into a technical problem with actionable answers. Building a decision-making layer lets agencies, communities and industries act on it in real time. The states that win the water fight will not be the ones with the most water. They will be the ones with the best maps.

Patrick Lane, a senior manager with the Pew Charitable Trusts, said, in a statement, "New Mexico is taking meaningful steps to address the water scarcity crisis, replenish groundwater reserves, enhance river connectivity and biodiversity, mitigate against the effects of wildfires and improve water quality."

THE NEW MEXICO WATER DATA INITIATIVE

The goal of the collaborative New Mexico Water Data Initiative (NMWDI) is to improve how water data is shared, integrated and managed in New Mexico. As part of the Water Data Act, the initiative is creating a centralized, accessible and standardized hub for water-related information to support planning, management and research.

Key projects include the Río Grande WaterSMART Project, Lower Pecos WaterSMART Project, and Regional Groundwater-level Monitoring Network Planning Project.

The NMWDI is working with the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission (NMISC) to improve water data access in the Middle Río Grande region. Management and operations of water in the region impacts some of the largest population centers of the state, a large irrigation district, several tribal partners, municipalities and an increasingly fragile river ecosystem. The project will improve access to and use of water resources data by connecting information from numerous federal, state and local agencies. This work is part of a U.S. Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART applied science cooperative grant, which began in 2022.

The NMWDI is primarily managed by the New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources at New Mexico Tech, in collaboration with state agencies such as the Office of the State Engineer (NMOSE) and the Environment Department (NMED). The initiative also works with the Internet of Water Coalition (https://internetofwater.org) and partners such as Sandia National Laboratories.

EXAMINING NM'S PRECARIOUS WATER FUTURE AT THE UPCOMING 31st NEW MEXICO WATER DIALOGUE

May 31, Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, Albuquerque

BY **JEFFREY SAMSON**

As New Mexico's water resource managers are figuring out how to manage a shrinking supply (Leap Ahead Analysis, 2022) the state is making progress enacting the Water Security Planning Act and initiating the regional planning process. It is hard to overstate the importance of this work, because we're heading into uncharted territory due to rapidly declining water resources and our society's history of ill-preparedness when it comes to natural disasters.

New Mexico cannot persist without healthy aquifers.

With the Río Grande watershed snowpack at record low levels and streamflow projections (meaning surface water allotments) dire across the state, groundwater aquifers will undoubtedly be turned to for sustenance. This automatically raises the importance of groundwater management for a multitude of reasons, all of which directly or indirectly impact New Mexico's future as a state. New Mexico cannot persist without healthy aquifers.

Water truly is, has been, and will be the center of every community in New Mexico. For most of our society, it is easy to go through life without realizing this fact because of the efforts of our predecessors and water professionals to develop reliable community water systems. These systems have benefited from timing in at least two important ways. First, the time the aquifers had to form and fill with water. And second, timing in the sense that there is water available and a previous user did not deplete or contaminate the source. If many communities continue their current paths, the latter may not be true for long.

The state is investing heavily in aquifer mapping and exploration of alternative water sources.

The intensifying regional drought is forcing communities across the state to analyze their hydrologic portfolios and increase their system resilience. Typically, this occurs through drilling of new, deeper wells, but an increasing number of communities are seeking "new sources" in the form of treated wastewater or brackish water. Recognizing the situations New Mexicans are facing, the state is investing heavily in aquifer mapping and exploration of alternative water sources.

McLure Reservoir (Feb. 2026) contains a portion of the City of Santa Fe's surface water reserve. Photo by Avery Young

McClure Reservoir, Santa Fe (Feb. 2026). Photo by Avery Young NMWD panelist Phoebe Suina speaks to NMWD attendees at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center; A guided discussion during the 2024 NMWD

The state's ambitious initiative to map aquifers and install 100 new monitoring wells is currently underway, spearheaded by Stacy Timmons and the New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources' Aquifer Mapping Program. This significant undertaking has the potential to provide the essential data that water managers require to complete the hydrologic puzzle. These critical components are underscored in the New Mexico Groundwater Alliance's *New Mexico 360 Groundwater Report*, as well as in numerous other studies and regional planning documents.

In fact, the New Mexico Water Ambassadors, a task force with diverse representation assembled by Gov. Lujan Grisham, highlighted these groundwater issues along with other important topics as persistent

themes impacting water management. These persistent themes require attention to move state policy and water users forward in a unified direction.

On Thursday, May 14, the New Mexico Water Dialogue will convene its 31st annual meeting at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center in Albuquerque. The title of the meeting is *Persistent Themes, Unified Direction*. The first half of the meeting will include panel discussion on incorporating Native, acequia and agricultural perspectives in the regional water planning process. The second half will include an in-depth discussion of the New Mexico 360 Groundwater Report. Registration for the event can be found at https://nmwaterdialogue.org/. Please join us to help inform New Mexico's water future. ■

Jeffrey Samson is the president of the New Mexico Water Dialogue and a senior water resources engineer with the professional services firm, WSP.

$120M FOR NAVAJO-GALLUP WATER PROJECT RELEASED

Following Senate questioning over delays in previously appropriated funds, the Bureau of Reclamation has expedited the release of $120 million for the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project.

During a March Senate Committee on Indian Affairs hearing, U.S. Sen. Ben Ray Lujan (D-N.M.) asked Bureau of Reclamation Acting Commissioner Scott Cameron about why the funding had not yet been released from the Reclamation Water Settlements Fund. During the hearing, Cameron described the Navajo-Gallup project "as the number-one priority for the Water Settlement Fund" and "the biggest construction project in the Bureau of Reclamation." He said that he was not aware of any holdup in releasing the $120 million.

Days later, Lujan and members of New Mexico's congressional delegation announced that the Bureau had expedited the full allocation.

The Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project is a major infrastructure initiative tied to the Navajo Nation's water rights settlement in the San Juan Basin. The system is expected to serve about 250,000 people by 2040, including communities across the Navajo Nation, the Jicarilla Apache Nation and the city of Gallup. The project is designed to reduce reliance on declining groundwater supplies and expand access to reliable drinking water, a longstanding constraint on housing, business development and public health in the region.

The funding adds to $55 million secured through the FY2026 Energy and Water Development appropriations bill and follows previous investments, including a $267 million contract awarded in 2024 for a key water treatment facility.

Federal officials have warned that the Reclamation Water Settlements Fund faces growing pressure from pending tribal water settlements. At the same hearing in March, Cameron said that the fund lacks sufficient resources to support all approved and proposed projects. He said there is more than $13 billion in settlements currently before Congress.

UPPER PECOS WATERSHED MINING PROTECTIONS REMOVED

Citing "evolving national policy objectives," in April, the Trump administration removed mining protections from the Upper Pecos watershed, a region that depends on agriculture and outdoor recreation. For years, residents, community groups and businesses in the area have opposed mining. In 1991, a release of orange sludge into Willow Creek and the Pecos River from an abandoned mine produced a toxic spill that killed wildlife. New Mexico taxpayers had to pay for the cleanup. That experience is still fresh in people's minds.

In 2019, Comexico, a subsidiary of an international mining company, seeking gold, silver, zinc, copper and lead, proposed exploratory drilling southwest of Terrero. There was substantial community opposition. At the end of the Biden administration, then-Interior Secretary Deb Haaland initiated a two-year mining withdrawal of the area. Permanent protection of the 165,000-acre watershed would require an act of Congress.

In April 2025, the U.S. Department of Agriculture indicated that the Pecos withdrawal would be cancelled in order to allow for mining of critical minerals. Organizations such as the Stop Terrero Mine Coalition and New Mexico Wild are considering litigation over the cancellation of the withdrawal and an application to the U.S. Forest Service to extend the withdrawal for 20 years.

PROJECT JUPITER UNDER SCRUTINY

Solid Oxide Fuel Cell-Powered Microgrid Announced

Transwestern Pipeline Co., a Texas-based company, requested Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) authorization to build a $60 million, 17.7-mile natural gas pipeline from El Paso Natural Gas Company to fuel Project Jupiter, a planned data center in Santa Teresa, New Mexico, near the U.S.–Mexico border. The massive project is a national partnership between tech giants OpenAI and Oracle.

Nonprofit watchdog Food & Water Watch (FWW) said that the pipeline would endanger New Mexico's air and climate and that the region can't sustain new fossil fuel infrastructure without serious harm to local communities. FWW estimated that Project Jupiter's two power plants would emit more than 14 million tons of greenhouse gases per year. That is more than the cities of Las Cruces, Albuquerque and Santa Fe combined. FWW urged the New Mexico Environmental Improvement Board to reject the project.

In March, State Land Commissioner Stephanie García Richard denied the line a permit to cross state trust lands. The company was forced to reroute a section. In April, FWW, the Center for Biological Diversity and the Sierra Club Río Grande Chapter filed a protest with FERC, challenging Transwestern's attempt to fast-track the project. The organizations argued that FERC must conduct a full review, as required by the National Gas Act. They also urged FERC to deny the application because it is contrary to the public interest. Also in April, FERC filed a protest, stating that the company's application is missing a finding that no historic properties will be impacted. The New Mexico Historic Preservation Division received a request for review on April 14. The division has 30 days to comment on the request.

Data centers' energy consumption is forcing public utilities to privatize in order to survive the strain on electric grids. In New Mexico, peak energy demands are expected to increase by 40 percent by 2035, potentially contributing to higher electric bills for communities. According to the Office of the State Engineer (OSE), Project Jupiter will need almost one million gallons of water per day to operate. That is 50 times more than developers told the Doña Ana County Board of Commissioners the project would use, before the commission voted to approve $165 billion worth of tax incentives. The Office of the State Engineer will hold a public hearing later this year regarding an emergency request to drill a new well to supply water to the project.

Peak energy demands are expected to increase by 40 percent in New Mexico by 2035.

On April 27, Project Jupiter's developers announced that they would replace their plans to build gas turbines and diesel generators with a power source that would "dramatically reduce water use and protect air quality." Borderplex Digital Assets said that it now plans to build a single microgrid—an independent energy source that doesn't tie into an existing grid— that will draw power from solid oxide fuel cells rather than combustion. Critics say that the proposed emissions are still incredibly high.

NM'S WATER QUALITY CONTROL COMMISSION AND THE PRODUCED WATER RULE

In May 2025, New Mexico's Water Quality Control Commission voted to stop the oil and gas industry's proposal that would have allowed the discharge of "treated" oil and gas wastewater into the state's rivers, streams and lands. Evidence presented before the WQCC by the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) and environmental groups such as Amigos Bravos demonstrated that even when treated, "produced water"—which contains a toxic mix of chemicals—is not safe to discharge outside of oil and gas operations.

In March, an industry-led group—the Water, Access, Treatment and Reuse Alliance (WATR)—citing the New Mexico Produced Water Consortium's research at New Mexico State University, claimed that the science of wastewater treatment had dramatically improved over the past year, to the extent that "treated produced water that undergoes post-treatment is of a higher water quality than drinking water."

WATR submitted a somewhat-revised 57-page petition to the commission, asking the WQCC to reconsider its ruling and to allow "demonstration periods…before authorizing expanded or long-term operations." The proposal argued that, because of the increasing scarcity of fresh water, "the effects of delaying produced water reuse is an existential threat to the wellbeing of New Mexicans" living in the 13 counties where produced water has been generated (98 percent in Lea and Eddy counties).

WATR's proposal advocates for the possibility of "indirect potable reuse,"—the application of reclaimed wastewater for drinking water purposes with an intermediary environmental or constructed buffer, or for "indirect" human or animal contact including crops used for biofuels, as well as the application of "reuse water for the care and feeding of domestic animals such as cattle or horses" (but not feedlots or agricultural applications).

The commission, apparently with Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham's encouragement, voted to allow WATR's new petition to proceed. On April 14, farmers, *acequieros,* tribal members, business owners, teachers, parents, medical professionals, scientists and former oil and gas workers from Taos to Española to Albuquerque to Doña Ana County—spoke passionately in four hours of public testimony. More than 90 percent expressed opposition to the petition that would allow treated oil and gas waste to be dumped into rivers and onto lands and reused for large-scale agricultural and industrial activities. The commission postponed a vote on the industry's request until May 12.

Above: Oil derrick pump; NM Water Quality Control Commission hearing in April Below: Photo by Anni Hanna

THE 2026 NEXT GENERATION WATER SUMMIT – FRAMED BY INCREASING DEMAND AND DECLINING REALITIES

June 11–12, State Capitol, Santa Fe, N.M.

BY **MIKE COLLIGNON**

The Next Generation Water Summit (NGWS) brings together the building and development community, water reuse professionals and water policymakers in a collaborative setting to share best practices and learn about innovative water conservation and reuse techniques that comply with conservation restrictions spreading across the Southwest.

The 2026 NGWS will return to the New Mexico state capitol building in Santa Fe on June 11–12. The event's theme is "Increasing Demand, Declining Realities."

Brett Walton, an award-winning reporter for Circle of Blue, will deliver the keynote on Thursday, June 11. He will provide an update on the Colorado River Compact negotiations. "It's a stressful period for the Colorado River as the basin attempts to reckon with a drier future," Walton says. "At the same time, a crisis is an opportunity for fresh ideas and trailblazing. With recent record heat and scant snow in the mountains, this is a pivotal year for one of the country's most important river basins."

Walton's keynote will be followed by a session on large water users, presented by Joan Hughes of the Alliance for Water Efficiency (AWE) and Anjali Bean of Western Resource Advocates. Day One will also include presentations on AI's role in managing water; how to integrate water into the sustainability conversation; a panel session on produced water research; the introduction of a new standard for water audits of existing homes; irrigation efficiency credentials; and more.

Friday, June 12 will feature a keynote from Michael "La-Schay" García that is designed to inspire hope and encouragement. Three concurrent tracks will give attendees a wide variety of choices over the course of the day. The New Mexico Track, a staple of the summit, will provide an update on the City of Santa Fe's efforts and a recap of the most recent legislative session. The National Track will highlight an update from the Greywater Alliance; a science and innovation panel; and community-scale adoption of rainwater harvesting. Finally, the Rural Track will offer sessions on soil's role in saving water, local decentralized water systems, agricultural water reuse and more.

Free educational workshops for the general public will take place at ReUnity Resources in Santa Fe, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, June 13.

Registration is available for in-person or virtual attendance, and all registrants will be able to access on-demand sessions online. The in-person registration fee is $299. Lunch is provided. Virtual attendance is $99. Students can attend in-person for $25 and virtually for free.

Hosts of the NGWS are New Mexico Sustainable Business; Green Builder® Coalition; City of Santa Fe; and KUELwater. The Alliance for Water Efficiency is a promotional partner; the national media partner is Green Builder® Media. The education partner is Triconic, with support from Santa Fe County for the Rural Track programming.

For more information, visit WWW.NEXTGENERATIONWATERSUMMIT.COM. To get the latest updates, link to www.linkedin.com/in/next-generation-water-summit . ■

Mike Collignon is an author and executive director and co-founder of the nonprofit Green Builder Coalition.









Photos from the 2025 Next Generation Water Summit
© Seth Roffman

TURNING SHARED KNOWLEDGE INTO COMMUNITY ACTION

City of Santa Fe Water Conservation Sponsors 2026 Next Generation Water Summit

For the eighth year, the City of Santa Fe's Water Conservation Section is a major sponsor of the Next Generation Water Summit, continuing a longstanding commitment to bringing meaningful water conservation education and innovation to the community. Now as part of the city's newly formed Conservation and Sustainability Division (CSD), the Water Conservation Section, sustainability programming and Keep Santa Fe Beautiful are under one coordinated division. The reorganization formalizes the partnerships and public-facing work that have long been part of the city's conservation efforts, creating stronger connections between education, outreach and action. The summit has always been a natural extension of that work and a direct opportunity to connect with residents on questions CSD staff hear every day about water use, landscape practices, efficiency and sustainability at home.

"One of the most valuable parts of this summit is that it creates space for people to learn from each other," said Christine Chávez, CSD's director. "Whether you're a homeowner, a professional, or someone just trying to understand how to do better with water and sustainability, there's something here for you. That shared learning is how real solutions take shape."

The summit brings together leaders in water reuse, building, policy and conservation.

To be held June 11–12 at the New Mexico State Capitol under the theme "Increasing Demand, Declining Realities," this year's summit brings together leaders in water reuse, building, policy and conservation to address the challenges facing communities across the Southwest. Through the Water Conservation Section's sponsorship and CSD's expanded outreach, Santa Fe residents can attend virtually at no cost and access all presentations for 30 days after the conference, making this resource available to the entire community.

This year also marks an expanded partnership with Santa Fe County, helping introduce a dedicated rural track that broadens the conversation and brings in new perspectives from outside city limits. Partnerships like this strengthen the work already underway with local organizations and community partners who continue to move conservation forward across Santa Fe.

The summit concludes with a free Community Day on June 13 at Reunity Resources, where the public can engage in hands-on workshops and tours focused on composting, soil health, drought-tolerant planting and plug-in solar. These community-based experiences turn ideas into action and give residents practical tools they can take home, reinforcing the connection between shared knowledge and everyday conservation practices.

Workshops and tours that give residents practical tools

The 2026 Great American Cleanup on April 18, led by the Conservation and Sustainability Division, resulted in a citywide effort where volunteers gathered up 10 tons of trash.

For the Water Conservation Section and CSD, the Next Generation Water Summit is more than an annual event. It is one of the clearest examples of how education, outreach and strong community partnerships can support Santa Fe's long-term sustainability goals and help build a more resilient future for everyone. To learn more, visit sustainabilitysantafe.org . ■

CITY OF SANTA FE
CONSERVATION & SUSTAINABILITY

CITY OF SANTA FE

SF COUNTY'S COLLABORATIVE STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE WATERSHED HEALTH

"Green Stormwater Infrastructure" Guidebook to be Released

BY **JACQUELINE BEAM AND SHAWNA GRAVES**

As a sponsor of this year's Next Generation Water Summit (NGWS), Santa Fe County, along with the City of Santa Fe, is taking on more of a role in the summit's rural and traditional water usage themes. It is an effort to strengthen collaborative relationships and share strategies that residents, businesses and agency partners at city, county, state and nationwide scales can implement to improve the health of our shared watersheds.

The 2026 summit theme, "Increasing Demand, Declining Realities," reflects the interconnectedness of communities up and downstream from one another. This year's speaker series, in addition to addressing urban challenges, includes opportunities for rural and traditional water users (such as agriculture and acequia traditions) to participate in the conversations.

Some of the speakers are: Joan Hughes, of the Alliance of Water Efficiency; Jonah Shein, of the EPA Water Sense Program; Christopher Lohr, of IAPMO (the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials); Sarah Mock, from the New Mexico Healthy Soil Working Group; and Cybil Sharvelle, of Colorado State University. Santa Fe County's Sustainability Division, along with Public Works Utilities and Growth Management, will present a panel discussion on county water updates and best practices for water management. The City of Santa Fe will present a similar discussion.

In response to the ever-increasing urgency, the county has been multiplying efforts to provide water-related services that increase water supplies, access, conservation and quality. Public Works Department hydrologist Christopher Acheson is preparing a drought and conservation plan. The combined state plan for stormwater management, permitting and domestic well usage reporting has been the focus of Environmental Compliance Officer Michael Carr. Utility Director Travis Soderquist is working on a water-modeling tool for the Water Utility Master Plan. He is spearheading this endeavor with Brandt Geist, the county's water resources manager.

Growth Management Director Alexandra Ladd and Sustainability Division staff, along with Sites Southwest consultant Carlos Gemora are working on Sustainable Land Development codes that increase green stormwater infrastructure, stormwater capture and incentives for increased conservation in new construction. Water planner Andrew Harnden and Valerie Rangel, GIS senior planner, are working with the Water Leadership Institute through the Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC) and the New Mexico Environment Department Drinking Water Bureau to increase education and networking among mutual domestic providers for strengthening resiliency in people, water supply and infrastructure.

The Sustainability Division intersects with all of the county's departments through its research and education mission, and is empowered by the conservation values of the rural community. The county boasts 9,400 acres of open space, 18 parks and 65 miles of trails.

Adeline Murthy, planning team leader with the Open Space Division, works with her team to remove invasive, high water-use species in the watershed and along the Santa Fe River. Many techniques used reflect the county's respect for the wisdom and experience of the region's Pueblo people, who have stewarded the land. These strategies are

Traditional water users such as agriculture and the acequias will participate in this year's NGWS conversations.

Traditional water users such as agriculture and acequia traditions will participate in the conversations.

Arroyo Hondo fire station Zuni bowl; muddy Middle Río Grande; Edgewood Senior Center stormwater management

Many different techniques are required to effectively address erosion control and flood mitigation.

represented on the county's water conservation resources website, especially in the Countywide Climate Action Plan (CAP) and the 4Nature Santa Fe initiative, which includes the 30x30 Initiative: protect and preserve 30 percent of all land and water by 2030, and the four pillars of Protect, Strengthen, Grow and Water for increasing shade, biodiversity, infiltration, food security and healthy bio-habitats.

4Nature Santa Fe aims to engage participation in stewardship at the residential and agricultural scales, while the CAP provides a map to equitably meet science-based targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 54 percent by 2030, and 100 percent by 2050. The CAP begins by addressing emergency concerns, as well as environmental risks such as drought and wildfire. As our landscape sees less precipitation, less weather predictability and more volatility in monsoon seasons, nature-based solutions, conservation and innovative water-management approaches offer tried-and-true adaptive tools to mitigate the impacts.

The Sustainability team often seeks to educate and inspire constituents to help reach these goals through implementation of low-tech strategies and tactics that involve working with nature to achieve results. A number of NGWS speakers will focus on topics such as this. Examples include restoration of ecosystems, sustainable management of rural and traditional water systems and lands, and integration of nature in and around populated areas. When managed effectively, nature-based solutions help address challenges of drought, mitigate wildfire, lessen heat-island effect, add flooding protection, lessen food insecurity, improve the soil, and help issues worsened by climate change.

Best practices for how to manage stormwater as a valuable local resource

At the summit's end on June 13, the city and county will host four hands-on workshops at Reunity Resources Community Farm. These workshops will feature examples from the county's soon-to-be-published 133-page guidebook, "Santa Fe County Green Stormwater Infrastructure," authored by Raincatcher. The book includes dozens of practical, low-impact tactics for implementing nature-based solutions specific to the semi-arid steppe landscape of Santa Fe County. It provides step-by-step water-wise techniques, with photos and diagrams, to use in livestock operations, agricultural practices, residential and commercial buildings, roads and parking lots. It includes how-to diagrams for constructing and installing Zuni bowls, one-rock dams, rain gardens, media lunas and more. Homeowners and practitioners can incorporate these structures on their land or property with scalable techniques.

The guidebook also details updated best practices for how to manage stormwater as a valuable local resource. One great example shows how to retrofit spaces in a parking lot to capture stormwater that irrigates trees and vegetation. It includes calculations for water volume capacity, runoff, and especially important, a section on maintenance. The manual is available for download on the Santa Fe County Sustainability 4Nature Santa Fe landing page.

Civil engineering has come a long way in recognizing the need to shift away from the practice of directing water offsite through pipes to holding areas far from the rainfall's source. Even the Army Corp of Engineers is recognizing the power and effectiveness of nature-based solutions in their "Engineering with Nature" program.

Many different techniques are required to effectively address erosion control and flood mitigation. Some require hybrid gray-infrastructure techniques. For water collection, onsite infiltration installations, commonly referred to as green stormwater infrastructure (such as raingardens) help cool the land, are more likely to support recharge of the aquifer, and encourage a healthier soil system while building a more drought-resilient landscape. Even small raingardens with native plants (using recommended plants and recipes found in the county's new GSI guidebook) will benefit the local ecosystem and contribute to larger efforts underway to manage water wisely across the Southwest.

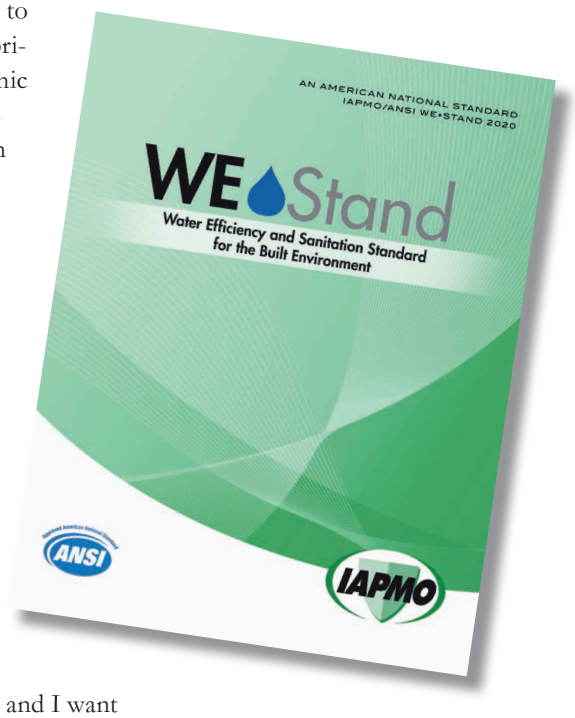
The NGWS will feature these stormwater management techniques, irrigation for agriculture, onsite wastewater treatment options and related policy in the summit's rural and traditional water usage speaker series, and at the workshop at Reunity Resources. Santa Fe County is sponsoring free online attendance for the first 300 county residents who register. For more information and to register, go to: HTTPS://NGWS.VFAIRS.COM/ . ■

Jacqueline Beam is Santa Fe County's sustainability manager. Shawna Graves is Santa Fe County's communications coordinator.

OP-ED: CHRISTOPH LOHR, P.E.

NEW MEXICO IS ALREADY DOING THE HARD PART. NOW LET'S GIVE IT THE RIGHT TOOLS

Santa Fe knows something that most American cities have yet to learn: Conservation is not deprivation. After a near-catastrophic water emergency in 2002, this high-desert city, drawing from a river system stressed by two decades of megadrought, cut its total water use by 30 percent, even as its population grew by a quarter. That is not a statistic. That is a culture. And it is exactly the kind of culture that a standard like the IAPMO WE-Stand was built to support, scale and sustain.



I am presenting on WE-Stand this year at the Next Generation Water Summit in Santa Fe, virtually, and I want to make an argument directly to New Mexico's decision-makers, code officials, utilities and builders. You are already doing the hard part. You have the political will, the conservation ethic and a governor-signed 50-Year Water Action Plan that acknowledges the state will have 25 percent less water by 2050. What you need now is a code framework designed to make every building in New Mexico do its share of the work. WE-Stand is that framework.

THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM DEMANDS MORE THAN GOOD INTENTIONS

New Mexico has the lowest water-to-land ratio of all 50 states. That alone puts it in a different category of urgency. Add the compounding pressures—aridification, earlier snowmelt, aquifer depletion, population growth—and the newly alarming water appetite of data centers settling into the region, and you begin to see why a January 2026 groundwater report from the New Mexico Groundwater Alliance warned that without proactive strategy, communities will face aquifer depletion, water-quality degradation and service disruptions.

The built environment—the buildings people live and work in and the plumbing systems inside them—is one of the most powerful levers available. But that lever only moves if codes and standards are designed to move it. Most model plumbing codes were not written with water efficiency as a primary objective. WE-Stand was.

WHAT MAKES WE-STAND DIFFERENT

Developed through an American National Standards Institute (ANSI)-accredited consensus process, WE-Stand is the only water conservation standard designed to simultaneously improve water efficiency and protect water safety. That distinction matters enormously in a state where public health and water quality are already stressed by drought and aridification. It was built to be adopted alongside existing plumbing and mechanical codes with minimal friction, and its provisions offer the flexibility for jurisdictions to implement requirements that fit their specific context.

Here is why that flexibility matters for New Mexico: A stretch code that works for Albuquerque also needs to work for a smaller municipality in the northern part of the state. WE-Stand's provisions can be selectively adopted to match local priorities and capacity. You do not have to take everything at once, but the framework is there when you are ready.

Without proactive strategy, communities will face aquifer depletion, water quality degradation, and service disruptions.
– NM Groundwater Alliance report

Of the top 13 water conservation topics and provisions in the field, WE-Stand covers nearly double what other model codes and water conservation standards address. That breadth matters because water efficiency is not a single-solution problem. It requires a systems answer.

THE NUMBERS ARE NOT ABSTRACT

Let me put some specific savings figures on the table, because advocates in New Mexico deserve concrete ammunition when making the case to their local officials and builders.

WATER-EFFICIENT PLUMBING FIXTURES

The foundation of any water-efficiency code is fixtures, and WE-Stand's Chapter 4 can deliver approximately 3,800 gallons of savings per home per year compared to pre-1994 fixtures still found in much of New Mexico's older housing stock. In a state where Santa Fe demonstrated that low-flow toilet retrofits contributed meaningfully to a 30 percent citywide reduction, scaling that outcome through code adoption is a powerful force multiplier.

HOT WATER SYSTEM DESIGN: RIGHT SIZING AND THE HOT WATER AREA RATIO

Here is one that does not get enough attention. The hot-water area ratio provision in Chapter 5 can save a family of four roughly 10,000 gallons per home per year. That is water wasted while waiting for heat. Right-sizing provisions in the same chapter add another 503 gallons per dwelling unit annually by ensuring pipe and system design matches actual demand. These are not exotic technologies. They are design decisions that good codes can require and that trained plumbing engineers can implement today.

GRAY WATER AND ONSITE REUSE

New Mexico is a leader in permitting gray water reuse, and WE-Stand's chapters 7–9 build on this with code-ready solutions that can reduce residential water use by up to 80 percent, and black- water reuse systems can cut an additional 20–50 percent. Facing a projected 25 percent water drop by 2050, reusing water is critical. IGC 324 sets rigorous standards for treating and safely reusing alternate water sources, including gray water, rainwater, stormwater, and HVAC condensate, in all types of buildings. Unlike NSF 350, which only covers gray water, IGC 324 ensures comprehensive onsite reuse and reliable performance for drought-stressed communities.

RAINWATER CATCHMENT (CHAPTER 11 AND APPENDIX A)

Santa Fe and northern New Mexico receive meaningful monsoon precipitation each summer. WE-Stand's non-potable rainwater catchment chapter enables communities to capture and use that resource in commercial buildings for toilet flushing and irrigation, potentially displacing 80 to 97 percent of water use for those end uses. The potential to harvest summer monsoon rains rather than letting them run off is an underutilized asset in this region, and WE-Stand provides the code language to unlock it.

HVAC CONDENSATE RECOVERY (CHAPTERS 4 AND 7)

Phoenix data shows approximately 300 gallons of condensate recovered per home per year from HVAC systems. Across New Mexico's cooling-heavy climate, particularly in lower-elevation communities, this represents meaningful reclaimed water available for non-potable uses. With the 50-Year Water Action Plan explicitly calling for expanded water reuse, HVAC condensate recovery is a natural and low-barrier place to start.

IGC 244: TUB AND SHOWER FLOW-REDUCTION SYSTEMS

If there's one product standard worth highlighting, it's IGC 244, which governs

temperature-actuated flow-reduction devices for tubs and showers. These devices sense when hot water reaches the fixture and automatically reduce flow to a trickle, alerting the user that the water is ready, at which point full flow can be restored with a simple action. This matters because the biggest source of behavioral water waste in homes is the shower warm-up period, when water runs at full volume down the drain until it heats up. IGC 244-certified products eliminate this waste, delivering significant impact in places like Santa Fe and Albuquerque, where high-efficiency showerheads are common but pre-shower water loss persists, providing a hardware solution rather than relying on changing user habits.

IAPMO Z1349: LEAK DETECTION

The IAPMO Z1349 standard sets requirements for electronic leak-detection systems in premise plumbing, which monitor water flow and automatically shut off supply when leaks are detected. Referenced by WE-Stand in Chapter 4, Z1349-certified devices are proven tools for capturing significant water losses, up to 10,000 gallons per home per year, according to EPA data, by identifying leaks from common sources like toilets, faucets and irrigation systems in real time, benefitting both individual buildings and overall utility-system management.

ASSE 1086: REVERSE OSMOSIS WATER EFFICIENCY

Reverse osmosis (RO) systems are common in New Mexico due to water quality concerns, but traditional units are highly wasteful, often returning only 10–20 percent of water as treated product. ASSE 1086, developed through an ANSI-accredited process and aligned with EPA WaterSense, sets a minimum efficiency of 30 percent for residential RO systems, verified through rigorous testing. WaterSense-labeled RO units certified to ASSE 1086 send significantly less reject water to the drain, about 2.3 gallons per gallon of treated water versus 4-to-9 gallons for conventional systems, resulting in a major reduction in water waste. Requiring ASSE 1086 certification for RO systems under WE-Stand is a practical, proven way for New Mexico to address hidden water losses in buildings.

WATER SAFETY AND EFFICIENCY ARE NOT COMPETING VALUES

One of the most important points is this: WE-Stand is the only water conservation standard on the market that was explicitly designed to protect water safety alongside water efficiency. In practice, poorly designed water-conserving systems can create stagnation in building pipes, the conditions that favor Legionella and other opportunistic waterborne pathogens. WE-Stand addresses this directly through right-sizing provisions and its approach to water movement in premise plumbing.

For a state with aging infrastructure and water systems already under stress from drought, that dual mandate—save water and protect health—is not a luxury. It is the minimum acceptable standard.

NEW MEXICO HAS EVERYTHING IT NEEDS TO LEAD

Santa Fe's director of Water Utilities, Jesse Roach, described his city's experience this way: Going through that period of scarcity produced a powerful ethic of water conservation. That ethic is the cultural prerequisite for everything else. Most states do not have it.

WE-Stand is the only water conservation standard designed to simultaneously improve water efficiency and protect water safety.

New Mexico does.

The state also has the policy architecture. Gov. Lujan Grisham's 50-Year Water Action Plan calls explicitly for expanded water reuse, adoption of efficient fixtures, reduced community consumption and tools to incentivize water conservation at homes and businesses. The Water Security Planning Act of 2023 further reinforces conservation as a legislative priority. WE-Stand is not a deviation from that direction. It is a direct and implementable expression of it.

New Mexico needs to close the gap between that policy intent and the actual code environment in which buildings are designed and constructed. WE-Stand closes that gap. It is written to be adopted alongside existing plumbing codes, requires little to no modification to align with existing requirements, and provides a framework of possibilities because plumbing codes function differently than most water regulations: If a technology is not explicitly described in code, industry professionals typically will not use it. WE-Stand puts the tools on the table.

2026 Next Generation Water Summit

LOOKING AHEAD: THE 2027 WE-STAND CYCLE

The 2027 edition of WE-Stand is already in development, with active discussion on several provision areas that are particularly relevant to New Mexico: updated water-conserving plumbing fixture and fitting standards, water-treatment devices and systems, gray water systems, log reduction targets for onsite reuse and data center water use. Given the documented concern about data centers cited in the groundwater report, having code language that addresses this sector is not theoretical; it is urgent. If New Mexico jurisdictions begin adopting WE-Stand now, they will be positioned to incorporate the 2027 enhancements as a seamless update rather than a wholesale new effort.

THE STANDARD THE MOMENT DEMANDS

As an engineer, I believe in tools that work. WE-Stand works because it starts from a realistic understanding of how the building industry actually functions through codes and provides the most comprehensive set of water-efficiency provisions available in any single standard, while maintaining the safety credentials that public health demands.

New Mexico is a national story of water conservation success. Santa Fe proved that a city can grow its population while shrinking its water demand. The 50-Year Water Action Plan signals that state leadership understands what is coming and is willing to act. The missing piece is a building-level code standard that turns that political will into gallons saved, year after year, in every structure built or renovated. ■

Christoph Lohr, P.E., a presenter at the Next Generation Water Summit, is vice-president of technical services and research for the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials. IAPMO engages with industry and government to develop a safer built environment, develop codes and standards for building professionals, manufacturers and researchers. Visit WWW.IAPMO.ORG

WATER SCARCITY, EXISTING HOMES AND THE BUILDING PERFORMANCE INSTITUTE'S ANSI 1200 STANDARD

BY **AMANDA HATHERLY**

Water scarcity is a challenge that demands practical, scalable solutions. Across the western United States, reduced snowpack in states like Colorado and New Mexico is straining water supplies. At the same time, population growth, urbanization and increased industrial demand (for example, AI data centers) are placing additional pressure on limited resources. We need consistent, effective approaches to water conservation and efficiency, particularly for the 143 million existing homes in the United States.

In response, the Building Performance Institute (BPI) is adding to its ANSI/BPI-1200 Standard Practice for the Analysis of Buildings a new Water Audit Annex. This addition represents a significant step toward establishing a standardized, nationally recognized approach to evaluating residential water use.

The Water Audit Annex is designed to support a comprehensive assessment of water use in existing homes, both indoors and outdoors. While many existing programs focus primarily on indoor fixtures such as toilets, faucets and showerheads, this approach captures only part of the picture. Other indoor measures that can yield meaningful savings are leak detection, appliance upgrades and behavioral changes. And in many regions, particularly arid and semi-arid climates, outdoor water use is not secondary; it is often the dominant source of wasted water.

By explicitly addressing both indoor and outdoor conditions, the new Water Annex defines the full scope of residential water use. Programs can adopt the entire framework or focus on specific components relevant to their goals, with the assurance that each element is grounded in an ANSI-approved, consensus-based standard that provides a common technical foundation for how existing residential water audits should be conducted.

That foundation has practical implications. A recognized ANSI standard is an American National Standard and introduces a repeatable methodology, enabling consistent implementation, measurable outcomes and scalable program design. States, utilities and program administrators can reference a credible framework rather than developing requirements independently. Contractors and practitioners gain clearer expectations. Homeowners benefit from more reliable and comprehensive assessments. In short, the standard aligns stakeholders around a shared definition of quality.

The development of the Water Audit Annex reflects BPI's consensus-based approach to standards. A working group of subject matter experts, drawing from across residential water industries, (including organizations such as the Alliance for Water Efficiency, IAPMO, EPA and RESNET) contributed their technical expertise and field experience. This collaborative process, combined with public review, helps ensure that the final standard is both technically sound and practically applicable.

The updated standard will provide a nationally recognized, consensus-based protocol for conducting residential water audits.

Amanda Hatherly and associates at Santa Fe Community College's Energy Smart Academy. The ESA trains students in weatherization, clean energy programs, water conservation, and offers pre-apprenticeships to become Home Energy Auditors.

The revised ANSI/BPI-1200 standard, including the Water Audit Annex, is soon entering the public comment phase. This is a critical step in the ANSI process, providing water utilities, state agencies, conservation organizations, program implementers and field practitioners the opportunity to evaluate the Annex and provide input. Broad participation strengthens the final standard and increases confidence in its adoption.

Once finalized, the updated standard will provide a nationally recognized, consensus-based protocol for conducting residential water audits. It will serve as a key resource for organizations working to improve water efficiency and conservation outcomes, helping bring greater consistency and rigor to programs across the country.

The next step is workforce development. A standard defines what should be done, but its impact depends on trained professionals who can apply it in the field. BPI is therefore advancing plans to develop a Water Auditor Certification aligned with the Annex and is actively seeking partners to support this effort. Establishing this credential will help ensure that audits are conducted consistently and in accordance with the standard while also creating a professional pathway in a growing area of need.

BPI's work to integrate water auditing into the ANSI/BPI-1200 standard reflects an important evolution in the home performance industry. Energy efficiency has long been central to building performance, but the increasing urgency of water conservation calls for the same level of structure, consistency and technical rigor. By expanding the standard to include a comprehensive Water Audit Annex, BPI is helping to close a critical gap and position the industry to better address emerging resource challenges.

The public comment period for the updated ANSI/BPI-1200 standard will soon open. Stakeholders are encouraged to review the draft and submit feedback through the Building Performance Institute's website. BPI also welcomes partnerships to support the development of the associated Water Auditor Certification, helping ensure that this important work can scale effectively.

BPI would like to thank the following individuals for their help on the Water Audit Working Group: Laureen Blissard, Green Builder Coalition; Matt Dickens, Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency; Maureen Erbeznick, Maureen Erbeznick and Associates; Joan Hughes, Alliance for Water Efficiency (AWE) (Chair); Deirdre Irwin, St. Johns River Water Management District; Gary Klein, Gary Klein and Associates; Kelly Kopp, USU; Darrell Lehman, Triconic; Christoph Lohr, IAPMO; Kristine Loomis, Santa Clarita Valley Water Authority; Melissa Matlock, CalWEP; Bill McDonnell, AWE board member; Ryan Meres, RESNET; Robbie Pickering, ERG; Doug Pushard, Kuelwater; Jonah Schein, EPA; Brendan Smith, Aurora Water; Jessica Woods, Round Rock, Texas. ■

Amanda Hatherly is the CEO of BPI. She lives in Santa Fe.

NEW MEXICANS CAN GET UP TO $14,000 FOR HOME ENERGY UPGRADES

The New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department is accepting applications for rebates of up to $14,000 to help low-income households replace aging appliances and heating and cooling systems with energy-efficient alternatives, cutting monthly utility bills while promoting energy efficiency. The rebates are available to New Mexico homeowners and renters who earn less than 80 percent of the median income for the area in which they live or participate in certain federal benefit programs

Once EMNRD certifies their eligibility, applicants receive coupons that can be converted into instant rebates when purchasing qualifying energy-saving products. The program is part of the state's broader strategy to reduce household energy costs and cut carbon emissions.

"Every family deserves access to appliances and technology that saves money and keeps their homes comfortable year-round," said Rebecca "Puck" Stair, director of EMNRD's Energy Conservation and Management Division, which is administering the program. "These rebates make energy-efficiency upgrades easier and more affordable. A heat pump, for instance, is a dual-purpose appliance, offering an efficient way to both heat and cool a home."

Billy Martin of Portales is among the first rebate recipients. He used the coupons to install new home insulation, replace his HVAC system with a heat pump and purchase new energy-efficient appliances. He reports a dramatic improvement in the comfort of his home along with a big reduction in energy costs. "If not for this program, I don't think I would have been able to stay in my home," Martin said. The electricity bill would have run me out. Now, I can stay in my home and remain independent."

Visit: HTTPS://WWW.EMNRD.NM.GOV/ECMD/TAX-INCENTIVES/ENERGY-CONSERVING-PRODUCTS/

WATER IN THE RIGHT PLACE: GREEN STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE

Green Stormwater Infrastructure Comes to San Pedro Drive

BY **ADRIAN N. CARVER**

When the Mile Hi District Streetscape Enhancement Project breaks ground this summer along the northern portion of the San Pedro Main Street corridor between Cagua Place and Lomas Boulevard in Albuquerque, most people will notice the wider sidewalks, the shade trees and improved business access. What they might not immediately see—but will absolutely benefit from—is what happens to the rain.

Integrated into the project's design is a suite of green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) features: curb cuts, sediment traps and saturation pools that work together to capture rainfall where it lands, slow it down and return it to the ground rather than flushing it downstream through pipes. It's a relatively low-profile component of a highly visible project, but it may be one of the most consequential investments the Revitalize San Pedro Partnership and our partners are making in the long-term health of the corridor.

WHY STORMWATER MATTERS ON SAN PEDRO

Albuquerque is a high-desert city, but that doesn't mean it's immune to flooding. When rain falls on impervious surfaces—asphalt, concrete, compacted soil—it has nowhere to go except across the surface and into the storm drain system. Traditional gray stormwater infrastructure is designed to move urban stormwater away from the built environment, collecting runoff from roadways, parking lots and rooftops and conveying it through piping that ultimately discharges untreated water into arroyos. That means pollutants—motor oil, heavy metals, sediment, litter—travel with it, untreated.

Managing water for a healthy urban ecosystem

San Pedro Drive is a classic urban arterial corridor: wide lanes, extensive parking lots, few trees and little permeable surface. Rainfall events here can generate significant runoff, creating localized flooding, and degrading drainage infrastructure over time. The streetscape project is an opportunity to address that cycle—not just aesthetically, but functionally.

WHAT GSI ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE ON A STREETSCAPE

The core GSI approach being integrated into the Mile Hi project uses three interconnected features that work in sequence.

A low-cost retrofit option that reduces overall stormwater flow

Curb cuts are the entry point. A curb cut is a section of curb removed to allow water to run from the street into a landscaped area between the sidewalk and the street. On San Pedro, where a landscaped buffer strip will separate the widened sidewalk from the travel lanes, curb cuts will direct water off the roadway into planted bioretention areas rather than into the gutter and storm drain. They provide a low-cost retrofit option that reduces overall stormwater flow when installed at intervals along the street.

Sediment traps protect the system and ultimately serve as the saturation point where stormwater settles back into the ground. Wherever water passes through a curb cut, it enters a small engineered transition zone—a planted depression designed to capture sediment, debris and trash before it can clog infiltration areas, while also holding water long enough for it to slowly percolate into the soil. Fine sediment can clog pore space and reduce infiltration rates over time, so the design is intentional: a depression just inside the

Design rendering of San Pedro Drive, Albuquerque

curb cut, with an earthen berm and native grasses to stabilize soil and filter pollutants. Rock or flagstone lining slows velocity and simplifies maintenance. The vegetation—ideally native or drought-adapted species suited to both wet and dry conditions—filters additional pollutants and supports the urban tree canopy anchoring the corridor's new landscape. During dry periods, these features disappear into the streetscape. After a monsoon storm, they do exactly what they're supposed to: hold water, let it soak in, and protect the rest of the system from being overwhelmed.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE, GRAY INFRASTRUCTURE, AND WHY THE COMBINATION MATTERS

The Mile Hi Streetscape project isn't replacing the city's conventional stormwater system—it's supplementing it. Green infrastructure is designed to mimic nature and capture rainwater where it falls, reducing and treating stormwater at its source, while also providing multiple community benefits including reduced localized flooding, improved aesthetics and enhanced foot traffic in retail areas. By reducing the volume and velocity of runoff that reaches the storm drain, GSI extends the functional life of that gray infrastructure and reduces the frequency and severity of flooding events on the corridor.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, integrating green infrastructure elements into broader transportation and community connectivity improvements can significantly reduce the marginal cost of stormwater management by including it within larger infrastructure capital improvement projects. That's the strategic logic behind weaving GSI into the Mile Hi streetscape rather than treating it as a standalone project: The excavation, grading and curb work is already happening. Adding bioretention infrastructure at that stage costs a fraction of what it would as an independent retrofit.

Implementing projects in public spaces provides additional benefits and gives communities the opportunity to showcase the aesthetic appeal of green infrastructure practices and provide a visual demonstration of how they can function—allowing residents, businesses and corridor visitors to experience the multiple benefits firsthand. For a corridor still building community confidence in public investment, that visibility matters.

A LONG-TERM INVESTMENT IN CORRIDOR RESILIENCE

The Mile Hi District Streetscape Enhancement Project has secured $1.8 million in state capital outlay funding to complete the full scope of the first phase of improvements. A community chalk-out demonstration event is scheduled for May 6 along the Phase 1 project area, where residents and businesses will be able to walk the corridor and see the proposed improvements at street level before a single shovel hits the ground. The green stormwater features won't be the most photographed part of that day. But they represent something important: a streetscape project that doesn't just look better but actually functions better—managing water the way healthy urban ecosystems are supposed to, and building resilience into the corridor one curb cut at a time. ■

Adrian N. Carver, MCRP, is executive director of the Revitalize San Pedro Partnership.
WWW.SANPEDROABQ.ORG

GREEN STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY

The City of Albuquerque is at the forefront of new ideas to reduce flood risks, improve groundwater and support healthy urban gardens. Many streets have a special ribbon of landscaping between the sidewalk and the curb. With a simple Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) curb cut, you can irrigate that area with storm water and grow your garden. GSI curb cuts reduce flood risk by slowing stormwater runoff, support urban ecology and beautify neighborhoods by bringing more water to support plants.

GSI infrastructure curb cuts and curb cores in the public right-of-way are a voluntary, low-cost retrofit option for existing neighborhoods. They are often installed on streets on the uphill side of a basin or swale where runoff flows along the curb. A sediment trap prevents soil erosion and road surface undercutting and captures sediment, debris or trash, which needs to be cleared three or four times a year and after large storm events.

Installation requires a permit and a licensed contractor. To apply online, visit ABQ-PLAN and follow the process to apply for a "Curb Cut Request" application. For more information on guidelines, contact the city's planning department.

A curb cut allows water to run into a landscaped area between the sidewalk and the street.

THE 2026 ELECTRIFY NEW MEXICO CONFERENCE

The 2026 Electrify New Mexico Conference

BY **JIM DESJARDINS**

Did you know that large-scale industry such as data centers are huge energy consumers, with U.S. data center facilities using about 4.4 percent of the nation's electricity in 2023, a figure that is projected to grow, driven by demand from AI and other technologies?

Did you know that New Mexico is ranked sixth in the nation for geothermal energy potential, with estimates that the state can produce 163 gigawatts of geothermal power?

Did you know that as of March 2026, over 54 megawatts of community solar is generating energy in New Mexico, providing savings for renters and homeowners?

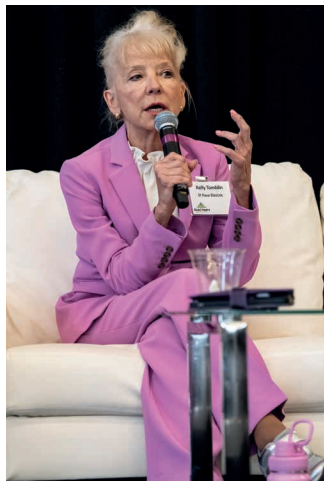
These are just a few examples of the issues explored and discussed at the third-annual Electrify New Mexico event, hosted by the Renewable Energy Industries Association of New Mexico, on April 9 in Albuquerque. More than 250 people, including attendees from industry, local government, state government, universities, nonprofit organizations and others attended the event, which featured a roster of 36 speakers and was highlighted by a rousing keynote speech from Congresswoman Melanie Stansbury.

The full day event featured speakers and panels on a variety of topics including meeting the energy demands of the future and exploring the range of emerging energy technologies that can power New Mexico, such as geothermal and evolving technologies in energy storage.

The conference kicked off featuring a panel with three New Mexico cabinet secretaries, Acting Secretary Erin Taylor (Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department), Secretary Sarita Nair (Workforce Solutions Department) and Secretary James Kenney (Environment Department), speaking about the New Mexico Comprehensive Energy Transition Strategy (CETS). This multi-agency, two-year initiative aims to take a data-driven approach to creating strategies to move or transition our state to a new, cleaner energy economy. The CETS effort will conclude this fall with a final recommendations report for New Mexico legislators.

Rikki Seguin, executive director of Interwest Energy, facilitated a panel of experts who spoke about the new landscape after the passage of the "The Big Beautiful Bill," which significantly slowed the deployment of renewable energy and clean transportation through the elimination of key tax credits. Glenn Felty from SunState Solar, Sara Birmingham from the Solar Energy Industries Association and Brian Reindel of Exus Renewables discussed the impacts of the bill and what steps the industry is taking to survive this challenging time.

One of the most dynamic panels of the day was "Will There Be Enough Electricity," which explored issues related to the recent significant demand in electricity from large industrial loads such as data centers. Panelists Kelly Tomblin, CEO of El Paso Electric Company; Rep. Nathan Small, New Mexico House of Representatives; Zoe Lees, Regional Vice President of Regulatory Policy, Xcel Energy; and Cliff Ho, senior manager of Renewable Energy, SB Energy, discussed the challenges and opportunities associated with these loads related to environmental impacts, economic development, infrastructure costs and balancing the state's climate, workforce and equity goals.



2026 Electrify New Mexico Conference; Top to bottom: Beth Beloff, CEO, NM Climate Investment Center; Jim DesJardins, executive director, REIA-NM; Kelly Tomblin, CEO, El Paso Electric Co; NM Congresswoman Melanie Stansbury; Rikki Seguin, exec. director, Interwest Energy Alliance; NMCIC staff; electric car-charger display. Photos © Seth Roffman

The event featured a roster of 36 speakers.

For the second year, Electrify New Mexico also featured "Tent Talks." These were designed as short, high-impact sessions featuring industry experts, and were used to build community and exchange ideas. Tent Talks topics included New Mexico's Community Solar Program, reducing the time and cost of installing solar, the future of electric transportation, and evolving technologies in energy storage. Additionally, there were informal "Table Talks" on solar workforce, wildfire mitigation and energy efficiency.

Electrify New Mexico could not successfully happen without the support of many great sponsors, including the presenting sponsor, PNM. Other sponsors included: Sustainability Partners, Sandia BMW, UNIRAC, ABC Supply Company, Affordable Solar Group, Beatty & Wozniak, New Mexico Renewable Energy Transmission Authority, New Mexico Oil and Gas Association, Positive Energy Solar, Exus Renewables, SunState Solar, Solar Energy Industries Association, Mitsubishi Electric, Mission Solar Energy, City of Albuquerque Councilor Tammy Fiebelkorn and New Mexico State Sen. Pro-Tempore Mimi Stewart.

A big thank you also goes to our media sponsors including *Green Fire Times* and *Albuquerque Business First*. We look forward to seeing you at next year's Electrify New Mexico conference. ■

Jim DesJardins is the executive director of the Renewable Energy Industries Association of New Mexico. REIA-NM.ORG

SUNZIA HAS BEGUN SENDING WIND POWER FROM NM TO CALIFORNIA

At a time when the wind industry is under attack in Washington, the SunZia Wind project in Torrance County, New Mexico, has been testing its 916 turbines and will soon be delivering an enormous amount of electricity to just south of Phoenix, Arizona and to California. The 3.5-gigawatt Pattern Energy development will deliver power over a 550-mile transmission line. California Independent System Operator (CAISO), which oversees the operation of California's bulk electric power system and transmission lines, recently informed the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission that it had taken operational control of the project.

Twenty years in the making, SunZia will be the largest wind farm in continental North America. Construction for the line and wind turbines took six years. Permitting took 17 years, as the project faced opposition from birders including the Audubon Society, and the military, which objected to the line's proximity to White Sands Missile Range. A new route was selected. Last year, a federal appeals court revived a legal challenge by the Tohono O'odham Nation and the San Carlos Apache, who say that federal regulators failed to consult them over the line's impact on tribal cultural sites in the San Pedro Valley of Arizona.

SunZia will be able to generate enough electricity to supply three million people. It is likely to generate the most at night, when California's main solar resources are offline and mostly replaced by polluting natural gas. A comparable wind project in Wyoming is also planning to export power to California, starting in 2029.

REGULATORS ATTEMPT TO JUMP-START COMMUNITY SOLAR IN NM

Community solar gives utility customers the cost savings of a rooftop solar array without having to install one on their home or business. Through a subscriber program, New Mexicans can purchase shares or leases of small solar farms that produce no more than 5 megawatts of power. Customers get a credit on their monthly electric bill for their share of the energy produced. Thirty percent of a solar farm's output is reserved for low-income residents.

Although interest in building the farms has been strong, of the initial 47 projects that received a state award to collectively build about 200 megawatts, only 12 solar farms have been energized. By May 2023, 408 projects (1.5 gigawatts over the cap) had bid into program. Many are still awaiting approval to be connected to the power grid.

Five years after its inception, regulators are jump-starting New Mexico's community solar program in order to expand access. The Public Regulation Commission held hearings in March on rule changes to the program as it prepared to bid out another 300 megawatts of new projects. In 2025, community solar stakeholders—utilities, solar farm developers and advocacy groups hashed out rules for the program, including where solar farms can be built, who pays to connect them to the grid, how consumers get billed, and more.

President Trump's "One Big Beautiful Bill Act" phased out lucrative federal investment tax credits and production tax credits for wind and solar energy projects. Those credits now expire Dec. 31, 2027.

In March, three companies jointly announced eight new community solar projects across the state. Four have been energized. Doña Ana County commissioners recently unanimously approved up to $10 million in industrial revenue bonds to finance the Lower Río Grande Solar Project, a 5-megawatt facility in an agricultural community south of Las Cruces.

THE GLOBEMALLOW ENERGY PROJECT

On April 16, the Santa Fe Planning Commission approved what will be one of the largest solar and battery energy storage projects in New Mexico. Linea Energy's two-phase Globemallow project is in southeastern Santa Fe County. Phase one would consist of 199 megawatts (MW) solar plus 199 MW battery energy storage. Phase two would consist of 150 MW solar plus 150 MW battery energy storage. The solar array on 2,000 acres near Stanley will produce enough electricity to power about 93,000 homes annually. Its power would be sold to Public Service Company of New Mexico (PNM). Plans for the project include 250 to 300 containers for batteries, along with 761,904 solar panels.

The utility-scale project will use an estimated 67.4 acre-feet or 22 million gallons of water during construction, according to the company's conditional use permit application. The water would be used for dust control and general construction activities. The company has said that they would only use water rights that are currently sanctioned for the property. Once operational, water will supply a 5,000-gallon potable water tank that is paired with an operations and maintenance building, as well as a 30,000-gallon tank for fire suppression, vegetation management and solar panel cleaning.

County commissioners would hear any appeal of the decision, and any appeal of the commissioners' decision would be heard in state District Court. The planning commission's approval comes less than a year after the county approved the controversial Rancho Viejo project near Eldorado, which has been in litigation.

A MORE RESILIENT "COMPLEX ADAPTIVE GRID"

A Santa Fe Institute news release says: "The grid is in crisis. A century-old system for generating, distributing and regulating electricity cannot cope with coinciding pressures of electrification, decarbonization, enormous demand from data centers, and grid technology updates such as digitalization and artificial intelligence. Even the supply chain is faltering."

To address the grid's overarching challenges, SFI External Professor Lynne Kiesling, of Northwestern University, helped organize a working group at SFI. The group assembled participants from academia, law, industry and public policy to discuss how technology is upending old ways of managing energy. More than a dozen researchers and practitioners have agreed to continue meeting. They will prepare a journal commentary paper. "Using the complex-systems approach, we want to introduce practitioners to new ways of thinking about stuff they've been doing every day for decades. We hope that encourages them to make regulatory changes that would create a more resilient, adaptive grid," Kiesling said.

It is a moment of deep structural change for the grid, plus a chance for significant consumer control.

Examples of the Clash Between New Actors and Old Systems in NM

• A private equity group, Blackstone, is seeking to buy the state's biggest utility, Public Service Company of New Mexico (PNM), presenting unexpected challenges and opportunities for regulators.

• Santa Fe-based Microgrid Systems Laboratory (MSL) is experimenting with innovations on the grid's edge (such as storing electricity at homes and developing microgrids operated by Indigenous communities)—proving that it's possible to reduce rigid hierarchy in energy decision-making.

• New energy technologies like rooftop solar, battery storage, smart thermostats, heat pumps and electric vehicle chargers can be synced to the grid and networked into a "virtual power plant," with utilities paying customers for small adjustments in energy use. In the 2026 Legislative session, HB 311, the "Grid Reliability through Integrated Distributed Energy Resources (GRID) Act" (which didn't pass) would have required electric utilities to develop virtual power plant programs and integrate them into future energy planning. Utilities would have been required to tap into this low-cost, homegrown energy resource, instead of building expensive new infrastructure.

GEOTHERMAL ENERGY: NEW MEXICO'S HOT GREEN REVOLUTION

BY **TOM SOLOMON**

New Mexico stands at the edge of a hot green revolution, but instead of Hatch green chile, this one will use the earth's heat for clean, renewable energy.

New Mexico is blessed with some of the best renewable resources in the nation. We are ranked No.3 in solar potential, No.12 in wind and No.6 in geothermal, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. It is our unique geology. Sitting atop the Río Grande rift and dormant volcanoes like the Jémez caldera allows access to extremely hot rocks at shallower depths than other states, lowering the cost to drill for the heat that can run a power plant, supply a hot spring or heat a greenhouse.

Geothermal energy will be the third leg of a 100 percent renewable-energy grid, using the 'always-on' nature of the earth's heat to generate 24/7 dispatchable power with no emissions. In its early stages it may not be as cheap as solar and wind, but its reliability will more than make up for higher costs by firming up the total system to work in all seasons, day and night, no matter the weather. And geothermal power will cost much less than other low-carbon sources, including nuclear power, and as volume scales up, costs will drop.

New Mexico currently has one operating geothermal electric plant, Zanskar's Lightning Dock in Hidalgo County, a 15MW facility on PNM'S grid. Zanskar, a company that develops and operates utility-scale geothermal power plants in the Western U.S., used advanced AI subsurface search tools to repower that formerly troubled plant, drilling a much deeper and hotter well that now maxes out the plant's generator and has the potential for additional development. It is likely that New Mexico contains more, perhaps many more, hidden hot aquifers ready to be tapped for energy production, and we now have the advanced search tools to find them. If so, these 'hydrothermal' plays present the fastest and cheapest path to adding geothermal power to the grid.

Other advanced geothermal options include the hot dry rock closed loop system announced by XGS and Meta for a 150MW power plant in northwest New Mexico by 2030.

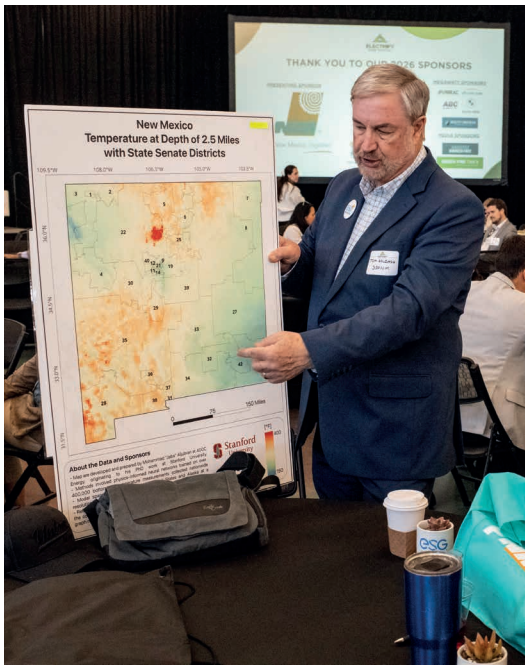
But what the industry is watching most closely is Fervo Energy's Cape Station power plant near Milford, Utah. That plant's engineered or enhanced geothermal system (EGS) 100MW first phase is now under construction and due to come online in mid-2026. Additional units totaling 500 megawatts are due by 2028. This will be the world's first >100 MW utility-scale next generation or 'hot dry rock' geothermal power plant, hopefully representing a template for future units by Fervo and others, that could be built wherever wells can be drilled into deep hot rock.

The location of Fervo's Cape Station near Milford, Utah is no accident, being within eyesight of the Department of Energy's geothermal research & development facility, called Utah FORGE, for Frontier Observatory for Research in Geothermal Energy. FORGE has been adapting the latest advances in drilling technology from the oil industry, like polycrystalline diamond bits to solve the tough challenges of drilling into deep, hot, hard rock. That's what is required to make next-generation geothermal viable and cost effective, and FORGE's R&D has been central to the rapid advances in the field that have led us to this point.

So, what's next? With solid policy support from the state of New Mexico, on top of the requirement of the Energy Transition Act for a 100 percent carbon-free grid by 2045, an obvious path forward is to look at New Mexico's remaining 17 gas-fired power plants. Those plants must decarbonize on the ETA's schedule, and we should start planning for at least some of them to be repowered using the geothermal resource that they are sitting on. It just so happens that the Río Grande rift, where the heat is closest, is also where the river is located, and thus our cities and power plants. Each of those gas plants already has a plot of land, an electric substation and a grid connection, all of which can be repurposed. This is an opportunity staring us in the face.

Some of NM's 17 gas-fired power plants should be repowered using the geothermal resource that they are sitting on.

A clean power source that will combine with NM's abundant solar and wind power to make the whole system work.



Tom Solomon explains New Mexico's geothermal potential at the 2026 Electrify New Mexico conference in Albuquerque.

They say the last 10 percent of the energy transition is the hardest. Geothermal power provides the answer—a clean, firm power source that will combine with New Mexico's abundant solar and wind power to make the whole system work. Geothermal power also uses the skills and equipment from the oil and gas industry, providing a transition path for those workers and communities. This is a New Mexico solution and like green chile on a breakfast burrito, it just makes sense. ■

*Tom Solomon, a retired electrical engineer, is co-coordinator of 350*NEWMEXICO.ORG *and facilitator of the NM Geothermal Working Group*

OP-ED: ANDREW BRAMBLE

PLUNGING INTO A SWIFT RIVER

I. QUESTIONS ARISE

Before anything existed, Raven tricked his way into a house with no entry. It was next to a river. The Spirit moved upon the waters. Life crawled out of the sea.

Eventually, one way or another, our stories bring us back to our origins, back to water.

Where is your water? was the question that brought me to permaculture systems and natural building, appropriate technology and watershed restoration. At the time, the water running from my tap traveled almost 200 miles from a reservoir fed by the Sierra Nevada Mountain range. Two hundred miles of tunnels and aqueducts. Something about that didn't sit right with me.

Almost a quarter of a century ago, a thoughtful piece of writing attributed to Hopi elders asked that question, and also asked: *Where are you living? What are you doing? Are you in right relation?* I wasn't pleased with my answers to those questions either, so I set out to change my answers. Fortunately, I was with a partner who had lived with and been answering such questions her entire adult life.

Almost a quarter-century ago we chose or were chosen by land in a place with not much water. Nine inches of annual rainfall. A non-rechargeable aquifer shrinking below us. We opted not to roll the dice on a well and instead purchased water tanks. And we started learning about the world in a whole new way.

Living off rainfall teaches us. Cooking with the heat of the sun teaches us. Working to restore the watershed, to grow food, composting; all of these teach us.

Am I in right relation? I'm in a more direct relation than I was. With sun and rain and clouds and wind. Moving deeper with every cycle of new moon to full moon to new moon again.

What else, who else teaches us? Our elders teach us. We've been lucky that way. Our peers teach us. Our students and interns and cohorts teach us. Watching water move across the land teaches us. Perhaps you, reading this, will someday teach us. Or learn alongside us.

II. LAY OF THE LAND

It's said that the streets talk, that the street finds its own uses for things. What do they say? What uses do they find? We'd have to know to which streets we refer. There are many. The everyday streets where we live with everyday life stories. There's Wall Street, of course, where lots of fast micro-transactions add up to macro-economics: Money Stories. There's K Street where the think-tanks and lobbyists ply their trade in Washington, DC: Influence Stories. And up from all these streets are White Houses and Parliaments, the Halls of Power, which is governance. Backed by state violence.

How do we heat and cool using less energy? What is the best use of our water?

Image: Andrew Bramble monitoring a restoration project;

Rhizomatous grasses rupture asphalt. Water erodes concrete.

I prefer fields to streets, but I'd be naive to think that, in the short term, streets don't border and impose, limit and pollute fields. In the long term, the streets will revert. Rhizomatous grasses rupture asphalt. Water erodes concrete. But in the short term, streets exert influence over fields. The stories of streets and fields are tightly linked. The spaces that really interest me are watersheds.

Watersheds are defined by surface flows. Streets and watersheds both have stories, and the stories they tell run on very different substrates. Street stories run on oil and empire. Watershed stories run on seasons, hydrologic cycles and biotic pumps, the diversity of life or lack thereof. They are of different scales. Watersheds may contain streets or parts of streets. Never the other way around. They have different concerns. Watersheds are about the movement of water. Streets are about control. Control of the social-political-economic terrain, sometimes to facilitate movement, other times to impede it.

The stories each tell follow trajectories similar to their natures. Stories of meander, flow, life. Stories of control, conquest, resistance.

Watersheds are about the movement of water.

III. DESTINATIONS

Domination and stories of domination and empire have brought us right to the present moment. The violent shenanigans in the Middle East are putting a spotlight on the role of oil in our modern age. It underpins our entire economy, not just as fue, but as feedstock for fertilizer, medicines and many industrial processes, such as the manufacturing of solar cells and wind turbines.

Few are mentioning that, even without the present military blockages, the carbon pulse is near its crest, perhaps slightly past it. The availability of easy to get oil declines from here. While the technical details are beyond this piece, the point is this: The systems that sustain this civilization are beginning to unravel. One in four U.S. farmers were unable to secure fertilizer for the current growing season. In England, some farmers decided to sell their fertilizer to other farmers rather than plant. Easier money.

Such unraveling forces questions into view.

Some are the same questions:
Where is your water? What are you doing?

Some are other questions: *How do we heat and cool using less energy? What is the best use of our water?*

Some are among the largest questions we've ever asked: *What are we living for? What is of value? What does value mean? What stories will be of use in the future?*

That writing attributed to the Hopi elders that posed those questions also included a story: *There is a river flowing now very fast. It is so great and swift that there are those who will be afraid. They will try to hang on to the shore... and will suffer greatly... The Elders say we must let go of the shore, push off into the middle of the stream, keep our eyes open and our heads above the water… Gather yourselves. Banish the word 'struggle' from your attitude and your vocabulary. All that we do now must be done in a sacred manner and in celebration.*

I'm in. How about you? ■

Bramble with solar cooker; post-flood restoration project success; rain-fed sunken greenhouse

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Andrew Bramble is the co-founder of Ampersand Sustainable Learning Center. He loves composting, writing, researching and walking barefoot in arroyos with his wife and their dog. HTTPS://AMPERSANDPROJECT.ORG

AMPERSAND SUSTAINABLE LEARNING CENTER

Land Practice Mentorship Cohort Starts June 21

Ampersand Sustainable Learning Center is a 38-acre demonstration site in New Mexico's high desert. For two decades, Andy and Amanda Bramble have lived their ecological designs and low-tech, affordable technologies that provide resiliency in harsh climate conditions.

The Brambles' home and learning center systems are engineered to be self-sustaining. They include self-regulating earthen structures, rain-harvesting micro-climates for habitat and food, solar water heaters, solar ovens, dehydrators for food preservation, graywater and composting circular waste systems.

Since 2008, Ampersand has provided on-site educational and experiential opportunities: apprenticeships, mentorships, residencies, classes and community events. That is paired with larger ecological restoration projects of repairing the surrounding land, improving the local Madrid Watershed and restoring humans' beneficial role within the area's ecological systems. The Brambles share these techniques with the local community.

Ampersand's main programming is its Earthstar Land Practice Mentorship, which offers small, deep-diving learning circle lessons on regenerative water systems, passive solar design, natural building and living off-grid. The next cohort begins June 21. Find out more at ampersandproject.org .

saving water is always in season!

CONSERVATION & SUSTAINABILITY
CITY OF SANTA FE

Conserving water now helps protect our community's future. Seasonal watering restrictions are in place May through October (no outdoor watering between 10:00am-6:00pm).

We have the tools you need to help you save water. Whether you want to create a waterwise landscape or you need to learn about the city's water conservation rules & regulations, our website has all the info you need!

- Rebates
- Weekly Podcast
- EyeOnWater
- Tips & Tools
- Waterwise Garden

LEARN MORE

sustainabilitysantafe.org/savewatersantafe

From Main Stream New Mexico

WATER CONSERVATION 101: SIMPLE HACKS FOR A WATER-WISE HOME

Every day, it seems, headlines warn of hotter summers, more intense fire seasons, lower snowpack and less water to go around. It can feel overwhelming, and it begs the question: "What is a concerned New Mexican to do?"

"You can be a part of the solution. Even making a few small changes at home can help. Over time and alongside your neighbors, these changes can lead to big impacts."

As grim as the predictions can be, remember: You can be a part of the solution. Even making a few small changes at home can help. Over time and alongside your neighbors, these changes can lead to big impacts—like what people accomplished in Santa Fe. We wrote a whole blog about it (https://mainstreamnm.org/article-from-crisis-to-conservation/). Since 1995, Santa Fe has reduced its water use by 40 percent, despite population growth and largely due to residential water conservation. It's an excellent example of the power of people.

Christine Chávez is the City of Santa Fe's water conservation manager. She implements programs that make it easier and less expensive for residents to save water. Here are a few hacks that Chávez and other experts recommend:

INSTALL EFFICIENT APPLIANCES

In the early 2000s, after a devastating drought, the City of Santa Fe gave away 10,000 free toilets. These weren't just any toilets. They were high-efficiency, low-flow toilets, and their implementation helped save the city *millions* of gallons of water each year. Installing efficient appliances is one of the most effective ways to reduce your household water use. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, using EnergyStar-certified appliances and WaterSense-labeled fixtures can help reduce water use by 20 percent, saving the average household $380 a year. That's a big win-win, saving shared water resources and your money.

TURN OFF THE TAP

It takes two minutes—and, if you don't turn off the tap, up to four gallons of water—to brush your teeth. This may seem like minimal waste, but consider this: If every New Mexican reduced their use by four gallons of water twice a day, we could save as much water each year as the entire city of Las Cruces uses annually.

FIX LEAKS

That drip-drip-drip from your outdoor hose bib? It's not insignificant. The EPA estimates that faucet leaks contribute to about 900 billion gallons of wasted water every year in the United States. That's equivalent to the annual water use of 11 million households.

PLANT WATER-WISE GARDENS

In New Mexico, gardeners don't have to sacrifice beauty for water savings. A host of showy plants grow well in our arid climate. Choose your species wisely, install drip irrigation, mulch well, and watch your garden flourish. It may take a couple years for new plants to establish and thrive with less water, but eventually your investment will pay off. The New Mexico Office of the State Engineer has a handy guidebook (https://www.ose.nm.gov/WUC/brochures/Xeric-Guide.pdf) to help you get started.

Photos by LeRoy Grafe

"It may not happen for the older generations, but these younger generations are taking in this information, and they understand, they're learning, and they're wanting to play bigger roles."

REPLACE NON-FUNCTIONAL TURF

If it's for show, let it go. If it's for play, let it stay. We all know grass is thirsty, but that doesn't mean it's never appropriate in New Mexico landscapes. Expansive lawns in shady parks offer a verdant refuge for city dwellers while giving young ones—and the young at heart—a place to play. But if you have grass on your property that's purely decorative, consider replacing it with a more water-wise alternative.

Undertaking these changes as a community will not only lead to water savings, it will also build hope. Chávez says she's optimistic, especially when she talks to young people. "It may not happen for us or for the older generations, but these younger generations are taking in this information, and they understand, and they're learning, and they're wanting to play bigger roles," she says. "I think they're gonna change the way the environment is considered at a national level. So I do have a lot of optimism." ■

WHAT'S GOING ON

ALBUQUERQUE / Online

MAY 14, 8 AM–4 PM
31ST ANNUAL NEW MEXICO WATER DIALOGUE
Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, 2401 12th St. NW
"Persistent Themes and a Unified Direction." Registration: $95, HTTPS://NMWATERDIALOGUE.ORG

MAY 15
NEW MEXICO BUILDERS SUMMIT
Hotel Albuquerque
"NM's path to housing solutions." Builders, developers, architects, engineers, investors, policymakers and industry professionals. NM Building Industry Institute and the NM Home Builders Association. HTTPS://NMBUILDERSSUMMIT.COM

JUNE 2–5
AFTACON 2026
Americans for the Arts national conference. 1000+ artists, administrators and advocates come together to shape the future of arts & culture. Full-day immersive incubators hosted throughout ABQ's cultural venues, special evening events. Registration: $100. WWW.AFTACON.ORG

JUNE 6
CREATIVECON
National Hispanic Cultural Center
"Where Creativity and Business Meet." Entrepreneurs, community partners and support organizations connect, learn and share ideas. Registration, tickets ($15): HTTPS://EDD.NEWMEXICO.GOV/CREATIVECON/

THROUGH JUNE 7
"WHAT WE BRING TO THE TABLE"
National Hispanic Cultural Center
Group show to mark NHCC's 25th anniversary featuring work by 18 NHCC staffers, including curators, designers, coordinators, campus safety and security, custodial teams and business department. 505-246-2261, NHCCNM.ORG

JUNE 13–14
LEGACY LAB NM
Albuquerque Museum
Support for legacy building and planning for the arts community through practical education, accessible resources and inspirational models. 6/13: free full-day seminar. Registration required. 6/14: submit application and pay fee. HTTP://WWW.LEGACYLABNM.ORG

JUNE 22–25
A MEETING OF SACRED WATERS
Isleta Resort & Casino
Global gathering to highlight Indigenous-led solutions in support of ancestral waters and lands. Registration: $545/$245. Hosted by the Restoring Balance Collaborative and the Pueblo of Isleta. HTTPS://WEB.CVENT.COM/EVENT/B6DB810B-9687-4105-A4FB-6A68908CB4C6/REGISTER

JULY 15, 10 AM–2 PM
14TH ANNUAL JOB FAIR
Río Grande High School, 2300 Arenal Rd. SW
126 employers have been featured. Presented by Sen. Michael Padilla.

SEPT. 17–19
38TH ANNUAL GREAT MINDS IN STEM CONFERENCE
Albuquerque Convention Center
GMIS inspires and supports students and professionals—especially from underserved communities—to build a diverse and inclusive STEM workforce. Hosted by the Hispano Chamber of Commerce. Info: 323-791-9295

SEPT. 19, 4 PM
SOMOS ALBUQUERQUE
National Hispanic Cultural Center
Indoor and outdoor festival featuring local artists, performers, makers and community alongside national music headliners. $24.95. HTTPS://WWW.EVENTBRITE.COM/

TUES.–SUN. 9 AM–5 PM
"ONLY IN ALBUQUERQUE"
Albuquerque Museum, 2000 Mountain Rd. NW
Permanent exhibit told through four galleries: Spirited, Courageous, Resourceful and Innovative. Hundreds of the city's beloved artifacts are featured. $3–$6., Free Sun., 9 am–1 pm. CABQ.GOV/ARTSCULTURE/ALBUQUERQUE-MUSEUM

TUES.–SUN. 9 AM–4 PM
INDIAN PUEBLO CULTURAL CENTER
2401 12th St. NW
"Gateway to the 19 Pueblos of N.M." Through Feb. 21, 2027: "Grounded in Clay: The Spirit of Pueblo Pottery." Special 50th- anniversary programming. Cultural dances, restaurant. $12/$10/children under 5 free. 505-843-7270, INDIANPUEBLO.ORG

TUES.–SAT. 10 AM–4 ON
MAXWELL MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY
500 University Blvd. NE
"People of the Southwest" permanent exhibition celebrates the cultural history of the SW, especially the close relationship people have had with the land. Free admission. 505-277-4405, HTTPS://MAXWELLMUSEUM.UNM.EDU

NM MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY AND SCIENCE
1801 Mountain Rd. NW
Reopened after seven months of renovations. 505-841-2800, NMNATURALHISTORY.ORG

RESILIENT FUTURES INITIATIVE
Dangerous heat, pollution and natural disasters affect all New Mexicans, especially frontline communities. This initiative, facilitated by the City of ABQ's (CABQ) Sustainability Office, is an effort to future-proof communities in Central NM. RESILIENTFUTURESNM.ORG

SANTA FE / Online

MAY 8–9
SWAIA NATIVE FASHION WEEK
Eldorado Hotel & Spa
Native design and storytelling. 10 am–6 pm: Native Creatives Market (free admission); 5/9, 6–8:30 pm: A Taste of Native Fashion Gala (ticketed). HTTPS://ONECAU.SE/_FMZF91

MAY 9, 9 AM–2 PM
SF EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER'S ANNUAL GARDEN FAIR
SF County Fairgrounds, 3229 Rodeo Rd.
Plant sale, exhibitors, vendors, children's corner, garden shed (tools, equipment). HTTPS://WWW.SFEMG.ORG/GARDEN-FAIR

MAY 14, 5:30–8 PM
PLUTONIUM PIT PRODUCTION NNSA HEARING
SF Farmers' Market Pavilion and Online
Public comment on draft programmatic environmental impact statement accepted through July 16. Proposed sites include Los Alamos Laboratory. HTTPS://BIT.LY/PITPEIS14MAY

MAY 16 & 30 AND JUNE 13 & 17, 12 PM
HOLISTIC FRUIT TREE & BERRY ORCHARD PRODUCTION
County Sports Field, Cty. Rd. 84, Jaconita, NM
Educational series hosted by NMSU SF Cooperative Extension and SF County. Registration: 505-471-4711, TDOMINGUEZ@NMSU.EDU

MAY 16, 1–9 PM
"HONORING OUR GRADUATES" SPRING POWWOW
IAIA Campus, 83 Avan Nu Po Rd.
Institute of American Indian Arts powwow follows the 2026 commencement ceremony. HTTPS://LNKD.IN/GEJ7PDYC

MAY 16, 6–7 PM
RIVER TALK: WILDFIRE AND WATERSHED RESILIENCE
Iconik Red, 1366 Cerrillos Rd.
Speakers: Alan Hook, City of SF Water Div.; Eytan Krasilovsky, Forest Stewards Guild. Free.

MAY 17 OPENING
STARS, STRIPES AND THE FIRST AMERICANS
Museum of Indian Arts and Culture
Exhibition examines the complex and evolving relationship between Indigenous peoples and the American flag, highlighting the diverse ways Native artists have incorporated its imagery. 505-476-1269, INDIANARTSANDCULTURE.ORG

MAY 20, 6 PM
BOOK TALKS: NORTEÑO WARRIOR; NUCLEAR FAMILY
Collected Works Books and Online
Profile of environmental and social justice activist Antonio "Ike" DeVargas by Kay Matthews; Memoir exploring the role of nuclear weapons and the legacy of Los Alamos in the lives of one American family by Ty Bannerman. COLLECTEDWORKSBOOKSTORE.COM/EVENTS

MAY 20–25
NATIVE ELEMENTS ART FESTIVAL + MARKET
SF Botanical Garden and SF Convention Center
Approximately 160 Native artists. Reception, VIP Night Market, panel discussion, art sales, food, entertainment. NATIVE-ELEMENTS@VISITSFBG.ORG, HTTPS://VISITSFBG.ORG/NATIVE-ELEMENTS/

THROUGH MAY 23, TUES–SAT., 12-5 PM
TABLE: ARTISTS REIMAGINE THE MEANING OF THE FAMILY TABLE
Community Gallery, 201 W. Marcy St.
Group exhibition exploring the traditions, symbolism and evolving meaning of the family table. Free.

MAY 27, 6 PM
BOOK TALK: BEATING HEART OF THE WORLD
Collected Works Books and Online
"The Taos Art Colony, the Pueblo Resistance & Battle for Indigenous America" by Steven L. Davis. COLLECTEDWORKSBOOKSTORE.COM/EVENTS

MAY 30
CREATIVECON NORTH CENTRAL
Buffalo Thunder Resort, Pojoaque
"Where Creativity and Business Meet." Entrepreneurs, community partners and support organizations connect, learn and share ideas. Registration, tickets ($15): HTTPS://EDD.NEWMEXICO.GOV/CREATIVECON/

JUNE 5 OPENING
INDIAN THEATER
SITE Santa Fe
Native Performance, Art and Self-Determination Since 1969. Exhibition curated by Candice Hopkins centers performance as an origin for the development of contemporary art by Native artists. SITESANTAFE.ORG

JUNE 7 OPENING
I AM CLAY: ACOMA LIFE IN FIGURES
Museum of Intl. Folk Art, 706 Cam. Lejo
Exhibition highlights the creativity, resilience and artistic innovation of Acoma Pueblo potters. More than 120 works. 505-476-1204, MOIFA.ORG

JUNE 11–12
NEXT GENERATION WATER SUMMIT
NM State Capitol
"Increasing Demand, Declining Realities." The state of water conservation in the Southwest. Join water policymakers, water reuse professionals and the building community. Workshops, classes, tours and more presented by the City of SF Conservation and Sustainability Division. Registration: https://lnkd.in/gtRJEp86, NEXTGENERATIONWATERSUMMIT.COM

JUNE 17–19
SOCIAL VENTURE NETWORK GLOBAL GATHERING
Business leaders and social entrepreneurs annual gathering. Social impact community conversations. $600–$900. Registration through 6/3. HTTPS://WWW.SVN.ORG/GATHERING-2026

JUNE 24–27
RODEO DE SANTA FE
3237 Rodeo Road
One of the largest professional rodeos in the United States. Tickets start at $20. HTTPS://RODEODESANTAFE.ORG

JUNE 29 ONLINE; JULY 13–17 IN PERSON
RETROFIT INSTALLER TECHNICIAN TRAINING
SF Community College Energy Smart Academy
Free 8-hour online class and 5-day training covers building science, air sealing, insulation, basic pressure diagnostics, health & safety, and more. Presented in partnership with NMMRD and NM Dept. of Workforce Solutions.

JULY 25–25
TRADITIONAL SPANISH MARKET
Santa Fe Plaza
A cultural showcase. Spanish colonial art. Contemporary Hispanic market on Lincoln Ave. https://traditionalspanishmarket.org, HTTPS://WWW.CONTEMPORARYHISPANICMARKET.ORG

AUGUST 7–9
TRANSFORMATION & HEALING CONFERENCE
Southwestern College & New Earth Institute
"Navigating Modern Chaos: Integrating Ancient Wisdom, Somatic Healing and Creative Practices" NEWEARTHINSTITUTE@SWC.EDU

AUGUST 15–16
SANTA FE INDIAN MARKET
Santa Fe Plaza area
Over 1,000 Native American artists from more than 200 tribal nations. Swaia.org. Hundreds more artists at nearby federal courthouse grounds. HTTPS://WWW.FREEINDIANMARKET.ORG

THROUGH AUGUST
MAKOWA: THE WORLDS ABOVE US
Museum of Indian Arts & Culture, 706 Cam. Lejo
Exhibit connects storytelling with science and observations, as well as celestial symbols in everyday and ceremonial objects. 505-476-1269, INDIANARTSANDCULTURE.ORG

SEPT. 18–20
EARTH USA 2016
Scottish Rite Center
13th International Conference on Architecture & Construction with Earthen Materials. Podium presentations, poster sessions, reception, tours. https://www.earthusa.org

THROUGH OCT. 4
ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS
New Mexico Museum of Art, 107 W. Palace Ave.
Photographic exhibition of Route 66 landmarks traces visual and cultural legacy of America's storied highway. HTTPS://WWW.NMARTMUSEUM.ORG

THROUGH NOV. 30
I AM CLAY: ACOMA LIFE IN FIGURES
Museum of International Folk Art, 706 Cam. Lejo
Community-curated show of figurative pottery works by artists from Acoma Pueblo, from ancient times and today. 505-476-1204, MOIFA.ORG

SATURDAYS THROUGH DEC., 9 AM–2 PM
SANTA FE ARTISTS MARKET
The Railyard north of the Water Tower
Local juried artists sell fine art and crafts. INFO@SANTAFEARTISTSMARKET.COM

SUNDAYS
RAILYARD ARTISAN MARKET
SF Farmers' Market Pavilion
Gifts, souvenirs and mementos from local artisans and creative small businesses. SANTAFEFARMERSMARKET.COM

MON.–FRI.
POEH CULTURAL CENTER AND MUSEUM
78 Cities of Gold Rd., Pueblo of Pojoaque
Di Wae Powa: They Came Back: Historical Pueblo pottery. The Why, group show of Native artists. Nah Poeh Meng: core installation highlighting Pueblo artists and history. $7–$10. 505-455-5041

MON.–SAT., 8 AM–4 PM
RANDALL DAVEY AUDUBON CENTER & SANCTUARY
1800 Upper Canyon Rd.
Free guided walks to see birds, Sat., 8:30–10 am. RSVP for Randall Davey House tours. 505-983-4609, RANDALLDAVEY.AUDUBON.ORG

TUES., SAT., 8 AM–1 PM
SANTA FE FARMERS' MARKET
Market Pavilion, 1607 Paseo de Peralta
Farmers and producers from northern NM. 505-983-4098, SANTAFEFARMERSMARKET.COM

TUES.–SUN., THROUGH SEPT. 7.
ROOTED STRONG: VISIONS OF AMERICA FROM NM
New Mexico Museum of Art
Exhibition exploring the layered histories of NM's lands and peoples, highlighting communities, traditions and artistic voices that shape the state and its place within the American story.

WEDS–FRI. THROUGH DECEMBER
NUEVO MEXICANO HERITAGE ARTS MUSEUM
750 Camino Lejo, Museum Hill
100 Years of Collecting/100 Years of Connecting, historical and contemporary artworks and articles representing daily life in New Mexico. Free admission. 505-982-2226, HTTPS://NMHERITAGEARTS.ORG

WEDS–SAT., 10 AM–6 PM; FRI.–SAT., 10 AM–6:30 PM
SANTA FE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM
Interactive exhibits, play areas, weekly programs. Masks required for ages 2 and older. $10/$8/$7/$3/one & under free. 505-989-8359, SANTAFECHILDRENSMUSEUM.ORG

WEDS–SUN.
EL RANCHO DE LAS GOLONDRINAS
334 Los Pinos Rd., La Ciénega
Living History Museum dedicated to the heritage and culture of 18th- and 19th-century New Mexico. 505-471-2261, GOLONDRINAS.ORG

SAT., 9–4, SUN., 10–4
EL MERCADO DE EL MUSEO
El Museo Cultural de Santa Fe
Many vendors. Art, jewelry, herbal remedies, textiles, beads, tapestries, books, furniture and more.

IAIA MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY NATIVE ARTS
108 Cathedral Place
Closed Tuesdays. $5–$10; under 16, Native and Indigenous peoples free. 888-922-4242, IAIA.EDU/MOCNA

MUSEUM OF INDIAN ARTS & CULTURE
710 Camino Lejo (Museum Hill)
Maatakuyma: Essential Elements: Art, Environment and Indigenous Futures, Makowa: The Worlds Above Us; Here, Now and Always. $7–$12. 10 am–5 pm. Closed Mondays. 505-476-1269, WWW.INDIANARTSANDCULTURE.ORG

MUSEUM OF INTERNATIONAL FOLK ART
706 Cam. Lejo, Museum Hill
"Protection: Adaptation and Resistance." More than 45 artists explore themes of climate crisis, struggles for social justice, strengthening communities through ancestral knowledge and imagining a thriving future. $3–$12. NM residents free first Sunday of the month.

NATIVE BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE
SF Business Incubator, 3900 Paseo del Sol
Monthly gatherings for Native American entrepreneurs, artists and business owners to connect, share resources and build pathways to success. Presented by UNM Rainforest Innovations and the City of SF Economic Development Dept.

NEW MEXICO HISTORY MUSEUM
113 Lincoln Ave.
The Lamy Branch of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad model train; Palace Seen and Unseen: A Convergence of History and Archaeology, photos and artifacts; Telling NM: Stories from Then and Now. Closed Mondays. 505-476-5200, NMHISTORYMUSEUM.ORG

SANTA FE HABITAT FOR HUMANITY
Seeking land, donated or for sale, to build affordable housing. Low-income homeowners help build homes and make mortgage payments to the nonprofit HFH. Property owners can qualify for 50% Affordable Housing tax credit through the NM Mortgage Finance Authority.
505-986-5880, ext. 109

SANTA FE WATERSHED ASSN. EVENTS CALENDAR
HTTPS://WWW.SANTAFEWATERSHED.ORG/EVENTS/

WHEELWRIGHT MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN
704 Cam. Lejo, Museum Hill
10 am–4 pm Tues.–Sat. $10.

YOUTHBUILD / YOUTHWORKS!
Paid training for Youth 16–24. Construction, Culinary, GED. 505-989-1855, WWW.SANTAFEYOUTHWORKS.ORG/SANTA-FE-YOUTHBUILD/

ESPAÑOLA

THROUGH MAY
NORTHERN NM ARTIST INVITATIONAL EXHIBIT
Bond House, 706 Bond Street
Group show. 505-747-8535, FACEBOOK.COM/SGHSBONDHOUSEMUSEUM

TAOS / Online

THROUGH MAY 30
PUEBLO FOODWAYS
Harwood Museum of Art, 238 Ledoux St.
Taos Pueblo foodways, from seed to ceremony. A glimpse into diverse activities and relationships that define food culture and sovereignty. 575-758-9826, HTTPS://HARWOODMUSEUM.ORG

JULY 24–26
TAOS WRITERS CONFERENCE
SOMOS, 108 Civic Plaza Dr.
Early bird registration ends 6/1. HTTPS://SOMOSTAOS.ORG/TAOS-WRITERS-CONFERENCE/

THROUGH MARCH 1, 2027
"HONORING THE LIFE AND WORK OF DEANNA AUTUMN LEAF SUAZO"
Millicent Rogers Museum
1504 Millicent Rogers Rd.
Open daily. HTTPS://WWW.MILLICENTROGERS.ORG

LA HACIENDA DE LOS MARTÍNEZ
708 Hacienda Way
Northern NM-style Spanish colonial "great house" built in 1804 by Severino Martínez. Open daily. TAOSHISTORICMUSEUM.ORG

HERE & THERE / Online

MAY 7–8
GALLUP FILM & MEDIA EXPO
Red Rock Park Convention Center, 825 Outlaw Rd., Church Rock, NM
Free event celebrates emerging filmmakers and media creators and highlights opportunities in NM's growing film and media industry. Registration: https://www.npacnm.org/gallup-film---media-expo

MAY 19–21
CONFLUENCE 2026
Fort Collins, Colo.
"The Future of Collaboration: The Power of Working Across Divides." National gathering for collaborative conservation practitioners, researchers, students and emerging leaders working to address complex social and environmental challenges. Western Collaborative Conservation Network. https://lnkd.in/gV8H6Fn3

MAY 21 PROPOSAL DEADLINE
FY27 RIVER STEWARDS PROGRAM
NM Environment Dept. funding to plan, design and construct projects that improve surface water quality or river habitat. Eligible entities: nonprofits, businesses, tribes, pueblos, soil and water conservation districts, municipalities, counties, local and state agencies. HTTPS://BIDBANANA.THEBIDLAB.COM/BID/Y0IQ4HO9IIHOZCOTCX2Q

JUNE 6–8
8TH ANNUAL NAVAJO NATION ECONOMIC SUMMIT
Twin Arrows Casino Resort, Flagstaff, Ariz.
"Our Resources, Our Responsibility." Conversations with leaders, innovators, community partners on economic growth, sustainability and stewardship. HTTPS://LNKD.IN/GJBCC8AA

JUNE 11–12
NM WORKING LANDS SUMMIT
Talpa and Las Trampas, NM
Learning resilience and collaboration from acequias. Presented by Quivira Coalition and community partners. Registration: HTTPS://LNKD.IN/GBE_SUMF

SEPT. 15–19
11TH TURTLE ISLAND BIOREGIONAL CONGRESS
Vernonia, Oregon
A bioregion is an interconnected community of landforms, watersheds, plants and animals, including human settlements. HTTPS://WWW.TIBC11.EARTH

THURS–SUN, 10 AM–4 PM
BOSQUE REDONDO MEMORIAL
Fort Sumner Historic Site, Fort Sumner, N.M.
Exhibit, 30 years in the making, tells the story of 'The Long Walk' and the Bosque Redondo. $7, children 16 and younger, free. NM residents with ID free first Sun. each month.
NMHISTORICSITES.ORG/BOSQUE-REDONDO

EARTH KNACK SURVIVAL AND OUTDOOR LIVING SKILLS
Crestone, Colo. and elsewhere
Fiber arts, blacksmithing, hide tanning, Rocky Mtn. Survival, Edible, medicinal plants, internships and more. HTTPS://WWW.EARTHKNACK.COM

GALLUP NEW DEAL ART VIRTUAL MUSEUM
GALLUPNEWDEALART.ORG
The culmination of a nine-year project provides images of the works as well as scholarly information. Hand-carved wood furniture, Spanish-Colonial-style tinwork, prints, murals, western American paintings, Native art. HTTPS://CONFERENCE.BIONEERS.ORG

Virtual Attendance for Santa Fe City and County residents is FREE!

Next Generation Water Summit

View Schedule & Register Now:

9th Annual Next Generation Water Summit

Increasing Demand, Declining Realities

Join us at the Capitol Building (the Roundhouse)
Santa Fe, New Mexico
June 11-12, 2026

KEYNOTE

Brett Walton

Colorado River Compact Negotiations Update

Award-winning journalist, *Circle of Blue*

SESSION TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Healthy Soil is Water in the Bank
- Integrating Water into the Sustainability Conversation
- Greywater Alliance Update
- New Aquifer Mapping Data and Why it Matters
- The Colorado River — The Years of Living Dangerously
- Nature-Based Solutions: Do Trees Save Water?

Live & On-Demand Sessions
Workshops | Classes
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