



SECURING NEW MEXICO'S WATER FUTURE

Through Nature-
Based Solutions



PROBLEM

- New Mexico will have **25% less water in 50 years.**
- New Mexico is experiencing **catastrophic wildfires, flooding, and drought.**
- **Local government budgets** are being strained.
- Residents are facing **higher insurance premiums, water and utility bills.**
- **Acequias, tribal communities, and rural areas** are being hit hard.
- Traditional infrastructure **cannot meet these challenges alone.**



NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS



NEW MEXICO EXAMPLES



Forest thinning



Health soils



Playa lakes restoration



Beaver dam analog



Zuni bowl, one rock dam



Green stormwater infrastructure

OUR REPORT

- Published by **Rio Grande Return and Spatial Informatics Group–Natural Assets Laboratory (SIG-NAL)**
- **Evaluated over 50 programs** across 14 state agencies and 4 non-state organizations
- **Interviews with agency leadership**, program managers, technical experts, and NGOs.
- Sought to understand **how nature-based solutions are reflected in state government.**



KEY FINDINGS

- **New Mexico already has the foundation to expand nature-based solutions.**
 - **Historic funding levels:** River Stewardship Program, Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs)
 - **Strong interest from agency personnel** to expand nature-based solutions
 - **Strong technical expertise** available throughout New Mexico
 - **Strong culture** of land and water stewardship



CHALLENGES

- No common language or terminology.
- Inconsistent requirements among siloed agency programs.
- Limited agency staffing capacity.
- Funding shortfalls despite high demand from communities.
- Reactive vs. proactive responses to natural disasters.
- Perception issues limit contracting opportunities.
- Shortages in N.M. workforce.



LEGISLATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue and expand funding, including for workforce development.
- Provide legal clarity in state statutes and programs.



EXECUTIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Update grant/contract requests & evaluation criteria.
- Integrate NBS into state planning documents.
- Update building codes and development rules.



NGO RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase outreach to state agencies, local governments & Tribal communities.
- Help address capacity gaps and partner on workforce development & job training.



CONCLUSION

- **New Mexico** has the foundation to expand nature-based solutions.
- We need **clarity in state statutes and programs**.
- We need **better government-wide coordination**.
- We need **better outreach to local governments, Tribes, etc.**

BENEFITS OF NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS



Public Safety Benefits

- Reduces wildfire, flood & drought risks.
- Reduces disaster response costs for local governments.



Economic Benefits

- Sustains agricultural, outdoor recreation & tourism economies.
- Helps grow rural and Tribal economies.
- Supports job creation and workforce development.



Environmental Benefits

- Conserves land for farmers and ranchers.
- Protects water resources.
- Protects wildlife.
- Better prepares us for extreme weather events.

