

New Mexico Water Policy & Infrastructure Task Force

Recommendations for

Groundwater Science, Policy, and Management

Water and Natural Resources Committee Meeting – August 8, 2023

Patrick McCarthy – Water Policy Officer, Thornburg Foundation



Task Force Members / Water Ambassadors (29)

Mike Hamman – Chair, Office of the State Engineer
Hannah Riseley-White – Interstate Stream Commission
Rebecca Roose – Environment Department
Marquita Russel – New Mexico Finance Authority
Elizabeth Anderson – Alb.-Bernalillo Co. Water Utility Authority
Aron Balok – Pecos Valley Artesian Conservancy District
Carleton Bowekaty – Zuni Pueblo
Jennifer Bradfute – Marathon Oil Company
Aaron Chavez – San Juan Water Commission
Dr. Ladona Clayton – Ogallala Land and Water Conservancy
Bill Conner – NM Rural Water Users Association
Dr. Nelia Dunbar – NM Technical Institute
Joy Esparsen – NM Association of Counties
A.J. Forte – NM Municipal League
Paula Garcia – NM Acequia Association
Norm Gaume – Middle Rio Grande Water Advocates
Kyle Harwood – Egolf Ferlic Martinez Harwood
Dr. Phil King – NM State University (ret.), private consultant
Todd Leahy – NM Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Dept.
Priscilla Lucero – Southwest NM Council of Governments
Patrick McCarthy – Thornburg Foundation
Debbie Romero – NM Dept. of Finance and Administration
Michael Sloane – NM Dept. of Game and Fish
Ryan Swazo-Hinds – Pueblo of Tesuque
Paul Tashjian – Audubon Southwest
Lynn Trujillo (Laurie Weahkee, proxy) – NM Indian Affairs Department
Daryl Vigil – Jicarilla Apache Nation
Ralph Vigil – NM Acequia Commission
Jeff Witte (Max Henkels, proxy) – NM Dept. of Agriculture

Legislative Advisors (9)

Rep. Gail Armstrong
Rep. Jack Chatfield
Rep. Susan Herrera
Rep. Tara Luján
Rep. Nathan Small
Sen. Ron Griggs
Sen. Elizabeth Stefanics
Sen. Peter Wirth
Sen. Pat Woods



Water Can't Wait

“Driven by drought and climate change, New Mexico’s water crisis has laid bare water policies and processes that users, practitioners, and lawmakers agree are not meeting the 21st century needs of New Mexicans under the stress of drought, aging infrastructure, and climate change.” *NM Water Task Force Charter*

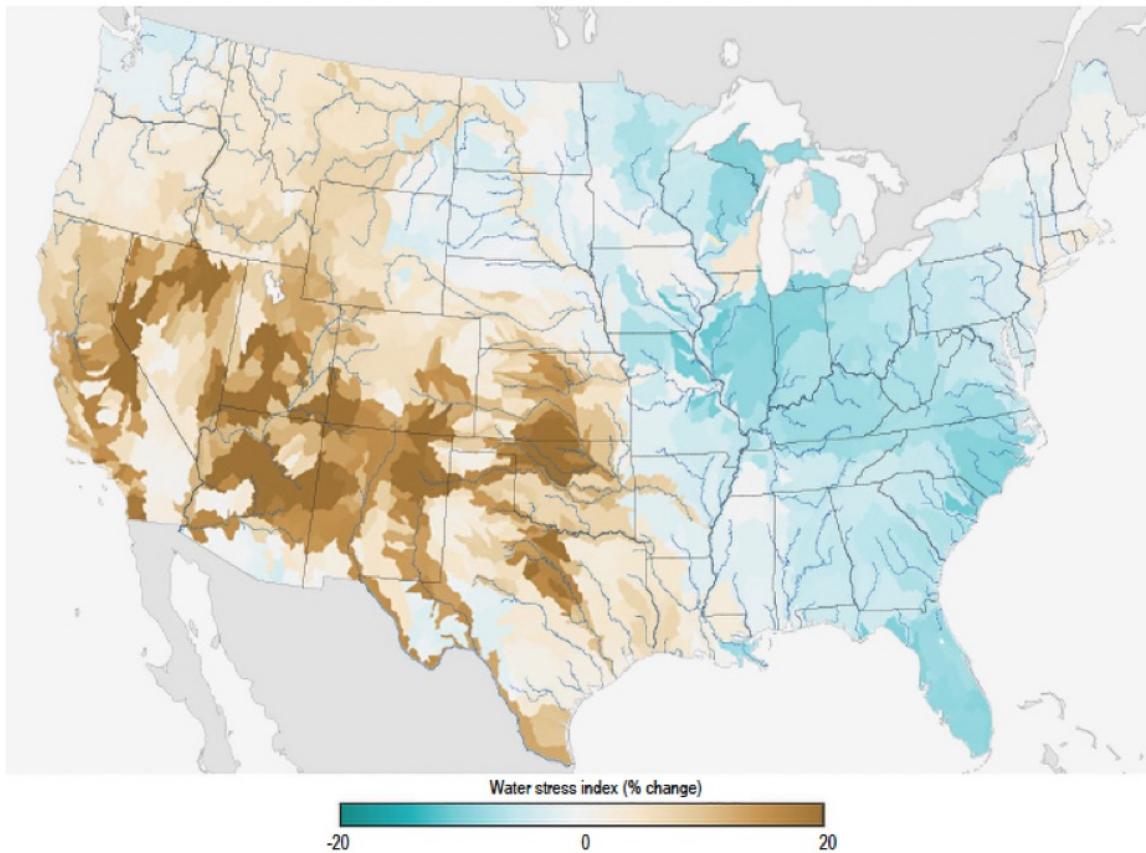


Figure 7.1. Projected change in water stress by mid-century (2040–2061) compared to historical (1900–1970) average (Lindsey, 2013).

New Mexico's Water Challenges

- Persistent “hot” drought, a.k.a. aridification
 - Catastrophic wildfires resulting in watershed & supply disruption
 - Declining aquifers due to compensation for reduced surface water supplies
 - Aging water and wastewater infrastructure, hitting rural systems hardest
 - Extreme weather (intense monsoon rainfall, etc.)
 - Local and state capacity limitations – in both private and public sectors
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- *Our policies and practices were designed for a different climate, economy, and sociopolitical system – to promote ‘beneficial use’ of water for development and growth of a new U.S. state with a population of 335,000.*

NM Water Task Force Recommendations: Groundwater Data & Science

2.8 – Advance scientific understanding and monitoring to support protection of the quantity and quality of groundwater resources.

Fund and develop an essential, modern, and dedicated monitoring network for groundwater to equip New Mexico to address the lack of existing coverage and risks of climate impacts in water resources planning and management.

Implementation: OSE, ISC, NMBGMR, NMED, EMNRD

NM Water Task Force Recommendations: Groundwater Data & Science

3.2 – Expand knowledge and improve management of groundwater resources, which are in near-universal decline, and which New Mexico relies on more than any other U.S. state.

- Fully fund the NM Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources **Aquifer Mapping Program**.
- Develop an **integrated and comprehensive statewide groundwater monitoring program**. This initiative will require partnerships among state agencies, Tribes, Pueblos and Nations, the NMBGMR AMP, the U.S. Geological Survey, and the New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute (NMWRRRI), and others.
- Provide **adequate funding to NMED's groundwater program** to improve monitoring, permitting, compliance, enforcement, and abatement activities and improve the state's response to emerging contaminant issues such as PFAS plumes.

NM Water Task Force Recommendations: Proactive Groundwater Policy & Management*

Evaluate and identify needed modifications to groundwater law, regulations and administration that would enable New Mexico to increase the resilience of the state's groundwater supplies and groundwater-dependent users.

Authorize and fund increased local capacity for groundwater management including studies to better understand shared resources and the ability to establish governance mechanisms, such as local groundwater management districts.

- Amend the NM water code (Section 73-1-1 NMSA 1978) to allow for all declared groundwater basins (not just only artesian basins) to form **locally managed conservancy districts**.
- Create a **stand-alone fund**, or identify other funds, to support local communities in implementing enhanced groundwater management of shared resources

Implementation: OSE, NMBGMR, NMED

Water Ambassador Request for 2023-2024



Ongoing legislative support to modernize NM water policy, infrastructure, and programs, including **authorization and funding** for:

- A. Building **state & local capacity** for water projects & operations
- B. Improving **water infrastructure** project funding
- C. Leveraging **federal funds** (state matching)
- D. Assessing and improving **groundwater policy and management**
- E. Closing the funding gap for **water infrastructure emergencies**

Water Ambassador Priorities for 2023-2025

2023

1 – Implement Solutions from the 2023 Session

- A. Water Security Planning Act (SB 337)
- B. Regional Water System Resiliency (SB 1)
- C. Legacy Permanent Fund (SB 9)
- D. Strategic Water Reserve & River Stewardship expansion
- E. Surface water permitting



2024

2 – Enact Outstanding Recommendations

- A. Build state & local capacity for water projects & operations
- B. Improve water infrastructure project funding
- C. Leverage federal funds (state & local matching)
- D. Assess and improve groundwater policy and management
- E. Close the funding gap for water infrastructure emergencies

2024-2025

3 – Refine and Act on Additional Priorities

- A. Strengthen water rights enforcement
- B. Grow the water workforce
- C. Expand shortage-sharing agreements
- D. Invest in green and natural infrastructure