

Protecting Our Water



Linda Guenley
Valencia Water Watchers
August, 2025

Valencia Water Watchers

We advocate for clean, safe water for Valencia County residents, and for sustainable, equitable access to water for generations to come.

We promote awareness and educate our community about water issues.

We have been organizing around local water concerns since Jan. 2020.





Rio Grande, Albuquerque, July 2025

New Mexico is facing A Long Term WATER CRISIS

- **The Rio Grande ran dry AGAIN in Belen & Albuquerque**
- **There is NO MORE irrigation water for 2025 (per MRGCD)**
- **As surface water runs dry, farmers are pumping groundwater to survive.**
- **Extremely low snowpack = very little spring runoff.**
- **Crucial ecosystems are drying – birds, fish, and beavers are dying.**

Shortfall:

River water supply is currently 50% less than it should be.

Record Lows:

San Juan–Chama Project is 69% down from a full supply.



Aquifer Depletion

- **Aquifer Levels Are Declining**
 - Being drained faster than they can recharge
 - Unsustainable surface water & groundwater use
 - Groundwater depletion lowers the water table
 - Corporations that pump our water for profit further deplete groundwater.
- **Rio Grande Compact (CO, NM, TX, & Mexico)**
 - We have legal obligations to deliver water downstream
 - We could face a Rio Grande Compact violation as early as 2026 (Extremely costly litigation!)

Residents said NO to Niagara.

Again and Again.



HUNDREDS of people spoke out



3 Village Councilors said YES.

How Much Water is 500 Acre Feet of Water? 163,000,000 gallons

Agriculture:

1,788 Tons of Green Chili

500 Tons of Hay



Showers:

8 million showers

→ 1 shower/day for 21,918 years

→ 400 showers/year for every Los Lunas resident

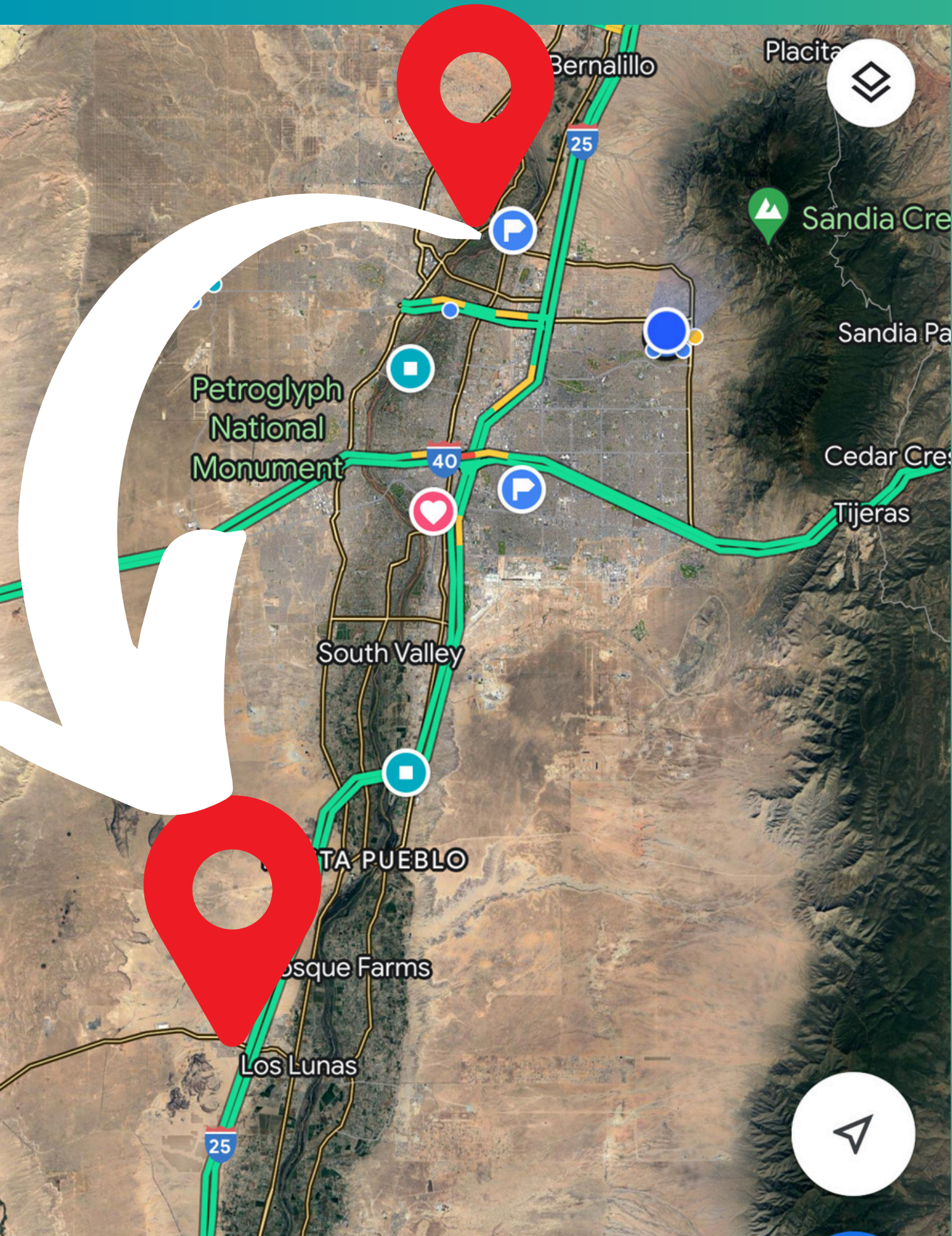


Household Needs:
Water for 6,000 people

... that's 1,500
4 person homes



Paper Water in Albuquerque = Real Depletion in Los Lunas



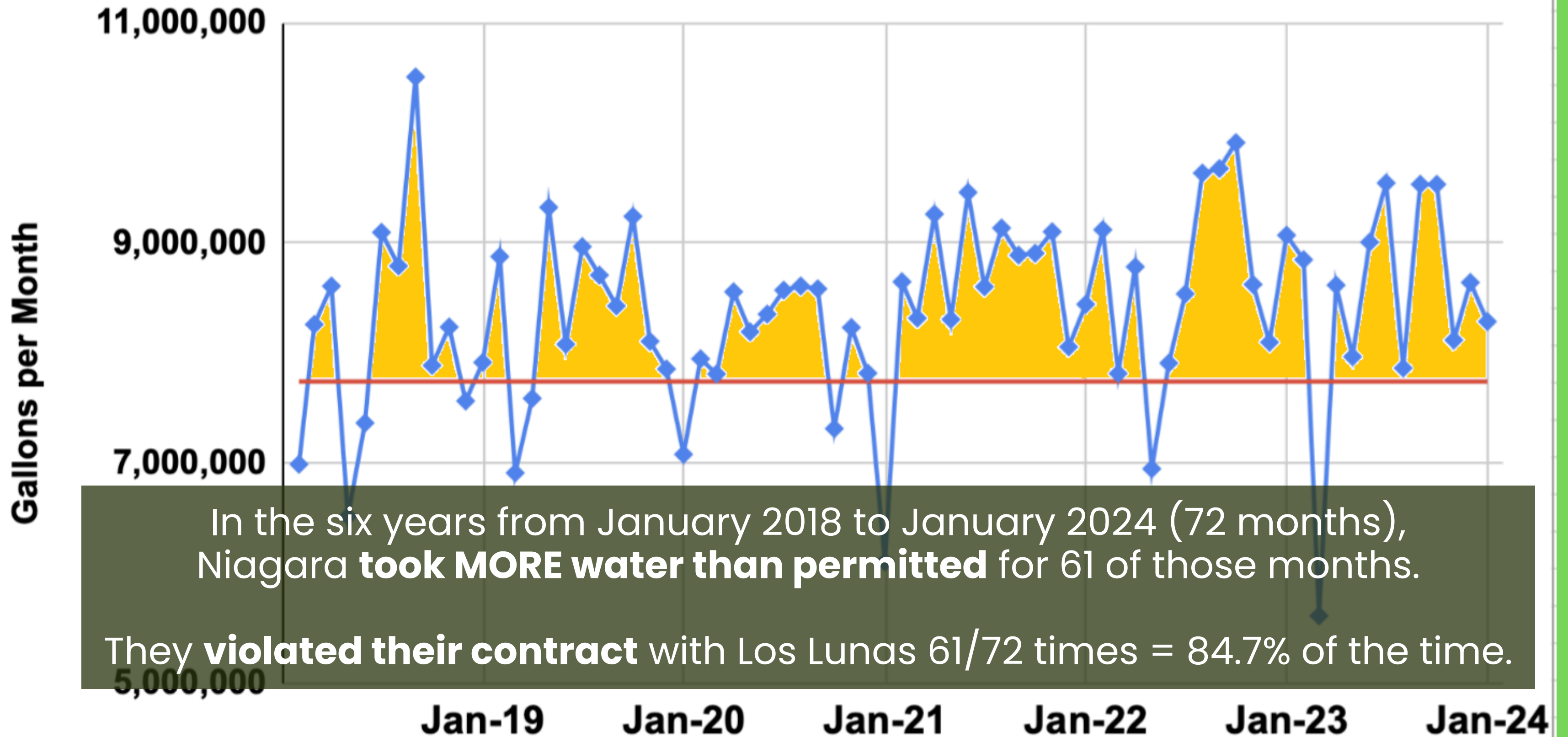
Niagara LEASES 'paper water' from PNM in ABQ

But... they PUMP wet water from wells in Los Lunas

And... Niagara *consistently* takes more water than permitted.

Niagara Monthly Pumping

◆ Actual Use — Allowable Use



Our Asks for Legislators

Modernize & Fund

Office of the State Engineer &
Interstate Stream Commission

Form & Fund Regional Water Councils

(including MANY community stakeholders)
to make DATA-DRIVEN decisions about water use.

Fully Fund Aquifer Mapping & Water Data Initiative

Much work remains unfunded:

The 2025 Budget recommended \$29 million

But funding was cut to \$7.5 million



Invest in Long Term Water Planning & Management

Modernize & Fund Office of the State Engineer & Interstate Stream Commission

Legislators need to **invest** in:

- Staffing
- Technical Systems
- Infrastructure (Aging dams, canals, pipelines are deteriorating. Leads to water loss & increased vulnerability to drought & floods.)



2025 lawmakers **DID NOT PASS** legislation to authorize the State Engineer to enforce against illegal water use. **WHY?**

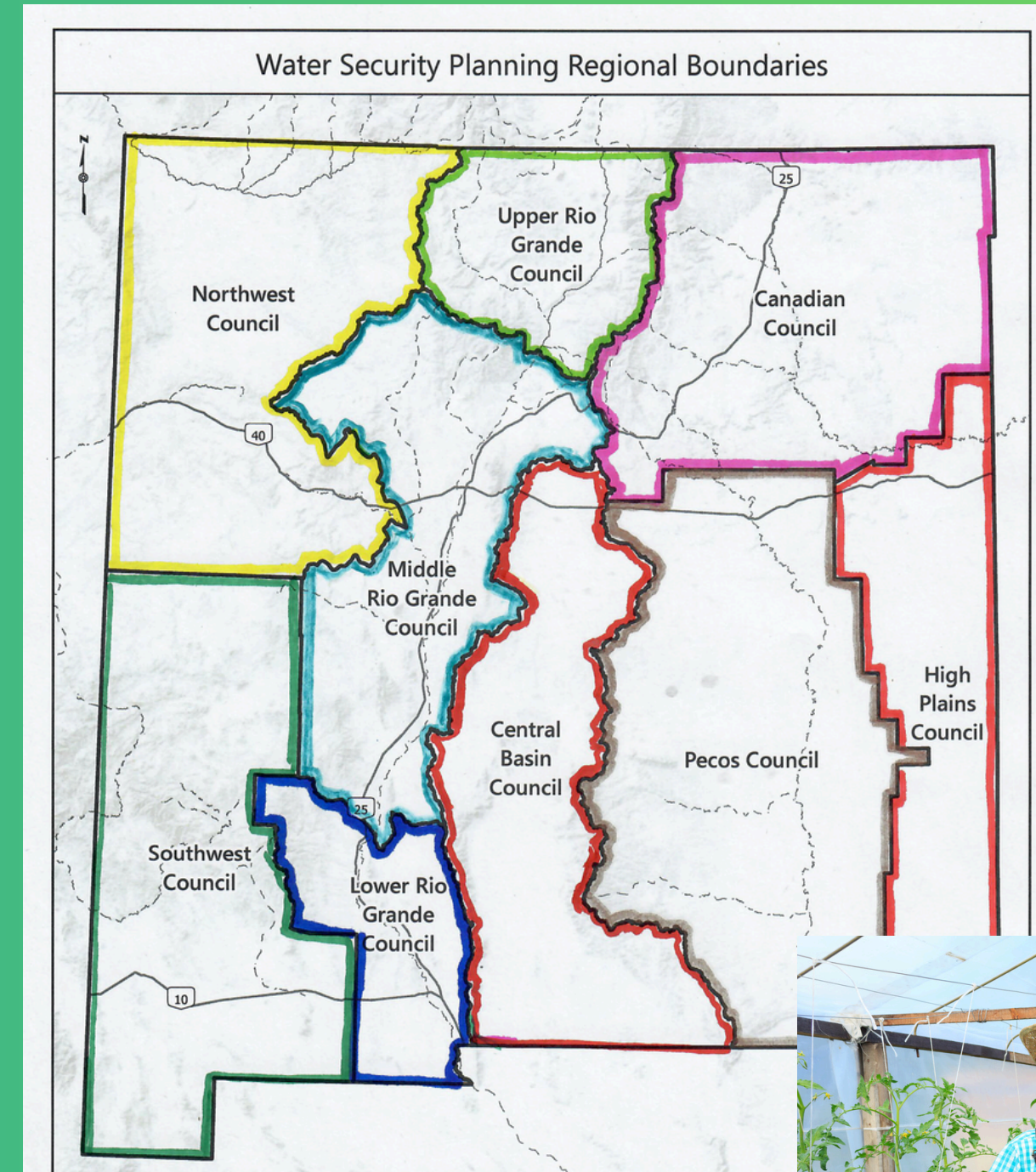
2025 legislature **REJECTED** the Governor's proposed \$500,000 increase for State Engineer compact compliance staff. **WHY?**

Fund Implementation of Regional Water Councils

- Promote long-term sustainability
- Balance supply and demand
- Balance competing interests
- Build community water resilience

Each **Regional Water Council** must include a majority of stakeholders from communities in that region.

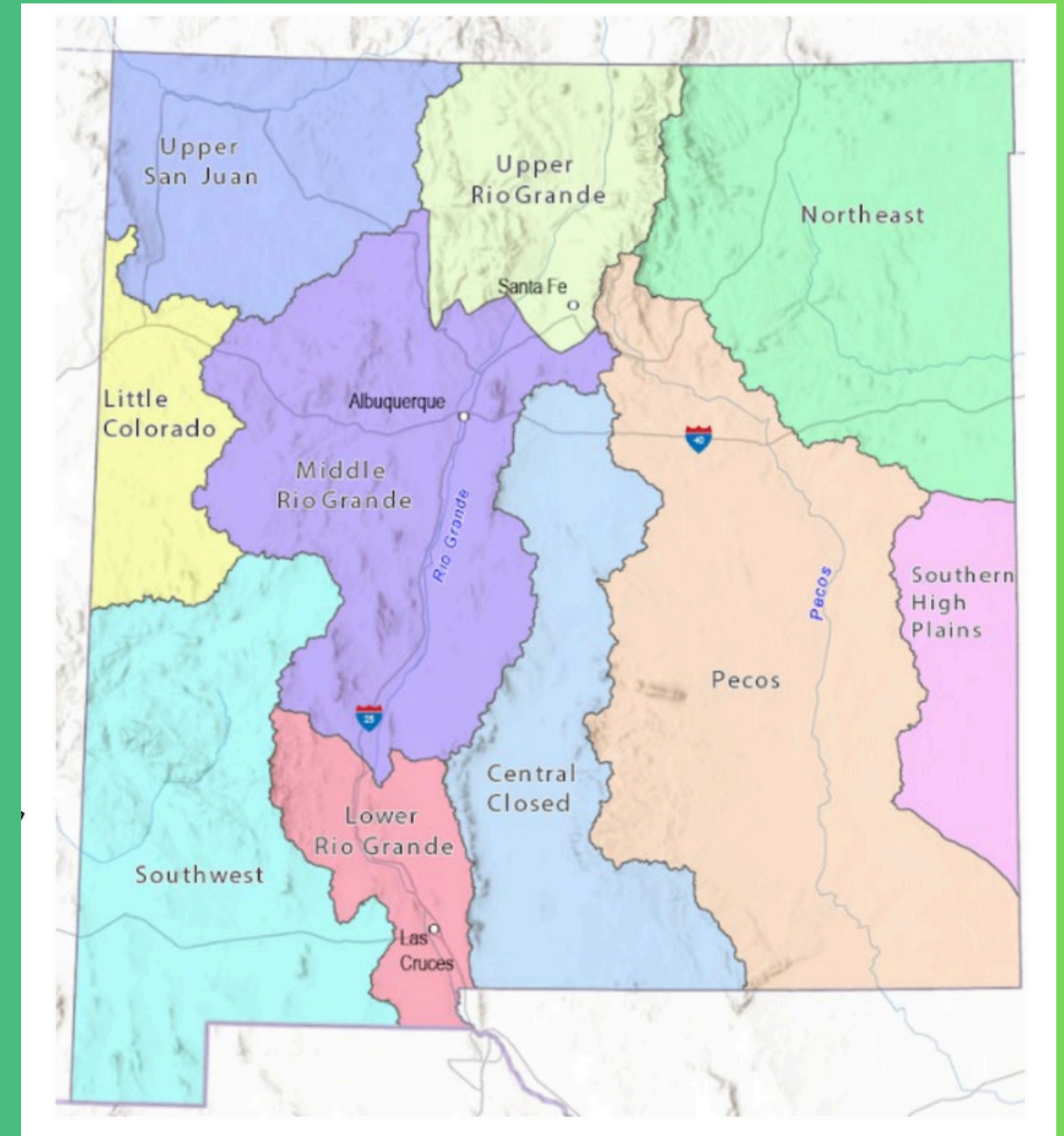
Data-driven decisions need to be made **by and for the people.**



The Water Security Act of 2023 must be implemented as intended.

Fund Aquifer Mapping & Water Data Initiative

- Conduct regional short & long-term **hydrogeology studies**
- **Measure:** Available groundwater & Aquifer recharge rate
- Monitoring 600 wells is **insufficient**
 - Need to measure **more frequently**
 - Need to monitor **more wells** to fill gaps
- Map water **quantity & quality** (3D Maps)
- Make **data** accessible & usable, as outlined in **2019 Water Data Act**



Data Driven Decisions for our Future

Questions and Discussion



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