

New Mexico Office of the State Engineer/ Interstate Stream Commission



Strategic Water Reserve – 20 Years

Hannah Riseley-White, NMISC Director

Water and Natural Resources Committee

November 17, 2025

Strategic Water Reserve – Then & Now



2005 Beginnings

In response to controversies related to interstate litigation, endangered species, and drought, a broad coalition wins legislation to create the Strategic Water Reserve.

Current Holdings & Accomplishments

San Juan River

- Up to 20,000 acre-feet per year leased from the Jicarilla Apache Nation. Water is released from Navajo Dam to support endangered species and interstate water management decisions.

Rio Grande

- 1,085 acre-feet per year leased in the Middle Rio Grande supports endangered species and compact deliveries.
- 72 acre-feet per year purchased in the Lower Rio Grande reduces groundwater depletions.

Pecos River

- 1,649 acre-feet per year purchased
- 2,326 acre-feet per year leased
- Groundwater pumped to the river through the Vaughan Conservation Pipeline supports endangered species and compact deliveries.

Canadian River

- Up to 5 cubic feet per second instream flow is permitted below Ute Dam to support endangered species.

2025 Statutory Changes



Broader Purposes, Dedicated Fund

The Interstate Stream Commission may acquire water or water rights by purchase, lease, or donation to assist the state in:

1. Complying with interstate stream compacts or court decrees;
2. Water management efforts for the benefit of threatened or endangered species, or in programs intended to avoid additional listings; or
3. **New:** Water management or conservation efforts designed to support *aquifer recharge or reduce ground water depletion, in order to promote stream flow or other environmental benefits*.

New: When establishing priorities, the ISC shall consider *supplementary benefits*, such as supporting traditional and cultural practices, habitat improvement or recreational opportunities.

New: Creation of the *Strategic Water Reserve Fund*: non-reverting except balances over \$15 million.

Strategic Water Reserve Fund



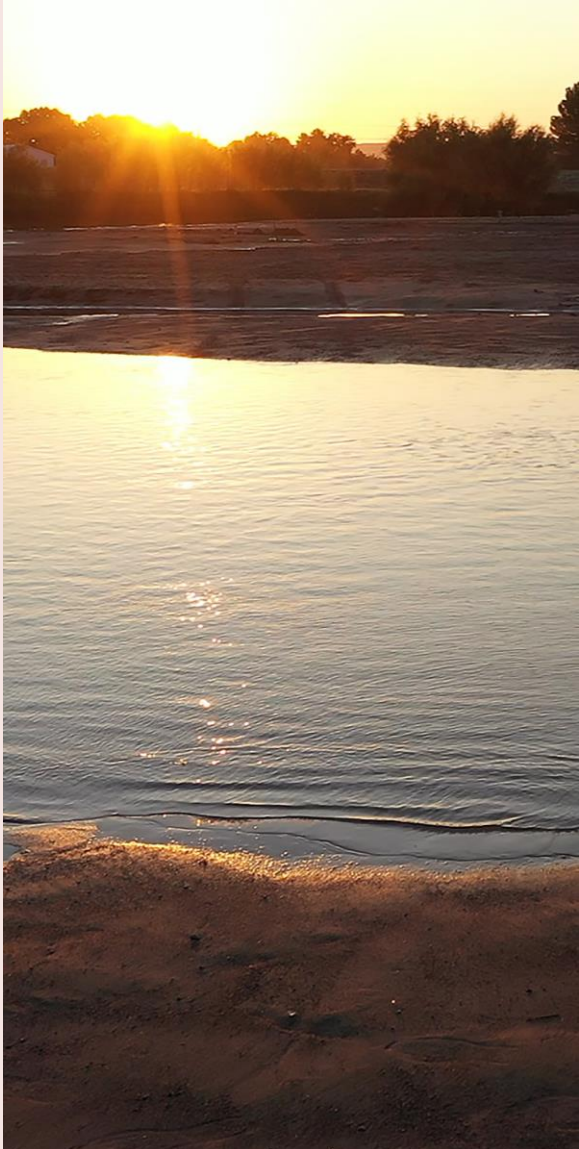
- Non-reverting Strategic Reserve Fund created in 2025
 - Will allow time to seek and complete transactions
 - Addresses the come-and-go history of funding
 - No dollars yet appropriated to the fund
- Past appropriations through 2022 expended, pulled back, or reverted
- 2023/2024 appropriations committed for existing leases and purchases under negotiation



Year	Appropriated	Pulled Back
2005	\$2,800,000	
2006	\$2,000,000	
2009		\$1,400,000
2010		\$600,000
2014	\$2,000,000	
2017		\$1,758,000
2020	\$750,535	
2022	\$500,000	
2023	\$7,500,000	
2024	\$1,000,000	



Looking Forward



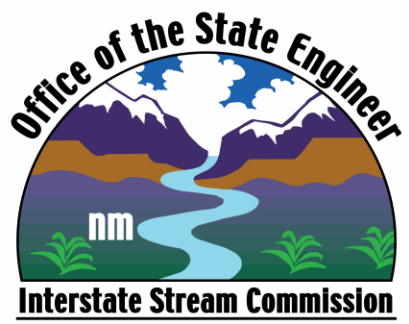
- Continued flexibility to meet changing climate and diverse basin needs
- Partnerships with communities
- Water for broader array of uses
- Sufficient and reliable funding from diverse sources is critical

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2026 Legislative Session Priorities

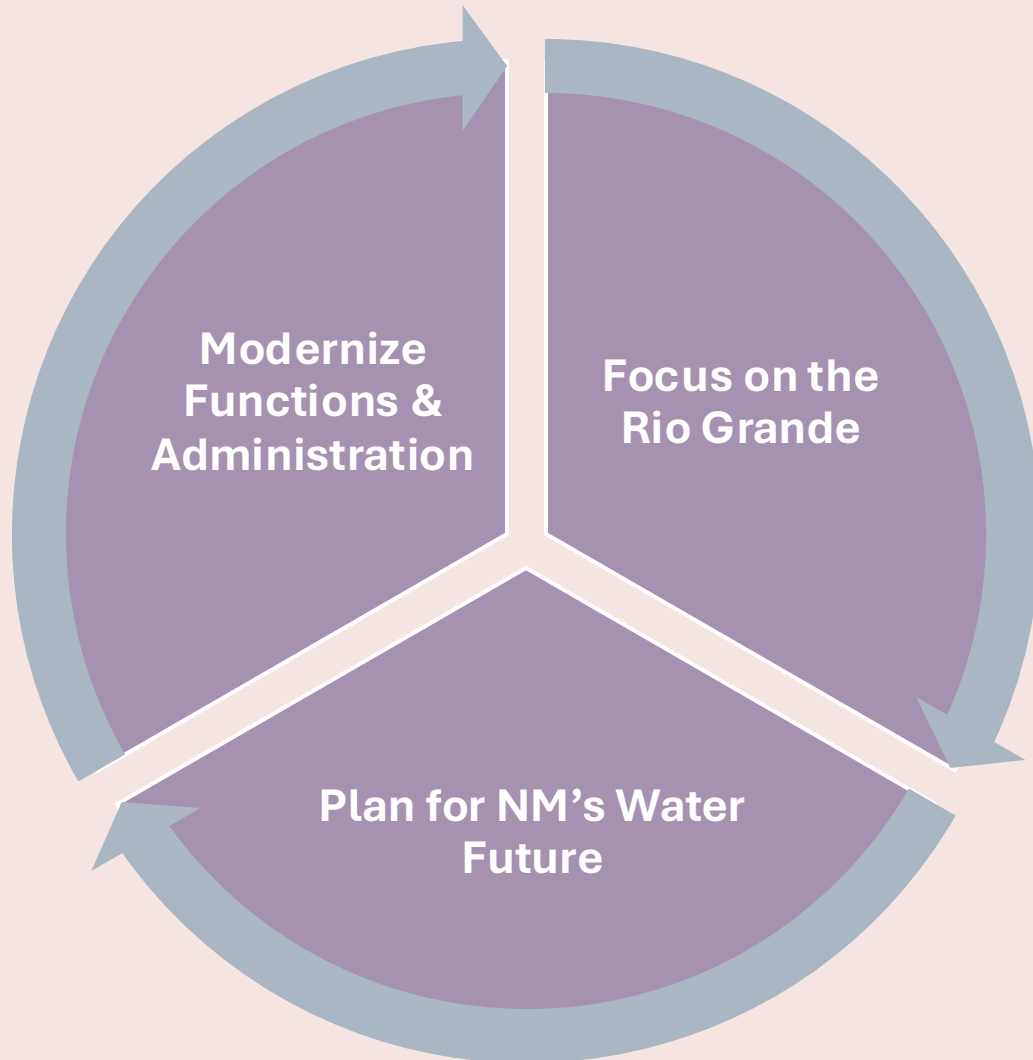
Elizabeth Anderson, P.E., State Engineer

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OSE/ISC 2026 Session Funding Priorities



Modernize the Agency

- Retain and recruit highly qualified staff
- Catch up to 21st century technologies, including expanded measurement and metering
- Emphasis on stronger enforcement capabilities

Focus on the Rio Grande

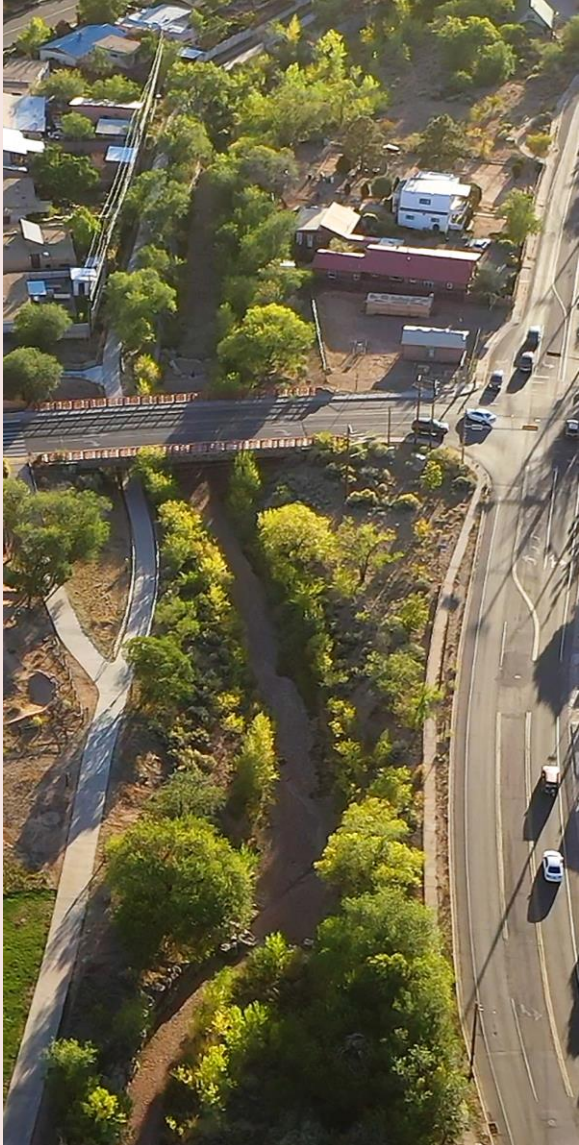
- Invest in the Lower Rio Grande through implementation of the proposed TX v NM U.S. Supreme Court Settlement
- Keep water flowing to Elephant Butte Reservoir through more focused work in the Middle Rio Grande

Plan for New Mexico's water future

- Advance and track implementation of the 50-Year Water Action Plan
- Re-envision regional water planning through continued implementation of the 2023 Water Security Planning Act
- Prioritize progress on Indian Water Rights Settlements



Modernize the Agency



Modernize Data Management Tools

- Replace antiquated databases through IT C2 funding requests
- Continue to advance and support Water Data Act initiatives

Enhance Water Rights Enforcement Capabilities

- Additional staffing / tools needed for administration and enforcement

Ensure Trust Fund Sustainability

- One-time infusion to Irrigation Works Construction Fund Trust will support fund solvency
- *Agency trust fund dependence prevents funds from supporting their originally intended purposes, including acequia infrastructure*

Focus on the Rio Grande



Implement Proposed TX v NM USSC Settlement

- Support aquifer sustainability through depletions reductions
- Invest in development of additional supplies including stormwater, brackish water, water importation and water reuse
- Convene stakeholders to develop long-term plans that ensure local communities and economies can continue to thrive

Invest in Middle Rio Grande Solutions

- Support New Mexico's continued Compact compliance through additional staff capacity for management and administration
- Conduct and coordinate river channel conveyance projects that improve deliveries to Elephant Butte Reservoir
- Engage major water users, tribes and other stakeholders in water conservation efforts and development of long-term solutions



Plan for Our Water Future



Implement the 50-Year Water Action Plan and Water Security Planning Act

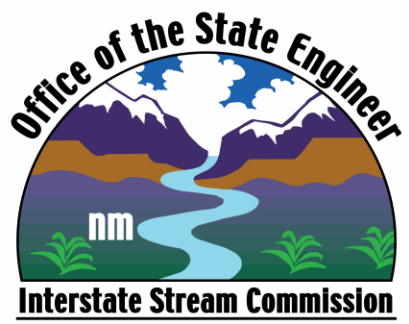
- Ensure communities across NM can prepare and respond to climate change impacts to water resources
- Advance water education initiatives with the general public, K-12 and invest in water workforce development
- Improve online engagement, information and data access tools

Resolve Long-Standing Indian Water Rights Claims

- Prioritize further settlement negotiations
- Ensure implementation through fund infusion and increased staff capacity, including water masters

Invest in the Strategic Water Reserve

- Protect streamflow for compact and species purposes



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Thank you