PRESENTATION TO THE NEW MEXICO
WATER AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
10/26/2026

Community Watershed Action Program

Start in Rincon, NM.
Plan across the region.
Build a statewide program.

Jennifer Kleitz
District Manager, Doña Ana SWCD;
Secretary, South Central NM
Stormwater Management Coalition



Rincon NM Sept. 29, 2026 flood, 2.8” in 24 hours, 25-year event

Images credit: WXChasing



Destructive floods from increasingly intense storms

Rincon flood, Sept. 29, 2026 *Image credit: WXChasing*



Rincon upland watershed condition issues



EBID work at Rincon Oct. 6, 2026



This and above images are both downstream of compromised infrastructure. *Images credit: Alamosa Land Institute (ALI)*

Damaging floods start upstream

We of course need to repair structures, but we have to do it in conjunction with restoration in the upper watershed. If we don't do watershed restoration, the sediment and erosive flows are going to keep coming down.

Climate challenges: more intense downpours

Hotter temperatures means more moisture in the atmosphere, more intense storms, and upland watersheds are getting dryer

Vegetation needs more water;
Less vegetation means less infiltration, resulting in higher energy flows

~7% more moisture capacity
for every 1°C (1.8°F) of warming



Rincon upland watershed condition issue, large area disconnected from overland flow from a road

Sources: IPCC AR6 (2021); Kalashnikov et al. (2026), Weather and Climate Extremes 53, 100915. Photo credit ALI.

Sustained, comprehensive support for communities

We urgently need to move beyond the one-off funding approach.

RESTORATION AND RECOVERY CREWS

Restore watersheds to slow and spread runoff
Repair damage and restore function after each major storm event

COMMUNITY LIAISONS

Connect agencies with local knowledge
Coordinate assessments and joint training

THE NEXT GENERATION

Train crews alongside youth and local advocates. Build local monitoring and practical skills



Low impact, process-based restoration

Restoration installed in a small subbasin of Rincon Watershed.



Restore existing infrastructure, prevent breaches

Breached earthen berm in upper Rincon watershed.

Images credit: ALI

Proposed Community Watershed Action Program, based on the final flyer.

We've done a restoration pilot in the Rincon Arroyo Watershed –

MEASURED RUNOFF HEIGHT (STAGE)

For small and medium post-restoration events that paired well with pre-restoration events (very similar amount of rain, intensity, and rain in previous week), the peak flow height was reduced between 58% and 99%





Preliminary results

Pre-Restoration Event	Post-Restoration Event	Pre Rain (in)	Post Rain (in)	Pre Peak Rate (in/hr)	Post Peak Rate (in/hr)	Pre Duration (hr)	Post Duration (hr)	Pre Antec. 7d (in)	Post Antec. 7d (in)	Pre Peak WL (ft)	Post Peak WL (ft)	Reduction (%)
Jul 4, 2022	Aug 25, 2023	0.705	0.748	0.705	0.748	1.0	1.0	0.309	0.471	0.319	0.135	58%
Aug 10, 2022	Aug 17-18, 2025	0.588	0.495	0.244	0.245	5.0	4.0	0.263	0.219	1.198	0.009	99%
Oct 16-17, 2022	Aug 14-15, 2023	0.460	0.308	0.173	0.214	9.0	2.0	0.191	0.141	0.381	0.070	82%

New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute Project NMED Watershed Implementation 319, Connie Maxwell, MCRP, PhD, lead, article in preparation with Emaz Arshad and J. Phillip King

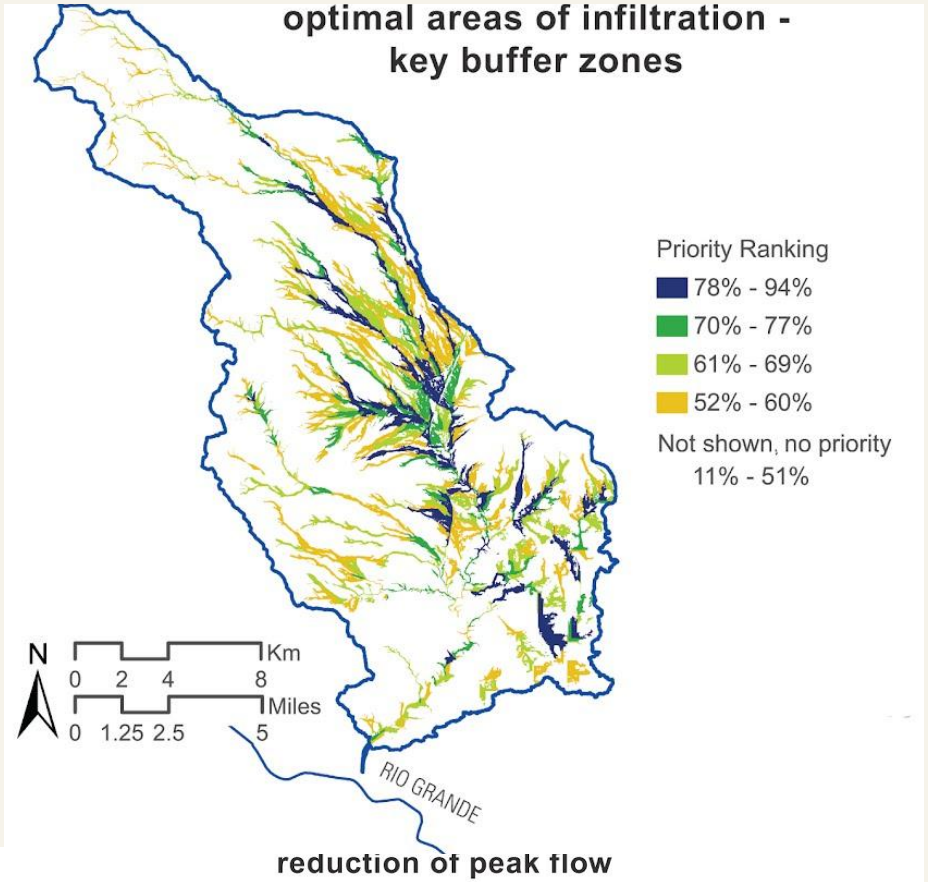
We've done the research and much of the planning –

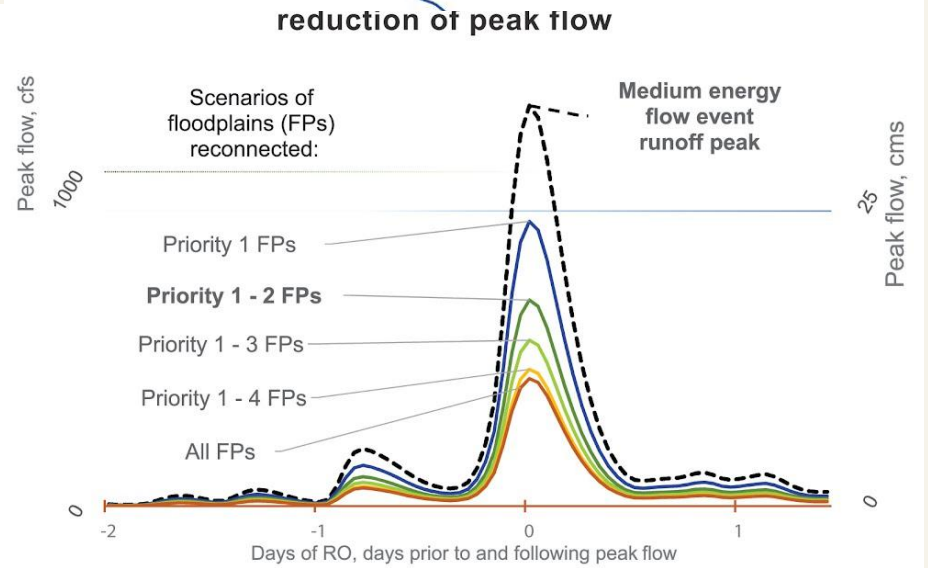
Peer-reviewed hydrologic modeling shows the value of targeted restoration

9% restoration =

49% lower peak flow

For medium energy storm event, but every reduction counts, if we can reduce for example 10% of a high flow, that results in substantially less erosion.





Source: Maxwell et al. (2021), Figure 4a. Restoration-priority map cropped from manuscript; original legend and scale retained.

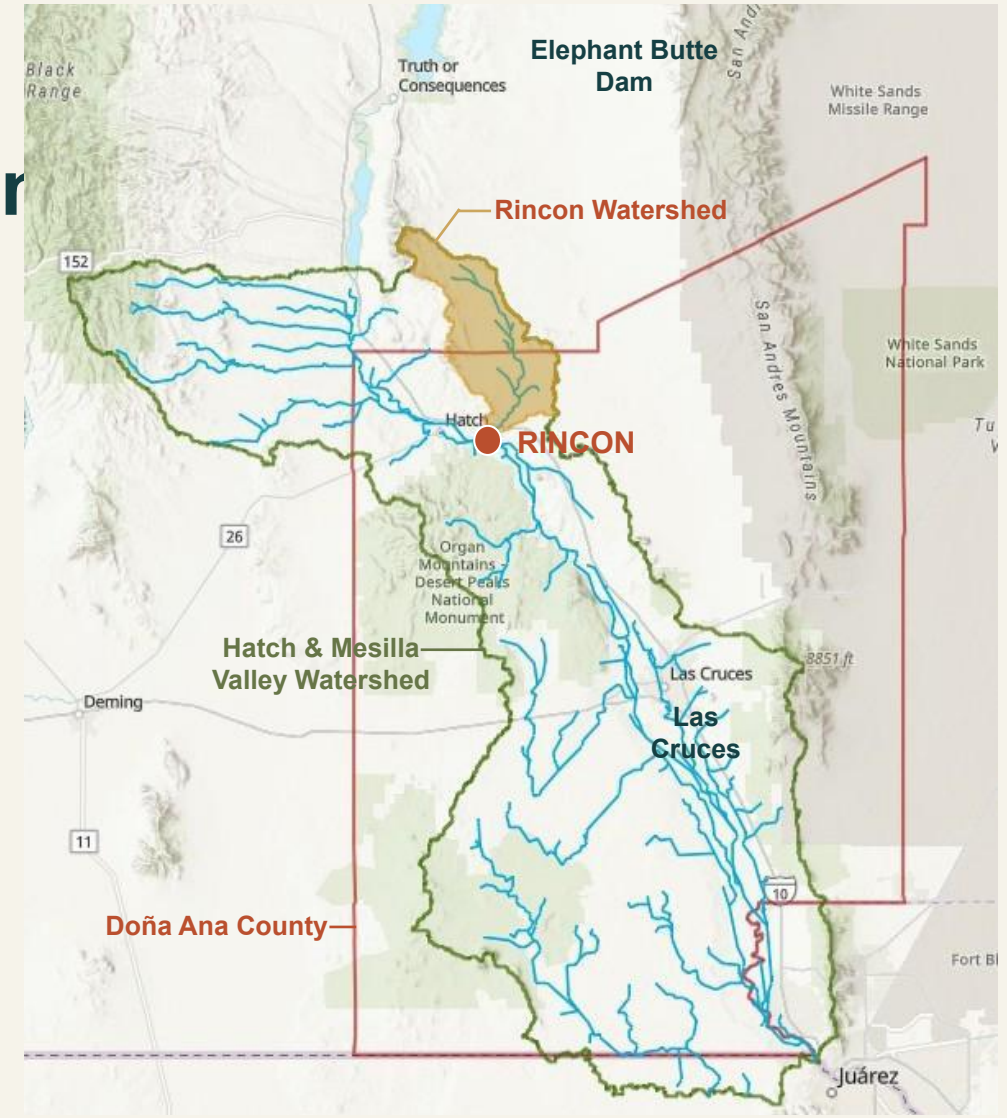
DASWCD's NMED 319 planning project builds the planning foundation

A watershed-based plan for stormwater, water quality, and restoration

The Rincon project and this regional program are being developing through the 319 project, as well as previously completed planning efforts

Why Rincon? – it is the highest regional priority

The 83,000-acre (130 sq. mi.) Rincon Arroyo watershed is estimated to contribute the most the sediment among tributary watersheds along the Rio Grande reach from Elephant Butte Reservoir to Texas (Figure 1) [1]. It also requires the most frequent and significant recovery efforts by regional agencies.



Hatch and Mesilla Valley Watershed Region

Source: DASWCD WBP Scope of Work, stormwater management update for the El Paso Las Cruces Watershed.

Federal investment is already supporting this approach:

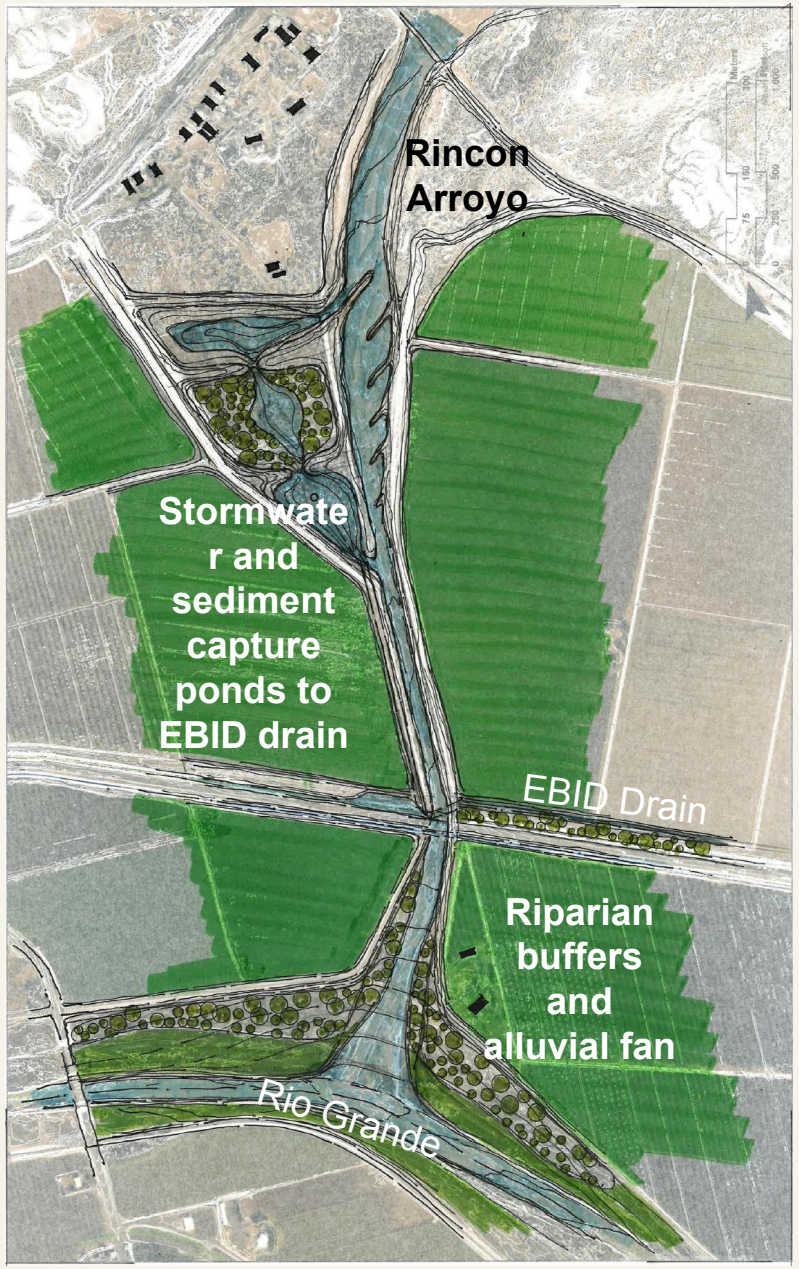
Managing stormwater for flood control, water quality, recharging aquifers, and a healthy river and watersheds

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Award · 2026 Drought Resiliency Effort Initiative

EBID's downstream stormwater and habitat project at RINCON

$4.37M

State investment adds the comprehensive upstream component



Source: NFWF Rio Grande Project DRE Initiative, 2026 grant slate, p. 3. Rincon sketch supplied by team.

COMMUNITY WATERSHED ACTION PROGRAM

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Award · 2026 Drought Resiliency Effort Initiative

WEST MESA

$6.37M

DASWCD: Upper-watershed restoration paired with stormwater capture

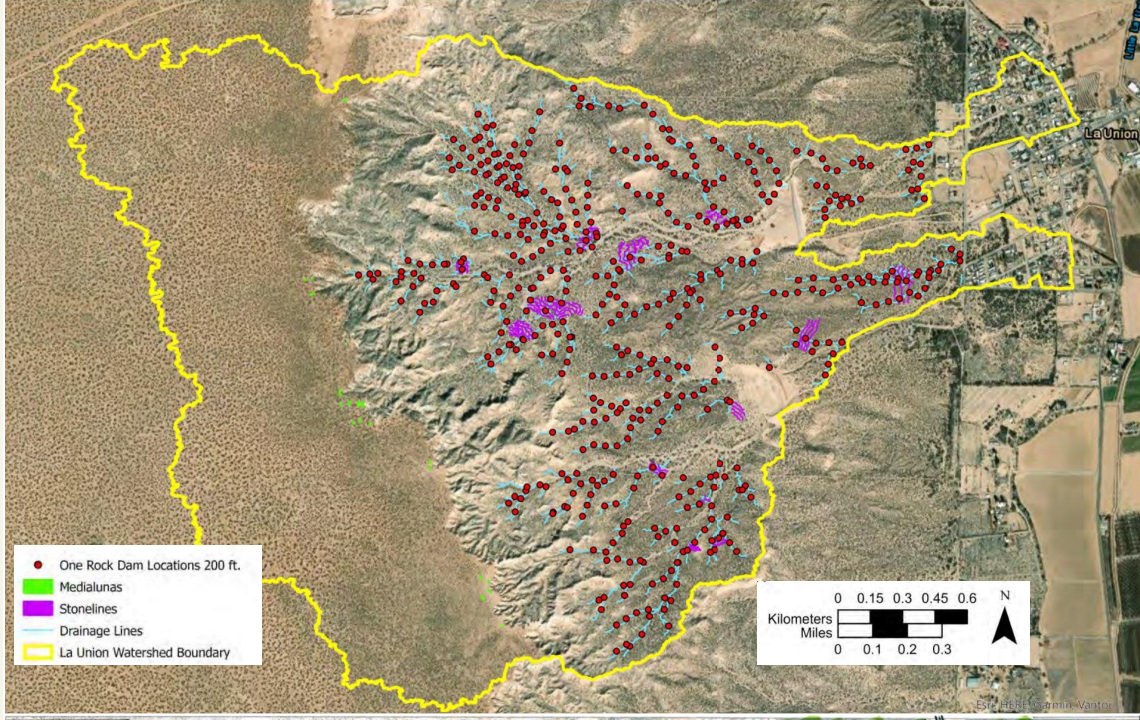
LA UNION

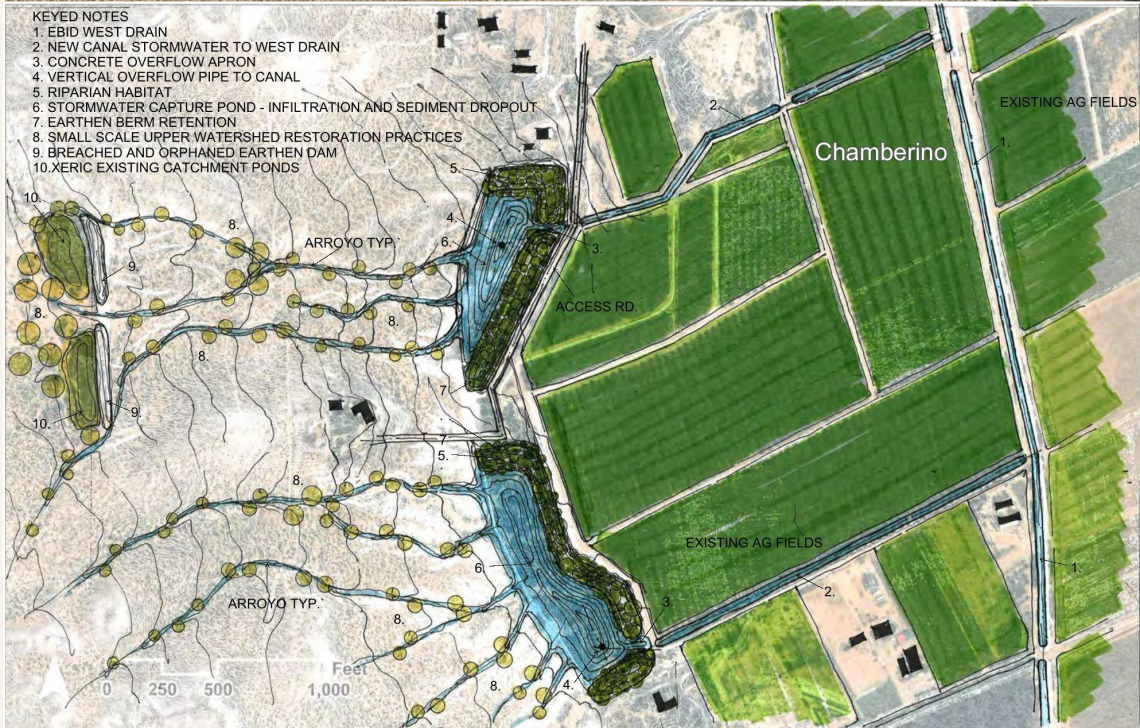
La Union Upper Watershed Practices: 500+ one-rock dams, stone lines and media lunas placed across the treated watershed to slow monsoon flows before they reach town.

Note that the Chamberino upper watershed restoration design is similar.

CHAMBERINO

Restoring the upper watershed, capturing floodwater, recharging the aquifer, creating riparian habitat





Source: NFWF Rio Grande Project DRE Initiative, 2026 grant slate, p. 3. Rincon sketch supplied by team.

We propose establishing restoration and recovery crews within county flood commissions and/or SWCDs.



RESTORATION: START IN RINCON

Restoration is needed at upper watersheds.

RECOVERY AFTER STORMS

Repair damaged infrastructure
Clear sediment and debris
Restore drainage and flood-control function

Reliable funding keeps trained people working between disasters.

Proposed host agencies: county flood commissions and/or SWCDs. Rincon restoration image: ALI.

BUILD REGIONAL CAPACITY AND COORDINATION

Regional watersheds, such as the Hatch and Mesilla Valley (often HUC8 or smaller scales), need community-led coordinated support and resources. We will develop this program for inclusion in the ISC Regional Water Plan for our region.

This program proposes community liaisons working with local groups that:

- Conduct planning to systematically restore watersheds throughout the region
- Increase agency coordination
- Support cross-agency emergency response updates and training
- Seek funding to continue sustaining the restoration and recovery crews long term

Local knowledge connected with technical expertise

Potential partners: Watershed Watch, YCC, 4-H, and others

Proposed staffing and training partnerships. Emergency response remains with responsible authorities.

STATE INVESTMENT TO DEMONSTRATE A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM

We are actively seeking funding for this program.

Start in Rincon. Planning regionally. Build statewide.

$3 MILLION Year 1: Rincon implementation, regional planning, coordination, and crew development

$20 MILLION Five-year program

Support a collaborative process to demonstrate building a lasting statewide system of community support.

Thank you!

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Secretary, South Central NM Stormwater Management Coalition
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Sources and acknowledgments

- Prepared by Connie Maxwell, MCRP, PhD; Planner, Alamosa Land Institute, for the DASWCD 319 Planning project; Vice-President, Stormwater Coalition. Prepared for joint partner review and presentation by Jennifer Kleitz, District Manager, Doña Ana SWCD; Secretary, Stormwater Coalition.
- EBID images from youtube channel: https://www.youtube.com/@EBIDGISVideos
- Atmospheric moisture capacity: IPCC AR6 WGI (2021), Chapter 11 and Technical Summary
- Rincon science: Maxwell et al. (2021), Journal of Environmental Management 278, 111486, doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2020.111486
- Sediment estimate: Tetra Tech et al. (2015), Rio Grande Canalization Project study
- Federal projects: NFWF, Rio Grande Project DRE Initiative, 2026 fact sheet and grant slate, p. 3, nfwf.org/sites/default/files/2026-09/NFWF-LRG-20260909-FS-GS.pdf

Program Lead: South Central NM Stormwater Management Coalition

The Stormwater Coalition has convened a broad coalition of stakeholders - producers and multiple layers of government and agencies, including BLM, NRCS, US IBWC, among others.



Doña Ana & Caballo Soil and Water Conservation Districts

