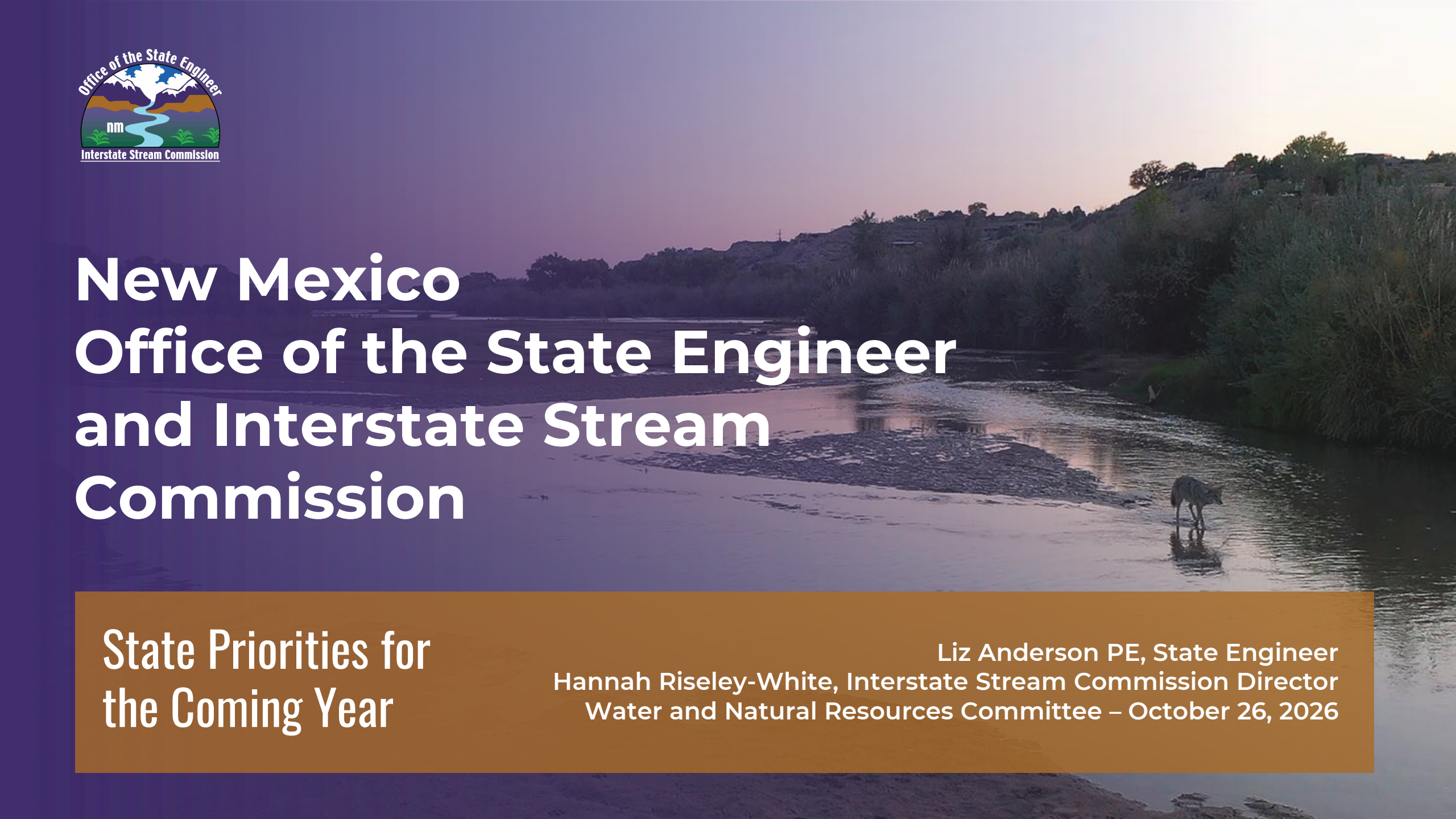
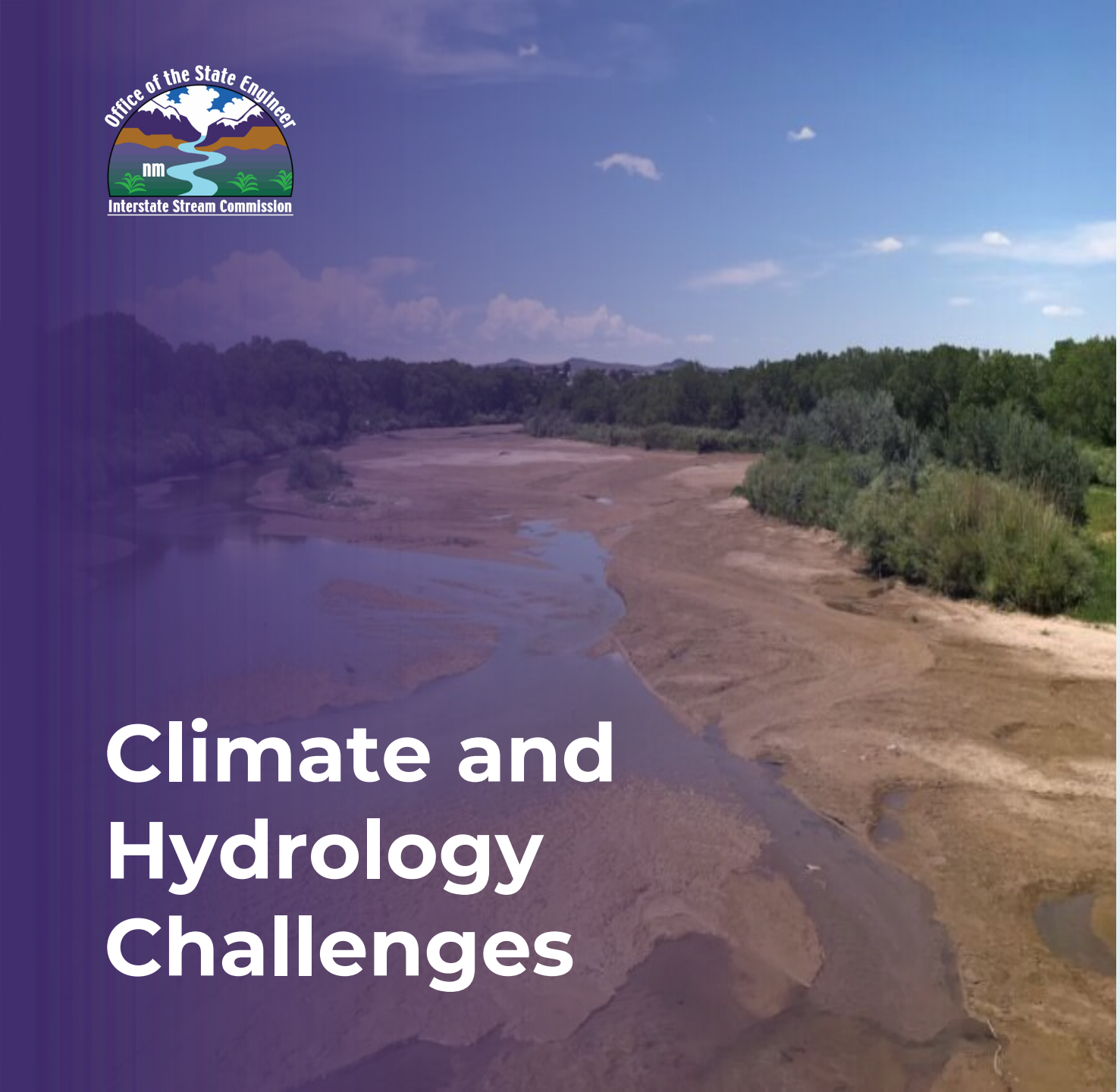


New Mexico Office of the State Engineer and Interstate Stream Commission

State Priorities for the Coming Year

Liz Anderson PE, State Engineer
Hannah Riseley-White, Interstate Stream Commission Director
Water and Natural Resources Committee – October 26, 2026



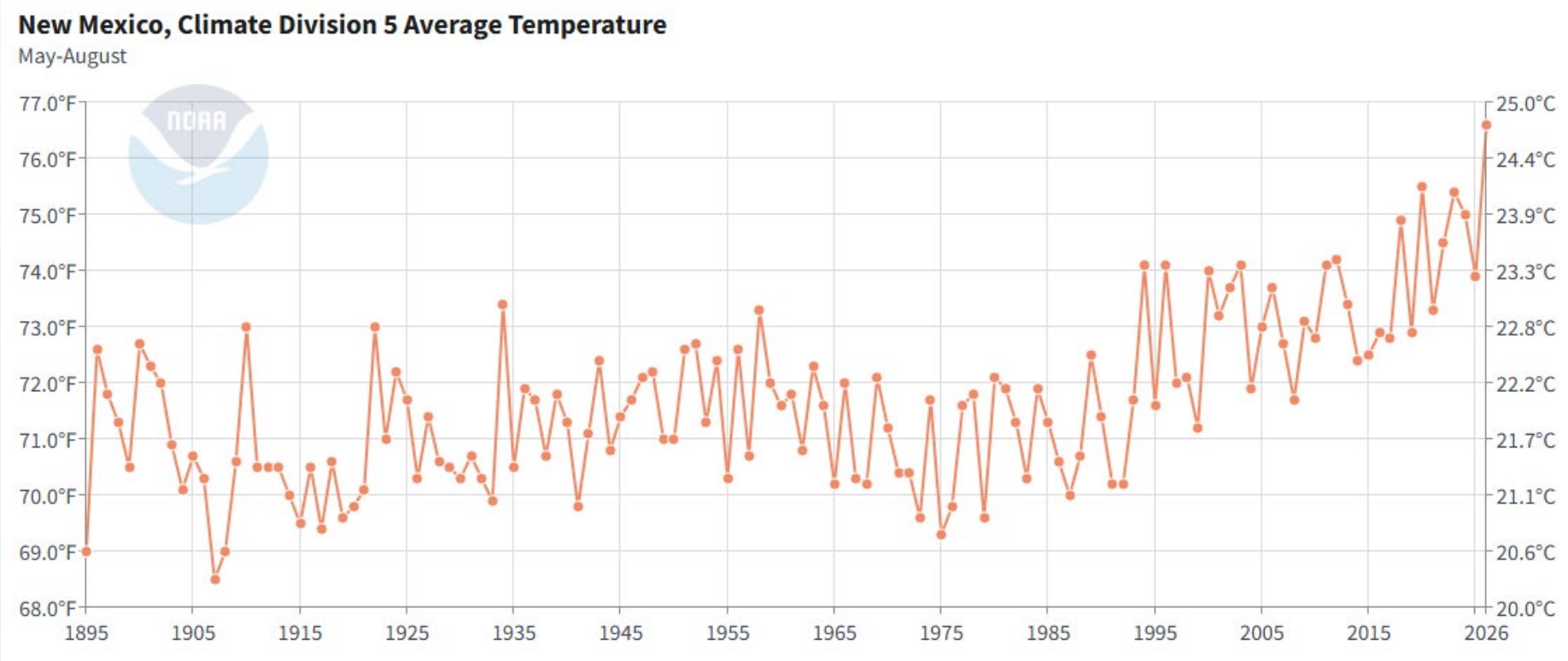
Climate and Hydrology Challenges

CLIMATE CHANGE TRENDS:

- Lower snowpack
- Higher temperatures
- Increased aridification
- More variable rain/monsoons
- Lower stream flows
- Lower reservoir levels

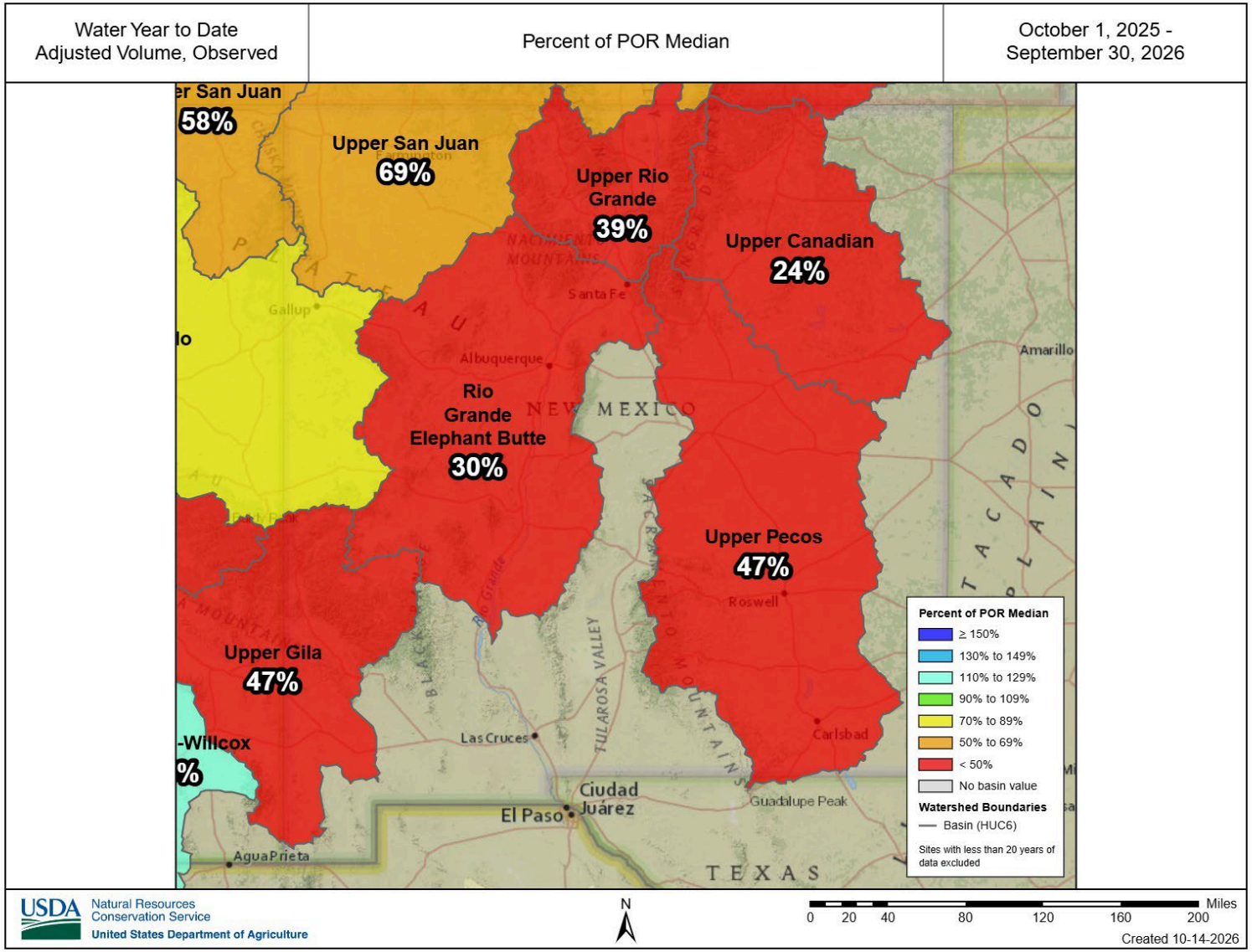
We need to prepare for 25-30% less water by 2070

AVERAGE SUMMER TEMPERATURE MIDDLE RIO GRANDE VALLEY



- 2026 was by far the warmest summer on record.
- Top 6 warmest summers on record have occurred in last 9 years.
- Warmer temperatures = greater water lost to evaporation and transpiration.

Record Breaking Conditions in 2026



RECORD LOW SNOWPACK

RECORD HIGH SPRING TEMPERATURES

STREAMFLOW in 2026

Despite record-breaking September rainstorms, 2026 flows were well below historical medians:

- Rio Grande - 30%
- Pecos River - 47%
- San Juan River - 69%

Record Low Reservoir Levels

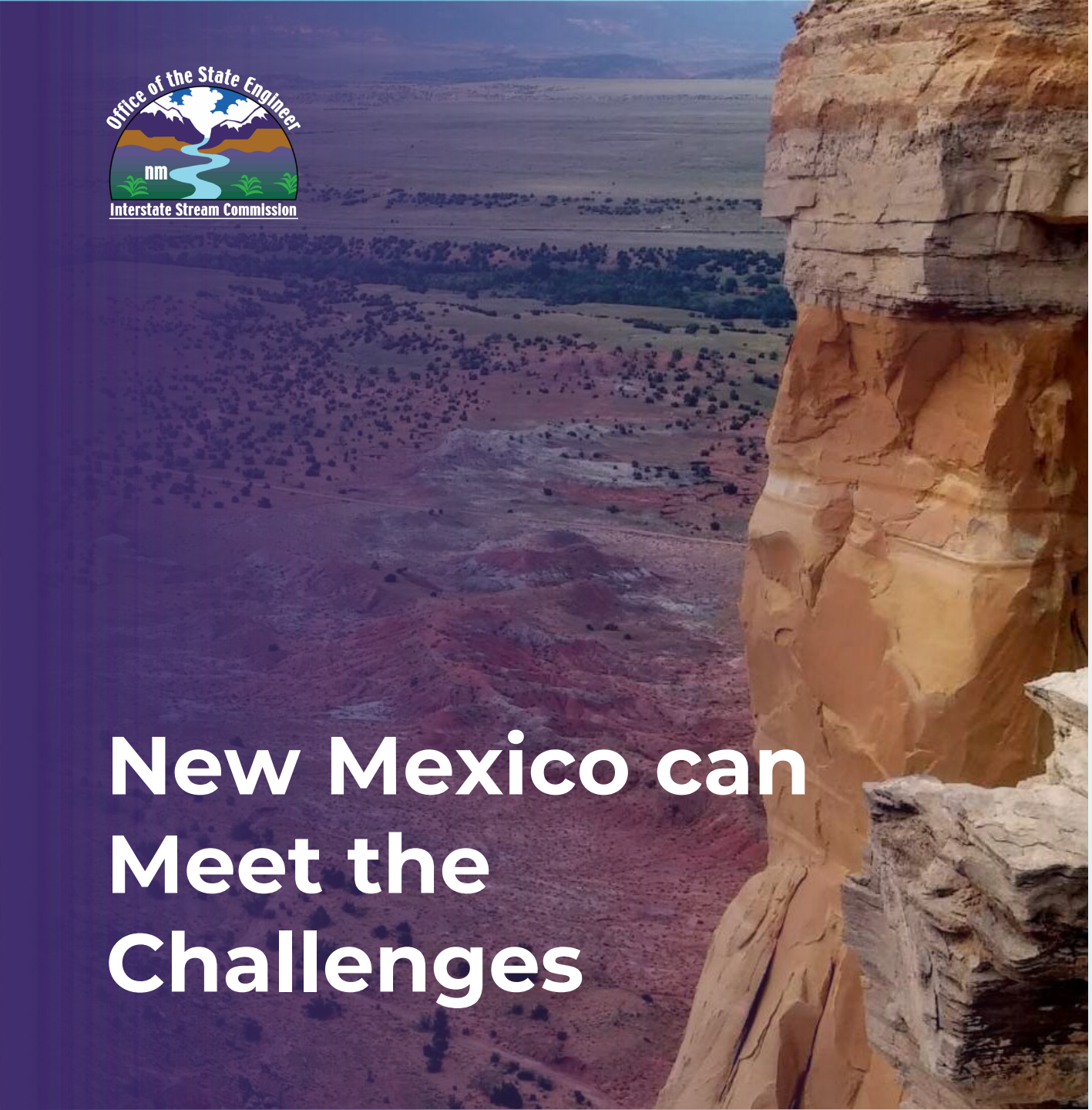


Photo: John Longworth

ELEPHANT BUTTE RESERVOIR August 31, 2026

Less than 1.5%

Lowest level on record for that date



New Mexico can Meet the Challenges

MULTI-PRONGED APPROACH With SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENTS NEEDED

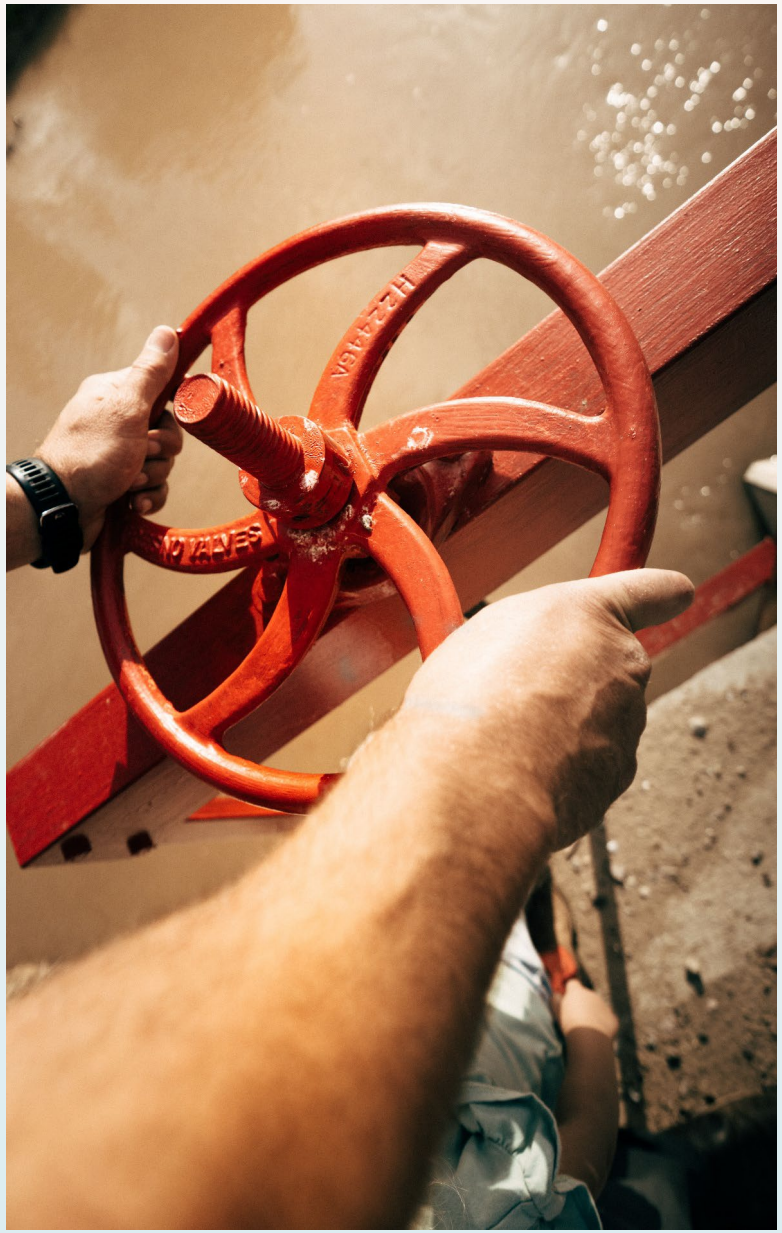
OSE and ISC are continuing to advance major priorities including:

- Modernizing the agency
- Focus on the Rio Grande and Colorado River
- Planning for New Mexico's water future

We must work together across the state to:

- Reduce depletions
- Increase efficiencies
- Enhance enforcement
- Build partnerships to implement holistic management practices

Priority: *Modernize the Agency*



Goals

- Retain and recruit highly qualified staff
- Emphasis on stronger enforcement capabilities
- Catch up to 21st century technologies, including Water Data Act implementation, expanded measurement and metering
- Enhance online information and engagement

Successes

- New statute with stronger enforcement capabilities at OSE
- Hired additional water master staff
- Ongoing installation of additional meters statewide

State Investment Highlights*

- ~$3.4 million invested in additional meters
- Over $17.5 million in dam maintenance and rehabilitation projects

*Expended or encumbered FY24 to present.

Priority: *Modernize the Agency*



2027 Session Priorities

- Retain and recruit critical staff through competitive salaries
- Improve ability to comply with new enforcement authorities (2026 HB 111) to prevent illegal water use and promote proper drilling techniques to protect aquifers
- Improve public service capabilities through better online resources, water administration databases, and availability of data in accordance with the Water Data Act (2019 HB 651)
- Ensure trust funds can be utilized for their originally authorized purposes ($10.1M)

September 1 Budget Request = $3.1M recurring, $5.2M special, $4M capital

Year Ahead: *Modernize the Agency*

Middle Rio Grande (MRG) Metering Order

- Upcoming Water Master District and Metering Orders
- Will assist in managing the MRG supporting compliance with the Rio Grande Compact

Enhanced Data Tracking and Online Engagement Resources

- Technical Services Program and IT Investments
  - Ensure decision-making is informed by the best available data, science and models
- Water Data Act implementation, including:
  - Database Replacements
  - AQUARIUS Transition
- Website Overhaul



New Mexico 360 Groundwater Report



Groundwater is indispensable, declining, under-measured, and requires coordinated statewide action grounded in science and local leadership.

Why It Matters

- 52% of NM's total water supply
- 78% of drinking water
- 24 of 33 counties rely primarily on groundwater
- As surface water declines, increased reliance on groundwater
- 25–30% less recharge projected by 2050

The Problem

- Pumping exceeds recharge in many basins = aquifer declines
- ~45% of withdrawals metered
- Significant data gaps
  - recharge rates, aquifer storage
- Water quality threats

Key Recommendations

- Treat aquifers as critical infrastructure
- Accelerate mapping & monitoring
- Expand statewide metering
- Develop statewide management framework
- Strengthen Tribal engagement & data sovereignty
- Support community-driven conservation

Produced by the NM Groundwater Alliance – thank you!

www.nmgrounwateralliance.org

Priority: *Focus on the Rio Grande and Colorado River*



Goals

- Invest in the Lower Rio Grande (LRG) through implementation of the TX v NM U.S. Supreme Court Settlement
- Keep water flowing to Elephant Butte Reservoir
- Protect New Mexico's interests in the Colorado River Basin, support development of Seven Basin State solutions

Successes

- Chama shortage sharing
- Over 7,500 acres enrolled in the voluntary Lower Rio Grande Groundwater Conservation Program
- Collaborative partnerships and work on the ground

State Investment Highlights*

- ~$11.2 million invested in river channel, habitat and vegetation management projects in the Middle Rio Grande
- ~$57 million dedicated to LRG solutions – conservation, new supplies, and community engagement

*Expended or encumbered FY24 to present.

Priority: *Focus on the Rio Grande and Colorado River*

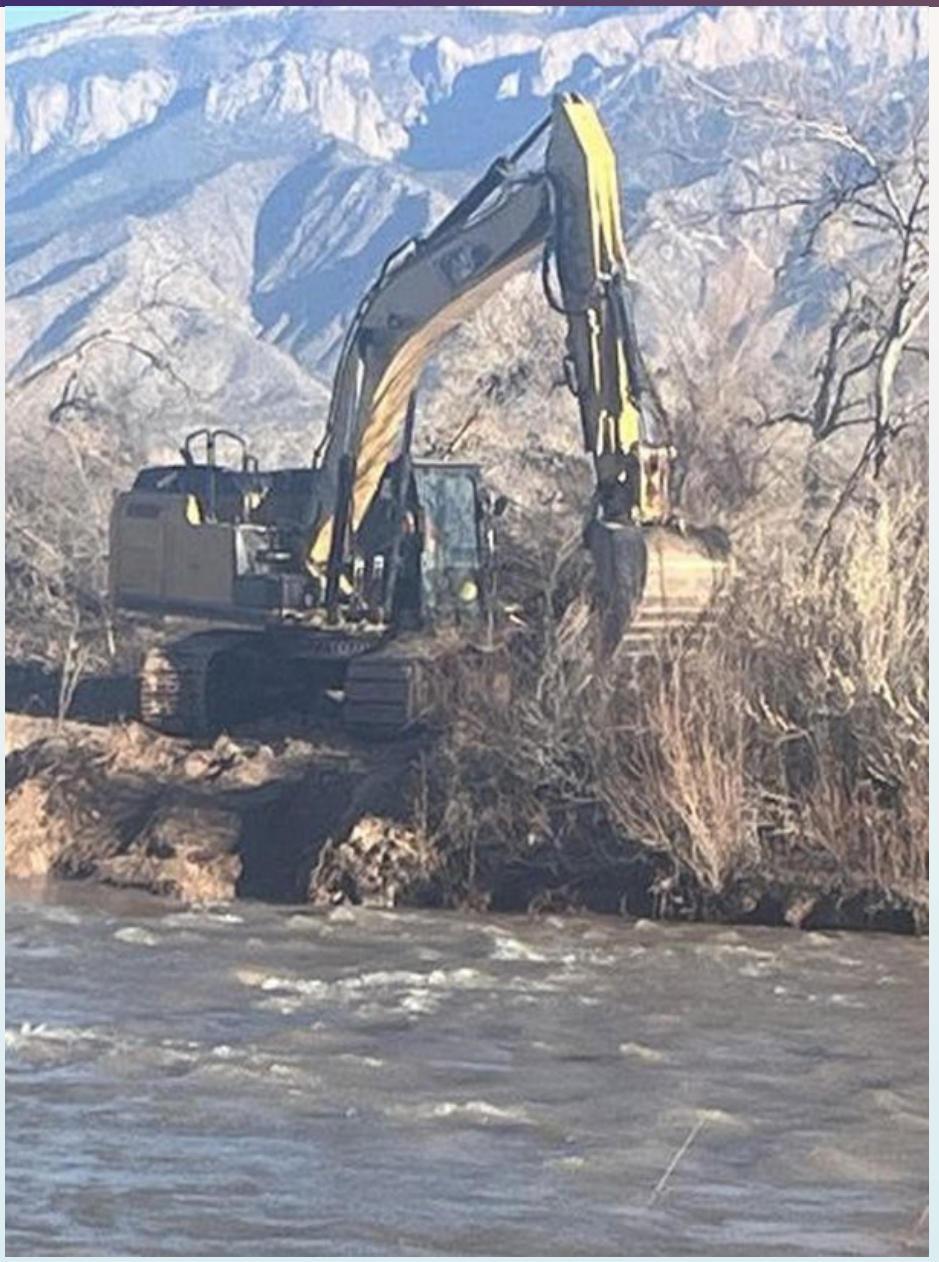
2027 Session Priorities

- Improve Middle Rio Grande operations to ensure Rio Grande Compact compliance and improved water deliveries to Elephant Butte Reservoir through increases in metering, monitoring, and enforcement
- Implement the Lower Rio Grande TX v NM Settlement to support New Mexico communities
- Increase San Juan Basin management and engagement with New Mexico water users to ensure Colorado River Compact compliance
- Prioritize new Strategic Water Reserve acquisitions for environmental and interstate compact compliance
- Expand depletion reduction and river channel conveyance efficiency programs

September 1 Budget Request = $1.8M recurring, $65M special, $95M capital



Year Ahead: *Focus on the Middle Rio Grande*



Metering, Measurement and Enforcement

- Metering order roll out and community engagement
- Better coordination on storage and releases to improve Compact performance

Channel and Bosque Projects

- Enhanced channel management for multiple purposes:
  - Improved conveyance, sediment transport, bosque and habitat management
  - Goals = increase deliveries to Elephant Butte; decrease depletions
- Cooperative Agreement with the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD)
- Critical partnerships with federal agencies: Reclamation and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Enhanced data collection, modeling and assessments to support decision-making

Year Ahead: *Focus on the Lower Rio Grande*



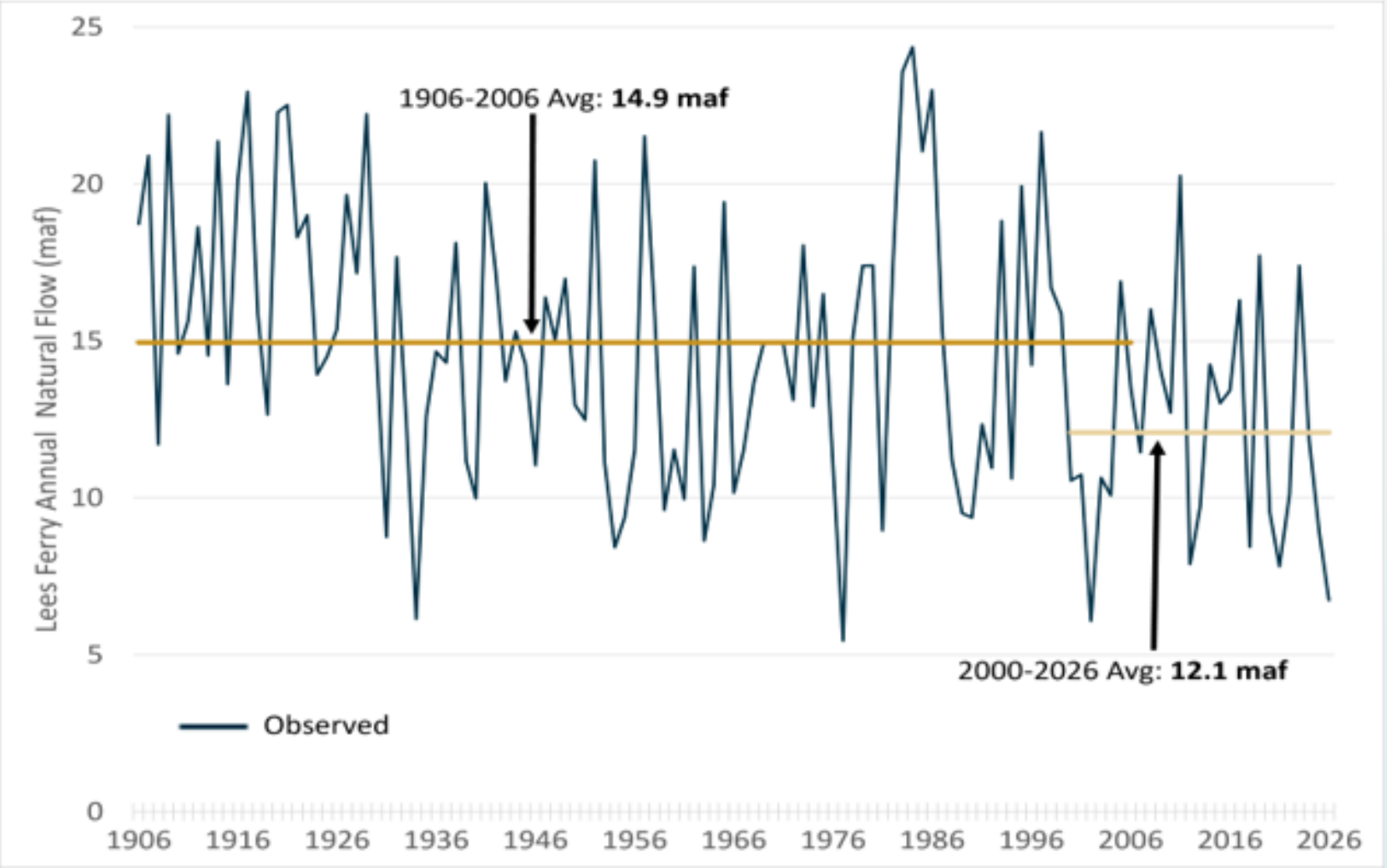
Metering, Measurement and Enforcement

- Active Water Resource Management: administration, ongoing Water Master measuring/metering, and enforcement
- Adaptive Metering for Informed Groundwater Operations (AMIGO) metering program

TX v NM Settlement Implementation

- Launching voluntary water rights acquisitions program:
  - 18,200 AF of current groundwater use within 10 years
  - Roll-out this year, starting with $40M in federal funding
- Range of complementary solutions = brackish water exploration and development, stormwater management, conservation and efficiency efforts
- Cooperative Agreement with Elephant Butte Irrigation District and local Soil & Water Conservation Districts
- Lower Rio Grande Water Alliance participation and collaboration

Year Ahead: *Focus on the Colorado River*



- New Mexico receives 11.25% of the available supply in the Upper Basin
- Natural flows have decreased by 20% since 2000
- Lake Powell and Lake Mead hit record low levels in 2026
- Department of Interior finalized Operating Guidelines for 2027-28 but long-term rules still need to be developed

Priority: *Plan for New Mexico's Water Future*



Goals

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

Successes

- Launched dashboard for 50-Year Water Action Plan outcomes
- Promulgated new regional water planning rule, convening new regions early 2027
  - Regions will prioritize recommendations for funding
- Continued effort on Indian Water Rights Settlements

State Investment Highlights*

- ~$7.7 million dedicated to water planning, education and enhanced tools and resources for communities
- ~$13.5 million dedicated to Indian Water Rights Settlements

*Expended or encumbered FY25 to present.

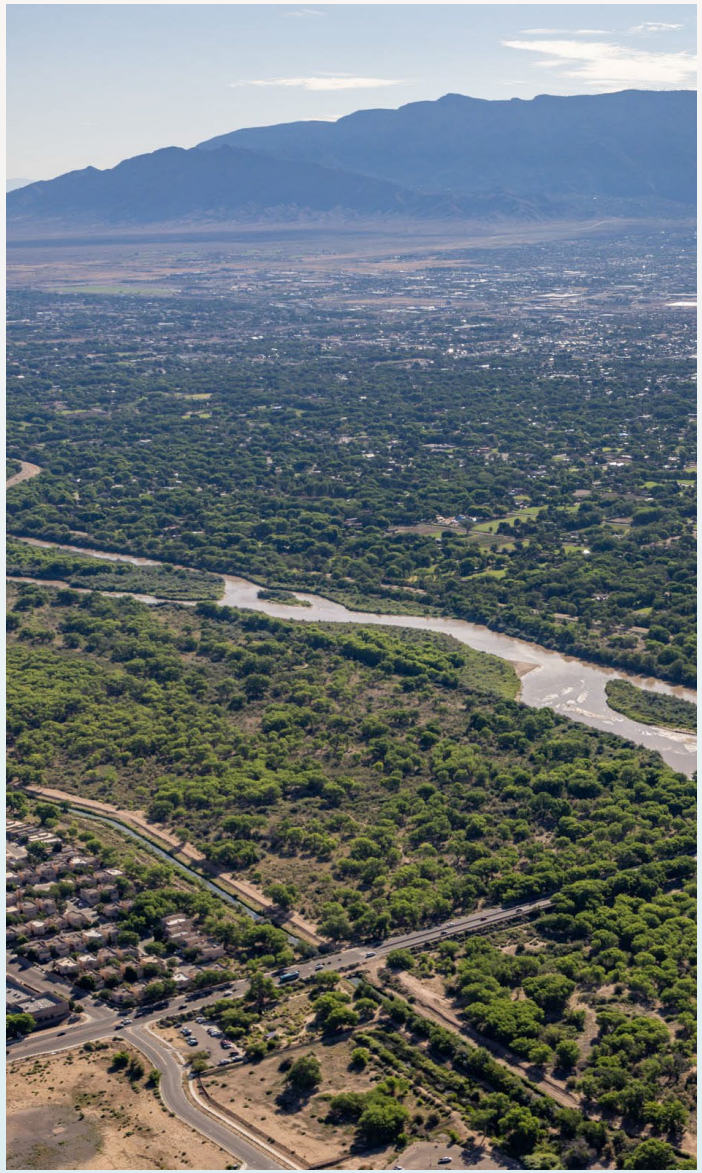
Priority: *Plan for New Mexico's Water Future*



2027 Session Priorities

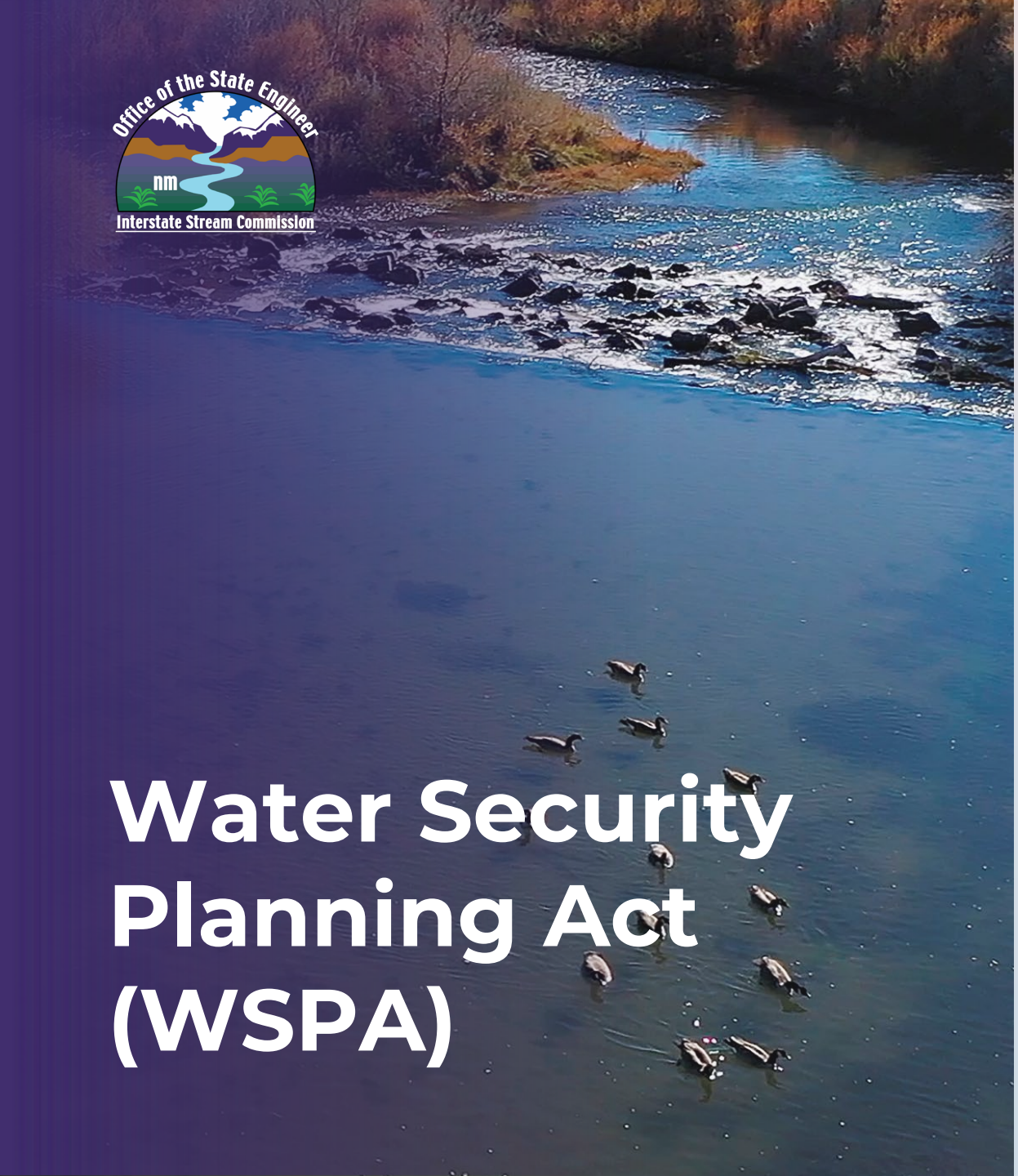
- Expand regional water planning efforts to ensure compliance with the Water Security Planning Act (2023 SB 337)
- Ongoing implementation of the 50-Year Water Action Plan, including implementation of a statewide water education campaign to amplify the importance of water conservation
- Ensure compliance and progress with Indian Water Rights Settlements
- Confirm and expand support for acequia communities
- Ongoing implementation of the Pecos River Settlement
- Expand dam safety funding in coordination with DFA
- Expand opportunities for new water supplies through weather modification

September 1 Budget Request = $2.9M recurring, $41.5M special, $43.1M capital



Indian Water Rights Settlements

- Continue efforts to secure federal passage of local settlements
  - Jemez River (Jemez Pueblo, Zia Pueblo)
  - Rio San Jose (Pueblo of Acoma, Laguna Pueblo, Navajo Nation)
  - Zuni River (Zuni Indian Tribe)
  - Chama River (Ohkay Owingeh)
- Make successful progress in ongoing negotiations
  - Santa Cruz/Truchas (Santa Clara Pueblo, Ohkay Owingeh)
  - Middle Rio Grande (6 MRG Pueblos)
  - San Juan River (Ute Mountain Ute Tribe)
- Secure additional federal support for completed settlements
  - Taos
  - Aamodt
  - Navajo-San Juan



Water Security Planning Act (WSPA)

Water Security Planning Act (WSPA) – SB 377 Passed unanimously in 2023.

Rule promulgated in early 2026. Guidelines to be finalized this year. ISC plans to begin standing up new regional planning councils in January 2027.

Ensures Regional Water Planning:

- Includes robust public involvement
- Is grounded in the best available data, science and models
- Supports implementation through prioritization of projects for funding
- Builds local capacity

WSPA will transform and reinvigorate regional water planning in New Mexico.

MainStreamNM.org

Water Education Updates – 50 Year Water Action Plan

In response to Action A1 in the 50-Year Water Action Plan to develop and implement a statewide water education campaign, the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer and the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission have taken a lead role to:

	Action	Progress
1	Assemble a State Agency working group	Active
2	Assemble an inventory of existing water education materials	Drafted, launching in 2026
3	Develop an integrated, state-wide water education strategy	Initial research and draft in progress

Scope includes:

- Kindergarten through 12th Grade (K-12) Students and Educators
- Water Workforce and Career Pathways
- General Public

Water Education Updates – 50 Year Water Action Plan

Ongoing Water Education Efforts

- Supporting a state-wide water conservation campaign, currently in development with plans to launch in 2026
- Continuing implementation of **mainstream.org**
  - Blogs
  - Educational Videos
  - Magazine – two annual issues so far
- Tools
  - Water mapping tool (at mainstreamnm.org)
  - WaterTAP planning tool for water utilities
    watertap.mainstreamnm.org
  - Compact Education Tool – Launched in Oct 2026
    nmwatercompacts.org



Time to Work Together!

Office of the State Engineer
nm
Interstate Stream Commission