

**2023 APPROVED
WORK PLAN AND MEETING SCHEDULE
for the
WATER AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

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Approved Work Plan

The Water and Natural Resources Committee was created by the New Mexico Legislative Council on May 1, 2023. The committee will focus on the following topics, as scheduling permits:

A. reports from water- and natural resources-related executive agencies, including statutory reports, agency initiatives, legislation passed and budget and staffing needs, including:

1. implementation of the Water Security Planning Act and regional water plans;
2. New Mexico state water plan 2023 review;
3. an update on the status, distributions and future of the New Mexico Unit Fund;
4. an update on the strategic water reserve;

5. implementation of the Water Data Act and aquifer mapping program;
6. the Community Solar Program and the results of the Public Regulation Commission process;
7. the effectiveness of renewable energy production tax credits, advanced energy tax credits and the advanced energy deduction;
8. the status of the Community Energy Efficiency Development Program;
9. lawsuits and penalty amounts for violations of the Oil and Gas Act;
10. implementation of the San Juan Generating Station Facility and Mine Remediation and Restoration Study Act and plans to ensure environmental compliance from owners of the generating facility and mine;
11. progress of the Rio Grande Trail Commission; and
12. updates from departmental tribal liaisons on state-tribal collaborations and cross-boundary resource management;

B. topics concerning water, including:

1. an update from the Water Policy and Infrastructure Task Force;
2. due process in water leases and the implications of court rulings on preliminary approvals;
3. a review of 2023 legislation to modernize water law, a water rights de novo review process and the possibility of creating specialized water-law courts;
4. reports on water rights litigation and settlements, including:
 - a. the *Aamodt* settlement, *State of New Mexico v. Aragon* and other Indian water rights litigations and settlements, including input from tribes;
 - b. *Texas v. New Mexico*;
 - c. *Sackett v. EPA*; and
 - d. Arizona's Gila River Indian Community Water Rights Settlement Agreement and Arizona Water Settlements Act updates;

5. an overview of Western states' water law and water needs, the Rio Grande Compact of 1939, the Colorado River Compact of 1922 and the recent Colorado River Basin Agreement and their impact on New Mexico water supply and agricultural uses;
6. an update on the Acequia and Community Ditch Infrastructure Fund and issues pertaining to acequias, agriculture and water health;
7. Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District and Lower Rio Grande Public Water Works Authority water technology investments and water management;
8. community water concerns, such as:
 - a. water contamination plumes and cleanup efforts at Los Alamos National Laboratory, Kirtland Air Force Base and White Sands Missile Range;
 - b. ground water contamination from fracking and mining operations;
 - c. water scarcity on New Mexico's military bases and its effect on national security;
 - d. the East Pecos Mutual Domestic Water Consumers' Association wastewater project;
 - e. water testing for lead in schools and daycare facilities;
 - f. abandoned contaminated sites, including dry cleaners; and
 - g. per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances rulemaking and lawsuits;
9. produced water and water use in oil and gas and natural resource extraction and an update from the New Mexico Produced Water Research Consortium;
10. water resource infrastructure funding and administration, including:
 - a. creation of a state water infrastructure management fund and planning and development office;
 - b. Tribal Infrastructure Project Fund updates and 2023 proposed projects; and
 - c. an update on the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund;
11. water line easements across state lines: processes and fees;

12. developing a surface water discharge program and surface water permitting;
13. a review of New Mexico's current water supply in streams and rivers and the implementation of an environmental flows program for critical ecosystem function;
14. the impacts of wildfires on watersheds and funding opportunities for river health and restoration, including:
 - a. an update on the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service's Emergency Watershed Protection Program;
 - b. post-fire flooding concerns and water-source protection;
 - c. the Rio Grande Water Fund forest and watershed restoration projects; and
 - d. an update on the Department of Environment's River Stewardship Program;
15. an update on the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project and other water deliveries to Indian nations, tribes and pueblos;
16. an update on the Liquid Waste Disposal System Assistance Fund;
17. Regional Water System Resiliency Act implementation and rulemaking;
18. using green and natural infrastructure to protect water quality and quantity;
19. an update from the Rio Grande Project Area Drought Resiliency Team and an update on rural and urban water conservation and extreme drought mitigation and plans for future growth and development;
20. brackish water and desalination technology pilot projects; and
21. an overview of historic pueblo-use water rights, federal reserve water rights and water rights established by state law;

C. topics concerning energy, including:

1. regulation of the oil and gas industry, including:
 - a. balancing the needs of the renewable energy industry and oil and gas production and the impact of climate change mandates; and

- b. oil and gas industry emission reductions and effectiveness of methane and ozone rules;
2. geothermal energy development legislation;
3. an overview of oil and gas leasing and economic diversification needed to replace the revenue of the oil and gas industry;
4. low-income utility rates;
5. carbon capture and sequestration; industrial-scale and natural solutions; community impacts of a carbon pipeline and storage buildout; and soil carbon sequestration as a strategy for climate resiliency;
6. an update from the Economic Development Department, Indian Affairs Department and Workforce Solutions Department on the Energy Transition Act and the "just transition" funds, including:
 - a. updates from the community advisory committees on input from tribes and affected communities; and
 - b. replacement power options and workforce retraining initiatives in affected communities;
7. green hydrogen development in New Mexico, including:
 - a. Western Inter-State Hydrogen Hub (WISHH) proposed projects;
 - b. the green hydrogen power plant at the Chevron Questa mine site in Questa;
 - c. saline aquifers as hydrogen feedstock; and
 - d. climate risk associated with hydrogen leakage;
8. decarbonizing energy and transportation and increasing renewable transportation, mass transit and other alternative transportation and shipping methods, such as trains and electric vehicles;
9. local economic development from the renewable energy industry and utility-scale investment in transmission and storage, including a review of energy grid reliability and modernization, regional transmission organizations, distributed energy resources and storage;

10. energy and water efficiency standards for appliances; building and home electrification; and the removal of nonfunctional turf from buildings;
11. combined cycle natural gas as an electric generation source;
12. the proposed climate investment center and environmental workforce development (Senate Bill 169 (2023));
13. federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and federal Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 funding and possible carbon standard for projects;
14. development of tribal energy resources and infrastructure, including:
 - a. Navajo Tribal Utility Authority updates on the Light Up Navajo initiative and the development of wind and solar power and energy storage on the Navajo Nation;
 - b. the federal Tribal Energy Development Capacity Grant program, energy sovereignty grants and renewable energy development on tribal lands;
 - c. the United States Economic Development Administration's Indigenous Communities program and the Pueblo of Jemez's energy independence study;
 - d. the federal Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs and the Pueblo of Laguna's Village Community Solar project; and
 - e. Sandia National Laboratories' tribal energy internship program and the Tribal Energy Management Studies degree at San Juan College; and
15. state university and college science, technology, engineering and mathematics programs and projects in areas such as water, energy and biofuels;

D. topics concerning natural resources and conservation, including:

1. forest management, prescribed burn practices and compensation and reclamation efforts for wildfires, including:
 - a. Mescalero forest management and sawmill;
 - b. Jemez Mountains Firewise Association and wildland fire management;
 - c. drought and climate change driving fires and affecting forest carbon; and
 - d. state and local bans on fireworks due to drought and wildfire risk;

2. an update on the Environmental Database Act;
3. copper mining and reclamation projects;
4. the proposed New Mexico green amendment (House Joint Resolution 4 (2023) and Senate Joint Resolution 4 (2023));
5. the federal Clean Energy Minerals Reform Act;
6. soil and water conservation districts' impact on the environment, agriculture and fire and flood restoration and the impact of climate change on soils;
7. progress and funding needs for uranium cleanup projects on state and tribal land;
8. the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund status and implementation;
9. improving New Mexico's state parks to increase visitation;
10. an update on the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund;
11. recycling and anti-littering initiatives and policies to address plastic pollution and the use of single-use plastics and Styrofoam;
12. *Atencio v. State of New Mexico* and other natural resources-related litigation;
13. state collaborations on health and climate issues, including:
 - a. the impacts of oil and gas extraction and large-facility pollution on human health, agriculture and other industries, New Mexico livelihoods and culture;
 - b. the proposed public health and climate resiliency fund (House Bill 42 (2023));
and
 - c. updates from the Climate Change Task Force and Technical Advisory Group;
and
14. public stream access and private land restrictions and the Blue Trails Program: developing New Mexico's water recreation economy; and

E. topics concerning agriculture, land management and animals, including:

1. Department of Game and Fish land purchases for 30x30 and 50x50 initiatives;
2. state meat inspection;

3. an update on the study of abandoned water wells on private and public property and the risks those wells pose to people and animals;
4. New Mexico food and farm initiatives, including:
 - a. land stewardship and economic opportunities for farmers, ranchers, food hubs and New Mexico businesses; and
 - b. the anticipated federal 2023 farm bill and how it can support New Mexico agriculture, consumers and nutrition-based programs;
5. a veterinary technician program to educate, attract and retain veterinarians; non-compete clauses for emergency pet health care services; physician's assistant veterinary licensure; extension of New Mexico's Loan-for-Service programs to include veterinary medicine (Senate Bill 404 (2023)); and the status of the Statewide Spay and Neuter subaccount of the Animal Care and Facility Fund;
6. Department of Game and Fish reform;
7. an update from New Mexico State University College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences on weather stations, education and research centers and the statewide Indian Resources Development program;
8. private preserves and other management strategies for relocated wild horses;
9. livestock, farming and land management on tribal lands, including:
 - a. New Mexico Indian Livestock Days and funding opportunities to support Native American farmers and ranchers;
 - b. the Indigenous Farm Hub, New Mexico Food and Seed Sovereignty Alliance and teaching of traditional indigenous agricultural practices; and
 - c. an update from the Navajo Agricultural Products Industry on crop diversification and the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project;
10. impacts of lead shot on wildlife;
11. New Mexico's unique biodiversity: opportunities and challenges;
12. an overview of New Mexico's agricultural production and opportunities for growth, including agricultural resiliency through technological innovations; and
13. a report from the state climatologist on weather station installations.

**Water and Natural Resources Committee
2023 Approved Meeting Schedule**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>
June 13	Santa Fe
July 10-11	Las Vegas
August 7-9	Farmington
October 3-5	Las Cruces
November 6-8	Santa Fe