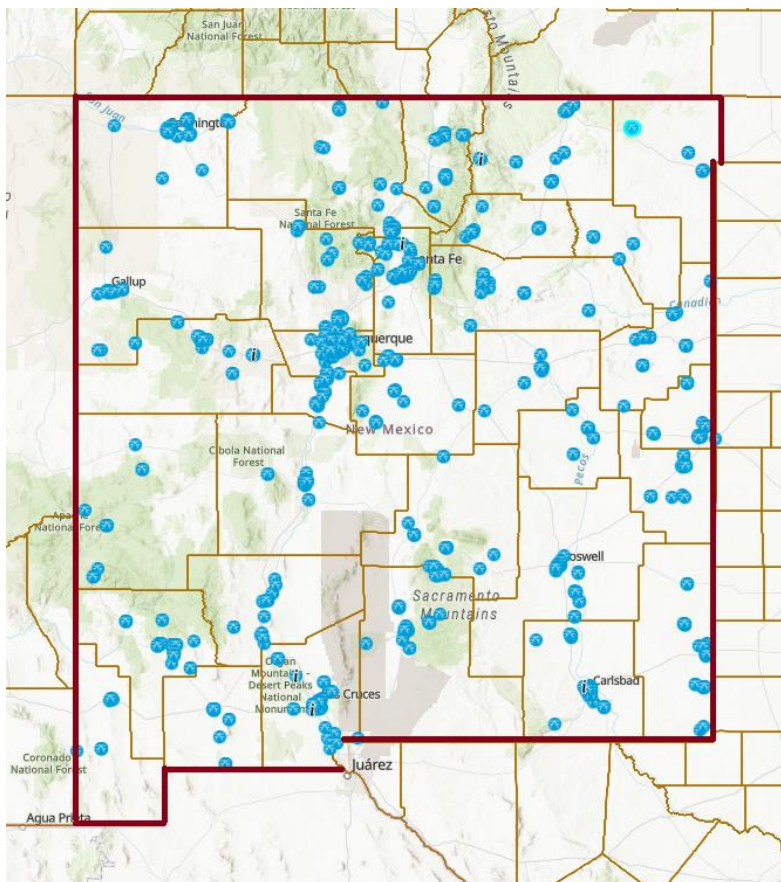


## Why the Land and Water Conservation Fund is vital to New Mexico

- The Land and Water Conservation Fund has been the most successful source of recreation and conservation **funding for local communities** in New Mexico history
- Since its creation in 1965, LWCF has provided tens of millions of dollars to communities to undertake **over 1000 projects in all 33 counties**
- Unfortunately, **over the past 25 years, only 26 projects** have received funding
- This drop-off in funding to local projects coincides with the **failure to appropriate** money to the state's **Supplemental Land and Water Conservation Fund**, which disbursed money to small communities to **help provide matching dollars**



### Land and Water Conservation Fund – State and Local Assistance

#### Funded Projects 1964 – 2023

Local communities need **matching funds** and **technical assistance** to leverage Fed \$\$

The state's **supplemental fund** provided local matching dollars when the program was most successful—but **has not received an appropriation** since 1994

Over **75% of community projects** were funded during the period **when matching funds were available**

## The Land and Water Conservation Fund: Federal Funding for Local Projects

### *LWCF State and Local Assistance \$ awarded to New Mexico communities*

County	# of Projects	\$\$\$
Bernalillo	85	\$6,912,713
Catron	13	\$230,903
Chaves	39	\$1,425,391
Cibola	35	\$2,624,102
Colfax	28	\$3,835,400
Curry	28	\$515,178
De Baca	11	\$506,559
Doña Ana	64	\$2,456,273
Eddy	39	\$2,632,508
Grant	37	\$1,007,056
Guadalupe	14	\$368,822
Harding	9	\$72,782
Hidalgo	8	\$65,979
Lea	35	\$1,363,439
Lincoln	30	\$875,830
Los Alamos	7	\$88,830
Luna	16	\$965,208
McKinley	29	\$1,407,697
Mora	18	\$1,974,712
Otero	34	\$1,110,834
Quay	39	\$481,475
Rio Arriba	36	\$1,019,188
Roosevelt	21	\$1,175,491
San Juan	43	\$1,439,927
San Miguel	36	\$1,914,377
Sandoval	35	\$712,242
Santa Fe	77	\$2,600,550
Sierra	20	\$1,376,820
Socorro	23	\$497,156
Taos	32	\$916,070
Torrance	23	\$503,580
Union	8	\$185,312
Valencia	26	\$998,126
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>998</b>	<b>\$44,260,530</b>



Albuquerque's Paseo del Bosque Trail - 1977



Magdalena Rodeo Grounds - 1979



Isleta Pueblo Youth Recreation Center - 1973

## Revive the State Supplemental Land and Water Conservation Fund

### *Equitable Access to Federal Outdoor Recreation Dollars*

New Mexico's Outdoor Recreation Act of 1973 created the "[State Supplemental Land and Water Conservation Fund](#)" (the "Fund") to provide smaller communities with funding to help meet the 50% local match requirement for Federal [LWCF State and Local Assistance](#) projects (16-1-3 NMSA 1978). The Fund is administered by the energy, minerals and natural resources department, and disbursements are capped at 25% of the total project cost. In addition, eligibility for receiving money from the fund is limited to communities of 15,000 people or less. This Fund provides smaller, cash-strapped communities with the local match necessary to access Federal outdoor recreation funds. This has renewed salience after the [Great American Outdoors Act](#) was passed in 2020, which sends **over \$3 million/year to New Mexico for local projects**—but only to communities that can match the Federal dollars.

Unfortunately, New Mexico communities have found it hard to provide that local match since the 1980s, when the legislature last appropriated money to the Fund. A brief overview of appropriations is below:

**1973:** In the Act creating the Fund, **\$250,000** was allocated as seed money (nearly **\$1.67 million** in 2022 dollars), to be used in FY 1973-1975. Unused money would revert to the General Fund.

**1975:** The Legislature allocated an additional **\$300,000 (\$1.65 million** in 2022), to be used over two years, rather than the three in the original appropriation.

**1976:** Just one year later, the Legislature appropriated another **\$200,000 (\$1.04 million** in 2022) to the Fund, indicating that there was likely more interest than originally anticipated.

**1978:** In the following short session, the Fund received its largest appropriation to date--**\$750,000 (over \$3.4 million** in 2022)—to be used in the following two fiscal years.

**1984:** After an apparent lapse in appropriations, the Fund again received **\$300,000 (\$860k** in 2022). Notably, this instance did not include any provisions about the years in which it had to be used, nor reversion to the General Fund.

**1985:** Just one year later, the Fund received another influx of **\$300,000 (\$820k** in 2022), again without any timing or reversion restrictions.

**1994:** The supplemental fund receives its last appropriation: **\$100,000 (\$197k** in 2022)

Over the twenty years during which we know the Fund received money, over \$2.2 million was allocated—which equates to roughly **\$10 million** in 2022 dollars.

Perhaps not coincidentally, **the years in which funding was appropriated to the Fund coincided with the greatest utilization of the LWCF stateside program** in New Mexico. Of the roughly 1000 projects funded throughout the program's 58-year history, about three-quarters—746 of them—were approved during the period when money from the Fund was available to local communities.

For unknown reasons, the Fund was not appropriated any money after the 1994 legislative session. The time is ripe to again allocate money to the Fund and place New Mexico's most resource-strapped communities in a position to take advantage of Federal LWCF Stateside money.

## Recommendations for Legislature

**Appropriate money to the Fund:** With the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act in 2019, New Mexico now receives more money from the Federal LWCF than ever before—roughly \$3 million in 2022. For rural, traditional, and tribal communities to fully leverage this funding stream, at least **\$2 million should be appropriated to the Fund annually** to serve as the local match for projects serving these communities.

**Expand eligibility of applicants:** New Mexico’s population has grown significantly since the Outdoor Recreation Act was passed in 1973, so **the community size eligibility should be raised to 30,000** to ensure equitable access to the Fund. This coincides with the lower population eligibility threshold of the [Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership](#) grants program, another subset of LWCF funding that is allocated [only to communities of 30,000 or more](#).

**Expand share of project costs eligible for money from the Fund:** Considering how tight budgets and grant-writing capacity are for smaller communities in New Mexico, it makes sense to eliminate the cap on project costs eligible for money from the Fund, which currently sits at 25% of total project costs. Considering that Federal funds can provide 50% of the total, **this would allow the Fund to cover the entirety of the community local match requirement**. This is particularly prescient in tribal communities and land grants, where barriers to funding and grant-writing capacity are often larger than with other eligible political subdivisions that can leverage property tax revenues. There is also precedent for this at the Federal level, as U.S. territories like Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands are not subject to the local match requirement at all. Tribes, as sovereign nations, should be afforded the same treatment, at the very least.

**Fund community outreach and technical assistance:** With capacity at such a premium, the Fund should be available as a source of money for NM State Parks to conduct outreach to communities that may be interested in applying for grants, and to help those communities navigate the Open Project Selection Process. This would also allow State Parks to provide a consistent source of funding for its own match necessary to **leverage National Park Service Administrative Assistance grants**—the first round of which will be available in 2024.

### *Historic Project Numbers and Funding*

<b>1966-70:</b> 96 projects totaling \$4.1 million	<b>1996-2000:</b> 1 project totaling \$19,200
<b>1971-75:</b> 198 projects totaling \$7.4 million	<b>2001-05:</b> 4 projects totaling \$542k
<b>1976-80:</b> 364 projects totaling \$14.2 million	<b>2006-10:</b> zero community projects funded
<b>1981-85:</b> 134 projects totaling \$3.4 million	<b>2011-15:</b> zero community projects funded
<b>1986-90:</b> 116 projects totaling \$1.1 million	<b>2016-20:</b> zero community projects funded
<b>1991-95:</b> 64 projects totaling \$1.2 million	<b>2021-present:</b> zero community projects funded
<b>^^last appropriation to supplemental fund in 1994</b>	