



New Mexico Environment Department



River Stewardship Program
Shelly Lemon, Surface Water Quality Bureau Chief
Legislative Finance Committee
September 22, 2026



River Stewardship Program

Provides funding and technical support for the planning, design, and construction of projects that enhance the health of New Mexico streams and rivers by improving surface water quality and/or river habitat.

Cimarron River Trout Habitat Restoration,
Cimarron Watershed Alliance





Watershed Protection Assistance Program

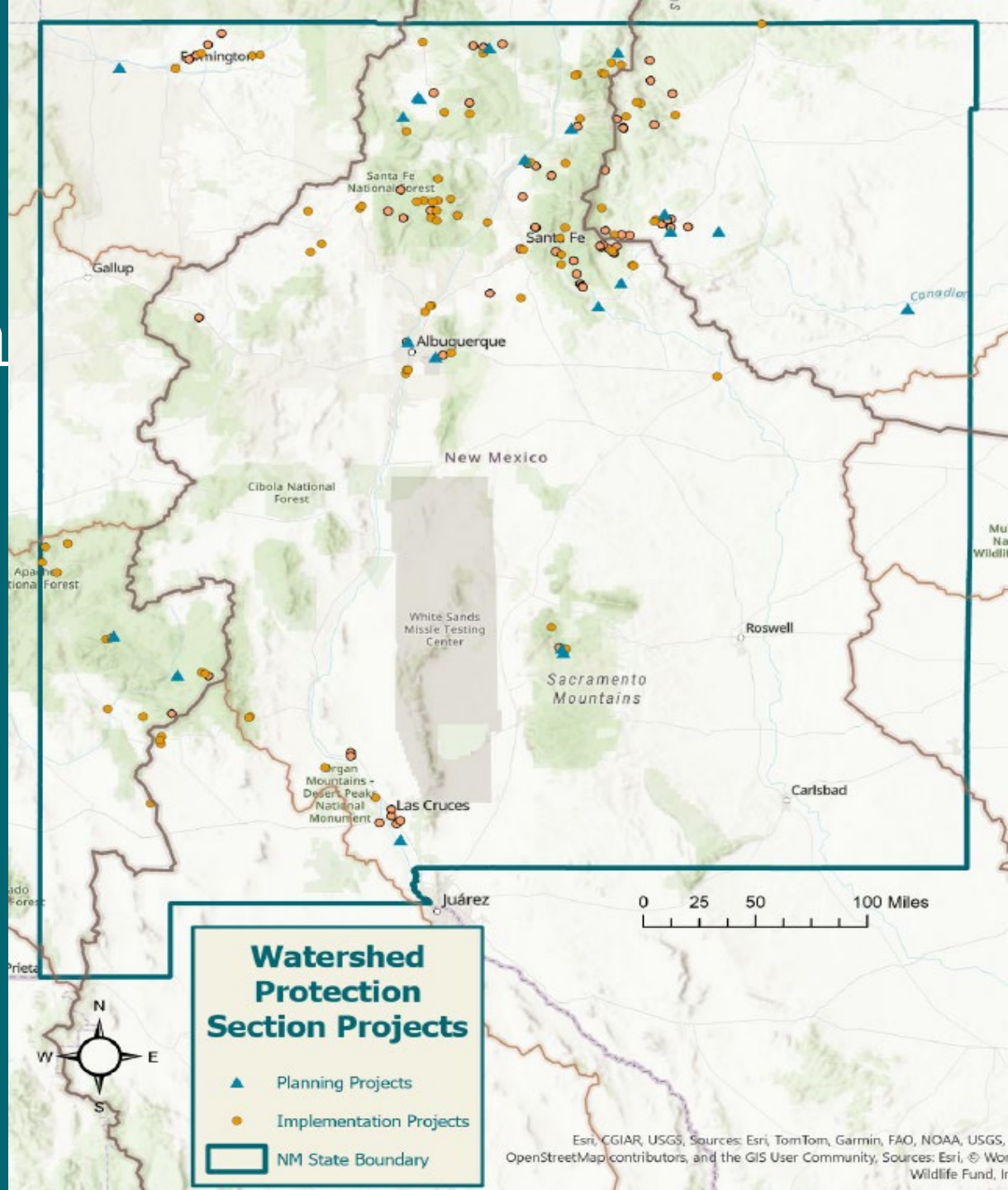
- ❑ Assist in the development, construction, maintenance and monitoring of projects that improve surface water quality, riparian habitat or aquatic habitat
- ❑ Application opportunity for up to \$75,000 to assist communities in getting projects started
- ❑ Eligible entities include vendors active on a Statewide Price Agreement or local public bodies
 - Results in faster procurement



River Stewardship Projects

67 projects completed

33 projects in progress





River Stewardship Funding

Year	Appropriation	Total Request	Funded*
2023	\$11,500,000	\$20,577,013	\$10,357,748
2024	\$2,000,000	\$10,721,836	\$5,975,938
2025	\$6,078,000	\$9,789,003	\$5,038,563.41
2026	\$11,721,300	\$12,000,000**	RFP in Progress

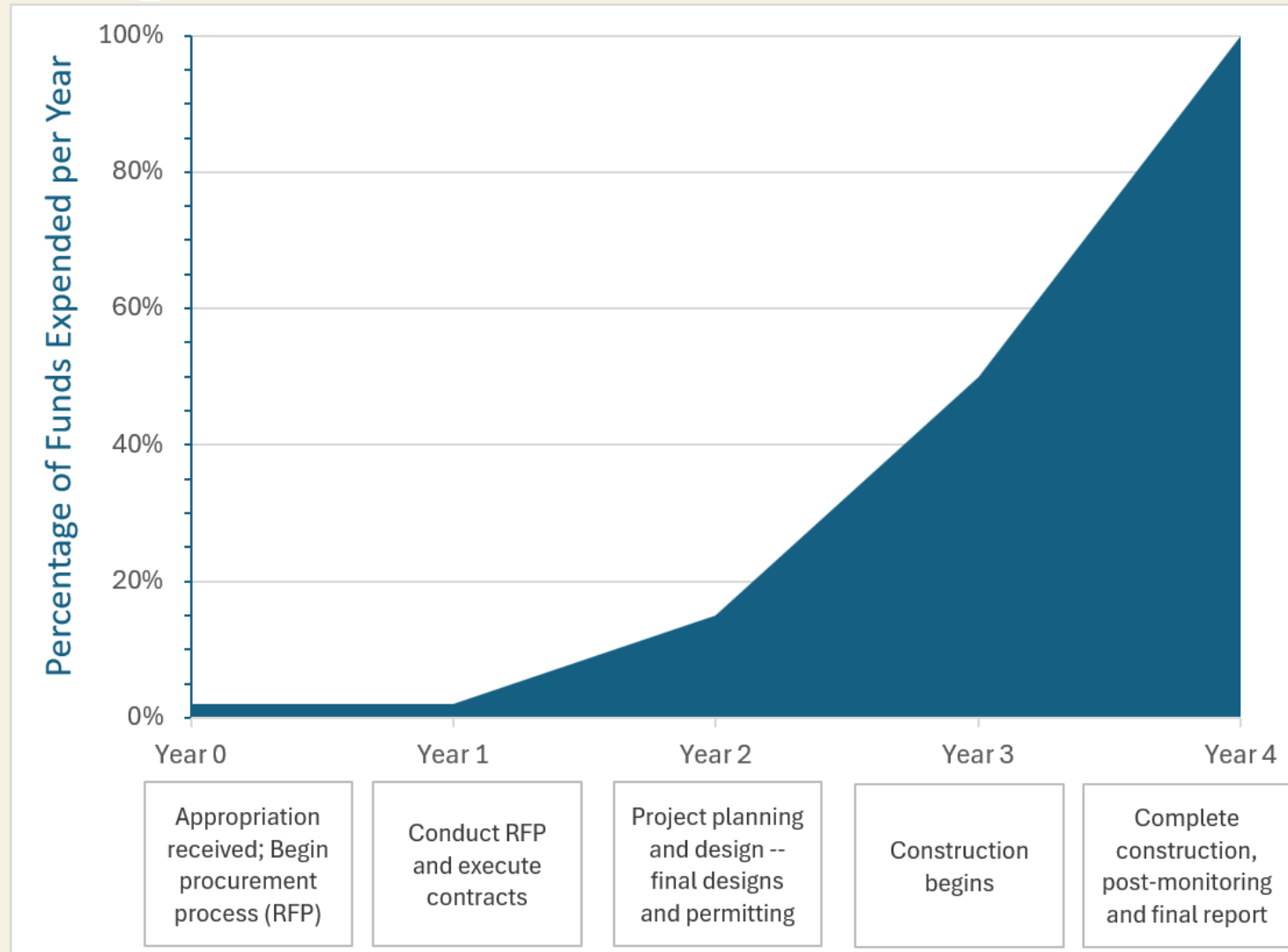
* Funded amount differs from appropriation amount because funds are utilized across fiscal years

** Estimated request, waiting on GSD to release cost proposals

- Aim is always to fully utilize funding and revert \$0
- River Stewardship Program hasn't reverted any funds within the last four years



Timeline for River Stewardship Program Project Expenditures





Challenges

- Procurement takes one year to complete
 - ▣ Watershed restoration projects would benefit from procurement code exemption
- Project terms are three to four years for completion (plan, design, permitting, and construction)
- Building the watershed restoration community statewide.
- Natural environments are dynamic – disasters happen and change timelines, funding inflexibility may result in lost project funding



Looking Forward: Recurring FY28 Requests

- Surface Water Quality Protection - \$5M
 - Implement Senate Bill 21 (2025)
 - Funding would avoid permit fees in FY28
 - Permitting, inspections, compliance, and enforcement
 - 20 existing positions covered by nonrecurring funds
 - 17 new positions
- Drinking Water System Support - \$4.6M
 - Utility operator certification modernization; capacity building for water systems; regionalization support
 - 12 existing positions funded by expiring federal funds
 - 10 new positions



Looking Forward: Nonrecurring FY28 Requests

- River Stewardship Program - \$10M
- Groundwater Permitting Program - \$2M
- Neglected contaminated sites - \$7.5M
- Strategic Water Supply fund - \$50M
- Rural Infrastructure Program fund - \$10M
- Capital outlay grant support - \$1M
- Clean Water State Revolving Fund match - \$5M
- Superfund match - \$7.6M



Questions

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