



New Mexico Environment Department

Reducing Disaster Impact on Water Systems
Jonas Armstrong, Water Protection Division Director
Joe Martinez, Drinking Water Bureau Chief
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Water Systems (WS) Impacted

Las Vegas & Ruidoso Fires & Flood Impacts

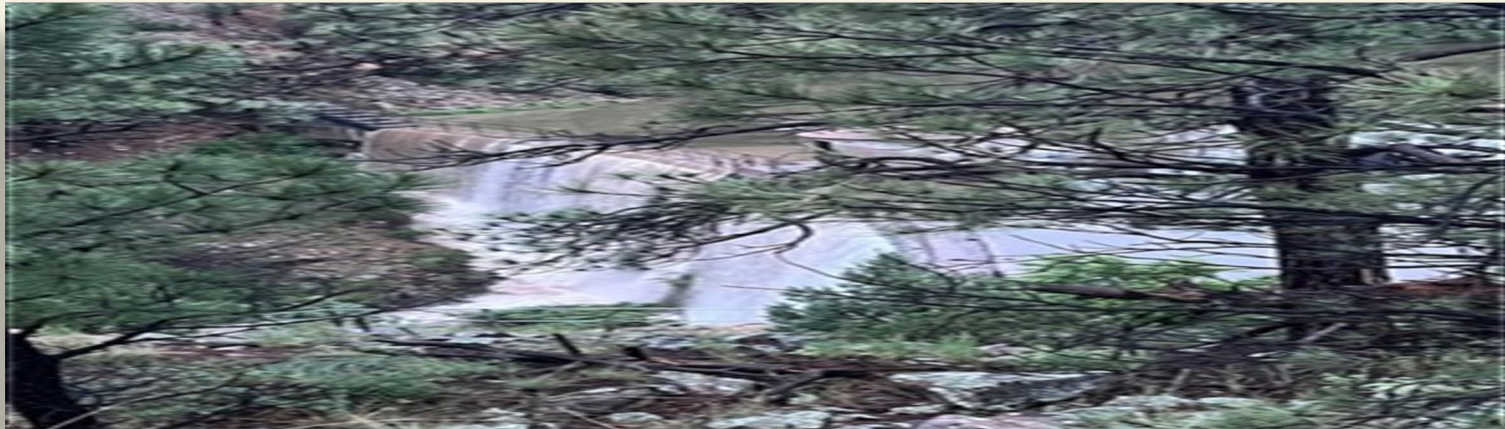
- ❑ Las Vegas, NM – Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Fire (2022)
- ❑ Las Vegas Water System burn scar flooding
- ❑ Ruidoso, NM – South Fork & Salt Fires (June 2024)
- ❑ South Fork & Salt fire burn scar flooding





Las Vegas WS Disaster Impact

1. **Fire & Watershed Damage:** Burned approx. 341,000 ac, including Las Vegas supply: Gallinas River watershed
2. Fire impacted watershed, leading to significant erosion and sediment runoff into the river
3. Reservoirs: highly turbid water & debris
4. Water treatment plant flooded
5. Water Restrictions Implemented
6. Community continues to experience serious issues due to failure to implement improvements although \$140 million allocated by FEMA and \$98 million already paid to the city.





Ruidoso WS Disaster Impact

1. Ruidoso severely hit by South Fork and Salt Fires in 2024, approx 25,500 ac burned
2. Monsoon rains triggered flash flooding
3. Over 160 people rescued in 1 day
4. 200 homes lost in flooding
5. Burned slopes shed ash, debris, and sediment into surface water sources
6. NMED issued boil-water advisories to 19,000 residents





Water System Recovery?

Ruidoso

- Water services largely restored
- Ruidoso Recovers dashboard shows active debris removal, infrastructure rebuilding, and FEMA assistance programs in full swing
- System currently stable, with proactive flood response and real-time alerts through RAIN map.

Las Vegas

- Gallinas River and Bradner Dam still contaminated
- Debris from the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Fire, causing high turbidity and delays in water treatment.
- City entered Stage IV water restrictions, limiting use to essential needs only
- City has received \$98 million dollars of \$140 million to build a new treatment facility and implement a pretreatment system but has not moved forward with construction.
- City continues to struggle with compliance issues and has been issued an Administrative Compliance Order with penalties.



Why the difference in recovery?

Ruidoso

- ❑ Modernized treatment plant
- ❑ Invested in well-trained, certified operators
- ❑ Developed robust emergency response plan
- ❑ City and County actively engaged in all aspects of the response and recovery.



Las Vegas

- ❑ Existing water system treatment and compliance issues exacerbated by the fires and flooding.
- ❑ Failure to take appropriate action by city government.
- ❑ Inadequate investment in treatment system prior to disasters.
- ❑ Lack of qualified operators.
- ❑ City received \$98,000,000 of \$140,000,000 from FEMA three years ago to repair existing system and build a new treatment facility but has not done so.
- ❑ City still dealing with non-compliance issues and has been issued compliance orders and fines.
- ❑ Las Vegas is entering into an Inter-Governmental Agreement with NMED, DHSEM, and DFA to ensure system gets constructed.



Small WS Impact & Recovery





Small Systems Navigating Crisis

Ruidoso Downs operates own drainage and flood control systems

Rural Mutual Domestic Water Consumers Associations (MDWCAs):

- Many were impacted by post-fire flooding and sedimentation, especially Mora and San Miguel counties
- Acequias (Traditional Irrigation Systems)
- Found throughout northern NM, community-managed ditches are vulnerable to both drought and post-fire debris flows



Disaster Themes

- Compounding Disasters
- Aging and unmaintained infrastructure
- Community resilience.
- Lack of financial investment.
- Climate Pressure



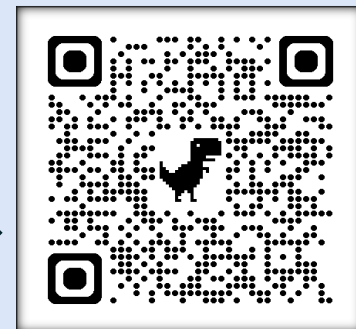
With a 25% decrease in available water projected in the next 50 years, fire risks are projected to increase.



NMED Funding available

- **CWSRF (Clean Water State Revolving Fund)**
- The CWSRF programs offer low-interest loans to eligible recipients for a range of water quality protection and restoration projects.
- **River Stewardship Program (RSP)**
- Goal: fund projects improving rivers' health by addressing poor water quality and stream habitat causes
- **Rural Infrastructure Program (RIP) Funding**
- RIP funding tied to water, wastewater, and solid waste projects
- **Drinking Water State Revolving Fund**
- low-cost financial assistance

More Information?





Recommendations Community:

- ❑ Regionalization & Shared Services/ costs
- ❑ Invest in Natural Infrastructure
- ❑ Emergency Preparedness Plans
- ❑ Apply for Resilience Funding
- ❑ Appropriate investments in infrastructure and staff.





Recommendations:

- ❑ Expand the New Mexico Match Fund
- ❑ Require Climate-Impact Risk Assessments
- ❑ Invest in Data & Monitoring
- ❑ Increase oversight and accountability in local government funding and projects
- ❑ Increase investments in training operators via the Drinking Water Bureau