



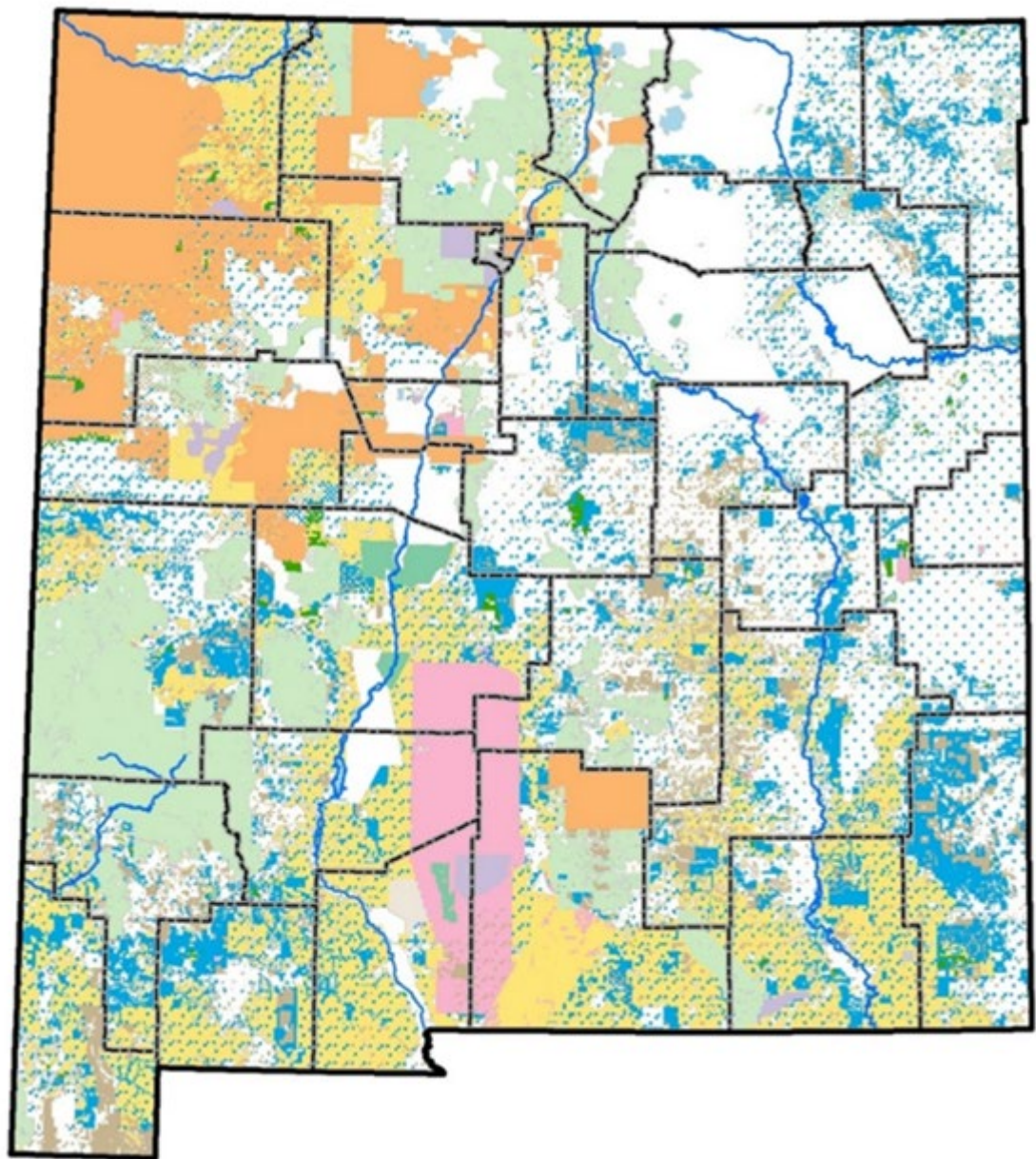
New Mexico State Land Office

LEGISLATIVE FINANCE COMMITTEE




**“NATURAL AND WORKING LAND
HABITAT OPPORTUNITIES”**

September 24, 2025

**Sunalei Stewart
Deputy Commissioner of Operations**



State Trust Lands

-  Subsurface Estate
-  Surface Estate
-  Both Estates

Other Surface Ownership

-  Bureau of Indian Affairs/Tribes
-  Bureau of Land Management
-  Bureau of Reclamation
-  Department of Agriculture
-  Department of Defense
-  Private
-  DOE
-  USDA Forest Service
-  Fish and Wildlife Service
-  National Park Service
-  Valles Caldera National Preserve
-  State Parks



Land & Habitat Restoration

General Approach

- Healthy lands are more productive and resilient
- Ecosystem health on a landscape level
- Leverage multijurisdictional resources & lessee partnerships
- Ensure responsible parties address damage
- Recognize importance of New Mexicans' reliance on public lands



Framework

- Agency funded projects to enhance wildlife habitat, range conditions, forest and watershed health
- Partnerships with agricultural community, NGOs, federal/state/local agencies, COGs, soil and water conservation districts, etc.
- Restoration and Remediation Fund
- Grants
- Maintain industry accountability regarding responsible operations and cleanup
- Mitigation stipulations in leases to protect species and habitat
- Best management practices for lessees
- Executive orders to protect sensitive landscapes
- Land exchanges to swap lands suitable for protection for more commercially-viable lands
- Conservation & stewardship leasing
- Land use restrictions
- Landscape-level planning
- Biological surveys and increased data collection to better inform decision-making
- Environmental Compliance Office oversight of remediation and reclamation activities (legal action as needed)
- Public engagement (e.g., sportspeople, recreational users traditional and tribal communities)

Recent Examples

- NMDGF collaboration to enhance wildlife habitat and sportspeople access (e.g., wildlife friendly fencing, drinkers, wildlife corridors, roads); includes in-kind contribution under hunting access agreement
- \$2.8 million agreement with NM Land Conservancy and DOD for WSMR land use restriction on 60,000 acres in the Chupadera Mesa (phase 2 will add another 60,000)
- Protected LPC habitat by restricting new large-scale development on about 20,000 acres of state land, voluntary partnerships with private landowners on about 5,000 acres; financed by NextEra Energy (over \$4.3 million)
- SWCDs treated invasive plant species to benefit landscapes across jurisdictional boundaries within the Pecos River Valley (15,094 acres in FY25, 11,541 acres in FY26 so far).
- Worked with the Village of Ruidoso to implement a strategically-placed fuel break along the west boundary of Moon Mountain
- Provided 100 cords of wood to the San Miguel de Bado Land Grant in Villanueva from a 200-acre forest thinning project in partnership with NM Wild and the Land Grant Council
- Treated 200 acres for noxious Canada thistle in the Elk Ridge Management Area as part of a broader treatment area within the White Peak landscape

Recent Examples (Cont.)

- Organ Mountains – Desert Peaks National Monument land exchange with BLM
- USFWS Valle de Oro land exchange in Bernalillo County
- Recreational Access Permits +6% in FY25; northeast recreational assessment to support planning efforts; grant application for trail planning in the White Peak landscape
- Partnered with BLM on remediation project that decreased erosion and provided watershed enhancement opportunities at former railroad ballast mine
- Environmental Compliance Office oversaw the completion of 349 remediation closures, development of 270 reclamation plans in FY25; enforcement actions have resulted in about 740 O&G wells plugged at industry's expense
- Conducted grassland bird surveys on 4,900 acres as NFWF grant match
- Entered into conservation lease to protect endangered cactus in NW (and earned \$48,000)

QUESTIONS?



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