

Report to New Mexico Soil and Water Conservation Districts

*New Mexico Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Programs and Resources
Division*

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<https://nmdeptag.nmsu.edu/apr/soil-and-water-districts.html>

November 2022

October 30 th	1 st quarterly budget report due to DFA-LGD (cc: to SWCC, SWCC region commissioner, and NMDA Specialist)
October 31 st	Water Quality and Conservation Grant 1 st quarterly report and budget due to the SWCC and NMDA Specialist
Nov to Dec	Adopt Open Meetings Act Resolution to cover upcoming calendar year (cc: NMDA)
December 1 st	Agreed Upon Procedure Report (AUP) Report or Certification forms due to the New Mexico State Auditor Office.

OMA Notification Requirements

Remember that if you have to hold a district board meeting at a date, time or location that deviates from the information you advertised in your Open Meetings Act resolution, you must advertise it accordingly. Here are the guidelines:

Regular Meeting – 10 Days Prior

Special Meeting – 3 Days Prior

Emergency Meeting – 24 Hours Prior

As COVID containment efforts continue, it is possible that an event scheduled for the near future could be postponed, canceled, or hosted online instead of in person. Because of the fluid nature of things in response to COVID, NMDA recommends that you check with the host organization for the events contained in this report that the events have not changed in terms of their date or the manner in which they are to be hosted. We have included event websites to make this a simple step for you.

1. Agricultural Workforce Development Program- still welcoming applications from agribusinesses seeking to hire interns

The New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) Agricultural Workforce Development (AWD) Program grant application period **opened June 10** and will continue until funds are fully allocated or by March 31, 2023, whichever comes first. Internships can begin July 1, 2022 and must be completed by May 31, 2023.

NMDA's AWD Program offers incentives to the state's agricultural businesses to hire interns. The AWD Program is intended to provide hands-on educational opportunities for students aspiring to careers in agriculture, as well as young or beginning farmers and

ranchers. The AWD Program is the result of the [Agricultural Workforce Development Program Act](#), which was signed into law in 2019.

NMDA will reimburse qualified agricultural businesses up to 50 percent of the actual cost of hiring a qualified intern, not to exceed \$15,000 per internship. An agricultural business may request funding to hire as many as three interns per calendar year. Each intern must be provided with **at least one hundred thirty (130) hours** of work experience, not exceeding one (1) year in duration per intern.

1. The period for agricultural businesses to apply is from June 10, 2022 to March 31, 2023 **or until funds are fully allocated**. NMDA will award funding to agricultural businesses based on: **a)** their compliance with program requirements; and **b)** funding availability.
2. Internships must occur between July 1, 2022 and May 31, 2023.

Please note:

- NMDA will **not** match agricultural businesses with potential interns.
- Agricultural businesses must identify an intern prior to applying for funding.
- Interns must be 18 years or older by the start of the internship.
- Immediate family members of the agricultural business are NOT eligible to participate.
- Participating agricultural businesses must pay minimum wage (or higher) to each intern, as well as carry workers' compensation insurance for each intern.

For more information, please visit:

<https://nmdeptag.nmsu.edu/agricultural-workforce-development.html>.

2. SWCC Appropriation Funding Allocation Memo

On October 13, 2022, the SWCC met and voted to allocate the SWCC \$3 Million appropriation as follows:

Funded Projects

Central Curry SWCD; Rainwater Harvesting Demonstration	\$73,480.00
Ciudad SWCD; Floodplain Restoration at the Tijeras Bio-Zone Education Center	\$70,105.00
Ciudad SWCD, Landscape Scale Restoration Grant Augmentation Funding	\$150,000.00
Claunch-Pinto SWCD; Building Capacity to Increase Conservation and Build Resilience at Soil and Water Conservation Districts across New Mexico	
<i>Fund planning document and story map only</i>	\$100,000.00
Coronado SWCD; Ciruela Arroyo Regeneration Program	\$125,000.00
Deming SWCD; Replacement of Drip Tape in Underground Irrigation Projects	\$300,000.00
East Rio Arriba SWCD; Noxious Weeds	\$270,000.00
East Rio Arriba SWCD; Riparian Restoration	\$39,516.00
Guadalupe SWCD; Pintada Watershed Soil Erosion Reduction Project	

Phase I	\$200,000.00
Grant SWCD; Lower Bear Creek Floodplain Protection	\$285,000.00
Lea SWCD; Saving Ogallala Water in Lea County	\$478,500.00
Santa Fe-Pojoaque SWCD; Construction of Guardrail Barriers and Rehabilitation of Unauthorized OHV Trails at Three High-Hazard Flood and Sediment Control Dams in Southern Rio Arriba County, New Mexico	\$40,458.00
Sierra SWCD; Wildlife Guzzler Installment	\$78,425.00
Upper Chama SWCD; Building Resiliency in the Upper Rio Chama Watershed	\$750,000.00
Upper Hondo SWCD; Rio Ruidoso Watershed Restoration and Management	\$39,516.00
	TOTAL \$3,000,000.00

Projects Not Funded

Ciudad SWCD; GSI Feasibility Study	\$97,500.00
Ciudad SWCD; Mil Levy referendum and long-range plan	\$20,000.00
Valencia SWCD; Soil and Hydrogeomorphic Assessment of the Whitfield Conservation Area Complex	\$92,573.00

3. FEMA Accepting Hazard Mitigation Assistance Grant Applications

The fiscal year 2022 application period for the Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs) for the [Flood Mitigation Assistance \(FMA\)](#) grant program and the new [Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities \(BRIC\)](#) grant programs opened on Sept. 30, 2022, and will close at 3 p.m. Eastern Time on Jan. 27, 2023.

FEMA's two competitive mitigation grant programs provide states, local communities, tribes and territories funding to address high-level future risks to natural disasters such as wildfires, drought, hurricanes, earthquakes, extreme heat, and increased flooding to foster greater community resilience and reduce disaster suffering.

For more information, visit <https://www.fema.gov/grants/mitigation/fy2022-nofo>.

4. Sunshine Laws Training

The Office of the New Mexico Attorney General will hold an online presentation/training on the "Sunshine Laws" on November 22nd.

The purpose of the presentation is to educate and assist New Mexicans regarding the importance of transparency and compliance, as well as the rights of the public under New Mexico's Sunshine Laws, the Open Meetings Act (OMA) and the Inspection of Public Records Act (IPRA). These events are open to all interested members and staff of state and local governments, school boards, commissions, media, and the general public. The first 90 minutes of each presentation addresses OMA followed by IPRA, and individuals can attend either or both trainings.

Though the trainings are offered at NO CHARGE, you are asked that you RSVP to Patricia Salazar at roadshows@nmag.gov or by telephone at (505) 490-4863.

5. NM Vegetation Management Association's Annual Conference

The NMVMA is a network of professionals involved in vegetation management, including noxious weed species. The members are a diverse group of individuals working across many types of landscapes and different land ownerships. NMVMA hosts an annual conference to provide continuing education units to licensed applicators and to provide the latest treatment information, updates on laws and regulations governing applicators, and best management practices.

This year, the New Mexico Vegetation Management Association's (NMVMA) annual conference will be held on November 16-17, 2022 at the Ruidoso Convention Center, 111 Sierra Blanca Dr., Ruidoso, NM 88345. They are asking that you pre-register for the conference and will NOT be taking walk-ins. The Hotel Elegante is honoring the Federal Per Diem rate; when booking, refer to this conference for the rate. For more information on registration and to view the draft agenda, please visit: <https://www.nmvma.com/>.

6. NM Edge Classes

NM Edge will be holding classes during the month of November. To see the full list of classes available for 2022, visit: <https://nmedge.nmsu.edu/documents/nm-edge-external-2022-calendar-ud-2102022.pdf>.

All classes are offered online.

For more information, to register and for the class zoom information, visit: <https://nmedge.nmsu.edu/>

7. Stockman & Stewardship Event

Register today for the free Stockmanship & Stewardship virtual event to be held Tuesday, Nov. 1, 2022. This online version of the popular in-person event provides an opportunity for cattle producers to learn about beef sustainability and livestock welfare, how consumer concerns have impacted the industry, and the role that Beef Quality Assurance plays in the conversation.

The full-day event features nationally recognized speakers and clinicians discussing topics such as grazing management practices in various climates, cattle handling, marketing, nutrition, international trade, labor, antimicrobial resistance and more. The program brings together beef and dairy producers, stakeholders and key industry members to engage in the discussion of current industry challenges, consumer driven trends, and realistic strategies to enhance producers' commitment to stockmanship and stewardship.

For more information and to register, visit www.StockmanshipAndStewardship.org or Wendy White, wwhite@beef.org.

8. Reminders for Healthy Soil Program FY23 grantees, tips for FY24 grant applicants

NMDA's Healthy Soil Program awarded 51 grants to projects across the state for implementation in Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23). Thirteen of those projects are being implemented by Eligible Entities, defined in law as "local governmental [entities] with proven land management capacity to support healthy soil". This year's Eligible Entities are 7 SWCDs, 2 pueblos, 2 acequias, 1 Extension-related site, and 1 conservancy district. The remaining projects are being implemented by Individual Applicants – individuals, businesses, and nonprofits engaged in farming, ranching, or another form of land management – whose project is sponsored by either an SWCD or by their pueblo, tribe, or nation.

NMDA offers the reminder that all FY23 grantees – whether they are Eligible Entities or Individual Applicants – should **invoice early and often**. Thank you to those who have already invoiced for their required pre-project soil test. The first of three quarterly reports (reflecting on project implementation between August 15 and November 30) is due December 31.

In preparation for the FY24 grant-application period opening in late Winter / early Spring 2023:

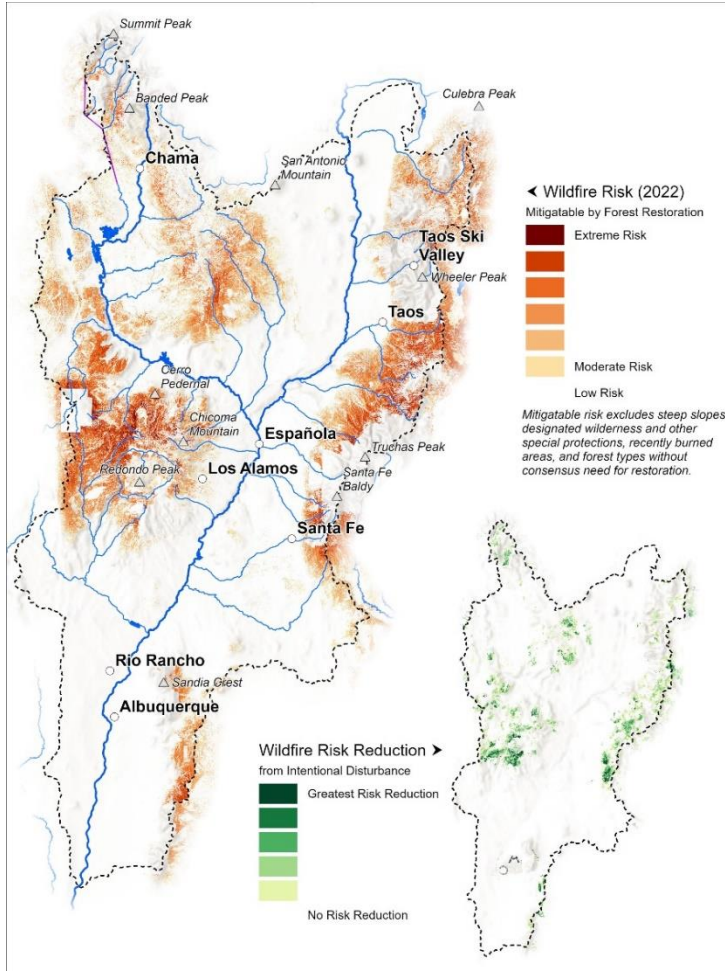
- SWCDs and other Eligible Entities intending to apply should **check SAM.gov to ensure that the Eligible Entity has a current Unique Entity ID** (which began to replace DUNS numbers in April 2022). The process of registering with SAM.gov is free but can be time-consuming. Having a current Unique Entity ID will allow the Eligible Entity to apply for a sizable FY24 Healthy Soil Program grant. FY24 funding caps for Eligible Entities will be determined pending the 2023 legislative session.
- Please encourage **Individual Applicants** seeking project sponsorship from your district to **reach out to USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to complete conservation planning** well before the Healthy Soil Program application period opens. Conservation planning is the absolute foundation for Individual Applicant projects, given that soil health-related resource concerns determine which soil health principles land managers should focus on, which agricultural/conservation activities they should implement, and which items to purchase in order to implement those activities.

Stay up to date on Healthy Soil Program happenings by subscribing to the program's e-newsletter at <https://nmdeptag.nmsu.edu/healthy-soil-program.html>. If your district staff and supervisors would like more Healthy Soil Program information delivered in real time, please **send an email to hsp@nmda.nmsu.edu requesting a virtual (i.e., Zoom) presentation** by program co-leads Dean Bruce and Katie Goetz during a future board meeting. We will do our best to accommodate such requests, particularly those from SWCDs that have not participated yet in the Healthy Soil Program.

9. RGWF Signatories Meeting Postponed

We've decided to postpone the Signatories Meeting in lieu of a larger, in-person gathering in Spring of 2023. Stay tuned for more details! In the meantime, we hope you can join us for the event below. **New RGWF Wildfire Risk Assessment: Wednesday, November 16 from 9-11AM**; To register, please visit the website below.

https://tnc.zoom.us/webinar/register/8016657709622/WN_y4ArI8xQQHClrhCnbPWfzA



A new risk map highlights effectiveness of forest restoration treatments and continued need for risk mitigation.

Join us for an overview of this wildfire risk assessment and its implications for our community and broader watershed, presented by Steve Bassett, TNC Director of Spatial Analysis & Planning. Q&A to follow.

Matt Piccarello, Forest and Watershed Health Manager, will also provide an update on what's ahead for the RGWF in 2023.

10. 2022 Fall Wetlands Roundtable

It's planning time for the 2022 Fall Wetlands Roundtable! This Fall we will have one Statewide Roundtable (instead of two) and it is scheduled for **Thursday, December 8, 2022**. We are continuing the virtual Wetlands Roundtable format for this Fall. We are still working on obtaining the technology for a hybrid meeting and hopefully we will be ready for that in the Spring where we will resume having both the Southern and Northern Wetlands Roundtables. The virtual Wetlands Roundtables have allowed us to reach

participants that cannot travel to our meetings which definitely has been a plus. I am excited to see or hear from you again at our Virtual Wetlands Roundtable using WEBEX.

We have set the dates for **Thursday, December 8, 2022** for our statewide Wetlands Roundtable. We are working on the **Agenda** and are looking for presenters for the meeting, so if you would like to present, please let me (maryann.mcgraw@env.nm.gov) know. (Note the new email addresses at NMED!) Also if you have **Announcements** that you would like to have on our introductory Powerpoint or would just like to make the announcement in person at the meeting, please send me your announcements by email.

So plan to grab your coffee or tea and morning energy bar, and cozy up to your old friend by now, your telework computer.

As we get closer to the meeting dates we will send out the agendas and “JOIN the MEETING” WEBEX notices to all of you. Please pass on the invitation to others interested in the Roundtables as well. We look forward to getting together again with all of you at our Virtual NM Wetlands Roundtable!

If you have any questions, please email (maryann.mcgraw@env.nm.gov).

The New Mexico Wetland Roundtables are conducted as part of a Wetlands Program Development Grant from EPA Region 6 to foster partnerships and collaboration for the restoration and protection of wetlands and riparian resources in New Mexico. The roundtables are conducted on a semi-annual schedule and if you have not attended in the past, we would like you to see what the New Mexico Wetlands Roundtables are all about. There is no cost to attend.

11. NM Wildland Urban Fire Summit

The NM Wildland Urban Fire Summit will be held in Santa Fe from November 16-18. The theme is **Community Recovery, Cultivating Resilience**. They are calling for presentations, since hearing local examples can be most impactful. Some guidance on submissions:

Topics should focus on collective recovering from wildland fire effects and how to build capacity for the future to adapt and respond to a longer and more intense fire season and the impacts. We invite you to submit a proposal that focuses on the theme and share experiences and lessons learned that will help others who share similar challenges in New Mexico’s rural and urban wildland interface. Presentations should be non-judgmental and solution oriented.

<https://www.nmcounties.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2022-WUFS-Call-for-Presentations.pdf>

12. NMACD Annual Meeting & District Supervisors Certification Training

Please help us get the word out to all District Supervisors that we are offering to hold a District Supervisors Certification Training on November 7th from 2:00-5:00 pm., the day

before the NMACD Annual Conference actually starts, **if there is sufficient interest**. It's shown on the attached agenda as **Elected Official Certification**. We are considering sufficient interest as approximately 8-10 or more people. Please let Troy Hood (Troy.Hood@q.com, 505-280-8102) know if you plan to attend this training.

If anyone is planning to attend the conference on November 8-9, remember that “early-bird registration” at a lesser amount ends October 31st. You can register for the conference and the hotel on our website. www.nmacd.org.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us. Thank you!

13. USDA Announces the November 18, 2022 Application Deadline for Conservation Program Funding in NM

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is announcing the application deadline for conservation program funding in New Mexico as **November 18, 2022**.

Financial assistance is provided through a competitive process that includes creating a conservation plan, ranking applications, and establishing eligibility of the land and the applicant(s). Although applications are accepted on a year-round basis, only applications received by **November 18, 2022** will be considered for funding this fiscal year for projects where the majority of the land is located in New Mexico.

“Applicants are encouraged to apply as soon as possible so that NRCS staff can begin working on the conservation plan which is the basis for program funding,” said Kenneth Branch, New Mexico Assistant State Conservationist for Programs. “Projects cannot start until the contract is obligated. The application deadline was set to give farmers and ranchers a few months to apply and still get contracts funded as early as possible in the year so that farmers and ranchers can start on their important projects. Field offices are ready to help you with your application and will conduct appointments and field visits following COVID guidelines.”

To find your local USDA service center click [here](#).

To find more important application information, read the [full press release](#).

14. 30 by 30 Committee Seeks Input to Define Important Conservation Terms

The New Mexico 30 by 30 Committee has prepared a second Request for Information (RFI), this time seeking public feedback on draft definitions for Conserved Lands and Climate Stabilization Areas. Here is the survey link: <https://arcg.is/1TqynW0> Spanish and English versions of the Press Release are also attached.

These definitions are important because they will help with baseline assessments of conservation activity in New Mexico and progress toward 30 by 30 goals as well as answer other key questions, such as how well existing conservation programs are working for

communities across the state, and how they can be improved moving forward. Please share the survey broadly!

If you have any questions contact: Jacob Pederson, Forest Restoration Officer, New Mexico Forestry Division Jacob.Pederson@emnrd.nm.gov

15. EPA Announces \$26 Million in Funding for New Mexico Water Infrastructure Improvements

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced more than \$26 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding to the New Mexico Environment Department and the New Mexico Finance Authority for water infrastructure improvements.

The New Mexico Drinking Water State Revolving Fund capitalization grant is being awarded to the New Mexico Finance Authority in the amount of \$17,992,00 for their drinking water program. The Drinking Water State Revolving Fund is a financial assistance program to help water systems and states to achieve the health protection objectives of the Safe Drinking Water Act. The focus of this program is to improve drinking water treatment, fixing aging water distribution system, improve sources of water supply and replace or repair water storage tanks.

The New Mexico Clean Water State Revolving Fund capitalization grant is being awarded to the New Mexico Environment Department in the amount of \$8,738,000. The Clean Water State Revolving Fund is a financial assistance program to provide loans to eligible recipients to construct municipal wastewater facilities, control nonpoint sources of pollution, build decentralized wastewater systems, create green infrastructure projects, protect estuaries, and fund other water quality projects. Nearly half of the grant will focus on assisting disadvantaged communities across the state.

For more information, visit: <https://www.epa.gov/infrastructure>.

16. USDA Announces Details for the Upcoming Census of Agriculture

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will mail the 2022 Census of Agriculture to millions of agriculture producers across the 50 states and Puerto Rico this fall. The 2022 Census of Agriculture will be mailed in phases, starting with an invitation to respond online in November followed by paper questionnaires in December. Farm operations of all sizes, urban and rural, which produced and sold, or normally would have sold, \$1,000 or more of agricultural product in 2022 are included in the Ag Census. Collected in service to American agriculture since 1840 and now conducted every five years by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), the Census of Agriculture tells the story and shows the value of U.S. agriculture. It highlights land use and ownership, producer characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures, among other topics. Between Ag Census years, NASS considers revisions to the questionnaire to document changes and emerging trends in the industry. Changes to the 2022 questionnaire include new questions about the use of precision agriculture, hemp production, hair sheep, and updates to internet access questions. To learn

more about the Census of Agriculture, visit www.nass.usda.gov/agcensus or call 800-727-9540. On the website, producers and other data users can access frequently asked questions, past Ag Census data, partner tools to help spread the word about the upcoming Ag Census, special study information, and more. For state-specific questions, please contact Rodger Ott at 1-800-392-3202.

17. USDA to Survey Row Crops County Acreage and Production

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) will conduct the survey of producers in 38 states, including Arizona, Colorado, Montana, and New Mexico as part of its 2022 Row Crops County Agricultural Production Survey. The survey will collect information on total acres planted, acres harvested, and total production of row crops to support estimates down to the county level. Producers can complete their survey securely online at agcounts.usda.gov.

“The data provided by producers will help federal and state programs support the farmer,” said Rodger Ott, Director, Mountain Regional Field Office. “We hope every producer who receives this survey will take the time to respond. Producers benefit when there are data available to help determine accurate loan rates, disaster payments, crop insurance price elections, and more. Without data, agencies such as USDA’s Risk Management Agency or Farm Service Agency may not have enough information on which to base their programs.”

If producers don’t respond online or by mail, in a few weeks a NASS representative will contact growers to arrange an interview to complete the survey. The information will be used for statistical purposes only. In accordance with federal law, responses will be kept confidential and will not be disclosed in identifiable form.

The survey results will be published in NASS’s Quick Stats database (quickstats.nass.usda.gov). For more information on NASS surveys and reports and for the release dates by commodity, visit nass.usda.gov/Publications/Calendar/reports_by_date.php. For state specific questions, please contact your USDA NASS State Statistician at 1-800-392-3202: New Mexico – Rodger Ott.

18. BLM Seeks Nominations to Rio Puerco Management Committee

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) today announced that it is seeking public nominations for positions on the Rio Puerco Management Committee. This citizen-based committee assists in the development of recommendations that address public land management issues within the Rio Puerco Field Office.

The Committee, which is formally chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, provides advice and recommendations to the BLM on the development and implementation of management plans in accordance with the Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act. The Committee has successfully demonstrated that consensus-driven recommendations often lead to sustainable outcomes that benefit long-term public land planning and management. This inclusive approach is proven successful and often enjoys a high level of public support.

The Committee consists of 15 members that represent the Rio Puerco Watershed Committee; affected Tribes and Pueblos; the U.S. Forest Service; the Bureau of Reclamation; the U.S. Geological Survey; the Bureau of Indian Affairs; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; the Environmental Protection Agency; the Natural Resources Conservation Service; the State of New Mexico, including the New Mexico Environment Department of the State Engineer; affected local soil and water conservation districts; the Elephant Butte Irrigation District; a private landowner; and a representative of the public at large.

Individuals may nominate themselves or others to serve on the Committee. Nominees, who must be residents of the state, will be reviewed based on their training, education, and knowledge of the Committee's geographic area. Nominees should also demonstrate a commitment to consensus building and collaborative decision-making. Letters of reference should accompany all nominations from any represented interests or organizations, a completed Committee application, and any other information that speaks to the nominee's qualifications. For more information, please contact Adam Lujan at alujan@blm.gov or 505-761-8734.

19. There is still time to respond to USDA's Conservation Practice Adoption Motivations Survey

USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) will continue collecting responses to the Conservation Practice Adoption Motivations Survey over the coming weeks. Survey recipients may respond securely online at www.agcounts.usda.gov, by phone, or mail. A representative for NASS may call producers to set up an interview to assist in the completion of the questionnaire.

In late May, NASS mailed the survey to 2,600 farmers and ranchers in the Mountain Region States of Arizona, Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming. A joint project between NASS and USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), this new survey is aimed at better understanding conservation practice adoption and the role of technical and financial assistance. The data will be used to guide the implementation of NRCS programs in the future.

All information reported by individuals will be kept confidential, as required by federal law. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact your USDA NASS State Statistician at 1-800-392-3202: New Mexico—Rodger Ott.

20. NM Fire Information: Stay Informed about Fires & Post-Fire Recovery Efforts

New Mexico Fire Information (<https://nmfireinfo.com/information/>) is an interagency effort by federal and state agencies in New Mexico to provide timely, accurate, fire and restriction information for the entire state. The agencies that support the site are the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, State of New Mexico, and U.S. Forest Service. The site is updated as often as new

information is available from the Southwest Coordination Center, individual forests, national parks, state lands, tribal lands and BLM offices. The aim is to provide one website where the best available information and links related to wildfire and restrictions can be accessed.

21. Science Says Thinned Forests are Healthy Forests

“The new [Forest Service](#) strategy on [Confronting the Wildfire Crisis](#) outlines the agency’s plan for increasing fuels and forest health treatments to create healthier forests and reduce the risk to communities.”

Overgrown forests are one of the key contributing factors to the current wildfire crisis in the West. The new Forest Service strategy on Confronting the Wildfire Crisis outlines the agency’s plan for increasing fuels and forest health treatments to create healthier forests and reduce the risk to communities.

To review the plan and more information on the Forest Service’s plan to thin, visit: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/features/science-says-thinned-forests-are-healthy-forests>

22. Records Management and Recording of Meetings during the Pandemic

Records Management Division provided some recommendations and guidance as to how long a recording of a district meeting needs to be held on file. The response by the Records Management Division was given:

Our recommendation for the recordings of the meetings, once the audio has been transcribed, the recording becomes non-records and can be destroyed at any time. The transcribed document shall become the official record and retained permanently.

For more information, or if you have questions, please contact Records Management Division at (505) 476-7921, or email Tanya Vigil at Tanya.Vigil@state.nm.us.

23. Electronic Meeting Options for SWCDs

Due to various state directives related to the COVID-19 situation, SWCDs that need to address time sensitive or emergency issues must meet electronically (teleconference and/or video conference). Your NMDA Soil and Water Conservation Specialist can help you get these platforms up and running for your SWCD. Here are a few options that have been the most successful:

- **Zoom** – This is a computer-based platform that allows participants the option to either connect through the internet with video and voice, or call in like a conference call using only voice.
 - While there is a free version, it does have a time limit of 40 minutes. This has caused problems for some SWCDs because the SWCD meetings typically last longer than 40 minutes.
 - The Pro Package is \$14.99 per month, and includes unlimited time, and up to 100 participants per meeting. It also includes cloud storage, the option to record the

meeting, screen sharing, and other features. This should be sufficient for most SWCDs.

- This is the link to the Zoom website <https://nmsu.zoom.us/pricing>
- **Webex** - is a similar video/phone conferencing option to Zoom, offering both free and prepaid plans.
 - Webex's free plan, allows up to 100 participants in each meeting, there is not a time limit on meetings, and it also does not limit the number of meetings one can hold.
 - Webex allows both video conferencing and phone calls into the conference number. Which assists those who either do not have internet or internet that does not support video conferencing.
 - Currently Webex is offering a promotion that allows a free first month when you sign up for a paid monthly plan, and four months free when an annual plan is purchased. Use code **wecare2020** to access this offer.

Other options available with the paid Webex plans include cloud storage, the option to record the meeting, screen sharing, and other features. Paid plans start at \$13.50 per month. To view what each plan includes, prices and frequently asked questions, visit: <https://www.webex.com/pricing/index.html>

24. Guidance from NMDA to SWCDs during COVID-19 Pandemic

The memo is informational and provides additional guidance to the New Mexico Soil and Water Conservation Commission (SWCC) and the New Mexico Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) during the time of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The most up to date orders issued by the Governor through the New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) can be found here: <https://cv.nmhealth.org/public-health-orders-and-executive-orders/>

In addition to the information on the NMDOH website, the New Mexico Attorney General (NMAG) has also issued Open Meetings Act (OMA) guidance related to conduct of public meetings during the period of social distancing, which can be found at: <https://www.nmag.gov/>

In part the NMAG states:

“The Office of the Attorney General’s Open Government Division (OGD) advises all public entities subject to OMA to first and foremost follow the guidelines of the Department of Health and other health officials to ensure the health and safety of both members of the entity and the public. Accordingly, the most prudent thing to do to ensure compliance with OMA would be to postpone /cancel a public meeting. If, however, a board or commission has a time-sensitive matter to attend to, it may proceed with a virtual meeting, provided it’s notice of meeting contains detailed information (password, phone number, etc.) about how members of the public may attend and listen via telephone, live streaming or other similar technologies.

More specifically, if a public body decides to proceed with a virtual meeting, it should:

- At the start of the meeting, the chair should announce the names of those members of the public body participating remotely.
- All members of the public body participating remotely must identify themselves whenever they speak and must be clearly audible to the other members of the public body and to the public.
- Members of the public should be afforded remote access, via live stream or other similar technology, if possible, or call-in number for listening by phone.
- Chair should suspend discussion if the audio or video is interrupted.
- All votes of the public body must be by roll call vote.”

NMDA has provided all of the above information to SWCDs through its monthly report to SWCDs as well as through individual contact to each district. However, since this is a rapidly evolving situation, it bears repeating.

You are advised to conduct public meetings in a manner consistent with the public health orders and in compliance with the NMAG guidelines. This means that the meeting must be conducted in a manner that the public has access to participate through a conference call line allowing many interested publics to attend at once. All members of the public must be able to attend and must be allowed to participate in the meeting no matter which technology is chosen. It is advised that no one gather for the meeting in observance of the order to stay socially distant. If meetings are conducted via teleconference or web-based conference service, there would be no need to gather.

In addition to compliance with the social distancing order, it is also important to respect that individuals with underlying health conditions (potentially members of the SWCD board, employees, or the public) may not want to gather even with the appropriate six feet of distance. Therefore, NMDA strongly urges you to conduct any meetings in strict accordance with the orders and guidelines issued by the State of New Mexico. Please consider this information and the guidelines as you decide to hold a public meeting. If you have questions, please contact NMDA staff at 575-646-2642 or call your specific SWCD specialist.

25. Rolling Quorums

NMDA would like to remind all SWCD and Watershed District boards to be careful when emailing and hosting conference calls during this time of limited interaction. A rolling quorum needs to be avoided. The definition and examples are stated below, directly from the Attorney General’s Open Meetings Act Compliance Guide.

Rolling Quorums (Open Meetings Act Compliance Guide 2015 page 7):

The Act’s requirement for open, public meetings applies to any discussion of public business among a quorum of a public body’s members. Usually, a quorum of a public body’s members meets together to discuss public business or take action. However, a quorum may exist for purposes of the Act even when the members are not physically present together at the same time and place. For example, if three members of a five-member board discuss public business in a series of telephone or email conversations, the discussion is a meeting of

a quorum. This is sometimes referred to as a “rolling” or “walking” quorum. The use of a rolling quorum to discuss public business or take action violates the Act because it constitutes a meeting of a quorum of the public body’s members outside of a properly noticed, public meeting.

26. Assistance Programs posted on NMDA’s Website

NMDA has compiled a list of all state and federal assistance programs available during the COVID 19 Pandemic. Please look over these assistance programs and feel free to pass along any of this information that might be beneficial to individuals or groups within your SWCD.

Please visit: <https://nmdeptag.nmsu.edu/assistance-programs.html>.

27. Meeting and Comments on National Forests in NM

All five of the National Forests in New Mexico are in various stages of completing their Forest Plan Revisions. For updates, please visit the National Forests’ websites below for meeting times and comment opportunities.

- Cibola NF: http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/cibola/landmanagement/planning/?cid=FSBDEV3_065627
- Carson NF: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/carson/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5443166>
- Santa Fe NF: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/santafe/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprd3791442>
- Gila NF: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/gila/home/?cid=STELPRD3828671>
- Lincoln NF: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/lincoln/home/?cid=stelprd3814307>

NMDA encourages all SWCDs to stay active in the Forest Plan Revision process for all five national forests. We also encourage SWCDs to provide information as requested to make sure that SWCD information is included in the process.