

Report to New Mexico Soil and Water Conservation Districts

New Mexico Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Programs and Resources Division

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

August 2024

July 30	4th quarter budget report due to DFA-LGD for the past fiscal year (cc: SWCC region commissioner and NMDA)
September 1st	Annual report of activities and annual plan for the past fiscal year due to SWCC, SWCC region commissioner, and NMDA Specialist.
October 30th	1st quarterly budget report due to DFA-LGD (cc: to SWCC, SWCC region commissioner, and NMDA Specialist)
October 31st	Water Quality and Conservation Grant 1st quarterly report and budget due to the SWCC and NMDA Specialist

1. Dylan Burruss hired as new NMDA Noxious Weed Coordinator

On July 1st, NMDA hired Dylan Burruss as its new Noxious Weed Coordinator. Dylan is based out of NMDA's Las Cruces office, but will be working with SWCDs and other stakeholders statewide. Here is Dylan's background in his own words:

I am originally from a small agricultural and fishing community in Eastern Virginia, and I relocated to New Mexico to earn an MSc in ecology and a minor in statistics from NMSU. For the last ten years, I have worked as a data scientist, where I have developed models to predict the distributions of rare and cryptic wildlife, wildlife/livestock disease, arthropod-borne viruses, extreme drought impacts on grassland ecosystems, and factors that control invasive plant germination and establishment in the Chihuahuan Desert.

You can reach Dylan at dburruss@nmda.nmsu.edu and 575-997-1845.

2. Healthy Soil Program grant-funded projects start August 1

This month marks the start of projects selected for Healthy Soil Program grant funding in Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25). **Before doing any other project activity**, all grantees – Eligible Entities and Individual Applicants alike – must have their soil **tested** (by taking samples and sending them to the lab named in their grant application) **and assessed** (by performing various in-field evaluation techniques themselves).

SWCDs that are sponsoring Individual Applicant projects selected for grants are expected to assist those Individual Applicants as they collect their soil samples for lab-based testing and as they assess their soil in the field. Such assistance is one of the activities for which the Project Sponsor is paid a 15% administrative fee.

As always, the Healthy Soil Program team invites your suggestions for program improvement at hsp@nmda.nmsu.edu. Sign up for weekly Healthy Soil Program updates at the bottom of the program's home page: <https://nmdeptag.nmsu.edu/healthy-soil-program.html>.

The items below might be of interest to SWCDs. These items were retrieved from various sources outside of NMDA.

3. New Mexico Vegetation Management Association Annual Conference

The NMVMA Annual Conference will be held September 11th-12th at the Ruidoso Convention Center, 111 Sierra Blanca Dr., Ruidoso. You are able to book your rooms now for the conference.

The pre-registration deadline is Friday August 30, 2024.

Please see the attached registration form and agenda for more information. Visit www.nmvma.com for more details.

4. New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission- Open Houses continue

The New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission's (NMISC) planning team is hosting a statewide open house series to listen and learn from communities across New Mexico. Open houses will take place in all 16 of New Mexico's existing water regions.

These open houses will help establish a roadmap for the future of water planning in New Mexico. Help plan and take action for New Mexico's water future.

Please note, if you are unable to attend an in person open house, you can also engage online. Online input is available through August 18th at MainStreamNM.org.

The upcoming meetings are scheduled for:

August 5: Region 6 - Northwest New Mexico

August 6: Region 2 - San Juan

August 7: Region 12 - Middle Rio Grande

For more information or to register for these upcoming open houses, visit: <https://mainstreamnm.org/get-involved/>

5. NM Environment Department accepting public comment on Outstanding National Resource Waters designation until August 19

From NMED press release dated July 20

The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) Surface Water Quality Bureau (SWQB) is nominating certain surface waters of the state as Outstanding National Resource Waters (ONRWs). ONRWs are surface waters that receive enhanced protection against degradation under state and federal statutes and regulations. Degradation of baseline or existing water quality is not allowed in ONRWs except under limited circumstances.

The SWQB is holding a public comment period on the nomination and amended regulatory language starting on July 20 and ending on August 19, 2024, at 5:00 PM MDT. Comments will be accepted via mail, email, and NMED's smart comment portal at <https://nmed.commentinput.com/comment/search>. The draft nomination, amended regulatory language, and additional information are available on our Smart Comment Portal and NMED's website at <https://www.env.nm.gov/surface-water-quality/wqs/>. We also plan on holding at least one public meeting regarding this action in August. Details for registering and participating in this meeting will be announced through this listserv. After consideration of the comments and feedback we receive, the SWQB anticipates petitioning the WQCC in September for a December 2024 hearing to designate waters as ONRWs.

If you have any questions or to submit comments, please contact Michael Baca, WQS Coordinator, NMED SWQB, P.O. Box 5469, Santa Fe, NM, 87502, michael.baca1@env.nm.gov or (505) 470-1652.

6. New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts' 77th Annual Conference

NMACD will hold their Annual Conference October 28th-October 30th. The conference will be held at the Uptown Sheraton Hotel, Louisiana Street, Albuquerque, NM.

NMACD will be sending out more information and the finalized agenda soon.

7. Open Meetings Act, Inspection of Public Records, and Governmental Conduct Act Training

The New Mexico Department of Justice has published a calendar of upcoming trainings on these "Sunshine Laws" that will be held around the state and encourage you to consider attending.

The purpose of the training is to educate and assist public officials and employees with their obligations under these laws and inform the public of their right to information regarding their representative government. The training will be conducted by Assistant Attorneys General from our Government Counsel and Accountability Division, and will provide an overview of each statute, explain legal requirements, best practices, and address some related laws and policy regarding government accountability and transparency.

These training are intended for officials and employees of state and local governments, school boards, public bodies, as well as the media and general public. There is no charge for the training, but space may be limited. Register for the next two trainings by using the link below

or visiting our website to register for future training at www.nmdoj.gov (registration should be available at least a month before each future training).

Training Schedule:

8:50 - Check-In

9:00 - Introduction to Government Transparency

9:15 - Open Meetings Act and Public Meetings

10:45 - Overview of the Governmental Conduct Act and Related Accountability Laws

11:00 - Questions and Break

11:15 - Inspection of Public Records Act

12:45 - Questions and Closing

2024 Training Calendar:

August 2024 – Farmington*

October 2024 – Santa Fe*

December 2024 – Roswell*

* exact dates and locations will be updated on our website closer to each training

8. NEW Inspection of Public Records Act Guide by the NM Department of Justice

Excerpted from NMDOJ press release; retrieved by NMDA June 2024

Attorney General Raúl Torrez announced the release of the New Mexico Department of Justice’s new Inspection of Public Records Act (IPRA) guide, a comprehensive resource for government transparency in New Mexico. By helping shine light on the affairs of state and local government, IPRA is a fundamental tool for promoting good government in New Mexico. Historically, the IPRA guide has helped governmental agencies, municipalities, counties, and other local governments with IPRA. Because the IPRA guide had not been revised for almost ten years, AG Torrez made revamping and updating the guide a priority as part of his commitment to supporting transparent and accountable government in New Mexico.

Navigating IPRA can be intricate and challenging, especially for those new to the process. With real-world scenarios and explanations of the law, the revamped guide is designed to be used by readers without a legal background, while also providing references to specific laws, court opinions, and other more technical legal analysis that are useful for attorneys, legal professionals, and other IPRA practitioners. The real-world examples help demystify the complexities of IPRA compliance and empower cities and local governments to fulfill their obligations under IPRA with confidence and clarity. We encourage all stakeholders to utilize the updated IPRA guide.

For more information or to access the updated IPRA guide, please [click here](#).