

Report to New Mexico Soil and Water Conservation Districts

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

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April 2020

April	Pass annual mill levy rate resolution and submit to the SWCC for approval.
April 9	2020 Water Quality & Conservation Grant proposals due
April 30	WQ&C grant 3rd quarterly report and budget due to SWCC and NMDA Specialist
April 30	3rd quarterly budget report due to DFA-LGD (cc: SWCC, SWCC Region Commissioner, and NMDA Specialist)
April	Appointed Supervisor Positions due to the SWCC by June 1st (cc: your NMDA specialist). See item #3

COVID containment efforts in New Mexico have included restrictions on the size of social gatherings. As a result, it is possible that an event scheduled for the near future has been – or will be – postponed, canceled, or hosted online instead of in person. Because of the fluid nature of things in response to COVID, NMDA strongly 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.

What is published below was current as of March 26, 2020.

1. Office of the Attorney General OMA Advice

The Office of the Attorney General advises all public entities subject to OMA to first and foremost follow the guidance 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 any non-essential public meeting during the pendency of the state of emergency. If, however, a public entity has an emergency or time-sensitive matter to attend to, it may proceed with a virtual meeting under the following guidelines:

- Notice of the meeting must still comply with the mandates of OMA, and it should contain detailed information about how members of the public may attend and listen via telephone,

live streaming, or other similar technologies---this should include such detail as relevant phone numbers, web addresses, etc.;

- While provided by alternative means, the public must have some form of access to the meeting to substitute for the access it would during any normally scheduled public meeting subject to OMA;
- Where possible, videoconference is the best alternative method of holding meetings;
- At the start of the meeting, the chairperson should announce the names of those members of the public entity participating remotely;
- All members of the public entity participating remotely must identify themselves whenever they speak and must be clearly audible to the other members of the public entity and to the public;
- The chairperson or person leading the meeting should suspend discussion if the audio or video is interrupted;
- All votes of the public entity should be by roll call vote;
- The public entity should produce and maintain a recording of the open session of the meeting.

The public guidance release is attached to the monthly report to review entirely.

Please also review the following links for additional guidance during this time:

<https://www.newmexico.gov/2020/03/15/governor-directs-state-government-agencies-to-minimize-face-to-face-contact-while-continuing-service-delivery/>

<https://www.nmag.gov/uploads/Files/COVID-19/OpenGovernmentDivisionAdviceCOVID-19.pdf>

2. Rolling Quorums

NMDA would like to remind all SWCD and Watershed boards to be careful when emailing and 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 Office of the Attorney General State of New Mexico 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.

3. Essential Business Per Public Health Order

On March 23, 2020, New Mexico Department of Health Secretary Kathy Kunkel announced a new public health emergency order suspending operations of all businesses and nonprofit entities except for those deemed essential, and further restricting mass gatherings due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

All New Mexicans must immediately heed the directive to stay home except as needed to maintain continuity of functions critical to public health and safety.

Please review the attachments which explain what business are considered essential and what is currently allowed in the State of New Mexico.

4. WFPO 2020 Funding Proposal Q/A Session for Sponsors

NRCS is providing a webinar for watershed sponsors that will outline the details on how Watershed Operations assistance can be obtained from NRCS. You may join, via Microsoft Teams, at 9:00 AM eastern on Friday, April 3. Please see the information below for details.

USA Toll-Free: 888-844-9904

Access Code: 2133963

- Overview of Watershed Operations Program
- PL-566 Background
- Purposes and Needs
- Statutory Requirements
- Cost Share
- Funding
- Working with your State NRCS Staff
- State Conservationist and Program Manager Roles
- Preliminary Investigations
- NHQ
- Proposal Review and Evaluation
- Timeline
- Open Q/A

5. Mill Levy Rate Resolutions and Appointed Supervisor Nominations

Please submit your Mill Levy Rate Resolutions and Appointed Supervisor Nominations to the SWCC by June 1st. Appointed Supervisor nominations should be submitted for **each** supervisor in positions 6 and 7.

6. 2020 Water Quality & Conservation Grant

The New Mexico Soil and Water Conservation Commission (SWCC) annually receive a legislative appropriation from the State of New Mexico to be used for special projects

relating to water quality and conservation. These funds are awarded by the SWCC through the Water Quality and Conservation (WQ&C) Grant Program. The goal of the grant program is to promote the health of New Mexico's watersheds and conserve the water resources they produce. A limited number of projects addressing one or more of the following areas will be funded over the next fiscal year:

1. Watershed Improvement/Management
2. Irrigation Efficiency
3. Riparian Restoration
4. Natural Resource Information and Education
5. Ground Water Protection/Conservation
6. Noxious Weeds

The RFP for the WQ&C grant was sent out to all SWCDs at the beginning of February. All proposals are due **Thursday, April 9th by 5:00 pm**. The proposal needs to be in **Microsoft Word formatted** version and emailed to: swcc@nmda.nmsu.edu. Faxed copies will not be accepted. See attached RFP.

7. New Mexico State Land Office Advisory Committees

In 2019, Commissioner Stephanie Garcia Richard reinstated advisory committees to provide information and recommendations to the State Land Office on a variety of issues. This year, Commissioner Stephanie Garcia Richard is encouraging even more people to get involved by completing the online application to participate in an advisory committee or working group. The State Land Office uses advisory committees and working groups to obtain independent expert advice and constituent input on a variety of issues relating to conservation, hunting, agriculture, and oil & gas operations.

Applicants are encouraged to apply for one or more of the following:

Agriculture Advisory Committee – The Agriculture Advisory Committee provides expertise and feedback on a range of issues directly impacting agricultural lessees. The committee is comprised of agricultural lessees, ranchers, farmers, and industry-related organizations. The committee will meet in person in Santa Fe or by phone on Wednesday, April 29 at 3 PM and at a date to be determined in September. This committee will be asked to be on-call to respond to emerging issues as they arise.

Conservation Advisory Committee – The Conservation Advisory Committee provides insight to the State Land Office to ensure conservation and improvement of our public lands. This committee takes on engagement and action. Members are asked to help raise environmental awareness, educate the public, and help coordinate their respective communities in support of the State Land Office's stewardship efforts and long-term landscape level planning. This committee is primarily on-call, but it will have at least one in-person meeting in Santa Fe every November.

Sportspeople Advisory Committee – The Sportspeople Advisory Committee provide expertise and insight into hunting and other outdoor recreation activities that take place on New Mexico

State Trust Land. This committee is mainly on-call to address issues that arise such as hunting closures and access issues, but it will have at least one in-person meeting in Santa Fe every September.

Working Groups

Game & Fish Easement Working Group – Every March, the State Land Office and the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish enter into an easement agreement to open up nearly 9 million acres of state trust land to hunters. This working group is comprised of agricultural lessees and sportspeople. The goal is to find compromises that both stakeholder groups can agree to in order to improve the experience of hunters and agricultural lessees during hunting season.

Agricultural Leasing Working Group – The State Land Office is fortunate to have over 3,500 agricultural lessees that provide stewardship and safety throughout state trust land. This working group is comprised of agricultural lessees, and it will help the State Land Office make critical decisions regarding any changes to agricultural lease terms.

Camping & Backpacking Working Group – The State Land Office in partnership with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish will establish the first-ever pilot program on state trust land to allow for backpacking and dispersed camping in 2020. This working group is comprised of sportspeople and outdoor recreational experts who will advise on the pilot program.

White Peak Working Group – For generations, families have used White Peak for camping and hunting, but access continues to be threatened. The State Land Office is committed to addressing these issues and finding solutions through this working group.

Applications will be accepted until April 15, 2020.

8. NMSU Extension Youth Ranch Management Camp

<https://nmyrm.nmsu.edu/>

A once in a lifetime experience is available to 30 youth, ages 15-19, at the NM Youth Ranch Management Camp, which will be June 7-12 at the CS Ranch in Cimarron. The application deadline is April 10.

Teens will have an opportunity to learn the agricultural science and technical know-how behind ranching at the camp conducted by New Mexico State University's College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences.

Collaboration between NMSU Extension specialists, county Extension agents and members of the ranching industry provides an opportunity for youth to learn about the many aspects of ranching.

They are introduced to what it takes to run a ranch, from financial statements and marketing strategies, to producing quality beef, and managing natural resources and wildlife. College-level, hands-on curriculum provides participants with information to develop a ranch management plan for a scenario similar to the host ranch.

CS Cattle Company's 130,000-acre ranch at the foot of the Sangre de Cristo mountain range near Cimarron has hosted the camp for the past three years.

Visit nmyrm.nmsu.edu for more information and to apply.

Completed applications will be reviewed and applicants will be notified by April 17. The registration fee of \$300, or payment arrangements, is due on or before May 1.

Scholarship opportunities are available to those invited to the camp. Additional information is available once camper has been accepted.

9. State Forestry Spring Conservation Seedling Sale

Online orders are now being accepted for the State Forestry Division Conservation Seedling Program annual spring sale. More than 40,000 tree and shrub seedlings are available for purchase online now through April of 2020. Please visit:

<http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/SFD/treepublic/ConservationSeedlings.html>

More than 60 species are available for the Conservation Seedling Program spring sale, including Ponderosa pine, Goodding's black willow, Coyote willow, Austrian pine, Chokecherry, Golden currant, and Nanking cherry.

To qualify for the program, purchasers must own at least one acre of land in New Mexico and agree to use the seedlings for conservation purposes - this may include windbreaks, reforestation, riparian restoration, Christmas tree farms, or other conservation needs.

One-season growth seedlings of the same species or in multi-species bundles are sold in minimum lots of 49 for \$80. Large container seedlings are sold in lots of 20 of the same species for \$57. Bareroot seedlings are sold in bundles of 25, minimum order of 50 (same or two different species), for \$62. ***There is a \$5 handling fee per order and an additional \$10 fee for all UPS orders. ALL SALES ARE FINAL.***

The final day to order is April 17, 2020. Seedling distribution will take place between March 9 and April 24, which includes pick up at the State Forestry Division seedling warehouse, Casa de Arboles (Tree House) at [3250 Calle Princessa Juana](#), in Santa Fe. Warehouse hours are Thursdays and Fridays from 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m.– 4:30 p.m.

10. NM Wildlife Corridors Action Plan

The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) in partnership with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF) has begun developing the Wildlife Corridors Action Plan (Plan) in accordance with New Mexico Senate Bill 228, the Wildlife Corridors Act (Act).

The Act, signed into law by New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham in 2019, directs the NMDOT and the NMDGF to develop the Plan for NMDOT roads statewide. The Plan will identify wildlife-vehicle collision hotspots that pose a risk to the traveling public, identify wildlife corridors from ecological data, and provide a list of priority projects based on the results of the Plan's analysis. The Plan will provide information on wildlife movement with an emphasis on large mammals such as elk, deer, bear and mountain lion. A team of national experts led by Daniel B. Stephens and Associates (DBS&A), under contract with NMDOT, will develop the Plan in partnership with NMDGF. The DBS&A team will use a science-driven approach to identify areas per the Act that "pose a risk to successful wildlife migration or that pose a risk to the traveling public" and will be based on NMDOT crash data and ecological information on wildlife movements.

The Plan will build on past and ongoing efforts and is intended to raise support for and consensus in the identification of priority wildlife corridors and priority projects across New Mexico. Development of the Plan will also involve soliciting input from the general public, tribal governments and interested stakeholders.

Written comments on the Plan can be provided by mail to the following: Daniel B. Stephens & Associates, Attn: Wildlife Corridors Action Plan, 6020 Academy Road NE, Suite 100, Albuquerque, NM 87109; by email to Wildlife.Corridors@state.nm.us; through April 18, 2020.

11. NM Watershed and Dam Owners Coalition

The New Mexico Watershed and Dam Owners Coalition will hold their spring workshop May 6th through the 8th. The workshop will be held at the Raton Convention Center, Raton, New Mexico.

The theme for this NMWDOC workshop will be Healthy Watersheds, Safe Dam O&M, and How to Fund It.

There will be discounted hotel accommodations in Raton available for attendees.

For more information visit: <https://nmwsc.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/2020Conference.pdf> and also see the flyer attached to the monthly report.

12. 2020 Agrifuture: Your Future in Focus (May 18-20)

<http://www.nmda.nmsu.edu/2020-agrifuture-educational-institute/>

(3/16/20 Update: While we still plan to host AgriFuture, please note that there is a possibility of postponing the conference. We will re-evaluate after April 15. We will inform the public of a decision as soon as we receive direction.)

“AgriFuture provides an incredible opportunity for ag producers and future ag producers to connect cross-generationally and explore new opportunities within our state’s agriculture industry,” New Mexico Secretary of Agriculture Jeff Witte said. “I encourage everyone interested in ag production, including next-generation agriculturists and returning military veterans who are looking to return to the land, to attend this year’s AgriFuture event.”

Future ag producers may attend AgriFuture for just \$50, which includes a two-night hotel stay. Current ag producers and mentors may attend for \$100, which does not include hotel expenses. Current producers/mentors can make their reservation directly with Embassy Suites using code AGF for a special rate.

13. NM Groundwater Conference

The NM Groundwater Conference will be on July 20 and 21, 2020 at the State Bar of New Mexico, located at 5121 Masthead NE, Albuquerque, NM 87199. To register, please go to: <https://agwt.org/civicrm/event/info%3Fid%3D307%26reset%3D1>

Groundwater resources play an important role in New Mexico’s drinking water supply in urban and rural areas. Additional water needs for mining, oil & gas, industry, agriculture, and for sustaining ecology add stress to an already limited supply. There are likely to be future constraints on stream flow dependability and aquifer recharge rates. Realistic water planning to achieve optimal use of the state’s aquifers is essential if New Mexico is to achieve a long term sustainable supply/demand balance. The Annual New Mexico Groundwater Conference will explore the next frontiers in water planning and implementation.

14. 2018 NM Agricultural Statistics

The 2018 NM Agricultural Statistics were recently published and are available at:

<http://www.nmda.nmsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/2018-NM-Ag-Statistics.pdf>

15. NMDA Strategic Plan 2019-2023

The New Mexico Department of Agriculture’s Strategic Plan for 2019-2023 was recently published and is now available at:

http://www.nmda.nmsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Strategic-Plan_2019_final.pdf

16. GIS Training Available Free of Charge

The USDA SW Climate Hub is offering GIS training to NM Soil and Water Conservation Districts at no cost. The purpose of these trainings is to help SWCDs with spatial data management, analysis and interpretation. Training content will be delivered at SWCD locations and defined by SWCD needs. SWCDs will also be able to request single trainings or a series of sessions.

The trainer is Caiti Steele, Coordinator at the SW Hub., Dr. Steele is a geographer with over 20 years of research, teaching and applications experience in GIS and remote sensing for natural resource management.

To request GIS training, or further information please email caiti@nmsu.edu

Dates and locations still to be determined. It is anticipated this will be an ongoing thing that will happen on a regular basis. The USDA SW Climate Hub will be responding to what is convenient for the SWCDs and whether they need one training or a series of training.

17. BLM and Forest Service Announce 2020 Grazing Fees

The Federal grazing fee for 2020 will be \$1.35 per animal unit month (AUM) for public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management and \$1.35 per head month (HM) for lands managed by the USDA Forest Service. The 2019 public land grazing fee was \$1.35.

<https://www.blm.gov/press-release/blm-and-forest-service-announce-2020-grazing-fees>

18. Districts' Accomplishments in the News

NMDA is pleased to spotlight SWCDs, including the following districts whose work earned them a bit of recent media coverage:

Conservation Efforts Focus on Restoration, Flora Management in the Carlsbad Area

<https://www.currentargus.com/story/news/local/2020/01/31/pecos-river-conservation-efforts-focus-restoration/4612540002/>

Federal Emergency Management Agency Hazard Mitigation Grant Program & Claunch-Pinto

<https://www.nacdnet.org/2020/01/21/swcd-shares-experiences-using-fema-grant/>

If your district has been in the news, please email a story link (or links) to Katie Kruthaupt at kkruthaupt@nmda.nmsu.edu so that NMDA can spotlight your district in an upcoming edition of this report.

19. 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.