



United States Department of Agriculture

New Mexico FY18 Annual Report



J. Xavier Montoya, State Conservationist
www.nm.nracs.usda.gov



Table of Contents

To Our Partners, Producers and Public _____	3
2018 NRCS New Mexico Leadership Team _____	4
Management & Strategy _____	5
NRCS New Mexico Administrative Areas _____	6
Opportunity Through NRCS Programs _____	7
Partnerships _____	12
Earth Team Volunteers _____	14
Engineering _____	15
Resource Technology Services _____	16
North Area _____	19
South Area _____	20
Resource Inventories & Assessment _____	22
Civil Rights Advisory Committee _____	25
NRCS New Mexico Service Center Directory _____	26

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State Conservationist Message

NRCS New Mexico is committed to helping people help the land. This would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of our NRCS New Mexico employees. NRCS New Mexico reflects a breadth of experience, innovation, and diversity. Throughout FY18, our team worked tirelessly in conjunction with our partners to promote conservation efforts to our farmers and landowners. We assist our New Mexico's producers in having productive lands that foster a healthy environment.

NRCS New Mexico's accomplishments support Secretary Sonny Perdue's priority to conduct the people's business efficiently, effectively, and with integrity while focusing on customer service, and to "Do Right and Feed Everyone."

New Mexico's motto, The Land of Enchantment, is fitting. New Mexico is a land of diverse people, culture, food, and arts. It has a wide range of climates that include deserts, mountainous vistas, forests, rangelands, and agricultural fields.

Our programs and operations are designed to address the natural resource concerns that impact New Mexico's agriculture.

Since its inception, the NRCS mission has always been rooted in sound science. The decisions made, the practices implemented, and the conservation technical assistance offered are based on research, technological advances, and empirical study. NRCS New Mexico helps producers achieve their long-term goals while also providing assistance with their more immediate agricultural production needs.

NRCS New Mexico collaborates with key stakeholders and facilitates effective communication within the agricultural community to ensure we best serve all of our constituents. We work with new and different partners to continue building the strongest team possible.

We are honored to serve the agricultural producers of New Mexico and are privileged to have earned their trust and confidence as we continue helping people help the land.

Thank you to the NRCS New Mexico team and all of our partners who continuously work to create a better New Mexico.

Sincerely,

J. Xavier Montoya

J. Xavier Montoya
State Conservationist



J. Xavier Montoya
State Conservationist

2018 Leadership Team

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Management & Strategy

Rosabeth Garcia-Sais, Assistant State Conservationist for Management & Strategy

The NRCS New Mexico Management & Strategy Team is committed to doing its part in accomplishing USDA's goals and objectives related to operationally working to implement conservation efforts at the ground level.

"Change is the only constant." Like the past few years, fiscal year 2018 was no different. In May, the Department consolidated the core business functions at the Food Production and Agriculture Conservation (FPAC) mission level resulting in the creation of an FPAC Business Center. Although the FPAC Business Center didn't officially stand up until October 14, the Management & Strategy Team was heavily involved with transitioning NRCS processes to the centralized FPAC Business Center. Interim processes and systems and some new, state-of-the-art tools were implemented including ServiceNow and Optimally Productive Office.

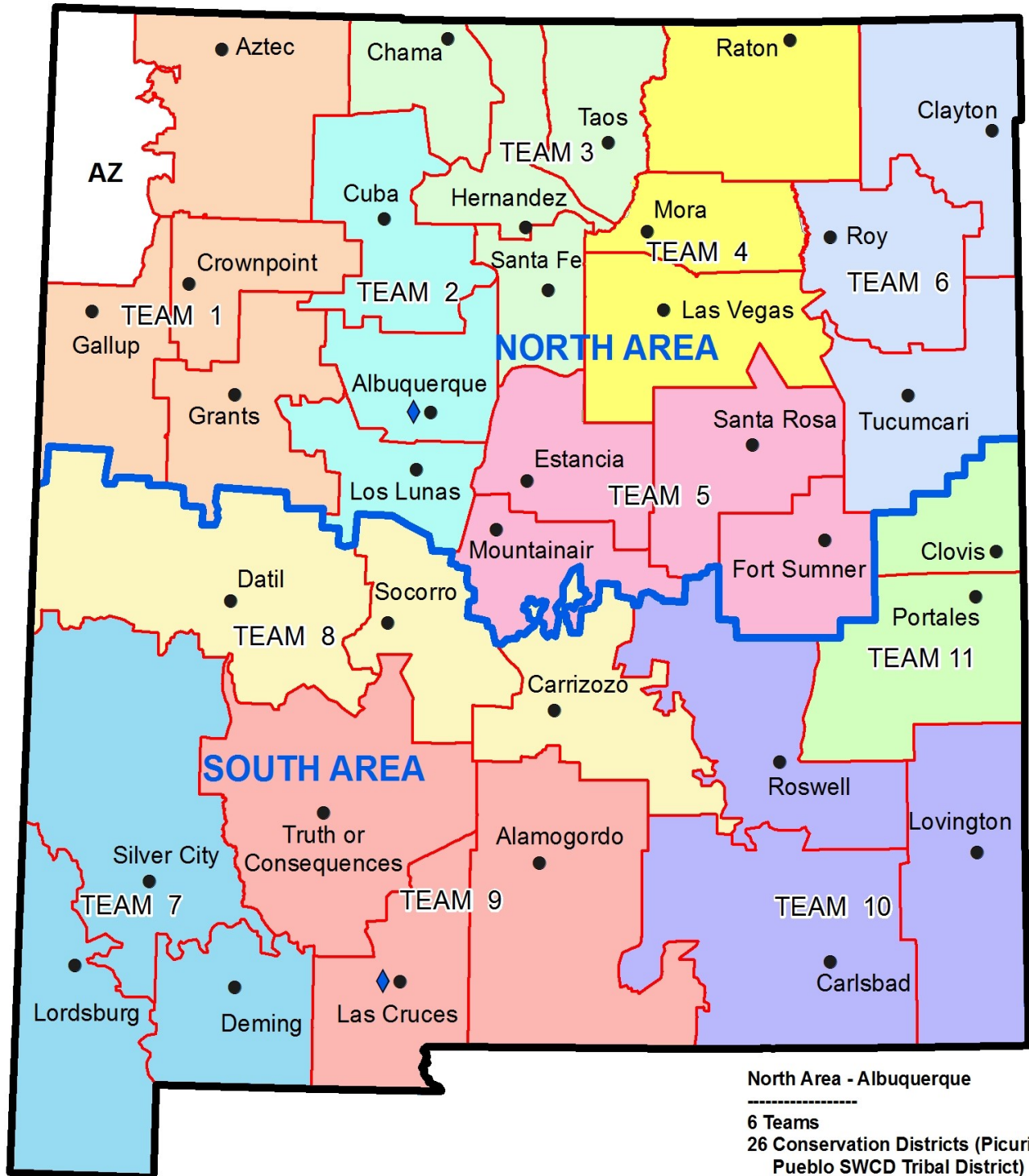
As the financial management, budgeting, human resources, information technology, acquisitions and procurement, customer experience, internal controls, risk management, strategic and annual planning, and other similar activities were transitioned from NRCS National Teams to the FPAC Business Center, the New Mexico Management & Strategy Team stayed focused and flexible. We successfully delivered high quality, timely, and almost seamless support services to our customers, both internal and external. We updated and implemented the State Business Plan, State Quality Assurance Plan, State Resource Assessment, and Workload Analysis. We awarded several Federal contracts, amended existing agreements, and executed new partnership agreements. We filled 6 permanent positions, provided training to employees, and provided several leadership opportunities.

The one accomplishment that we are especially proud of was the launch of the Tri-State Leadership Development Program between Colorado, New Mexico, and Oklahoma. The primary purpose of the Tri-State Leadership Development Program (LDP) is to build and recognize potential leaders for the agency. New Mexico led the process and secured a professional leadership development firm to provide training and coaching to the 15 participants competitively selected from the three states. As part of the 18-month program, the participants were challenged to undertake leadership development opportunities to broaden their perspectives and enhance their leadership and management skills. The NM participants served on long-term details as Assistant State Conservationists for Field Operations in NM and other states, District Conservationist, and Area Programs Specialist. We look forward to continuing this program.

The Management & Strategy Team is proud of our contributions to the NRCS mission. We are also proud of our strong relationship with our FPAC partners. Together, we continue to collaborate with the FPAC Business Center, ensuring the field has what it needs to service our customers and conserve our natural resources.

Our Team thanks you for your continued support.

NRCS - New Mexico Administrative Areas



North Area - Albuquerque

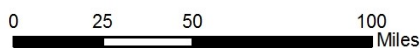
 6 Teams
 26 Conservation Districts (Picuris
 Pueblo SWCD Tribal District)
 23 Nations, Tribes, and Pueblos

South Area - Las Cruces

 5 Teams
 22 Conservation Districts
 2 Nations, Tribes, and Pueblos



Resource Inventories and Assessments
 KKM, 2/25/16
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Opportunity Through NRCS Programs

Kristin Graham Chavez, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) was a continued success with over \$28 million in obligated funding to assist agricultural producers to plan and implement conservation practices that improve soil, water, plant, animal, air, and related natural resources on agricultural land and non-industrial private forestland. This was achieved through local, state, and national initiatives.

- **Local initiatives include:** Grazed Rangeland, Irrigated Cropland, Forestland, Watersheds, Beginning Farmer or Rancher, Conservation Activity Plans, and Animal Feeding Operations.
- **State initiatives include:** Energy, Organic, Seasonal High Tunnel, Acequias, and Tribal Lands.
- **National initiatives include:** National Water Quality, Strike Force, Working Land for Wildlife Lesser Prairie Chicken, Joint Chiefs, and Water SMART.



Environmental Quality Incentives Program

New Contracts	.405	Contracts with Beginning Farmer/Rancher 92
Acres1,170,945	Contracts with Limited Resource Farmer/Rancher 10
Dollars\$28,987,005	Contracts with Socially Disadvantaged Farmer/Rancher...	145

Top Eight EQIP Practices Installed on the Ground in FY2018

Practice	Extent	Projects	Financial Assistance
Brush Management	41,240 acres	220	\$3,413,613
Sprinkler System	2,552 acres	71	\$3,701,305
Irrigation Pipeline	117,545 feet	119	\$2,128,018
Watering Facility	398 No.	398	\$1,758,766
Fence	1,078,136 feet	155	\$1,999,713
Livestock Pipeline	1,216,568 feet	234	\$1,688,477
Forage and Biomass Planting	4,321 acres	79	\$1,392,592
Forest Stand Improvement	1,625 acres	84	\$1,427,433

Programs



Regional Conservationist Partnership Program (RCPP) in New Mexico include:

Canadian River Watershed Restoration Project: The Canadian River Watershed Restoration Project encourages ranchers and landowners operating within the Prairie Grasslands Region of New Mexico to utilize the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. Each participating rancher, in collaboration with Federal and state land managing agencies, will develop a resource management plan. The leveraged EQIP funds facilitate restoration efforts outlined in the plan, like treating invasive plant species. Partners within the CRWRP have been addressing resource concerns on ranches with mixed ownership lands for 11 years. This project was initiated when eight Soil and Water Conservation Districts encompassing the entire Canadian River Watershed began collaborating through a Joint Powers Agreement to restore the watershed of the Canadian River and its tributaries.

New Mexico Range and Forest Soil Health Initiative: The New Mexico Range and Forest Soil Health Initiative is designed to bring Environmental Quality Incentives Program and partner funds together for New Mexico's ranchers whose operations include Federal lands. Each rancher, state and Federal agency with lands included in the ranch operation will develop a coordinated resource management plan or CRMP. The CRMP will include range and forest soil health restoration strategies, such as forest thinning, to combat the increase in wildland fires. New Mexico experienced over 1.5 million acres in wildfires from 2009 to 2014. Restoration efforts through this initiative are critical to fund treatments on over 20 million acres of brush-invaded rangeland and 10 million acres of overstocked forest lands.

Building Resiliency in the San Juan-Rio Chama Region: Participating States: New Mexico (Lead State) and Colorado— Completed by the Bureau of Reclamation in 1976, the San Juan-Rio Chama Diversion is a series of diversion structures and tunnels that together carry runoff 26 miles across the Continental Divide from the Colorado River watershed to the Rio Chama, in the Rio Grande watershed. This diversion, along with the Rio Chama, provides approximately one third of New Mexico's water supply for irrigators, agriculture, industry, communities, and fish and wildlife. The Building Resiliency in the San Juan-Rio Chama Region Project, managed by East Rio Arriba Soil and Water Conservation District and twenty partners, complements recent diversion structures with additional forest health and watershed treatments to increase the resiliency of the landscape to withstand stressors such as drought, wildfire, and climate change in southern Colorado and northern New Mexico. Between 2017 and 2021, partners in the San Juan-Rio Chama region of southern Colorado and northern New Mexico will complete 1,000 – 1,500 acres of watershed resiliency treatments per year utilizing \$6.4 million of Environmental Quality Incentives Program funds, Conservation Stewardship Program funds, and the Agricultural Easement Program funds.

Programs

North Central NM Watershed Restoration Project: This is a regional watershed project aimed at reducing wildfire risk while at the same time improving soils, hydrology, vegetation, and enhancing social/economic needs. The watershed approach provides a framework for coordinating project needs among private land-owners, state and Federal agencies, tribes, communities, and other interested stakeholders. The project extends from Taos (North) to Bernardo (South) and Gallup (West) to Santa Rosa (East), including all major tributaries and sub-watersheds of the Rio Grande and Pecos River in that region. This project will expand on previous work with established partners to improve the natural resources of this critically important region. Forest restoration practices have been shown to reduce high-severity wildfire and to improve watershed health, water quality, and water quantity. Poor historic management of forest watersheds and riparian zones along with current and forecast climate change are creating a dire situation for the condition and availability of New Mexico’s forest, rangeland, and water resources.

New Mexico Acequia Revitalization on Historic Lands: New Mexico has a rich history of community acequias supporting agriculture. Approximately 800 acequias and community ditch associations serve many farmers or “parciantes” who make all, or part of their livelihood from farming and ranching. Farms served by acequias range in size from less than 1 acre to over 500 acres. The majority of farmers depending on acequias are minorities in underserved communities. Acequias are located in 12 of the most impoverished counties in New Mexico. In New Mexico we say “agua es la vida” (water is life). This project will help sustain this critical social and spiritual connection as a matter of social and environmental justice. The objective of this initiative is to facilitate and promote surface water conservation, increase irrigation system efficiencies/ effectiveness, and improve water quality on agricultural lands and for downstream purposes.



Pecos Partnership: Participating States: New Mexico (Lead State) and Texas— The Pecos River Watershed in New Mexico and Texas is home to the Permian Basin, one of the largest and most important oil and gas reserves in the country. NFWF and its partners will collaborate with at least four major oil and gas producers on the Pecos River Watershed Initiative to promote the conservation of the region’s important rangeland and riparian features. NFWF will use Environmental Quality Incentives Program and Conservation Stewardship Program programs to support riparian restoration, grazing system improvements, water development and irrigation improvements, establishment of native riparian and rangeland species and removal of invasive species.

Programs

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) continues to provide significant financial assistance to rural areas in New Mexico, primarily on grazed range. In 2018 there were 584 active CSP contracts covering 5.15 million acres of private land. The \$15,739,353 in annual payments supports stewardship activities on private land.



CSP

Conservation Stewardship Program

New Contracts .. 34	Contracts with Beginning Farmer/Rancher	5
Acres 321,179	Contracts with Socially Disadvantaged Farmer/Rancher	8
Dollars..... \$2,291,904.28		

Targeted resource concerns for 2018

Agland (grazed range, cropland and pasture)

Soil erosion, Soil quality degradation, Degraded plant condition, Inadequate habitat for fish and wildlife, Livestock production limitation

Agland Irrigated (grazed range, cropland and pasture) with focus on conserving irrigation water:

Soil erosion, Soil quality degradation, Degraded plant condition, Inadequate habitat for fish and wildlife, Insufficient water

Nonindustrial private forestland:

Soil erosion, Water quality degradation, Degraded plant condition, Inadequate habitat for fish and wildlife, Livestock production limitation

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) is growing in New Mexico. There is a continual need for protecting wetlands, farmland and grasslands from development and fragmentation. The growing success of this program is largely due to the ability of local easement entities to enroll and manage these easements.



ACEP

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

New Easements . 1	Easement total (ALE, WRP, GRP, FRPP).....	29
Acres 5,239	Entities holding NRCS funded easements	4

Programs

Congressional District Programs Tally

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Congressional District	Contracts Obligated	Contracted Acres	Obligation Amount
1	22	106,645	\$1,158,334
2	179	689,960	\$15,938,061
3	204	374,338	\$11,879,973
Total	405	1,170,943	\$28,976,368

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

Congressional District	Contracts	Contracted Acres	Obligation Amount
1	4	18,852.90	\$131,602.08
2	23	248,959.82	\$1,895,248.90
3	7	53,366.30	\$265,053.60
Total	34	321,179.02	\$2,291,904.28

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Congressional District	Contracts	Contracted Acres	Obligation Amount
1	10	63,053.50	\$790,007.00
2	35	693,289.00	\$5,573,771.35
3	34	175,8638.40	\$2,809,000.13
Total	79	932,210.90	\$9,172,778.48

Partnerships

Alicia Rodriguez, Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships

NRCS New Mexico's achievements in delivering conservation services and programs are largely attributed to our strong working relationships with many key partners, such as the New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts, New Mexico Coalition of Conservation Districts, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, New Mexico Department of Agriculture, local, state and Federal government, acequia associations, elected and appointed officials, and of course our farmers, ranchers, tribes and pueblos, and others who manage privately owned lands.

NRCS New Mexico worked diligently in planning, coordinating, and participating in numerous successful stakeholder events to promote NRCS's motto, Helping People Help the Land. A centerpiece message promoted by NRCS New Mexico highlighted the importance of productive working lands and healthy water, while sustaining and enhancing the future for agriculture producers.



*Under Secretary Bill Northey with NRCS and New Mexico Partners
Ruidoso, NM*

As a result of these efforts, the NRCS New Mexico brand continues to grow stronger, further strengthening our stakeholder relationships. NRCS New Mexico has a long history in building and maintaining partnerships. This has a direct correlation to our success in implementing millions of dollars annually through our Farm Bill programs, which continues to enhance and expand the depth of our conservation reach throughout the State.

The relationships with individual farmers, ranchers, other landowners, local conservation districts, state, and federal agencies, tribes, earth team volunteers, and many other conservation minded individuals can not be understated. Sharing our technical expertise and leveraging our respective resources allow us to better serve our ever growing constituency while collectively, we continue to improve and leave our conservation imprint on America's natural resources.

The success of our partnerships continue to thrive as we strive to achieve the NRCS mission to protect, restore, and enhance the lands and waters upon which people and the environment depend.

Education - Partnership

NM NRCS Partners With New Mexico State University to Get More Conservation (and Conservationists!) on the Ground

New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, New Mexico, is partnering with the with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to enhance conservation delivery across the state. Our common goal is to start with students and carry those efforts through to good stewardship.

Prior to the announcements of NRCS Pathways Internship Opportunities, the NMSU Range Department hosts a “Career Pizza Party” as a mentoring opportunity to students in Range, Agronomy, Soils, Engineering, and Wildlife. During the event, NRCS and NMSU staff engage with the students to learn more about resume-building, enhancing their transcripts to include required courses for NRCS positions, and navigating the internship application process in USAjobs. Six of our Pathways Interns are NMSU students. One of our partnership’s greatest successes are that some of our best recruiters are Pathways Interns!

In 2018, the NMSU Range Department offered the nation’s first graduate level course on Ecological Site Description (ESD) development and use. NRCS uses feedback from the class to improve ESDs and as recruitment platform.

Also in 2018, NRCS Soil Scientists and NMSU Rangeland Management Professors began collaborating on a Soil Seed Bank Suitability rating based on NRCS soils data. The goal of the interpretation is to improve the success of NRCS conservation practices including Critical Area Planting, Range Planting, Brush Management and Prescribed Grazing.

Furthermore, encouraging the development of future environmental and agricultural leaders is something we see as essential to continued excellence in the field and expert preservation of our natural resources for future generations. When invited to serve as Role Models with careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) professions in the Federal Government, during the New Mexico session of the Environmental STEM Institute, we jumped at the chance. We started by giving presentations about all the benefits of employment with USDA, we participated in round table discussions with students about each of our careers and answered many questions about the many career paths available in NRCS. We also provided awareness training on various methods of topographical surveying techniques to the scholars of the National Hispanic Environmental Council – Environmental STEM Institute.



Earth Team Volunteers

Earth Team Volunteers: NRCS is proud of the dedicated Earth Team volunteers and staff who have committed their time and talents to conserving and protecting our natural resources.

Earth Team Award Recipients for FY18. New Mexico was the recipient of the following awards:

- National Group Volunteer Award and West Regional Group Award Winners—Friends of Whitfield, Belen.
- West Regional Earth Team Individual Volunteer Award – William “Bill” Humphries, Tucumcari.

FY18 was a successful year! New Mexico ended the FY with:

- 9,783.50 Hours! (The most ever!)
- 959 Volunteers (Highest ever!)
- 100% Office Utilization (3rd year with reaching 100%)
- This FY19 we have upped the goal to 10,000 hours.



Group Volunteer Award Winners: National and Regional West Award Winners : The Friends of the Whitfield Wildlife Conservation Area – Belen, New Mexico, volunteered 1,800 hours over the past year holding many conservation events that they organized and conducted at the Whitfield Conservation Area.



Bill Humphries (far right) with NRCS employees, allowed NRCS Field staff and State staff to conduct a Prescribed Grazing Training on his ranch allowing numerous NRCS field staff, local ranchers, and Technical Service Providers to learn the process of writing a Grazing Management Plan and conduct the different transects that go along with the Grazing Management Plan in order to comply with the new and improved CStwP. Additionally, he is inspiring neighboring ranchers, local college students, and younger future ranchers and farmers to embrace conservation.

Engineering

James Hewitt, State Conservation Engineer

NRCS New Mexico plans, designs, and inspects complex earthen dams, reservoirs, and related infrastructure under widely varying conditions. It is essential that these structures be constructed with uniform criteria to ensure consistent performance. Consideration must be given to the damage that might occur to existing and future developments should the dam suddenly release large quantities of water downstream due to a failure, or landslide into the reservoir. The stability of the spillway materials, the physical characteristics of the site and the valley downstream, and the relationship of the site to industrial and residential areas, including controls of future development, all have a bearing on the amount of potential damage in the event of a failure.



Rock and brush structure for erosion control in a gully.

NRCS New Mexico Engineering Staff continuously performs inspections of multiple NRCS-assisted watershed structures and related critical infrastructure. Specialty equipment, such as Ohm Mapper, has been used to provide more detailed reports of dam condition. The aging condition of the structures are monitored according to existing O&M Manuals and Emergency Action Plans are drafted by the Watershed Sponsors with assistance from NRCS and approval by the Office of the State Engineer Dam Safety Bureau.

In a continued effort to support our Watershed Sponsors access to government tools and funding, several presentations have been given on the DamWatch internet-based tool (available for use on NRCS-assisted watershed projects) and the Watershed Operations and Flood Prevention Program. The Santa Cruz River Watershed Site #1 Floodwater Retarding Structure Rehabilitation planning is progressing.

Over 140 well reports were completed for NM and AZ conservationist in FY18. These reports are site specific and assist with conservation planning, design and application for practices in EQIP, CTA and other programs.

NRCS New Mexico Engineering Staff updated many of the over 100 conservation practice standards, for which an engineering specialty is the lead discipline. We also provided several policy updates to better clarify NRCS requirements for applying conservation to the land through training and issuance of bulletins. Provided training to all NRCS engineers and technicians, along with several NMDA-Farm Bill Specialists working as technicians under the direction of qualified NRCS employees, on various aspects of irrigation design including: micro/drip irrigation, center pivot irrigation, pump design, irrigation water management (IWM) as well as irrigation design softwares: WinSRFR and SURFACE.

Resource Technology Services

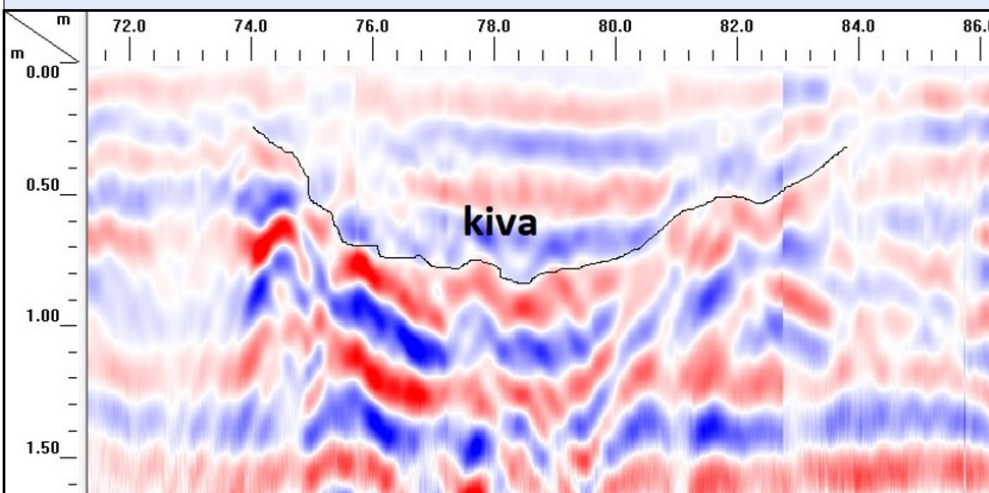
Steve Kadas, State Resource Conservationist

Archeology

The RTS Cultural Resources staff was very active in FY2018. A Prototype Programmatic Agreement with the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) was signed and executed in 2018. This agreement streamlines NRCS New Mexico's National Historic Preservation Act responsibilities for proposed conservation practices. The agreement is the first between NRCS New Mexico and SHPO since 2002. Through a partnership with NMACD, two archeologists were added to the cultural resources team to conduct cultural resources surveys and resource documentation in support of conservation practices planned by field office staff. The RTS cultural resources staff completed consultations and NHPA compliance work on 264 NRCS contracts amounting to 13,054 acres surveyed for cultural resources. The surveys identified and documented 305 cultural resources of archeological sites (prehistoric and historic), historic structures, and acequias. The cultural resources staff began employing state-of-the-art technology to "see" buried archeological features from the surface without causing any ground disturbance or destruction of the resource. Use of this technology can provide empirical data to support National Register of Historic Places eligibility determinations. Additionally, the staff provided refresher trainings on cultural resource policy and procedures to two Teams (one from each area), conducted quality assurance reviews of two teams (one from each area), and gave presentations at a brush management training and new employee orientation training.



NRCS Archeologist and Soil Scientist –Geophysics conducting a Ground Penetrating Radar survey.



GPR interpretations are thought to suggest a kiva or pit-house structure at this location. The concave feature is very consistent with subsurface features observed at other known locations containing kiva/pit-house structures. (Image from Wes Tuttle's Geophysics)

Resource Technology Services

Conservation Planning and Water Quality Conservation

In 2018, three important trainings—Soil Health For Sustainability, Organic Cropping Systems, and Conservation Planning Modules 6-8—were held at different locations around the State. The trainings were attended by both NRCS New Mexico employees and partners. Soil Health for Sustainability is a requirement for Conservation Planners focusing on the principles of soil health and implementation strategies. Conservation Planning Modules 6-8 is the field portion of the Conservation basic course. Participants review principles and gain hands-on planning experience on rangeland and cropland. The Organic Cropping systems look at the Organic Certification process and visit with Certified Organic producers.

Outreach and Education on Soil Health and Water Conservation: Conservation education for schools, colleges, tribes, and organizations is a priority. The rainfall simulator in addition to the soil slake, slump and stability test continues to be used around New Mexico demonstrating the properties and benefits of healthy soil. Cover Crops are continuing to be used more in New Mexico as producers become aware of the benefits especially for soil health.



Resource Technology Services

Range Management and Grazing Land Conservation

Brush Management is one of the leading conservation practices applied by New Mexico ranchers with the help of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Approximately three million dollars of financial assistance is provided annually through NRCS programs to support ranchers who have brush invasion on their operations. The most common types of brush management used are chemical and mechanical methods in treating species such as mesquite, juniper, cholla, creosote and sagebrush.

New Mexico's number of acres treated and dollars spent, 3 year average (FY 16,17,18):
61,350 acres and \$3,942,367.

In 2018, NM NRCS held a state-wide training for approximately 35 of its field office planners to ensure staff have the newest technology and information to assist producers dealing with invasive brush on their operation.



Aerial application of chemical herbicide on mesquite.



Mechanical extraction of One-seed Juniper.

North Area

Thomas Marshall, North Area Conservationist

North Area Program Activity				
	Contracts	Acres	Obligation Amount	Payment Amount
EQIP	280	878,338	\$16,761,405	\$2,971,133
CStP	24	190,371	\$966,807.85	\$382,089.85

Freshies of New Mexico

High in the mountains of Northern New Mexico, in Rio Arriba County, lies Freshies Organic Farm. Christopher Bassett and Taylor Dale Bassett whom are the proprietors. Growing fruit at 5700 feet in elevation is challenging, to say the least, with the warm days and the frigid nights. The Bassett's produce apples, peaches, blackberries, apricots, oyster mushrooms, melons and tomatoes just to name a few.

In 2011 they applied for assistance from the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) with Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to erect a high tunnel system so they could extend their growing season. In 2016 they successfully received assistance from EQIP a second time for Seasonal High Tunnels to plant trees 3 feet apart on a trellis system, so the trees could be trained for ease of pruning and harvesting. Planting fruit trees in high densities, according to some fruit experts, can increase yields and speed up production. The Bassett's also are advocates for soil health and Sustainable Agriculture. They are using row covers with a drip irrigation system and mulching to enhance water conservation and soil microbial activity.

Currently they have 11 bays 30 ft wide x 300 ft long. Each bay has 3 rows of trees at three feet spacing; so approximately 900 trees per bay. They are row cropping between the tree rows as the trees are maturing to maximize space and creating a return on their investment. They have plans of expanding and planting more trees in the future. Some of the other NRCS practices implemented include: Nutrient Management, Irrigation Water Management, Pollinator Habitat, Wind Barriers, and Integrated Pest Management.



South Area

Vacant, South Area Conservationist



Livestock fence installation, T or C, NM

South Area Program Activity

	Contracts	Acres	Obligation Amount	Payment Amount
EQIP	172	541,002	\$16,134,989	\$1,392,339
CStP	10	130,808	\$1,325,097	\$610,803

Fiscal Year 2018 was a productive year for the South Area. The South Area had 16 vacancies in FY18, employees took on the challenge of providing quality conservation assistance to countless agricultural producers all across the South Area, and have completed a tremendous amount of hard work. The great work the employees accomplished in FY18, could not have been accomplished without our conservation partners. We continue to build and foster partnerships with BLM, Forest Service, State Land Department, Extension Services NM Game and Fish, and NM Association of Conservation Districts to meet the needs of the land and the producers of Southern New Mexico.



High-flow turnout
in action
Las Cruces, NM

Treating juniper
Alamogordo, NM



South Area

Vacant, South Area Conservationist

Special Projects:

Heritage Farm – Agreement with NMSU to provide technical assistance to the university in the construction of a demonstration farm site that will depict the landscape, habitat, and commodity crops from throughout New Mexico.

NRCS along with the New Mexico State University Ag Science Center in Clovis hosted a field day for local producers. This field day provided an opportunity for Eastern New Mexico and West Texas agricultural stakeholders to discuss and learn about regional challenges related to row crop production, quality management and cover cropping, soil and water conservation and soil health monitoring for sustainable crop and dairy farming.



Forage and Cover Crops Field Day at Heritage Dairy Farm

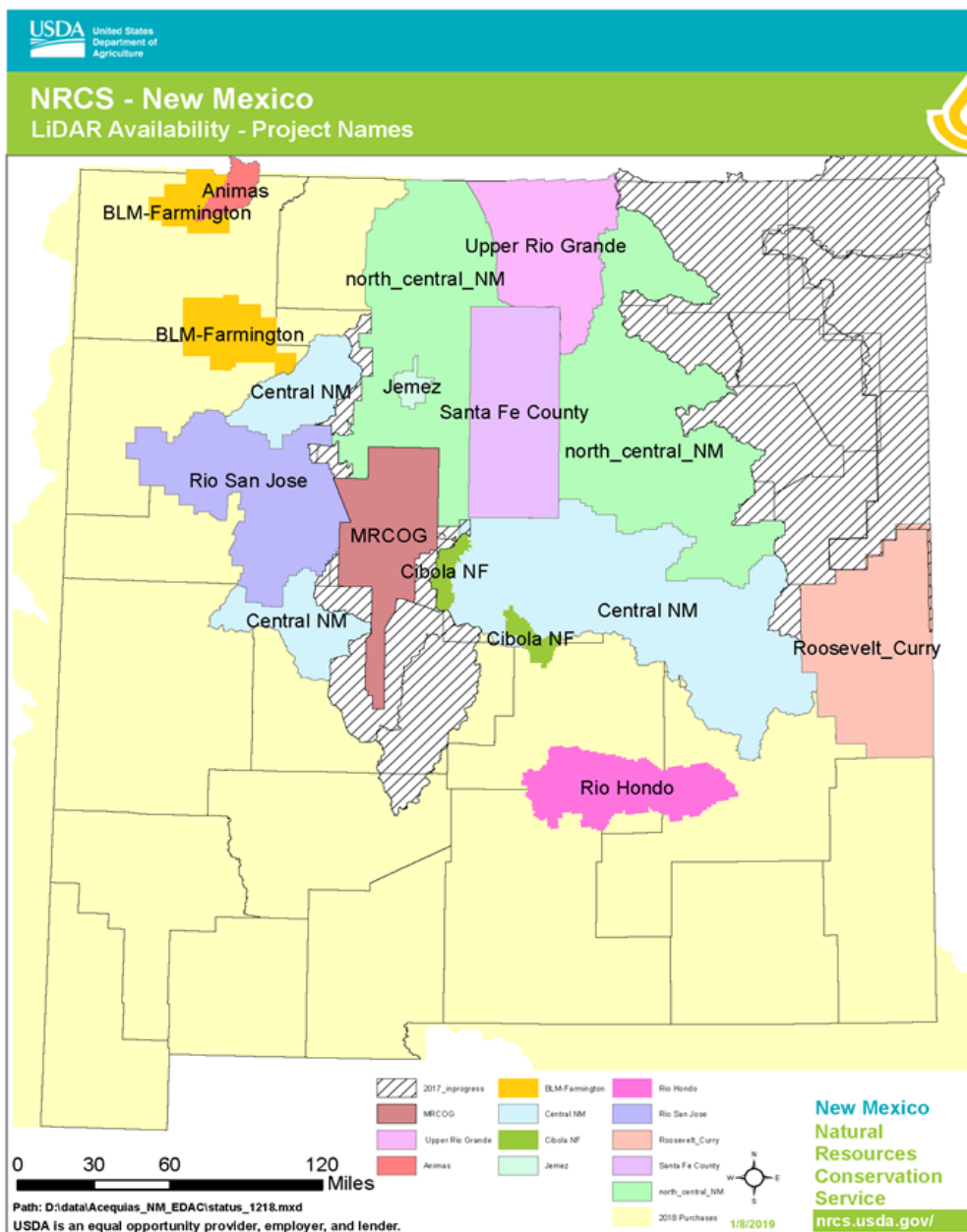
Resource Inventories & Assessments

Rick Strait, State Soil Scientist

NRCS New Mexico strives to develop, enhance, and deliver quality data and tools to support conservation planning and program delivery. In 2018, we worked with Federal and State partners to acquire additional high-resolution elevation data (LiDAR), deliver a soil survey based tool to predict juniper encroachment, and begin the development of the nation's first Soil Seedbank Suitability Rating Tool.

High Resolution Data Acquisition and Application

In partnership with FEMA, NRCS New Mexico contracted the acquisition of additional Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) data to complete statewide coverage. LiDAR delivers sub-meter elevation data accuracy for conservation planning and application.

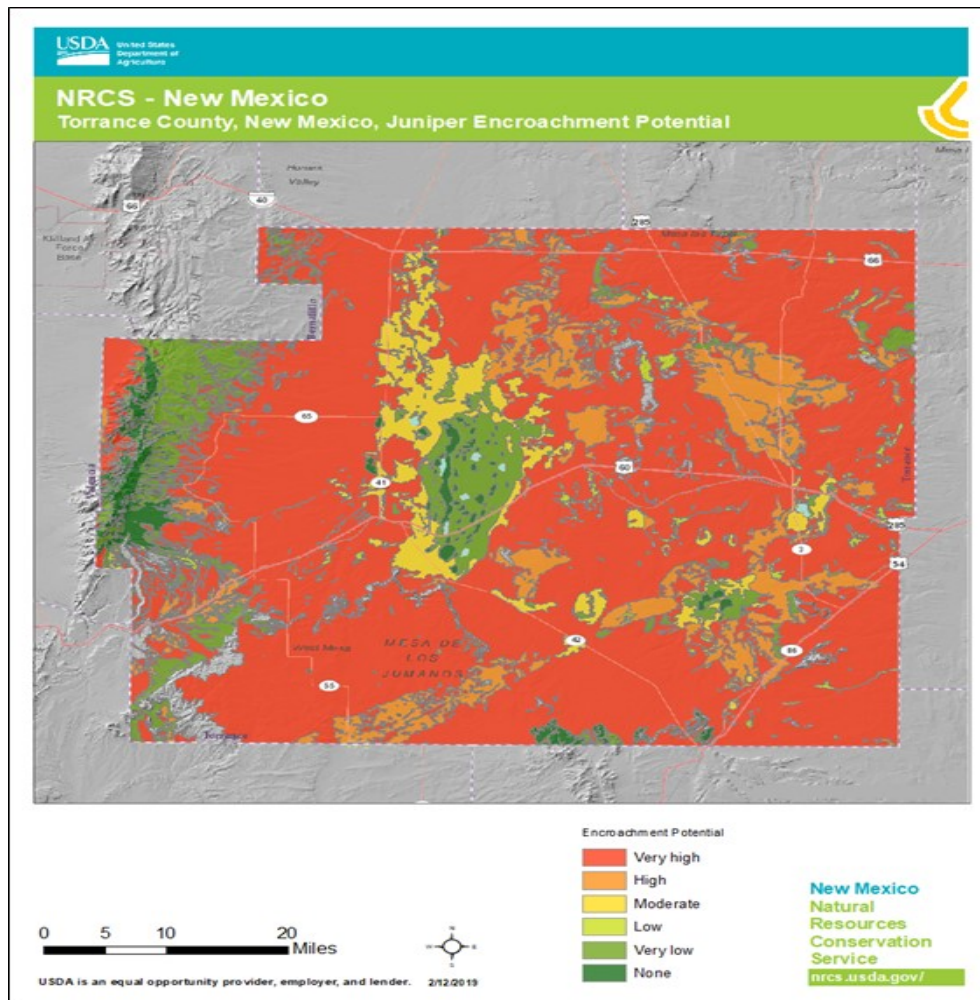


Resource Inventories & Assessments

Brush Management and Forest Stand Improvement

In collaboration with NRCS's West National Technology Support Center (WNTSC) and the NM State Department of Forestry, in 2018 we released a new interpretation which uses Soil Survey data to evaluate the capacity of an area to be prone to juniper encroachment. The interpretation provides three major functions:

- It serves as a decision support tool to differentiate true juniper woodlands from rangelands that may be prone to juniper encroachment. This function assists conservation planners in choosing appropriate conservation practices.
- In non-woodland areas, it helps planners determine if juniper are a naturally occurring component of the landscape that provide valuable ecosystem services including wildlife habit and shade and structure for livestock. These areas tend to be in mid-elevation areas on shallower soils and/or on soils with a high content of rock fragments. Controlling juniper in these areas normally does not improve forage production for livestock and wildlife
- The interpretation predicts areas where juniper encroachment may occur as a result management or natural disturbances. As such, the interpretation aids conservationists in planning appropriate brush management strategies to improve rangeland productivity.



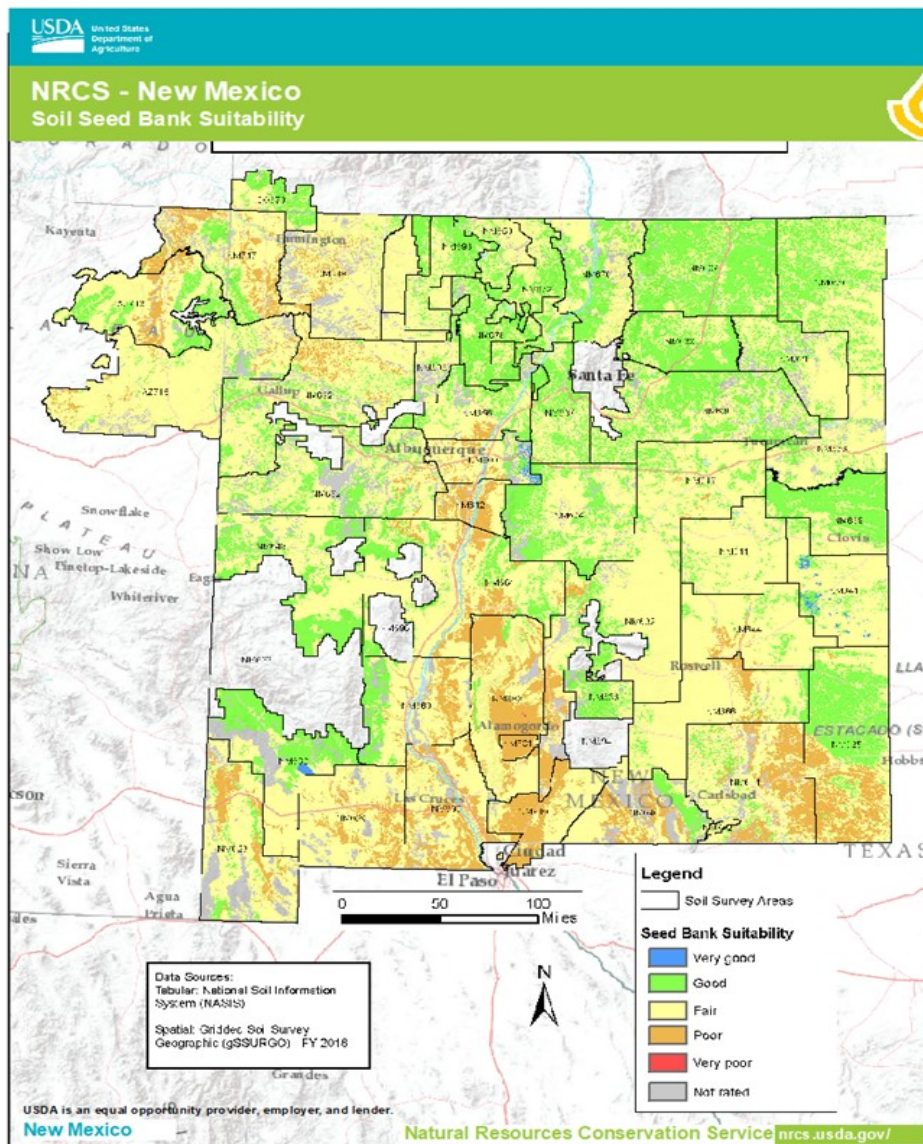
Resource Inventories & Assessments

Soil Seedbank Suitability Guide

When restoring rangelands, land managers are often faced with the difficult choice of deciding if seeding desirable species is a cost-effective alternative. In New Mexico, it is difficult to predict when the rains will fall and contribute to good stand establishment. Thus, the soil's capacity to store seed over time is an important factor in determining the success of range seeding.

In collaboration with NMSU and the WNTSC, NRCS New Mexico developed a draft interpretation which rates the soil's capacity to store seed and allow for proper seedling emergence after monsoonal precipitation. The interpretation relies on soil physical and chemical properties including soil texture, soil climate, and salt content.

To date, field observations have indicated that the interpretation can be a valuable tool for conservation planners and land managers. New Mexico NRCS looks forward to working with partners to conduct a full evaluation of the interpretation over the upcoming years.



New Mexico Civil Rights Advisory Committee



We are a diverse group of people serving a diverse group of people. New Mexico's culture and tradition make it one of the world's most diverse places. We take our responsibility of being fair, transparent, honest and accountable very seriously. One of the tools we use to ensure this is through the Civil Rights Advisory Committee, or CRAC. The CRAC's charter is designed to assure that we are following federal laws, civil rights policies and national and state objectives and advises the state conservationist on all Equal Opportunity Employment (EEO) and program delivery related matters. The CRAC promotes education, awareness and outreach of all the Special Emphasis Programs.

Training was given to all teams on Reasonable Accommodation, the First Amendment, and retirement training was held in both the north and south areas.

Numerous recruitment and outreach events took place throughout the state. Two Quality Assurance Reviews were completed, for Team 2 and Team 11.

Civil Rights Employee of the Year: New Mexico recognizes an employee who has made contribution during the fiscal year that advances civil rights program in one or more of the following areas: outreach, improvement of services in programs to underrepresented groups and/or employment.

New Mexico celebrated our cultural diversity in April, 2018 with a speaker, Bruce Gardner, who demonstrated "hikaru dorodango". Hikaru dorodango are balls of soil, molded by hand into perfect spheres, dried, and polished to an unbelievable luster. We learned about this art form and saw examples at different states in the process. Bruce collects soils from various locations in New Mexico, and ties his art form to the landscape his materials come from. This example is "Placitas Gray".



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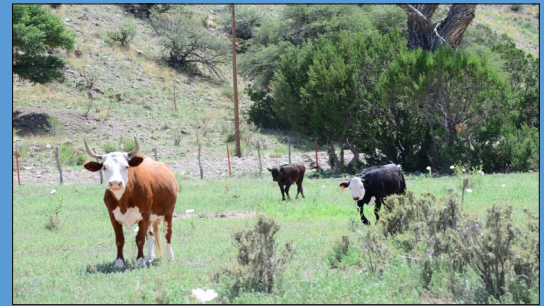
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Conservation Planning



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