



United States Department of Agriculture



NEW MEXICO ANNUAL | FY REPORT | 2020



J. XAVIER MONTOYA, STATE CONSERVATIONIST
WWW.NM.NRCS.USDA.GOV



New Mexico
Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service

nm.nrcs.usda.gov



HELPING PEOPLE HELP THE LAND

USDA Natural Resources
Conservation Service
100 Sun Avenue N.E.,
Suite 602
Albuquerque, NM 87109
(505) 761-4402

www.nm.nrcs.usda.gov



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GREETINGS

Greetings from the beautiful Land of Enchantment! NRCS New Mexico showed resiliency and adaptability this year to the many challenges posed by COVID. Throughout the pandemic, NRCS continued to deliver programs to assist agricultural producers, work with key partners, provide technical assistance, and promote soil health, while also making strides to enhance efficiency and effectiveness to improve services to customers.

In FY 2020, we put many millions of dollars into the hands of New Mexico landowners and land users to implement conservation practices and we provided many with technical assistance guided by science and research.

In this report, you will meet our leadership team, learn about our FY 2020 program successes and new partnerships, and read success stories from around the state. As we look around our communities, we should be proud of the conservation accomplished in our beautiful state, even as we eagerly look to the future and what is yet to come.

Keep up the good work, stay safe, stay healthy, stay flexible, and have a great year going forward.

Sincerely,

J. Xavier Montoya,
State Conservationist



OUR AGENCY

NRCS works with farmers, ranchers, and landowners across the country to help boost agricultural productivity and protect our natural resources through conservation.

OUR STAFF

NRCS in New Mexico has over 140+ staff across the state to meet the unique resource needs of our farmers and landowners. Every county in New Mexico is supported by 35 USDA Service centers located in many counties across the state. Our offices (see right) provide customer service at the local level.

OUR MISSION

We deliver conservation solutions so agricultural producers can protect natural resources and feed a growing world.

OUR VISION

A world of clean and abundant water, healthy soils, resilient landscapes, and thriving agricultural communities through voluntary conservation.

OUR MOTTO

Helping People Help the Land.



For more information, visit: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/nm/contact/local/>

See also page. XX at the end of this report for a full list of offices and numbers.



2020 NRCS NEW MEXICO LEADERSHIP TEAM



ROSABETH GARCIA-SAIS
Assistant State Conservationist for Management and Strategy
 rosabeth.garciasais@usda.gov
 505-761-4411



ALICIA RODRIGUEZ
Assistant State Conservationist for Partnershipd
 alicia.rodriguez@usda.gov
 505-761-4421



KRIS GRAHAM CHAVEZ
Assistant State Conservationist for Field Development
 kristen.grahamchavez@usda.gov
 505-761-4404



KENNETH BRANCH
Assistant State Conservationist for Programs
 kenneth.branch@usda.gov
 505-761-4454



ADRIAN TAFOYA
South Area Conservationist
 adrian.tafoya@usda.gov
 575-522-8875 ext. 115



KENNETH ALCON
North Area Conservationist
 kenneth.alcon@usda.gov
 505-761-4445



STEVE KADAS
State Resource Conservationist
 steve.kadas@usda.gov
 505-761-4422



RICK STRAIT
State Soil Scientist
 richard.strait@usda.gov
 505-761-4433



JAMES HEWITT
State Conservation Engineer
 james.hewitt@usda.gov
 505-761-4490



CHRISHELLE JACKSON
Executive Assistant
 chriselle.jackson@usda.gov
 505-761-4402

MANAGEMENT & STRATEGY

Rosabeth Garcia-Sais

Assistant State Conservationist for Management & Strategy

The Management & Strategy Team contributed to the overall success of NRCS New Mexico by providing operational leadership and support for the field as well as oversight and quality assurance in our processes. We helped get conservation on the ground by effectively developing and managing a technical assistance budget of over \$19 million used to support our workforce.

Fiscal year 2020 was certainly challenging due to COVID-19. The pandemic required us to adjust “normal” operations and affected the usual travel, training, and other face-to-face activities. But on a positive note, it allowed us to utilize workplace flexibilities to efficiently and seamlessly carry out our work. We provided formal retirement training to 38 employees and through the use of technology, we expanded the annual pre-retirement health benefits training conducted jointly with the Social Security Administration and Blue Cross Blue Shield to all employees statewide. We also implemented the 2020-2021 Tri-State Leadership Development Program in which 15 employees from New Mexico, Colorado, and Oklahoma received formal training to enhance leadership skills and prepare them for future leadership opportunities.

As in previous years, grants and agreements played a major role in our conservation efforts. An unprecedented 17 new agreements were awarded, 15 existing agreements were amended, and 100 agreement payments were processed. We also executed working agreements with Soil and Water Conservation Districts using the new national templates. We continued to utilize our partnerships with the New Mexico Department of Agriculture and the National Older Worker Career Center to provide additional staffing assistance in the field. We purchased 16 new vehicles for the field and our staffing cap was increased from 141 to 148. We ended the year with 97% of positions filled, an increase of 33 new employees to New Mexico!



OPPORTUNITY THROUGH NRCS PROGRAMS

Kenneth Branch

Assistant State Conservationist for Programs

New Mexico staff kicked off the year with NRCS employees from all over the United States attending a training conference in Dallas, TX to learn about the 2018 Farm Bill regulations and new program policy. A key focus throughout has been “streamlining.” Objectives include streamlining conservation planning processes to improve quality, streamlining program delivery to make it easier and more transparent for producers to apply for funding, and streamlining communication to improve customer service across USDA agencies.

Here are several ways this is being accomplished:

- **CART**, the new conservation assessment software, provides a consistent way to evaluate the impacts of planned activities on resource concerns.
- **Farmers.gov**, a new webpage that consolidates information on USDA funding and resources in one place and is the portal for farmers and ranchers to apply for program funding.
- Emphasis on soil health. Soil health is the foundation for a healthy and productive ecosystem.
- Training and mentoring. New Mexico held sessions with all employees in the State to discuss the Farm Bill changes and began monthly program teleconferences with employees.



Employee farm bill training session in Las Cruces.



State Conservationist, Xavier Montoya at the farm bill training.



Assistant State Conservationist, explaining CART.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) was a continued success with over \$24 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:** Grazed Rangeland, Irrigated Cropland, Forestland, Watersheds, Beginning Farmer or Rancher, Conservation Activity Plans, and Animal Feeding Operations.
- **State initiatives:** Energy, Organic, Seasonal High Tunnel, Acequias, and Tribal Lands.
- **National initiatives:** National Water Quality, Strike Force, Working Land for Wildlife Lesser Prairie Chicken, Joint Chiefs, and Water SMART.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM (EQIP) FY 2020



TOP 8 EQIP PRACTICES BY FINANCIAL INVESTMENT

1 SPRINKLER SYSTEM

- FUNDS OBLIGATED **\$ 5,842,068**
- 6,348 ACRES**
- 86 PROJECTS**



- 2 BRUSH MANAGEMENT**
\$2,978,678, 33,269 ACRES, 180 PROJECTS
- 3 IRRIGATION PIPELINE**
\$2,084,843, 111,591 FEET, 120 PROJECTS
- 4 FENCE**
\$1,938,570, 1,039,960 FEET, 188 PROJECTS
- 5 FOREST STAND IMPROVEMENT**
\$1,852,842, 1,346 ACRES, 63 PROJECTS
- 6 WATERING FACILITY**
\$1,580,192, 366 NO., 349 PROJECTS
- 7 STRUCTURE FOR WATER CONTROL**
\$1,286,569, 945 EACH, 287 PROJECTS
- 8 LIVESTOCK PIPELINE**
\$996,219, 710,279 FEET, 177 PROJECTS



CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAMS (CSP)

The Interim Final Rule for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) allowed public land to be eligible in 2020 for the first time ever. The interim rule also emphasized the goal of the program to improve soil health and protect drinking water in source water priority areas. Applications competed across the state for the allocated funding with priority for applications in source water areas and those that implemented a priority practice or enhancement. New Mexico ended the year with 451 active CSP contracts receiving payments over the last 5 years totaling \$33,985,595.

Regular and renewal sign-ups	73
Acres.....	1,015,250
Grassland Conservation Initiative new contracts	6,250
Acres.....	321,179
Contract with Beginning Farmer/Rancher	12
Contract with Socially Disadvantaged Farmer/Rancher.....	29
Dollars obligated in 2020 for all 5 years.....	\$13,310,519
Underfunded applications	9

In the regular and renewal sign-ups, NRCS was able to fund 73 applications. The contracted enhancements were those selected by the applications that ranked high enough for funding. A contract could have selected several of the enhancements below.

ENHANCEMENTS SELECTED IN MORE THAN 2 CONTRACTS	NUMBER	EXTENT
Use of body condition scoring for livestock on a monthly basis to keep track of herd health	37	592,057 acres
Incorporating wildlife refuge areas in contingency plans for wildlife	32	128,356 acres
Maintaining quantity and quality of forage for animal health and productivity	10	41,244 acres
Improved grazing management for enhanced plant structure and composition for wildlife	8	211,326
Incorporating “wildlife friendly” fencing for connectivity of wildlife food and resources	8	33,032 feet
Eliminate use of chemical treatments to control pests and to increase the presence of dung beetles	2	11,769 acres

State priority resource concerns for FY 2020

Agland (grazed range, cropland and pasture): Wind and water erosion, Soil quality degradation, Degraded plant condition, Inadequate habitat for fish and wildlife, Livestock production limitation

Nonindustrial private forestland: Concentrated soil erosion, Water quality degradation, Degraded plant condition, Inadequate habitat for fish and wildlife, Livestock production limitation

State priority practices for 2020

State priority practices for FY 2020

Rangeland: Prescribed Grazing, Cropland: Cover Crop, Residue Management No-till, Reduced tillage; Pasture: Prescribed Grazing if grazed and Forage Harvest Management if not grazed.



AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROGRAM (ACEP) provides certainty that agricultural and unique environmental land will be protected from development. Many landowners in New Mexico are turning to conservation easements to ensure that their values of land stewardship are maintained by future generations. In 2020 NRCS implemented changes to contracting procedures that significantly reduce the time and paperwork to create and manage easement agreements. Through the streamlined process, 3 new parcels were enrolled in ALE in 2020 in New Mexico’s 2nd Congressional District.

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

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT PROGRAMS TALLY

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Congresional District	Contracts Obligated	Contracted Acres	Obligation Amount
1	13	40,589	\$695,795
2	167	907,279	\$13,457,117
3	168	306,566	\$10,382,246
Total	348	1,254,435	\$24,535,158

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

Congresional 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

FIELD DEVELOPMENT

Kris Graham Chavez

Assistant State Conservationist for Field Development

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) promotes coordination of NRCS conservation activities with partners that offer value-added contributions to expand our collective ability to address on-farm, watershed, and regional natural resource concerns. Through RCPP, NRCS seeks to co-invest with partners to implement projects that demonstrate innovative solutions to conservation challenges and provide measurable improvements and outcomes tied to the resource concerns they seek to address.

New Mexico has been fortunate with 13 active agreements and currently working on the development of two new agreements and two renewals. Some objectives include working with acequias, forest stand improvement to reduce fire risk, phreatophyte removal, and working with producers who have federal land permits.

RCPP makes available a variety of NRCS conservation activities to help partners, agricultural producers, and private landowners address local and regional natural resource challenges.

Partners apply to NRCS for RCPP project awards. Once projects are selected, NRCS works with partners to set aside a certain pool of funding for an awarded project. Producers, landowners, and partners then enter into producer contracts and supplemental agreements with NRCS to carry out agreed-to conservation activities.

Conservation Agricultural Mentoring Program (CAMP)

The Conservation Agricultural Mentoring Program is a state-driven, partnership and field-based program to build strong employee-producer relationships and increase employees' knowledge of production agriculture in their local areas.

NRCS matches producer volunteers who are passionate about conservation and teaching with field employees who have fewer than three years of experience or who are new to an area. The producers will have an opportunity to mentor the employees through "on-the-land," hands-on learning to help them develop their knowledge of:

Common agricultural practices, equipment, inputs, and other agricultural factors in the local area, including:

- The types of challenges and decisions producers face day to day.
- Local resource problems and concerns.
- How NRCS and local producers address resource problems and concerns.

The program provides the opportunity for mentor producers to engage with mentee employees several times over the course of the program, which lasts 1-1.5 years for each participating employee.

By focusing on field-based, hands-on learning, we aim to accelerate employees' early career development and increase their ability to provide customer service of the highest quality, while also increasing their confidence, connection to their local communities, and their understanding of producers' needs.

Currently, New Mexico has 52 participants. When a new employee joins NRCS, they are matched with a mentor within the first 2 months.

PARTNERSHIPS AND OUTREACH

Alicia Rodriguez

Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships

NRCS NM Conservation Outreach Agreements:

NRCS NM recently advertised requests for proposals on Grants.gov to assist with Farm Bill outreach efforts. The focus of the outreach included 1) Farm Bill Outreach Workshops; 2) Technical Workshops and/or Field Days, Native Plant Community Adoption, and/or Pollinator Habitat; and 3) Organic and Specialty Crop Workshops.

NRCS NM received 11 proposal submissions for this opportunity. We were very pleased with the quality of proposal submissions and for all the excellent potential partnership opportunities from which to select.

All proposals received by the submission deadline were reviewed by an NRCS review panel. The panel evaluated and ranked the proposals based on the criteria and priorities as stated in the Grants.gov announcement.

NRCS NM is pleased to announce the selection of the following outreach proposals, with a total amount of funding of \$133,497.34:

- Regents of New Mexico State University, Native Plant/Pollinator Habitat Workshops in San Miguel and Mora County (\$15,271).
- Ciudad SWCD, Urban Ag in the Middle Rio Grande Valley (\$19,560).
- Dona Ana SWCD, Small and Beginning Farmers - Introduction to NRCS (\$19,508.50)
- Bat Conservation International, NM Water Conservation for Livestock and Wildlife on Rangelands serviced by multiple SWCD Regions I, III, and IV and NRCS Service Center in Mora, San Miguel, Cibola, McKinley, and Socorro Counties (\$19,966.44).
- Center of Southwest Culture Organic and Specialty Crop Workshops to farmers in the communities of the Jemez and Isleta Pueblo, and the North and South Valley districts of Albuquerque (\$19,532.44).
- Not Forgotten Outreach, Taos Veteran Farmers Sustainable Ag & Specialty Crops Training (\$19,891.96).
- Tree New Mexico, Multicultural Conservation Campaign for Pollinators will cover the Middle Rio Grande Valley including Albuquerque's South and North Valley in Bernalillo and Sandoval Counties, plus nearby Isleta, Sandia, and Santa Ana Pueblos (\$19,767)

Projects will be 1 year in duration. All seven agreements have been fully executed.

New Mexico Ag Campaign Contribution Agreement:

The New Mexico Agriculture Campaign is an educational and outreach campaign designed to educate the general public about the importance of New Mexico agriculture, its contributions to the state as a whole, to persuade positive perceptions about the agriculture industry, and to advance the NRCS mission of delivering conservation solutions so agricultural producers can protect natural resources and feed a growing world. The goals of the campaign are to hit consumers in major urban areas and change their perceptions about New Mexico agriculture and understand its importance. With the help of the NRCS, New Mexico Agriculture will

continue its mission and enhance its efforts to increase awareness and positive perception of the state’s agriculture sector among residents of New Mexico. New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau (NMF&LB) will be the primary funder for the initiative. NMF&LB will manage the campaign with input from various supporters who help fund the initiative. Matching funds will be provided by NMF&LB and those supporting the program. Currently funds have been received from several industry partners including NM Cattle Growers, Farm Credit of New Mexico, NM First and NM Hay Growers.

New Mexico Agriculture in the Classroom (NMAIC):

New Mexico Grow Project Grant. NMAIC is working with the following twelve schools – keep these schools in mind when conducting outreach activities.

Region I & II:

- **Wilson Middle School, Albuquerque**
- **Mountain Mahogany Community School, Albuquerque**
- **Rudolfo Anaya Elementary, Albuquerque**
- **Desert Montessori School, Santa Fe**
- **Melrose Middle/High School, Melrose**
- **Maxwell High School/ FFA, Maxwell**

Region III & IV

- **Garfield Elementary, Hatch**
- **Snell Middle School, Bayard**
- **Aztec Youth Academy, Las Cruces**
- **Columbia Elementary, Las Cruces**
- **Holloman Middle School, Holloman Air Force Base**
- **Berrendo Middle School, Roswell**

With the help of NRCS and partner funding, these schools received a raised bed garden with drip irrigation and classroom hydroponic systems with customized training.

ENGINEERING

James Hewitt

State Conservation Engineer

During FY20, NRCS New Mexico (NM) engineering staff supported USDA Strategic Goals by ensuring USDA programs were delivered efficiently, promptly, with integrity, and a focus on customer service. These results-focused measures align with other USDA Strategic Goals by strengthening the stewardship of private lands through technology and research and by maintaining a high-performing workforce through employee engagement and empowerment, enhancing conservation planning with science-based tools and information, promoting productive working lands, and enhancing productive agricultural landscapes.

The NRCS NM State Office Engineering Section reviewed and checked field office designs; provided design and policy guidance to field offices; completed numerous on-farm designs, design checks, and certifications; and completed numerous Water Management Entity (WME) site visits, surveys, and designs. The NRCS NM Assistant SCE held a Side Roll Irrigation Training Workshop, for NRCS area and field office staff, that included an overview of Side Roll Irrigation and Agency Technical References as well as presentations on Planning Concepts (i.e., Soils, Crops, Topography, Irrigation System Layout and Hardware, Water Quality and Quantity Concerns), and Design Concepts (i.e., Soils, Crops, Irrigation Requirements, and Irrigation System Hydraulics and Hardware).



The NRCS NM Regional (GSU) Geologist completed over 120 well reports for water well contracts in New Mexico and Arizona. The GSU Geologist also reviewed two mineral assessments for Arizona farms and provided a geotechnical review for the following ongoing Arizona dam rehabilitation projects: Buckeye, Graveyard, Graham County Dams, Florence, Vineyard Road, Freeman Wash, Powerline Channel, Coyote Wash Buena School Watershed Recharge Project, and Fredonia.

The NRCS NM engineering staff helped watershed dam sponsors/owners (i.e., Irrigation Districts, Soil and

Water Conservation Districts, and Watershed Districts) conduct numerous annual O&M inspections of NRCS-assisted dams to assess general conditions at dam embankments, principal and emergency spillways, sediment pools, principal spillway outlets, and perimeter fences and gates; document field observations; document actions taken, and any actions needed to be taken, by the dam owners; and account for general maintenance and repairs to address damages resulting from localized storm events.

The NRCS New Mexico Assistant SCE completed the Santa Cruz River Watershed Site #1 Floodwater Retarding Structure Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment for the rehabilitation of the dam. The NRCS NM Assistant SCE facilitated the issuance of A/E contracts for the preparation of nine Dam Assessments throughout.

New Mexico, a Supplemental Watershed Plan and Environmental Assessment for the Tortugas Arroyo Watershed Dam #1, Watershed Plans and Environmental (NEPA) Documents for the Rincon Arroyo and Upper Lomas Negras Watershed Flood Protection Projects, The NRCS NM Assistant SCE also facilitated the execution of a Cooperative Agreement for the Planning Phase of the Belen Watershed Operations Program Flood Protection Project.

NRCS New Mexico, State Office Engineering Section gave numerous presentations to NRCS employees, non-federal partners, and outside contractors on the Watershed Operations and Flood Prevention Program and a few that covered the DamWatch (internet-based) tool, for use on NRCS-assisted watershed projects.

RESOURCE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

Steve Kadas

State Resource Conservationist

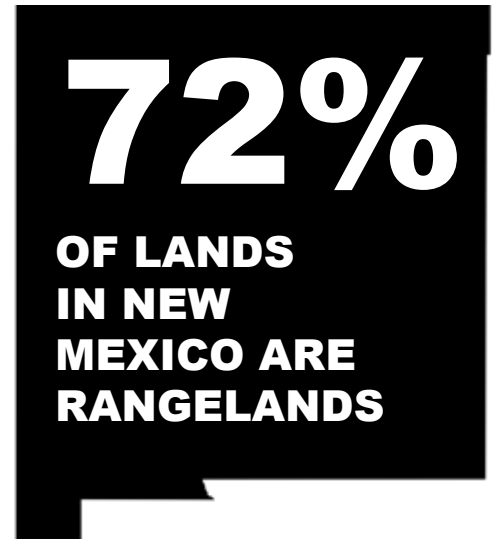
NEW MEXICO RESOURCE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Conservation planning and ecological sciences are the heart and soul of NRCS, that’s what Resource Technology Services (RTS) is all about. RTS represents top specialists in the state and oversees conservation technology and training for New Mexico.

The RTS specialists provide leadership to Field Offices, assisting them in their common and complex conservation planning needs. The ultimate goal is to help field staff, Help Clients Helping the Land. The RTS includes the state Agronomy, Wildlife Biologist, Business Tools Specialist, Archaeologist, Rangeland Specialist, Forester, and Water Quality Specialist. We ensure that our employees are prepared to provide the best technical assistance to our clients so that our clients can be the best they can in managing their lands.

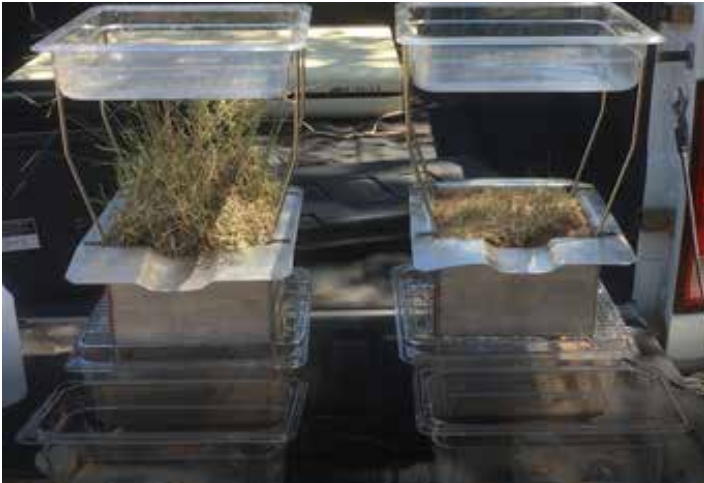
RANGE MANAGEMENT AND GRAZING LAND CONSERVATION

New Mexico NRCS understands the importance of the livestock industry to the culture, tradition, and economics of New Mexico. With the majority of New Mexico lands being classified as rangelands (72%), and livestock grazing being the primary use on these acres, NRCS is committed to assisting New Mexico farmer and ranchers in applying conservation practices such as brush management, fencing, livestock pipelines, and watering facilities, as well as developing grazing management plans that help farmers and ranchers achieve their conservation stewardship and livestock production goals. Prescribed grazing is the base practice most relevant to New Mexico farmers and ranchers in the latest version of the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). NRCS assisted many New Mexico Farmers and Ranchers in the development of prescribed grazing management plans to help producers achieve their management goals while maintaining healthy, productive lands for future use. The Resource Technology department at NRCS is committed to ensuring that the conservation practices implemented on New Mexico lands are relevant and technically sound to the Agricultural producers of our state.



OUTREACH AND EDUCATION ON RANGE MANAGEMENT AND SOIL HEALTH

Conservation education for farmers and ranchers, schools, colleges, tribes, etc. 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 to soil health.



From a demonstration on soil and range health using the Rainfall Simulator at a NMSU Extension Soil Health Workshop Via Zoom, October 2020.



NRCS State Rangeland Management Specialist Assists Ranchers and Field Staff on Grazing Management inventory methods and calculations Near Watrous, NM September, 2020



NRCS State Rangeland Management Specialist Assists Ranchers and Field Staff on Grazing Management inventory methods and calculations Near Watrous, NM September, 2020



CULTURAL RESOURCES

The RTS Cultural Resources staff was busy in FY2020. The RTS cultural resource staff completed consultations and National Historic Preservation Act compliance work on 158 NRCS contracts amounting to 9,824 acres surveyed for cultural resources. The surveys identified and documented 173 cultural resources of archeological sites (prehistoric and historic), historic structures, and acequias.

The RTS archeologists participated in the Quality Assurance Reviews of the 10 field offices comprising Teams 4, 5, and 8.

Additionally, the staff provided a week-long training on cultural resource policy and procedures to new field office staff (see pictures below).



158 CONTRACT CONSULTATIONS

173 CULTURAL RESOURCES DOCUMENTED



9,824 ACRES SURVEYED



SOIL HEALTH IS GROWING

The promotion of Soil Health by NRCS staff in New Mexico is a high priority for RTS because soil health is the foundation of all soil and water conservation. Conservation begins with the soil.

In 2020 RTS developed the New Mexico Soil Health strategy which will guide our State, Area, and Field office staff in 1) Implementing Soil Health Management Systems (SHMS), 2) obtaining Technical excellence through soil health training and accountability, 3) building partnerships with outside groups, 4) conducting soil health education and outreach and 5) quantifying the benefits of soil health. The 5-part strategy will be executed by RTS Staff and the New Mexico Soil Health Team which consists of one soil or range conservationist from each of the 11 Teams that was selected by the Area Conservationists based on Knowledge and interest in Soil Health. Each Team member will gain knowledge and improve their expertise in order to assist all field offices in improving their skills in encouraging farmers and ranchers to adopt the four principles of soil health: maximizing plant and residue cover, maximize plant species diversity, increase the length of time living roots are in the soil and minimize soil disturbances.

Due to the pandemic 2020 was marked by online soil health presentations mostly by RTS staff. NRCS Partnered with NMSU to deliver (2) Online 2-day Soil Health workshops attended by over 100 individuals. On occasion, the staff was able to get into the field.



A slake Test as part of a Cropland In-Field Soil Health Assessment training near Fence Lake.



Digging up a plant to assess roots during a Cropland In-Field Soil Health Assessment training near Fence Lake.

RESOURCE INVENTORIES & ASSESSMENTS

Rick Strait

State Soil Scientist

New Mexico is the first western state to have statewide high-resolution elevation data (LiDAR) for use in our Geographic Information Systems. LiDAR data has a ground resolution that is 100 times better than elevation products used in the past. The derivative products from LiDAR include contours, hillshade, aspect and slope base layers. Conventional elevation products do not provide the level of accuracy needed to analyze small (1-2 foot) differences on the landscape. With LiDAR, New Mexico NRCS can take advantage of an extremely accurate and consistent base layer that will benefit agency business as well as the public.

**ELEVATION DATA
100 TIMES
BETTER THAN
BEFORE!**

Some applications include:

- **Dam safety analysis**
- **Cultural Resources determinations**
- **Acequia delineation**
- **Engineering surveys and planning**
- **Improved planning for brush management and other conservation practices**
- **Floodplain delineations**
- **Terrain visualization**
- **Determination of slope gradient, aspect, and complexity**
- **Watershed evaluations**
- **Wildfire planning, fire behavior modeling, and rehab**

Resolution Comparison of Digital Elevation Models



Best available prior data (10 meter resolution)



LiDAR data (Submeter resolution)

PLANT MATERIALS – NEW MEXICO “COVERS” CROPPING SYSTEM BENEFITS

Since 1937, the New Mexico Plant Materials Program has developed over 30 improved conservation plants and new vegetative methods for improving rangeland, riparian restoration, wildlife habitat enhancement. While the program continues to maintain native plant releases, in 2020 the Center branched out to improve its focus on cover crops and soil health.

Cover crop plantings at the Los Lunas facility focused on:

- Utilizing “smother crops” for weed suppression
- Designing crop rotations to improve soil health while providing forage harvests to improve economic returns
- Cycling nutrients through the soil-plant system with catch crops



First-year pearl millet smother crop planted in 2020. In 2019 and prior years, this field was infested with Russian thistle, pigweed, and other undesirable plants. Herbicides were not used to establish this field.



Multipurpose forage corn/cowpea cover crop mix planted to improve soil health and provide a high-quality forage crop. The “Red Ripper” cowpea variety in this mix has a hardpan penetrating root system with documented root growth down to nine feet. Red Ripper vines at Los Lunas measured up to 12 feet in length!



Sunflower catch crop at the New Mexico PMC. The sunflowers “catch” nitrogen and other nutrients that would otherwise be leached out of the soil profile. The plantings also benefit pollinators by providing a high-quality food source

NEW MEXICO HOSTS THE WEST REGIONAL NATIONAL COOPERATIVE SOIL SURVEY CONFERENCE

In July, 2020 New Mexico NRCS, in conjunction with New Mexico State University, hosted the first-ever virtual West Regional National Cooperative Soil Survey Conference.

A major highlight of the conference was a virtual field tour which featured 10 soil scientists and ecologists from 9 states (NM, MT, AZ, WY, CA, UT, OR, AK, HI) who highlighted unique soils and landscapes from their areas.

Post-conference feedback indicated that attendees were grateful to ‘visit’ soils in remote locations that they would otherwise never set foot on.

Overall, there were 165 registrants and participants for the conference. Eighty-one percent of these attendees were from the West Region while 19% were from outside the region. Conference participants were from all states in the west region with New Mexico, California, and Oregon, each fielding >10% of the overall participants.

Slightly more than 50% of the attendees were from the NRCS, approximately 25% were university participants (including faculty, staff, and students), and the remaining approximately 25% were from other federal agencies. Slightly more than 40% of the attendees were soil scientists. The remainder of the attendance consisted of directors/program managers, university faculty and staff, graduate students, ecologists, range managers, and student trainees.

NORTH AREA

Kenneth Alcon

North Area Conservationist



NORTH AREA PROGRAM ACTIVITY

	CONTRACTS	CONTRACT ACRES	OBLIGATIONS	PAYMENTS
EQIP	151	651,842	\$11,746,229	\$341,255
CSP	33	315,357	\$5,859,688	\$305,037
RCPP				
CSP-GCI	24	4,175	\$375,837	\$74,874



SUCCESS STORIES



For Melissa Bell, hoop houses were a “game changer.”



Melissa Bell leads the way into one of her hoop houses.

Melissa Bell

Organic Farmer
Taos, NM

Melissa Bell’s transition from family gardener to full-time farmer was a gradual process that began with selling extra produce to a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). Over the years her garden has grown and evolved into the impressive full-time operation it is today. Now Melissa Bell is a successful high-volume small-acreage.

Bell implements holistic management no-till regenerative agriculture practices in her growing and she continually seeks to understand how soil biology interacts with plant roots and how nutrients are cycled. That quest has produced a wide variety of high quality, nutrient-dense, delicious vegetables as well as a colorful array of spectacularly beautiful flowers.

In recent years, NRCS is proud to have helped Melissa Bell fund two Hoop Houses through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Vernon Mirabal, USDA NRCS NM Team 3 Soil Conservationist, helped Bell design a conservation plan and apply for the NRCS EQIP contract. “We are at a high elevation,” Mirabal explained, “above 7000 feet and it doesn’t get warm until later in the year and the growing season usually ends around September, so with that, you’re really limited with what you can grow traditionally.”

The hoop houses allowed Melissa to extend her growing seasons and, for some plants, even farm year-round. The



Bell’s flowers are the table centerpiece at historic hotel, Mabel Luhan Dodge House.



Bell checks her winter vegetables. The hoop houses allow Melissa to extend her growing seasons.



In the summer, Bell's gardens and high tunnels are filled with color and life.



Sign made for Melissa Bell by husband.

installation of the high tunnels was a gamechanger for Bell. “I felt like I made a step up,” she said. “I felt more authentic as a farmer.”

In the summer, Bell’s gardens and high tunnels are filled with color and life. “When you’re out here during full production,” Mirabal said, “you can’t even see across all the way because there is so much vegetation...not only covering the ground, but vertically. It’s every single square foot, used to its maximum intent. And I think that has a lot to do with how healthy her soils are, the amount of organic matter in her soils...her last soil test was coming back with organic matter around 7-8%...the Taos average in this kind of setting is more around 3-4%.”

Bell’s successes have also garnered attention from NRCS, becoming a popular place for NRCS NM personnel, where it was recently the site of numerous High Tunnel trainings. As Mirabal noted, it’s one thing to read about no-till soil health in the classroom, but quite another to see a producer realizing that to its fullest potential.

In August 2019, NRCS Chief Matt Lohr visited New Mexico. New Mexico State Conservationist, Xavier Montoya, as well as other NRCS personnel brought, Chief Lohr to Melissa Bell’s farm to showcase some of the good work being done in the state. Bell provided a great example of the benefits of using no-till, holistic methods, and succession cropping, and how all that could be done in an urban agricultural high production seasonal high tunnel, and in a limited-water high-desert village like Taos, New Mexico. During Chief Lohr’s visit, NRCS presented Bell a certificate of appreciation for hosting high tunnel trainings at her farm.



Bell receives a certificate of appreciation from NRCS.

SOUTH AREA

ADRIAN TAFOYA

South Area Conservationist



SOUTH AREA PROGRAM ACTIVITY

	CONTRACTS	ACRES	OBLIGATED AMOUNT	TOTAL PAYMENT
EQIP	137	397,538.70	\$12,697,472.25	\$1,208,019
CSI-GCI	10	2,074.70	\$186,732.60	\$37,344.60
CSP Renewals	6	81,497.20	\$1,220,383.75	\$139,998.75
CSP Classic	34	618,396.20	\$5,667,876.69	\$253,711.69



SUCCESS STORIES

Dusty Dixon

Beginning Agricultural Producer

Roosevelt County

Dustin contacted our office in 2019 on land that he had purchased for irrigation a few years back. Unfortunately, Dixon had missed the 2019 EQIP signup deadline. The Portales Field office made a field visit to see what we could help him with. Dixon’s land was in rough shape and his irrigation system as well. He managed what he could with what he had on hand. He replaced irrigation pumps, irrigation pipelines, and fixed leaky center pivot. Dixon had raised various crops such as oats, triticale, millet, haygrazer, and alfalfa on six different circles. Dixon knew he had plenty of water for the crops that he was growing, but he knew that the pivot system could not handle it without collapsing. He reached out to NRCS for assistance, and in 2020 Dustin received a contract with NRCS to replace 3 faulty center pivot systems including flow meters and chemigation valves. With the mess 2020 was and getting contracts approved, Dixon was very eager to get started due to a center pivot system collapsing on freshly planted alfalfa. Dixon submitted a waiver request to install a practice early, and it was granted. Dixon not only got one system up, but he also managed to get all three installed before the end of the calendar year. As NRCS employees we are always grateful to producers that have a “go get’em attitude”, it makes our job so much easier.

NRCS looks forward to assisting Dustin Dixon on a new EQIP application for 2021. We are looking at replacing the other three pivots. We also will look at planting corners back to native grass. Hopefully, NRCS can help Dixon achieve his goals and objectives, not only in the present but in the future for his kids to take over at some point.





The Prather Family
Generational Ranchers
Otero County

The Prather family homesteaded in the dry desert land of southeastern New Mexico several generations back, and the family continues to ranch the same land today. In this country it's a given that ranchers would like to get more water facilities throughout the rough and rocky terrain to increase grazing distribution, but that is often easier said than done. Decades of experience dictated that they could not lay pipelines in the bottoms of canyons without it being washed away with large rain events. With EQIP and technical assistance from NRCS, they were able to come up with a viable solution to get water across the ranch, benefitting both livestock and wildlife. They anchored the pipeline into the rock walls of the canyons, ensuring that the pipelines would be out of danger when floods occurred in the canyon bottoms. Now the ranch has more widely distributed water sources and cattle are grazing in areas they never have before.

Team 8 - Datil Field Office

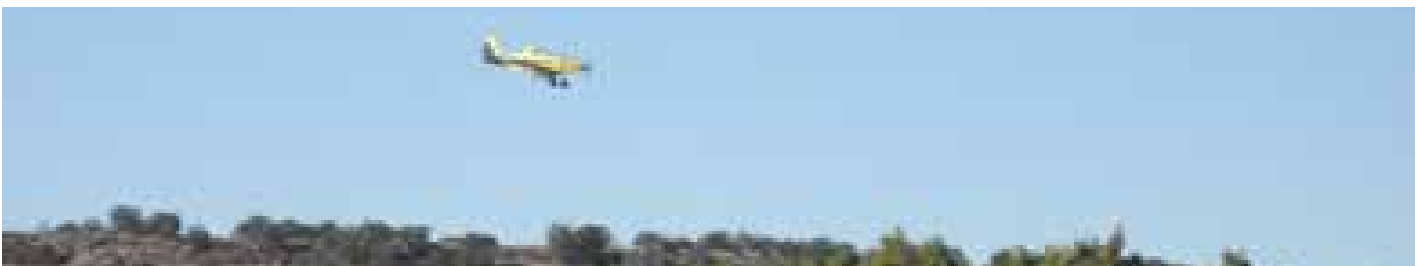


Fiscal Year 2020 showed the benefit of the Chemical Brush Management through the aerial application. This year, we were able to successfully see the results of application that was applied on over 900 acres. This application was unique due to the altitude and distance challenges for aerial application. Flying at that high of an elevation with as much weight as what was required for the application, was not an easy feat that many were willing to tackle.

The species treated was mainly Juniper with a small portion being Piñon. The overall goal was a reduction in canopy being 65-80% with small islands for wildlife nesting species. **Overall, the success rate was 85% reduction of species of concern, with the wildlife islands remaining intact!**

In the end, the success of this project can be attributed to the coordination received between the landowner, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the NRCS. The partnership with the BLM was essential in the role they played in helping to secure a contractor who was willing to take on the extra burden and responsibilities that come with applications at such high altitudes.

The Datil Field Office is thankful to the landowners who recognized the need for conservation in these remote areas and continually strived for improvement of their overall operation. Their patience in the whole process was essential to the success of the whole operation.



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 (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.

In FY 2020, New Mexico CRAC nominated one of its members for the for the Chief's Workforce Diversity Award. The nomination was for her excellence in going above and beynd to recruit socially disadvantaged and historically underserved populations, especially veterans. New Mexico CRAC also nominated another one of its members for the National NRCS Individual Civil Rights Award, for creating a campaign to recognize women in conservation during Women's Observation Month in March, an effort for which the member was recognized for as the New Mexicao CRAC Civil Rights Employee of the Year (below are two examples of the 28 profiles created in this campaign).



3 Words To Describe Myself: *Delia Pastran-Garcia*

- * FAMILY ORIENTED
- * INDEPENDENT
- * WORRIER

Job Title: Engineer
Years with NRCS: 11 years
Career Timeline:

- Civil Engineer—Las Vegas, NM—2009-2016
- Design Engineer State office—ABQ, NM—2016-present



Favorite Position: "Enjoyed and enjoy working both positions!"

Why did you choose NRCS as a career?
 "I am the daughter and granddaughter of lifetime farmers. Working with and assisting farmers and ranchers is close to the heart."

Most memorable experience working for NRCS: "I worked closely with a producer who had a small parcel of land. The producer worked his system using a shovel each time he irrigated. He also used and moved cinder blocks to turn out the water from his ditch. We designed a small but efficient system for him which no longer required a shovel to irrigate. I was fortunate to be there when he opened water to his small field. I will never forget the look in his eyes or the gratitude he had. This is the good stuff."

Home Town: Born & Raised Deming, NM/Lived in Las Vegas, NM for 26 years

Favorite Food & Beverage: Red Enchiladas//Iced Tea
Hobbies: "I enjoy spending time with my kids and grandkids, and I enjoy going to the movies and taking long walks. Traveling."

What do you enjoy most about your career with NRCS? "I enjoy working projects turnkey. I enjoy the beginning, starting with designing a project, then witnessing and possibly inspecting its actual construction, to finally ending the project... stepping back and watching the system work. Magic."

Challenges faced while working for NRCS: "All is good..."

Favorite Lyric That Keeps Me Motivated...

"...I'll never reach my destination if I never try so I will sail my vessel til the waters run dry..."

3 Words To Describe Myself: *Raquel Chacon*

- * COMPASSIONATE
- * STUBBORN
- * MOM



Job Title: District Conservationist

Years with NRCS: 18 1/2 years

Career Timeline:

- Co-Op Student—Deming, NM and Las Cruces, NM
- Soil Conservationist—Carrizosa, NM
- District Conservationist—Santa Rosa, NM, Silver City, NM and Carrizosa, NM

Favorite Position: "District Conservationist in Silver City, NM. I had an opportunity to work on NM biggest fire through EWIP, White Water Baldy Fire."

Why did you choose NRCS as a career?
 "I enjoy seeing someone step out on the ground. I find it rewarding and feel like this is the place God intended me to be. Caring for His creation."

Home Town: Loving, NM
Favorite Food & Beverage: Anything with cheese and chile // Capi God

Hobbies: "Hunt, fish, trap, & ranch."

What do you enjoy most about your career with NRCS? "I enjoy the people. Cowskins I pretty much grew up with. Like a second family. I also enjoy the outdoors although my position now I don't get to get out as much as the field agents."

Most memorable experience working for NRCS: "I remember Tracy Hughes, the technician at the time, and myself went to do a charcoal at a ranch. Tracy got down to clear the gas, however, she didn't realize she was still on the other side when she did so. We had a fire moment like that together I can grow and run with them lol."

Challenges faced while working for NRCS: "I was the first female Hispanic to be promoted out of the Carrizosa Field Office. There was definitely a cultural barrier when I first began work in 2002 here. I had been a part of the farming community in the valley but not necessarily the ranching community growing up. The story I have worked with producers I have built their trust. I began work with NRCS as a sheep trader. I did several details and moved several times within NM NRCS to gain more experience all while raising 4 little girls, the last 3 years I have done this as a single mom. I've learned to adapt to circumstances and through hardships I have learned a lot of compassion. I have had the support of my supervisors in doing so."

Favorite Quote...

"I can do all things through God who strengthens me." —Philippians 4:13

NRCS Service Centers

NRCS Office	(Current as of 2019)
Alamogordo	(575) 437-3100
Albuquerque	(505) 761-5447
Aztec	(505) 334-3090
Carlsbad	(575) 887-3506
Carrizozo	(575) 648-2941
Chama	(575) 756-2581
Clayton	(575) 374-9461
Clovis	(575) 762-4769
Crownpoint	(505) 786-7094
Cuba	(575) 289-3278
Datil	(575) 772-5722
Deming	(575) 546-9692
Estancia	(505) 384-2272
Fort Sumner	(575) 355-2448
Gallup	(505) 722-4357
Grants	(505) 287-4045
Hernandez	(505) 753-3508
Las Cruces	(575) 522-8775
Las Vegas	(505) 425-3594
Lordsburg	(575) 542-9141
Los Lunas	(505) 865-4643
Lovington	(575) 396-5857
Mora	(575) 387-2424
Mountainair	(505) 847-2941
Portales	(575) 356-6629
Raton	(575) 445-9571
Roswell	(575) 622-8746
Roy	(575) 485-2294
Santa Fe	(505) 471-0410
Santa Rosa	(575) 472-5401
Silver City	(575) 388-1569
Socorro	(575) 835-1710
Taos	(575) 758-3863
T or C	(575) 894-2212
Tucumcari	(575) 461-3801
State Office	(505) 761-4400
	(800) 410-2067



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