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Contact: Tracey Stone
The Nature Conservancy
tstone@TNC.ORG
602-738-1586

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Grant Opens Door to Find Ways to Improve Our Land, Water and Economy

ALBUQUERQUE – Actions that create healthy soil for agriculture, clean air to breathe and that prevent severe wildfires that send dangerous smoke into the atmosphere are universal and immediate goals. Yet climate change looms large, threatening our health and economy. Thanks to a [United States Climate Alliance](#) grant, new doors will open to meet ambitious greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction goals in New Mexico and Colorado.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in New Mexico and Colorado, along with New Mexico's [Department of Agriculture](#) (NMDA) and [Energy, Minerals & Natural Resources Department](#), are collaborating on a project that will improve working lands – ranches, farms and productive forests – for generations to come.

“We have a long way to go and not very much time,” said New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham. “Our planet, and our state’s priceless natural resources, require diligent and science-driven action. With aggressive clean energy goals, we’re on our way. And when the stakes are this high, every step in the right direction is meaningful.”

How will the partners accomplish this? First, we need science. Using publicly available data, remote sensing, and advanced climate modelling, TNC will generate estimates of carbon reductions through agricultural practices, forest management and avoided land conversion. Then, a broad group of stakeholders will develop and vet scenarios.

“By quantifying the potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, we can develop and promote practices and policy that will create a cleaner and stronger economy,” added

Nina Carranco, TNC's director of external affairs in New Mexico. "Natural climate solutions will play a key role as they draw on the power of nature to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it in healthy soils and forests."

"This grant aligns with our Healthy Soil Program, which supports improved watersheds, reduced soil erosion, and increased climate resilience," says Jeff Witte, New Mexico's secretary of agriculture. "The grant also provides an opportunity for us to work together with our Colorado neighbors to determine what we can all do to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Whether it's working with another state, or our continued participation on the Natural and Working Lands Climate Action Team, partnerships are important to NMDA's mission of working cooperatively with both public and private sectors."

"New Mexico has ambitious plans to cut greenhouse gas emissions in multiple sectors and reliable data is the basis for all our work," said Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department Cabinet Secretary Sarah Cottrell Propst. "This partnership between state agencies and non-governmental organizations is necessary to provide the scientific basis for measuring the contributions of natural climate solutions such as voluntary changes in agricultural practices, avoidance of mega-fires, and land protections that reduce carbon emissions."

Both Colorado and New Mexico have adopted bold greenhouse gas reduction goals. In January 2019, New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham set a bold energy and climate agenda for the state to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by at least 45% by 2030 compared to 2005 levels. In May 2019, Colorado Governor Jared Polis signed the ambitious Climate Action Plan to Reduce Pollution by at least 50% by 2030.

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