

NEW MEXICO'S STATEWIDE COMPREHENSIVE OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN

December 2021



Prepared by:



Prepared for:





United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

1.1.B.(2225)

MAR 18 2022

The Honorable Michelle Lujan Grisham
Governor of New Mexico
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Dear Governor Lujan Grisham:

Thank you for submitting the final New Mexico 2022-2026 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), *Get Outside, New Mexico*, along with your assurance that adequate public participation occurred during its development. I am pleased to inform you that the National Park Service (NPS) determined that the SCORP meets the statutory requirements of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act (54 U.S.C. §200305(d)), as detailed in Chapter 2 of the LWCF Federal Financial Assistance Manual. Therefore, it has been accepted to continue New Mexico's eligibility to participate in the LWCF State Assistance Program. This eligibility is effective through December 31, 2026.

Federal, State, and local parks are a crucial part of the fabric of our Nation. Our duty to preserve and protect these lands on behalf of the American public includes constant innovation to meet changing recreation demands, as well as assuring the efficient and effective use of enhanced LWCF funding resulting from the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act. Both these purposes are major objectives of the 5-year SCORP update process. Consequently, I hope this plan and the financial assistance that will follow as a result are valuable tools to help your state increase the quantity and quality of outdoor recreation lands and facilities through expansion, new development, modernization, and rehabilitation efforts to benefit both current and future generations. It is clear such efforts are particularly needed in communities that suffer from inequitable access to parks and other outdoor opportunities, a circumstance that became very obvious during the last two years with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The NPS is pleased to work with New Mexico as a partner in investing in the future of parks. We thank your state LWCF team for their efforts in the development of this plan and look forward to working with them to administer the LWCF program and implement the SCORP.

Sincerely,

Charles F. Sams III
Director

cc: Mr. Todd Leahy, State Liaison Officer
Ms. John Husemeyer, Alternate State Liaison Officer

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Introduction	1
2	Community Engagement	3
3	Outdoor Recreation Trends	13
	Factors and Trends Affecting Outdoor Recreation in New Mexico	14
4	Economic Development	31
	Economic Development and Outdoor Recreation	32
5	Recreation Resource Protection	43
	Recreation Resource Protection	44
6	New Mexico Wetlands	55
	Introduction	56
7	Outdoor Education	69
8	Access & Equity	77
9	Regional Findings and Recommendations	85
10	Implementation	99
11	Appendices	107
	Appendix A: Outdoor Recreation Resource Inventory	108
	Appendix B: Works Cited	114

FIGURES

Figure 2.1.	Community survey response rate by county	9
Figure 2.2.	Resident Word Cloud - Favorite Outdoor Recreation Activities	10
Figure 2.3.	Resident Word Cloud - Barriers to Outdoor Recreation Activities	10
Figure 2.4.	Resident Word Cloud - Most Needed Outdoor Recreation Facilities	10
Figure 2.5.	Visitor survey responses by state	11
Figure 2.6.	Visitor Word Cloud - New Mexico Outdoor Recreation	11
Figure 2.7.	What type of facilities should be prioritized for investment?	12
Figure 2.8.	What is the biggest challenge facing outdoor recreation providers in New Mexico?	12
Figure 2.9.	Townhall participant affiliation	13
Figure 2.10.	Where are you most often recreate outdoors?	13
Figure 2.11.	What criteria should be used to help prioritize decisions related to outdoor recreation?	14
Figure 2.12.	What is the single most important thing that outdoor recreation providers can do to help you participate?	14
Figure 2.13.	Jamboard	15
Figure 3.1.	Public lands in New Mexico	19
Figure 3.2.	Race and ethnicity in New Mexico and the United States, 2019	23
Figure 3.3.	Outdoor recreation participants in rural and urban areas in New Mexico	23
Figure 3.4.	Average spending per trip by visitors to New Mexico	28
Figure 3.5.	Common and favorite outdoor recreation activities in New Mexico	31
Figure 3.6.	Outdoor recreation activities which New Mexicans would like to do more often	32
Figure 3.7.	Satisfaction with outdoor recreation facilities among New Mexicans	32
Figure 3.8.	Facilities which residents would like more of in New Mexico	33
Figure 6.1.	Mapping and Classification Project Areas	71
Figure 9.1.	New Mexico Tourism Regions	90
Figure 9.2.	Northwest region survey results: What type of outdoor recreation facility is most important to you?	91
Figure 9.3.	Northwest region survey results: What is your most common outdoor recreation activity?	91
Figure 9.4.	Northwest region survey results: What one activity would you do more often, if high-quality facilities or amenities were available?	91
Figure 9.5.	Southwest region survey results: What type of outdoor recreation facility is most important to you?	93
Figure 9.6.	Southwest region survey results: What is the most common outdoor recreation activity you do?	93
Figure 9.7.	Southwest region survey results: What activity would you do more often if high-quality facilities were available?	93
Figure 9.8.	North Central region survey results: What outdoor recreation facilities do you wish there were more of in your area?	95
Figure 9.9.	North Central region survey results: What is the most common outdoor recreation activity you do?	95
Figure 9.10.	North Central region survey results: What activity would you do more often if high-quality facilities were available?	95
Figure 9.11.	Central region survey results: What outdoor recreation facilities do you wish there were more of in your area?	97
Figure 9.12.	Central region survey results: What is your most common outdoor recreation activity?	97
Figure 9.13.	Central region survey results: What activity would you do more if high-quality facilities were available?	97
Figure 9.14.	Northeast region survey results: What type of outdoor recreation facility is most important?	99
Figure 9.15.	Northeast region survey results: What is your most common outdoor recreation activity?	99
Figure 9.16.	Northeast region survey results: What activity would you like to do more often if facilities were available?	99
Figure 9.17.	Southeast region survey results: What type of facility is most important to you	101
Figure 9.18.	Southeast region survey results: What is the most common outdoor recreation activity you do?	101
Figure 9.19.	Southeast region survey results: What is the most common outdoor recreation activity you do?	101



TABLES

Table 2.1.	Regional townhall participation	15
Table 3.1.	Public Land Providers in New Mexico	20
Table 3.2.	Profile of local and county recreation providers survey respondents	21
Table 3.3.	Annual visitation on federal and state lands in New Mexico	29
Table 3.4.	Most popular outdoor activities in the United States	31
Table 3.5.	Participation in popular outdoor activities	31
Table 4.1.	Outdoor recreation employment in New Mexico by sector, 2017*	37
Table 4.2.	Visitors and visitor spending in New Mexico, 2015-2019 (NM Tourism, 2019)	39
Table 4.3.	Spending on select outdoor recreation activities in New Mexico, 2020 (ORD, 2020)	39

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ACRONYMS

AASHTO – American Association of Highway and Transportation Officials
 BIA – Bureau of Indian Affairs
 BLM – Bureau of Land Management
 EDD – Economic Development Department
 EENM – Environmental Education of New Mexico
 EMNRD – Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department
 FD – Forestry Division
 NACTO – National Association of City Transportation Officials
 NGO – Non-governmental Organization
 NMDGF – New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
 NMED-SWQB - New Mexico Environment Department, Surface Water Quality Bureau
 NMDOH – New Mexico Department of Health
 NMHED – New Mexico Higher Education Department
 NMDOT – New Mexico Department of Transportation
 NMIAD – New Mexico Indian Affairs Department
 NMPED – New Mexico Public Education Department
 OC Task Force – Outdoor Classroom Task Force
 ORD – Outdoor Recreation Division
 OSE – Office of State Engineer
 RTPPO – Regional Transportation Planning Organization
 SLO – State Land Office
 SPD – State Parks Division
 USFS – US Forest Service



1

INTRODUCTION

New Mexico's 2022 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) update provides guidance for the allocation of Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program funding. This SCORP update meets all objectives of the LWCF Act of 1965, which requires the development of a statewide outdoor recreation plan every five years.



INTRODUCTION

With the state's rich culture, deep history, and magnificent natural treasures, there is little doubt that New Mexico is the heart of the American Southwest. New Mexico's towering peaks, verdant river valleys, and high deserts offer countless opportunities for outdoor adventure and exploration. It is crucial that these resources be protected and made accessible so that present and future generations can learn to love and respect the land that has sustained New Mexicans for millennia.

New Mexico's 2022-2026 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) update provides guidance for the allocation of Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program funding. This SCORP update meets all objectives of the LWCF Act of 1965, which requires the development of a statewide outdoor recreation plan every five years.

That said, this SCORP revision aims to do much more. This SCORP update will serve as an actionable plan to build partnerships and guide sustainable outdoor recreation development across the state, drawing on a diverse array of expertise and funding sources. For the purposes of this plan, outdoor recreation refers to any activity done outdoors for enjoyment or health benefits. The plan provides analysis and recommendations to inform federal, state, and local decision-making regarding outdoor recreation as it relates to:

- Economic development;
- Resource protection (including wetlands);
- Outdoor education;
- Access and equity; and
- New Mexico's unique regional contexts

While this SCORP update was led by the State Parks Division of the Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD), the plan utilizes a wide range of expertise from other state and federal agencies, local governments, civil society, New Mexico businesses, and the public. SCORP planners collected information and input through a steering committee; expert focus groups; community, visitor and provider surveys; targeted interviews; and public townhall meetings. The resulting plan pairs a broad perspective on the complex role of outdoor recreation in the state with actionable recommendations to build a just, sustainable, and fruitful future for outdoor recreation in New Mexico.

LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

Established by the LWCF act of 1965, the federal LWCF program has provided a legacy of public parks, outdoor recreation facilities, and open space statewide. LWCF investments have supported

the development of public access, recreation opportunities, and environmental protection at national, state, and local parks across New Mexico. LWCF investments come with a commitment to preserve these public spaces in perpetuity.

LWCF brings federal funding from offshore oil and gas revenues to New Mexico through two programs: a federal program and a stateside assistance program. The federal program provides funding to federal agencies with outdoor recreation amenities in New Mexico including the National Park Service and the United States Forest Service. The stateside assistance program is a local grant matching program that provides funds through the EMNRD, State Parks Division. The Division may use these funds to support outdoor recreation projects at state agencies or distribute funds to local governments through a grant that requires a 50% local match. LWCF grants have supported over 1,200 projects across New Mexico over the last 55 years. The state has awarded over \$25 million in stateside grants that have been used to acquire lands, develop new outdoor recreation facilities and improve existing public recreation facilities around the state.



2

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A robust community engagement strategy was critical to shaping the SCORP update. The insights of outdoor recreation users (both residents and visitors to New Mexico), as well as the perspective of outdoor recreation providers, informed each of the focus areas that follow in this plan.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A robust community engagement strategy was critical to shaping the SCORP update. The insights of outdoor recreation users (both residents and visitors to New Mexico), as well as the perspective of outdoor recreation providers, informed each of the focus areas that follow in this Plan. This plan aimed to gain a better understanding of:

- What people view as the strengths of New Mexico's outdoor recreation opportunities;
- Outdoor recreation opportunities that people feel are underutilized or underdeveloped;
- Areas and places that are lacking recreation opportunities or facilities, including types of outdoor recreation facilities that would provide these areas with the greatest benefits;
- Outdoor recreation strengths, weaknesses, issues, and opportunities on public lands; and
- Opinions of out of state visitors regarding outdoor recreation strengths, issues, and opportunities in New Mexico.

What follows is a summary of community engagement tactics that were employed through this planning process and their results.

STEERING COMMITTEE & FOCUS GROUPS

A steering committee comprised of representatives from the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Division (EMNRD), National Parks Service (NPS) and additional subject matter experts related to the themes covered by the SCORP advised the planning process. This committee provided guidance and direction to understand the landscape of outdoor recreation needs and opportunities in New Mexico today. This group met on a bi-weekly basis between September 2020 and June 2021.

Several members of the steering committee also led focus groups related to key outdoor recreation areas of interest, including:

- Resource protection;
- Outdoor education;
- Outdoor recreation trends; and
- Economic impact

Through the community engagement process, the planning team heard that equity (and the related issues of awareness and access) was a key theme that must be addressed to achieve the collective goals of this SCORP.

Each focus group and group leader met at least once, and in some cases several times, to discuss challenges, opportunities and priorities related to their area of interest. In addition to meetings, focus group participants provided feedback on and contributed to the development of summaries for each of the interest areas..

As different ideas and issues arose within the focus groups, the planning team organized stakeholder meetings to address those ideas. These included a meeting focused on transportation as it relates to outdoor recreation opportunities and access along with a meeting of statewide leaders from the New Mexico Council of Governments and Economic Development Districts to understand the SCORP's regional dimensions.

SURVEYS

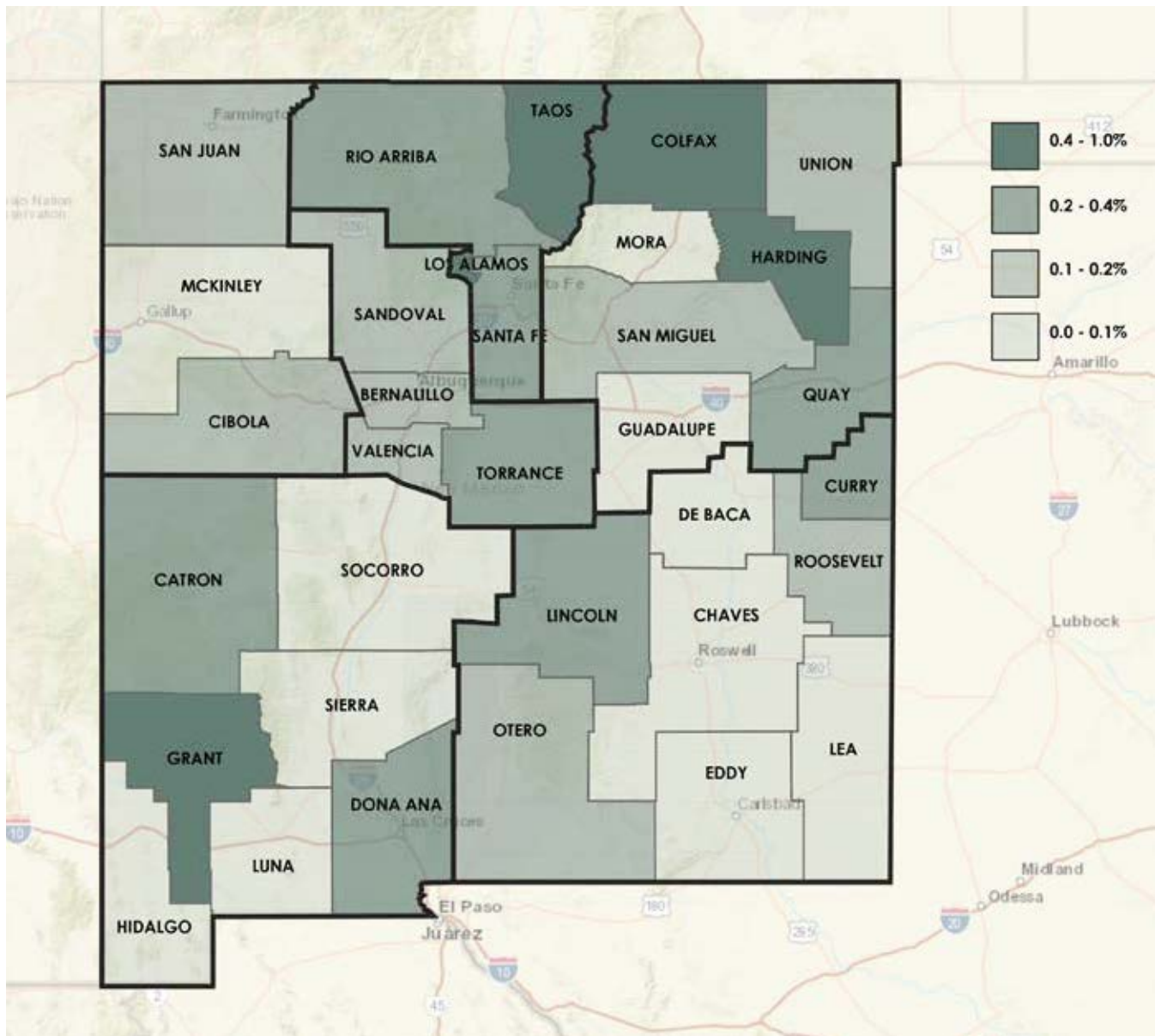
Three surveys were created to gather input from New Mexico residents, out-of-state visitors, and recreation providers including park staff. Links to the surveys were made available on the project website and marketed through e-blasts, social media, and virtual town halls. All surveys were launched in January 2021 and remained open through July 2021.

Resident Survey

3,915 responses were collected for the resident survey. The community survey framework used three broad categories for questions:

- Most common or favorite outdoor recreation activities, motivations, and barriers
- Influence and perception of outdoor recreation opportunities, activities, and facilities for youth
- Quality of and needs related to outdoor recreation facilities and amenities

Figure 2.1. Community survey response rate by county



Respondents were more likely to be older, with more than 50 percent over the age of 55. The responses were almost evenly divided between those who identified as living in an urban area (49%) and a rural area (46%). Responses were submitted by residents in every county in New

Mexico, except for De Baca. Figure 2.1 is a map showing the response rate from each county.

Some questions asked participants for open open-ended responses which have been arranged into word clouds.

Overall responses from the resident survey were analyzed by region and informed the regional priorities and recommendations discussed later in the Plan.

Visitor Survey

In total, 500 responses were collected for the visitor survey. Visitor survey respondents heavily skewed older, with 62% over age 65. Additionally, respondents to the visitor survey were generally higher income, with 58% having an annual household income greater than \$75,000.

Questions in the visitor survey focused on motivations for visiting New Mexico, popular activities, common destinations, and ideas for how to improve visitor experience. Some questions also asked respondents to compare New Mexico to other nearby states that would otherwise be destinations for outdoor recreation (Arizona, Colorado, Utah).

Visitors were also asked about the first word that comes to mind when thinking about outdoor recreation in New Mexico. The word cloud to the right summarizes these results.

Key Findings

The importance of natural beauty and ability to participate in outdoor recreation activities are apparent for visitors to New Mexico. Maintaining natural spaces for the enjoyment of residents and visitors alike should be a key theme of the plan.

Figure 2.5. Visitor survey responses by state



Figure 2.6. Visitor Word Cloud - New Mexico Outdoor Recreation



Visitors who stayed overnight in New Mexico were drawn for a few key reasons including:

- General desire to visit state parks, national parks and other natural areas
- Seeking natural scenery
- Participating in outdoor activities such as hiking, biking or horseback riding
- Visiting outdoor cultural or historical sites

Provider Survey

38 responses were collected from outdoor recreation service providers representing municipal, county, regional and some federal agencies. The majority of respondents were parks and recreation staff and city leaders (68%), though several also held various positions as planners, field managers, and project or event coordinators. Respondents represented 21 of the 33 counties in New Mexico and all six regions. Questions in the provider survey focused on organizational capacity, priorities, issues, and recent changes.

Key Findings - Provider Survey

When asked to prioritize facilities investments respondents favored investment in developed parks and trails. These responses reflect both the interests in amenities indicated in the resident survey and the importance of these shared spaces in local communities. Given that the majority of respondents represented local government, it is unsurprising that they favored investment in facilities that are typically managed by local governments.

Respondents overwhelmingly reported that funding was the biggest challenge facing outdoor recreation providers. Staffing was also noted as a major challenge.

Figure 2.7. What type of facilities should be prioritized for investment?

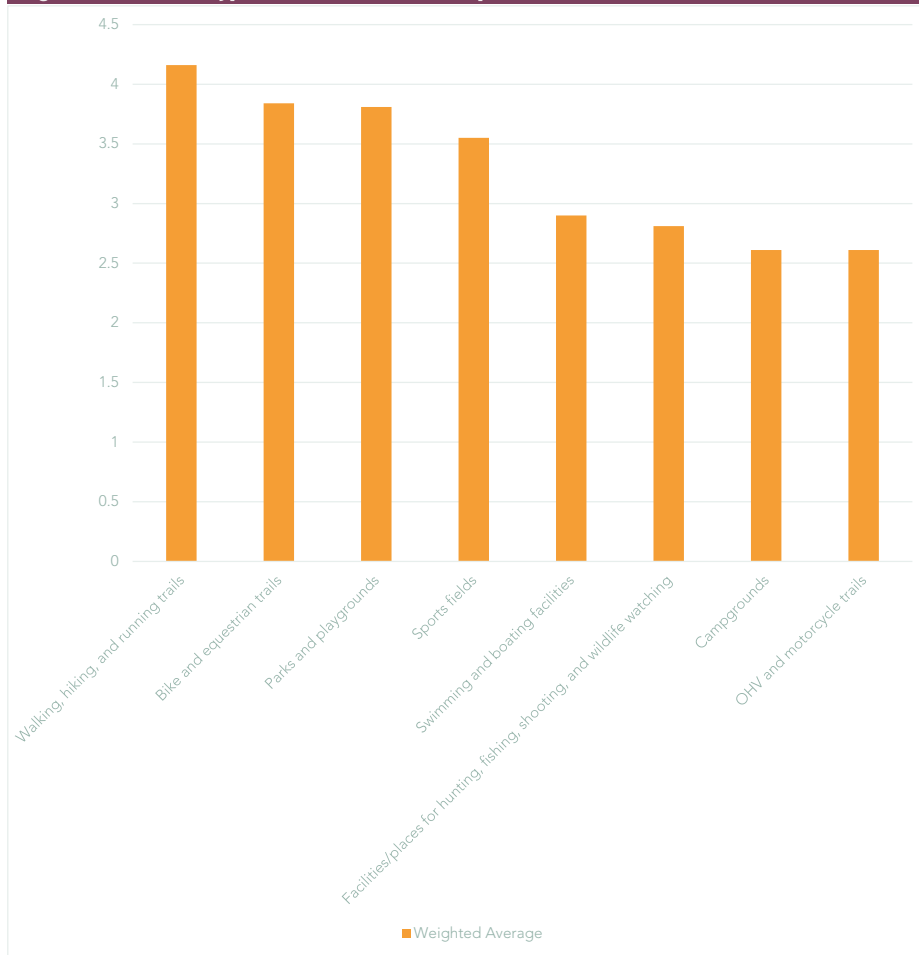
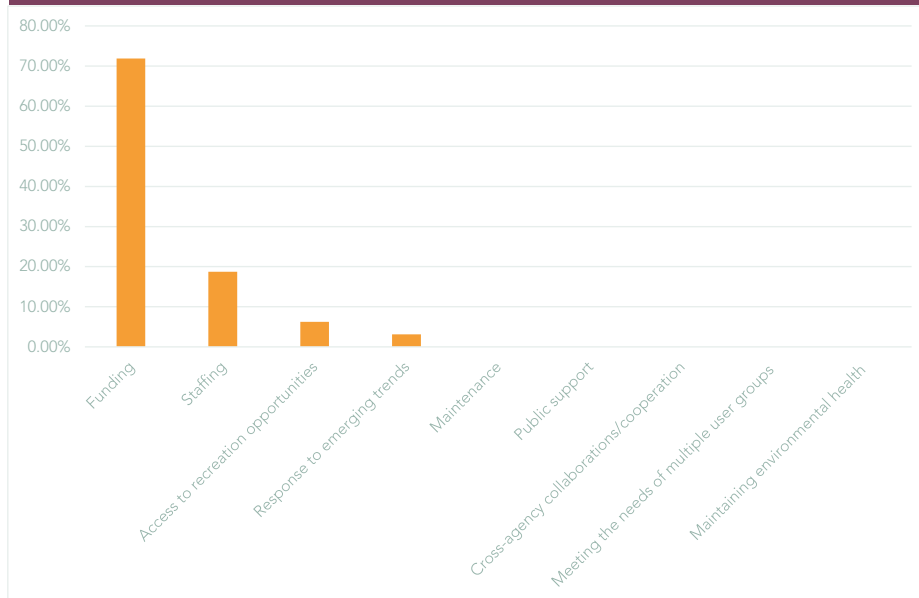


Figure 2.8. What is the biggest challenge facing outdoor recreation providers in New Mexico?



VIRTUAL TOWN HALLS

In an effort to maintain safety during the Covid-19 pandemic and to reach as many people as possible across broad expanses of the state, the planning team hosted a series of virtual townhall meetings. The statewide town hall was held in the spring of 2021 and six regional town halls were hosted through the summer of 2021.

Statewide Town Hall

On March 24, 2021 the planning team hosted a virtual town hall using Zoom. The goal of this town hall was to broaden outreach for the SCORP planning process and to gain resident feedback both during the meeting and afterwards via the Resident Survey. More than 150 residents

participated in the meeting, representing all six regions of New Mexico. Throughout the town hall presentation, polling was used to better understand the outdoor recreation priorities and preferences of participants. Below are highlights from the poll results.

Figure 2.9. Townhall participant affiliation

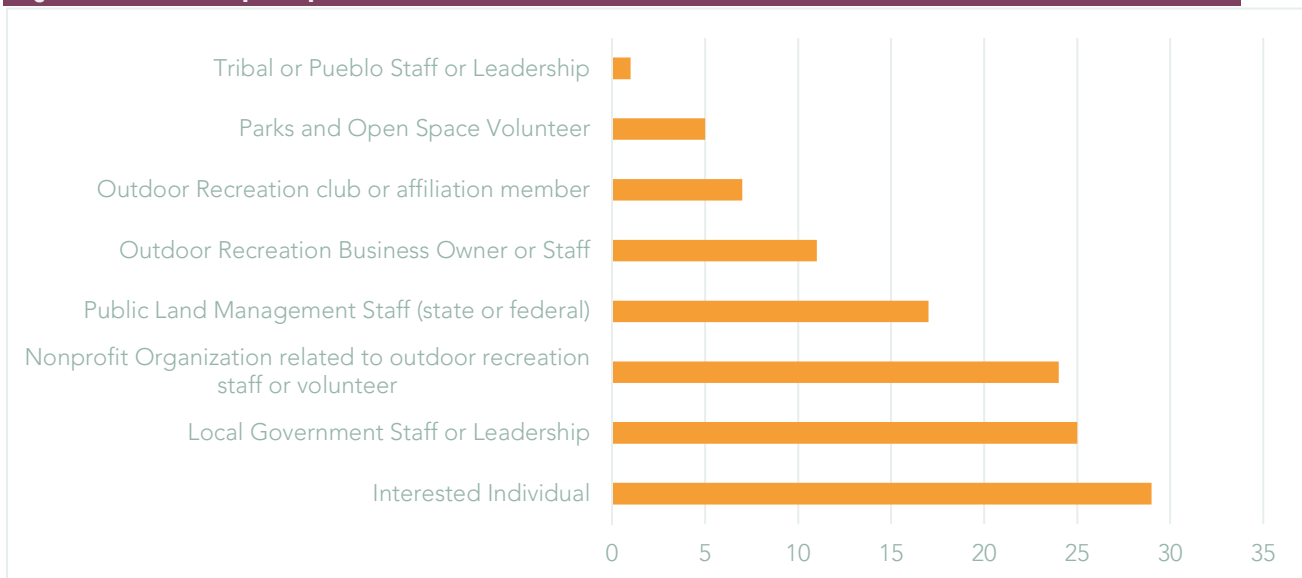


Figure 2.10. Where are you most often recreate outdoors?

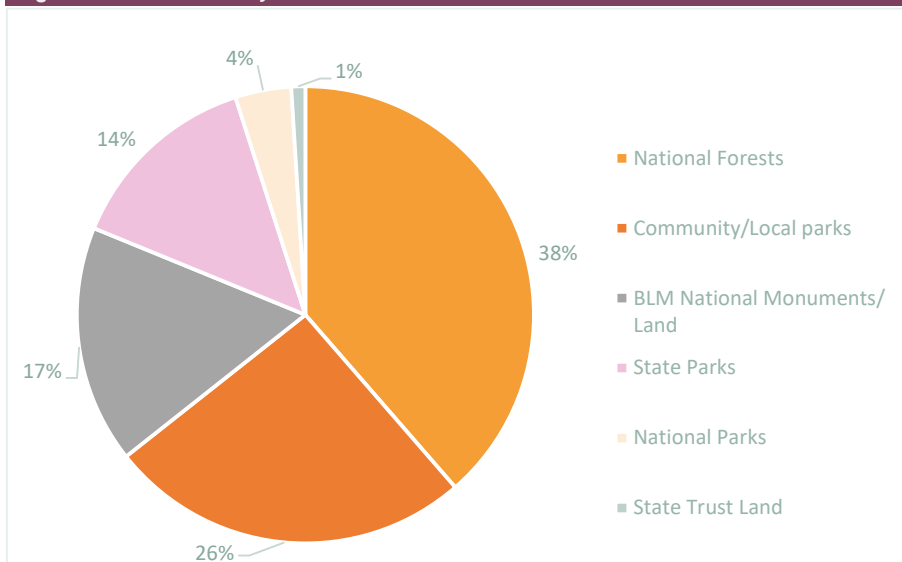


Figure 2.11. What criteria should be used to help prioritize decisions related to outdoor recreation?

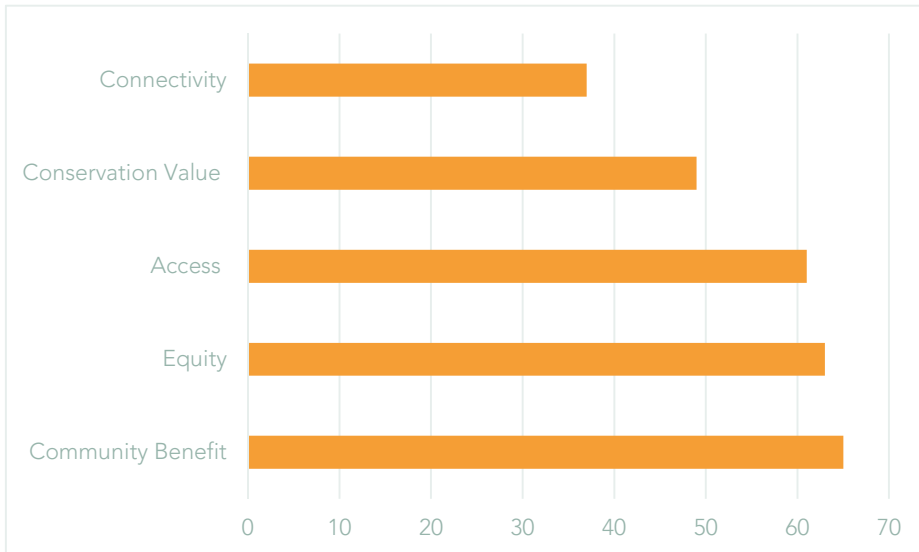
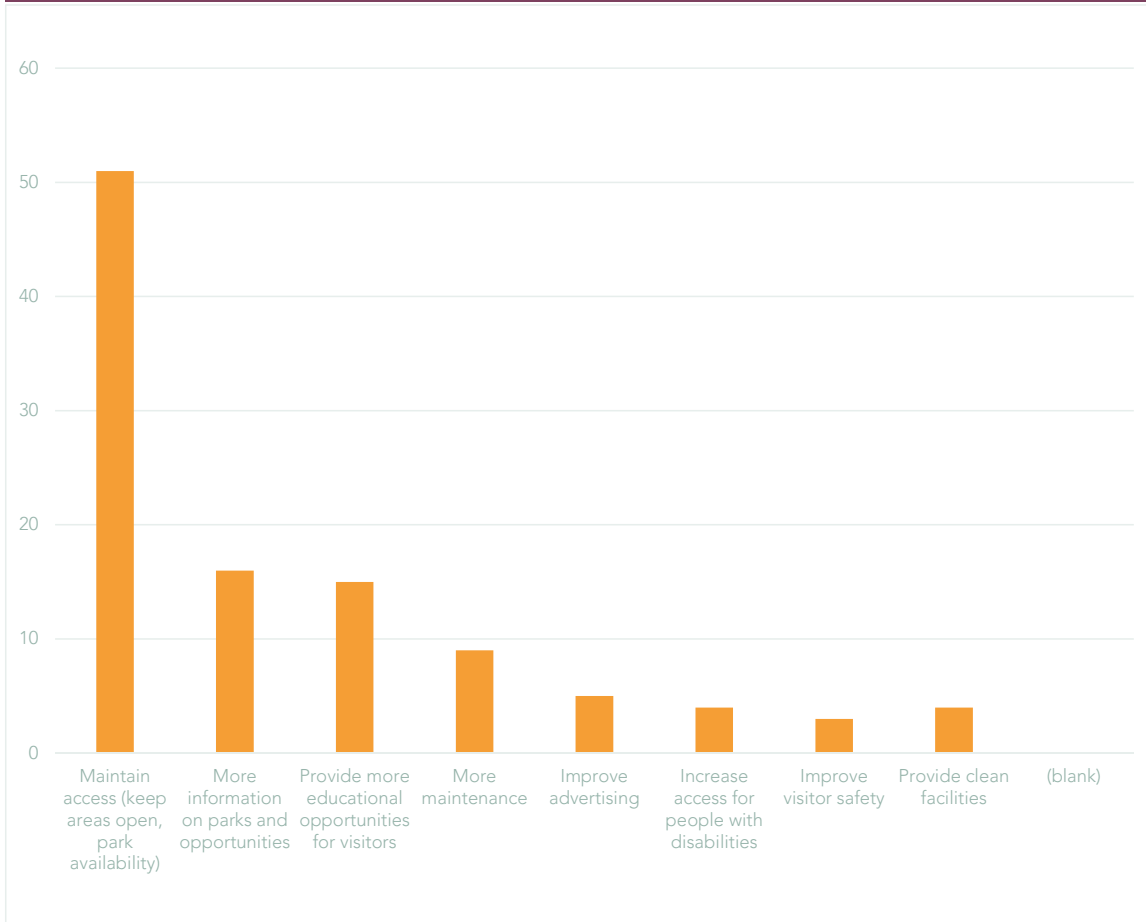


Figure 2.12. What is the single most important thing that outdoor recreation providers can do to help you participate?



Regional Town Halls

Six virtual townhalls were held between June 1 and July 13, 2021 focusing on each of the regions covered by the SCORP. The goal of these meetings was to better define regional outdoor recreation priorities and recommendations for the SCORP. Each meeting was co-led by COG or other regional leadership. Table 2.1 summarizes participation in the SCORP regional townhall meetings.

In addition to presenting preliminary information about what the team had heard from the planning process to-date, participants were divided into breakout rooms to discuss the following questions:

- What are the outdoor recreation needs in your region?
- What are the opportunities or barriers to meeting your region's outdoor recreation needs?

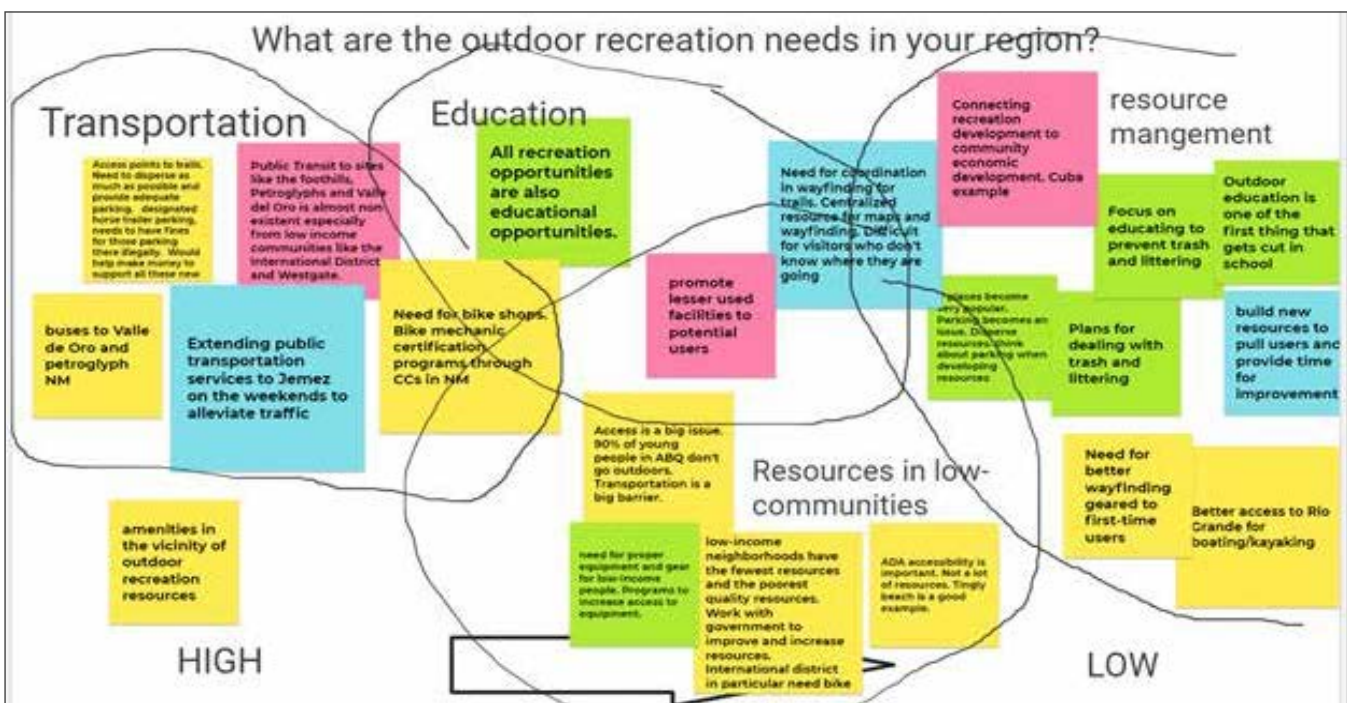
SCORP planners used Jamboard to facilitate and record the results of group discussions during the regional townhall meetings. Jamboard is a virtual engagement tools that functions similar to an

online whiteboard. Each breakout room was provided a unique set of these slides to help capture their discussion. Figure 2.13 is an example of the resulting board.

Table 2.1. Regional townhall participation

REGION	DATE	PARTICIPANTS
SOUTHEAST (Chaves, Curry, De Baca, Eddy, Lea, Lincoln, Otero, Roosevelt)	Tuesday, June 1	16
NORTHEAST (Colfax, Guadalupe, Harding, Lincoln, Mora, Quay, San Miguel)	Thursday, June 10	21
SOUTHWEST (Catron, Doña Ana, Grant, Hidalgo, Luna, Sierra, Socorro)	Thursday, June 17	37
NORTHWEST (Cibola, McKinley, San Juan)	Tuesday, June 22	32
NORTH CENTRAL (Los Alamos, Rio Arriba, Santa Fe, Taos)	Thursday, July 8	31
MID-REGION (Bernalillo, Sandoval, Torrance, Valencia)	Tuesday, July 13	26

Figure 2.13. Jamboard Example from Central Regional Town Hall



WEBSITE

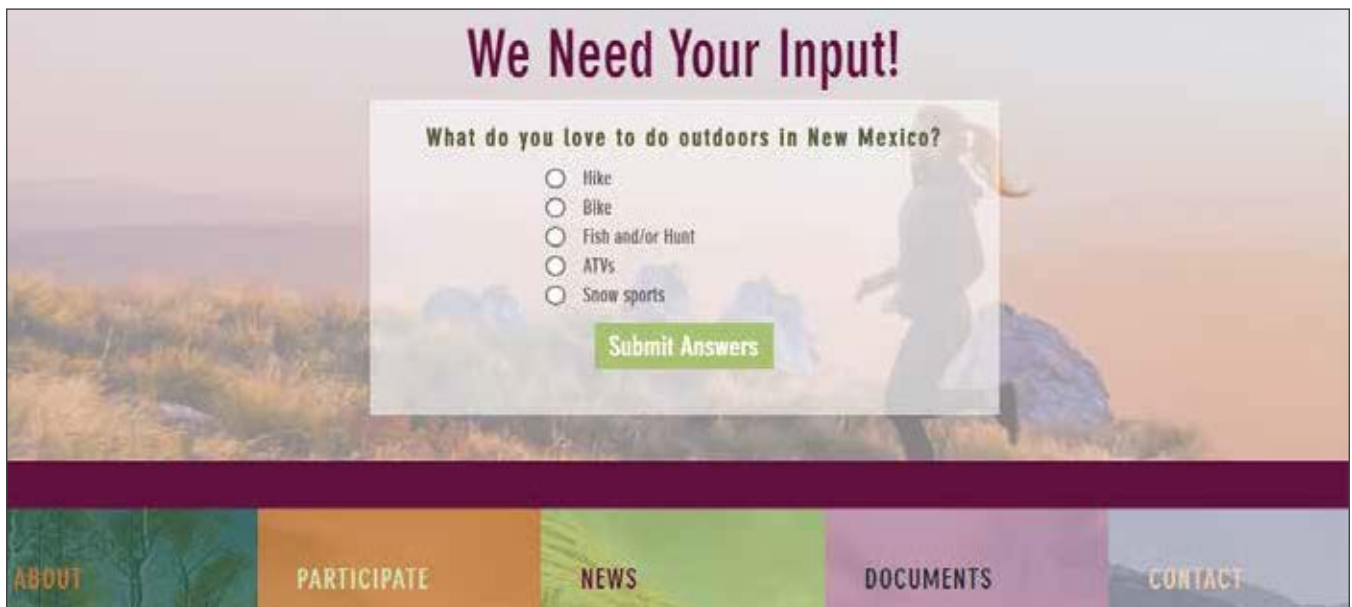
A project website – www.Get-OutsideNM.org – was created so that all interested members of the public and stakeholders could stay up-to-date and informed on the purpose, process, and recommendations of the SCORP. This website launched in October 2020 and was maintained for the duration of the project. The planning team updated the website regularly with results from each milestone and produced social media content to help promote different opportunities for engagement. Community members were able to provide comments using an online form and could subscribe to receive updates about the project.

SUMMARY

Community engagement and input is critical to the success of any recreation plan. Without that input, plans can only represent the perceived needs and priorities of communities. This planning process implemented a diverse array of methods to engage the state’s population including a website, digital surveys and virtual town halls. That said, there were still challenges that limited our ability to fully engage with the public. Most notably, the pandemic and associated state health orders precluded the use of in-person meetings. This likely resulted in reduced engagement with rural communities, including tribal populations. Future SCORP planning efforts must find ways to better represent those groups.

Based on the input that we did receive, when it comes to outdoor recreation priorities for both residents and visitors of New Mexico’s public space, maintaining and expanding access to amenities such as trails, camping, local parks, and athletic courts are essential. People value the amazing natural resources that are abundant throughout the state, but they want to make sure these are places that can be accessed and shared by all.

Additionally, resource providers in New Mexico need more resources to support quality outdoor recreation experiences. Providers need additional financial resources and staffing to address maintenance and the expansion of amenities and facilities. Participants in the SCORP planning process shared ideas for how New Mexico might begin to better prioritize limited resources, while leveraging networks and partnerships to improve outdoor recreation opportunities for everyone.



3

OUTDOOR RECREATION TRENDS

This chapter will review the important factors and major trends in New Mexico outdoor recreation and nationwide.



FACTORS AND TRENDS AFFECTING OUTDOOR RECREATION IN NEW MEXICO

A mix of diverse and often complex elements combine to influence outdoor recreation in New Mexico today and in the future. This plan seeks to analyze and understand some of the current factors and trends in outdoor recreation to inform effective recommendations and priorities to grow sustainable outdoor recreation resources in New Mexico. Some of the key factors influencing outdoor recreation identified in this plan include the status of recreation providers, population and socio-economic trends, outdoor recreation participation and preferences, and environmental and health factors. This chapter will review these important factors and major trends in outdoor recreation in New Mexico and nationwide.

RECREATION PROVIDERS

A recreation provider is anyone who provides the space or resources necessary to engage in outdoor recreation activities. For the purposes of this plan, 'recreation provider' usually refers to an owner or lessee who provides land and infrastructure for outdoor recreation. The varying missions of these recreation providers and their decisions regarding access and management of their lands represents an important factor

in the state's outdoor recreation landscape. In New Mexico, public lands make up the lion's share of recreation land. About half of New Mexico's 121,000 square miles are public lands with federal agencies managing 32% and the State of

New Mexico owning an additional 12% of the state's total land area. Remaining recreation lands are provided by tribal and local governments, land grants, and private landowners (Figure 3.1).

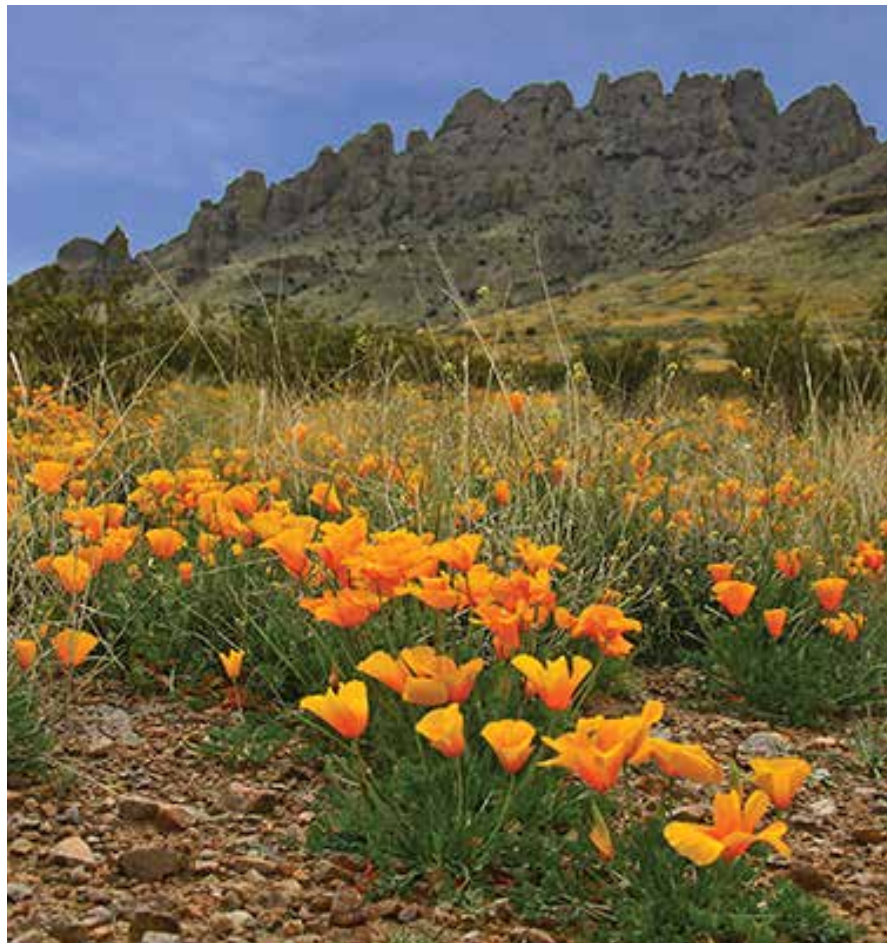
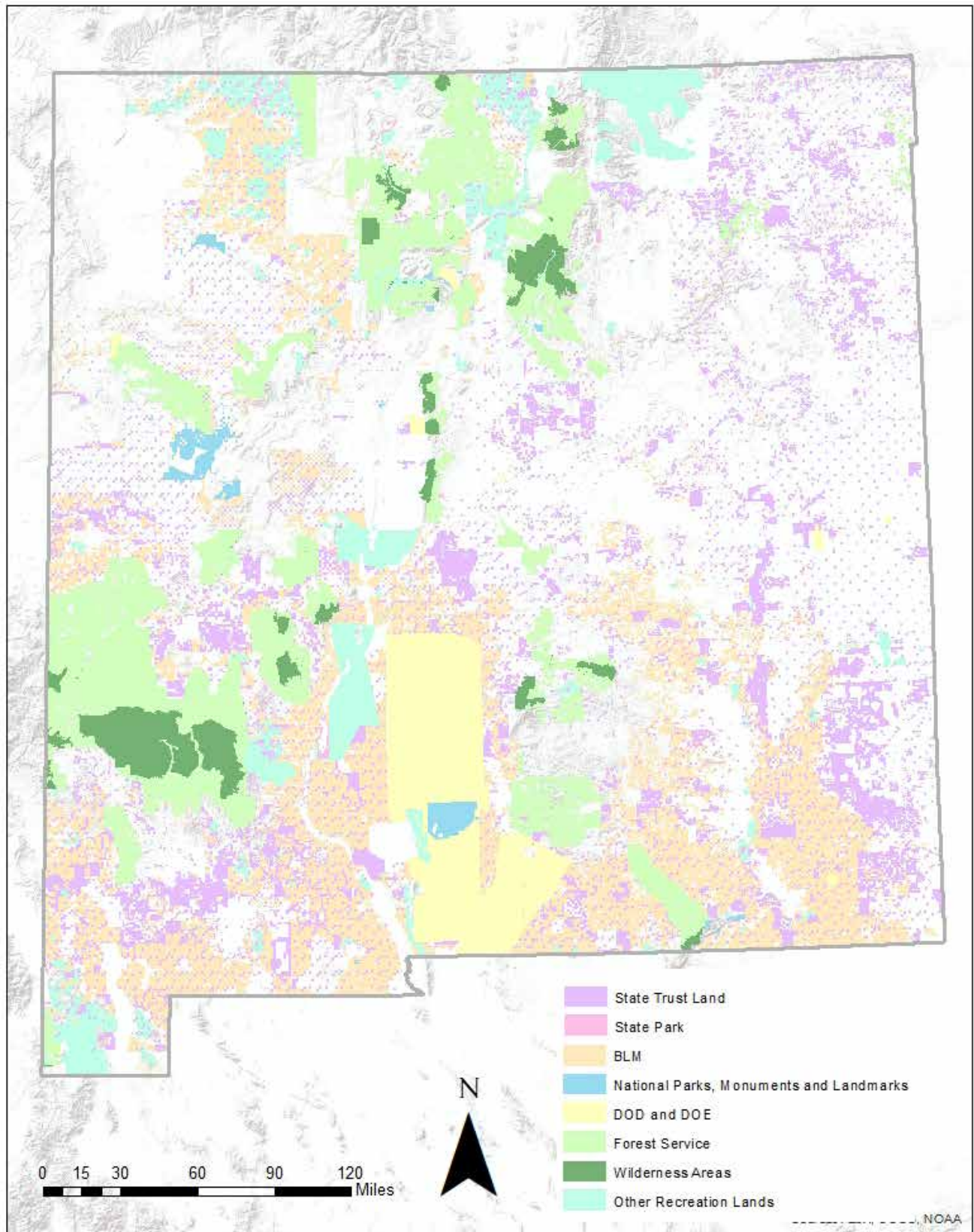


Photo Courtesy NM Tourism Department

Figure 3.1. Public lands in New Mexico



Federal and State Lands

The United States government is by far the largest owner of recreation lands in New Mexico. At more than 21,000 square miles, the Bureau of Land Management is the largest landholder in New Mexico, followed by the United States Forest Service with about 14,300 square miles of land in the state. The National Parks Service and US Fish and Wildlife Service are also large landholders in New Mexico. Recreation resources on federal lands include natural resources like forests, deserts, rivers and lakes; infrastructure like trails, campgrounds, and boat ramps; and leased land for ski resorts. This plan will make recommendations for how the State of New Mexico can better collaborate with federal landowning agencies in improving both federal and state outdoor recreation resources.

Following the federal government, the State of New Mexico is the second largest landowner and recreation provider in the state. The State Land Office owns about 14,000 square miles of public lands which are made available to commercial lessors and recreationists for biking, hiking, hunting, fishing and more. While The State Game Commission and The EMNRD State Parks Division own just 0.5% of the state's land area, they manage some of New Mexico's most popular recreation facilities. Hiking, camping, and boating are among the most popular activities at these properties. The SCORP will recommend and prioritize actions to maintain and improve quality outdoor recreation infrastructure on state lands.



Photo Courtesy Sites Southwest

Table 3.1. Public Land Providers in New Mexico

Ownership	Acreage	Square Miles	% of State
Federal			
Bureau of Land Management	13,485,894	21,072	17.3
Bureau of Reclamation	54,489	85	0.1
Department of Agriculture	109,478	171	0.1
Department of Defense	2,518,094	3,935	3.2
Department of Energy	36,509	57	0.0
US Fish and Wildlife Service	383,236	599	0.5
US Forest Service	9,213,637	14,396	11.8
National Park Service	474,994	742	6
State Lands			
State Land Office	8,973,877	14,022	11.5
State Game Commission	199,651	312	0.3
State Parks Division	118,910	186	0.2
Total	43,794,886	68,430	56.3% (45.6% excluding tribal lands)

Pueblos, Tribes, and Nations

There are 23 indigenous communities in New Mexico that account for about 11% of the state's land area and 11% of the population. As sovereign governments, pueblos, tribes, and nations pursue a variety of initiatives to improve the quality of life of their members through self-determination. Pueblos, tribes, and nations in New Mexico provide visitors the opportunity to learn about their unique and rich cultures through events such as arts and crafts shows, tours, and some public feast days. A wide variety of outdoor recreation activities are available on tribal lands including world-class facilities for golfing, camping, hiking, boating, fishing, hunting, cycling, and outdoor education.

While there are many outdoor recreation facilities available to the general public on tribal lands, there are also many areas that restrict access to affiliated tribal members permanently or during specific cultural events. The SCORP recognizes the opportunities and limitations of outdoor recreation on tribal lands. This document serves to identify opportunities for local, federal and state governments to improve collaboration and consultation with pueblos, tribes, and nations to protect natural and cultural resources while improving recreation resources across New Mexico.

Local Governments

Local and county governments are also important providers of outdoor recreation facilities

including public parks, sports fields, swimming pools, trails, and open spaces. Nevertheless, with resources spread across the state among different entities with varying levels of management capacity, it is very difficult to gain a full picture of the local and county outdoor recreation resources in New Mexico. However, this version of the SCORP attempts to improve this situation by developing an initial spatial data inventory of outdoor recreation resources that can be viewed and analyzed. A summary of the data included in this inventory can be found in Appendix A. The State Parks Division and its public and private partners will continue to improve this resource for future use as a comprehensive tool to better understand our outdoor recreation resources across the state.

Local governments were consulted throughout this planning process. A survey of local and county-level recreation providers helped identify the general profile and programming and infrastructure needs of providers in New Mexico. The survey found that most local outdoor recreation providers served populations smaller than 10,000 residents and did not have

government-adopted parks and recreation master plans. Providers overwhelmingly reported that quality of life and livability was the most important benefit of outdoor recreation facilities in their community and rated public parks and sports fields as their most important recreation resource. Most local providers also suggested that hiking, biking, and equestrian trails should be prioritized in the coming years along with parks and sports fields. Funding was identified as the single biggest challenge for local- and county-level recreation providers. A summary profile of the average respondent to the provider survey is included in Table 3.2.

Private Recreation Providers

Understanding the full scope of private outdoor recreation resources is similarly challenging. The legacy of the Spanish and Mexican land grant system has created a unique land ownership pattern, especially in northeastern New Mexico where federal land is limited. Many large properties in this region continue to operate as ranches or private hunting or

Table 3.2. Profile of local and county recreation providers survey respondents

	Respondent Average
Acres of developed parks and sports fields?	219 acres
Acres of open space?	402 acres
Miles of trails?	8 miles
Capital budget?	\$56,500
Operational budget?	\$76,206

fishing grounds with limited public access often requiring advanced permission and a fee. Commercial outfitters and guides are the primary vehicle for the public to access otherwise off-limit private land. Examples of other private recreation providers include some golf courses, ski resorts, shooting and archery ranges, and fishing and hunting clubs.

For-profit, non-profit, academic, professional, and civic organizations support New Mexico's recreation providers, as well. However, these organizations serve a supporting role and rarely own substantial land-based facilities. Land-based private or non-profit providers include some colleges/universities, private schools, and special districts. Although LWCF monies are limited to state and local government, this plan seeks to identify strategies to increase access to private outdoor recreation resources and improve the viability of New Mexico's outdoor recreation economy.

DEMOGRAPHIC & SOCIAL TRENDS

Aside from the characteristics of outdoor recreation providers, many other factors play an important role in the need for and access to outdoor recreation resources in New Mexico. The following section lists some important demographic and social trends relevant to the State's outdoor recreation landscape.

Economic Trends

The US Census Bureau's 2015-2019 American Community Survey data profile indicates that New Mexico has a lower median per-capita income than the United States as a whole and New Mexicans experience poverty at a higher rate than Americans living in most other states (Census, 2019). This is significant because research suggests that, on average, those who participate in outdoor recreation tend to have higher incomes (ORF, 2019). Nevertheless, as will be discussed later in this chapter, New Mexicans are more likely to participate in outdoor recreation than the average American. This SCORP will seek strategies to increase equitable access to the outdoors and stimulate economic growth that generates high-wage employment opportunities for New Mexicans.

Recent studies show that outdoor recreation is a strong and growing sector of the New Mexican economy. The New Mexico Economic Development Department estimates that the outdoor recreation economy directly supports \$1.2B in revenue and 33,500 jobs for New Mexicans and indirectly contributes \$2.3B (2.5%) to the state's GDP (ORD, 2020). The US Bureau of Economic Analysis found that in 2019 RV camping, equestrian and snow activities were the largest contributors to value added GDP among outdoor recreation activities in New Mexico (BEA, 2019). Most GDP from outdoor recreation is generated from recreation activities in nature-based environments (i.e., hiking, skiing, hunting, fishing), highlighting the importance of resource protection and conservation in outdoor recreation development (ORD, 2020).

New Mexico's outdoor recreation economy is growing faster than the state's economy as a whole. Between 2012 and 2017, New Mexico's GDP from outdoor recreation grew 11% while the overall state GDP grew 4% (ORD, 2020). New Mexico experienced the second fastest employment growth in outdoor recreation and the fifth highest value-added GDP growth from outdoor recreation of any state in 2019 (BEA, 2019). This represents an important opportunity for the State of New Mexico to drive sustainable economic development through investment in a growing outdoor recreation sector.

Population Trends

New Mexico's population trends further inform outdoor recreation development in the state. The US Census Bureau's 2015-2019 American Community Survey (ACS 2019) estimates that New Mexico's population grew 1.8% between 2010 and 2019. This is substantially less than the 6.3% population growth in the United States during this same period. New Mexico remains sparsely populated compared with most other states and maintains a large swath of public lands and open spaces attracting outdoor recreationists from inside and outside of the state (Census, 2019). Additionally, the University of New Mexico's Bureau of Business and Economic Research projects that migration from rural areas to New Mexico's urban centers, particularly in the central region, will continue in the coming decades. The SCORP community survey demonstrated an almost even split among outdoor recreationists living in

rural and urban areas, with only slightly more respondents from the state's urban areas (Figure 3.3) (EMNRD, Get Outside, New Mexico! Community Survey, 2021). It is important that New Mexico provide adequate recreation facilities for a growing urban population while also supporting rural economic development through outdoor recreation.

New Mexico's age distribution is comparable to that of the United States. The mean age of American outdoor recreation participants is slightly younger than the population as a whole (ORF, 2019). However, as the Baby-Boomer generation retires and the population ages, it will be critical to ensure that outdoor recreation facilities can accommodate an older population while recognizing the importance of youth participation in outdoor recreation.

Diversity

Racial and ethnic diversity is one of New Mexico's greatest strengths. The state's Hispanic and Native American populations are particularly high when compared with the rest of the United States (Figure 3.3) (Census, 2019). New Mexico's unique cultural heritage is indeed a major draw for tourism, including many visitors who wish to experience both cultural and outdoor recreation activities. That said, outdoor recreation in New Mexico must seek to be inclusive of the state's diverse population and supportive of local culture.

Recent data have drawn connections between race and ethnic origin and outdoor recreation participation. National-level data suggests that, while non-His-

Figure 3.2. Race and ethnicity in New Mexico and the United States, 2019

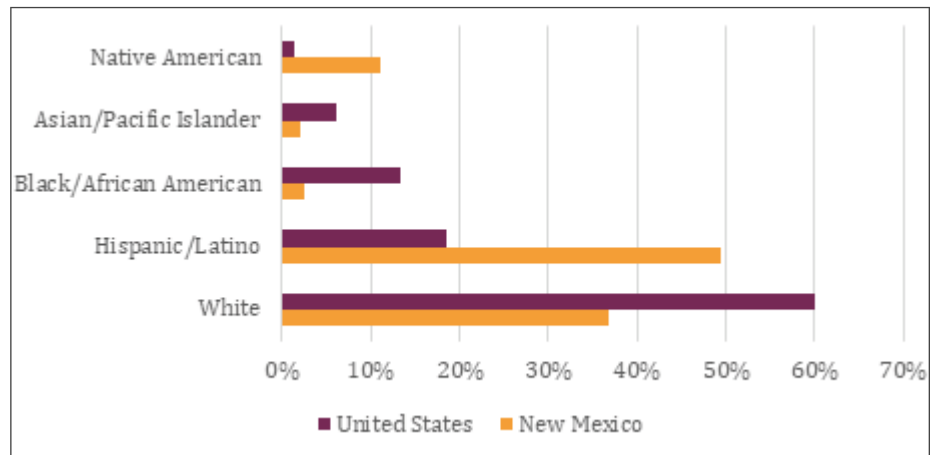
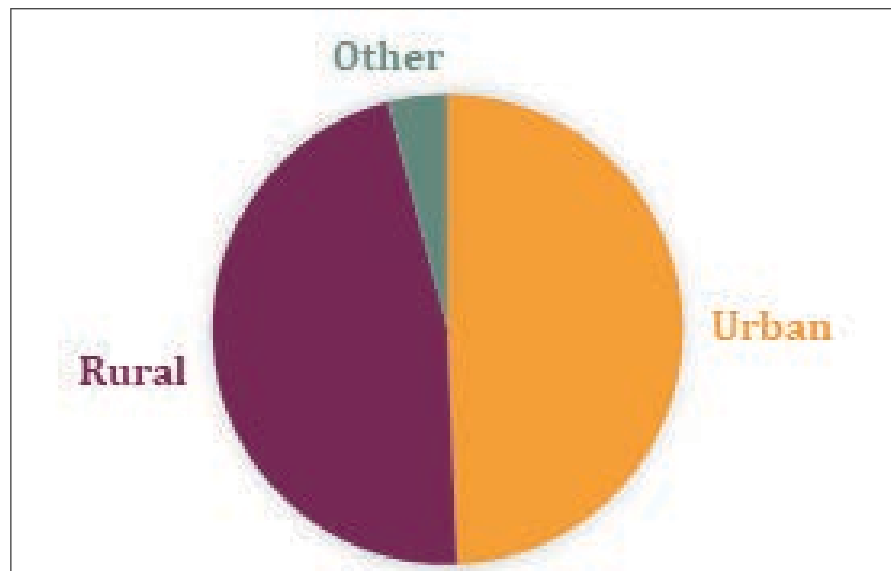


Figure 3.3. Outdoor recreation participants in rural and urban areas in New Mexico



panic whites were more likely to participate, outdoor recreation participation among Hispanic/Latino people in the United States grew more than any other racial or ethnic group in recent years. The Outdoor Industry Association's (OIA) 2019 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report found that Hispanic persons reported more annual outdoor outings than any other racial or ethnic group (ORF,

2019). The sustained and growing popularity of outdoor recreation among New Mexico's largest ethnic group represents a positive trend for outdoor recreation in the state. However, participation in outdoor recreation must be assessed and understood, and improvements made to address the needs of all ethnic groups and populations in the state.

Data also suggest a connection between gender and outdoor recreation participation. Men tend to participate in outdoor recreation at a higher rate than women, though female participation in outdoor recreation is growing at a higher rate (ORF, 2019). It will be important to ensure that the recommendations of this SCORP support continued growth in outdoor recreation participation among all gender expressions.

CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENTAL TRENDS

Environmental trends influence and are influenced by outdoor recreation in New Mexico. Sustainable development of New Mexico's outdoor recreation landscape should support environmental resource protection and climate change adaptation. Climate change is leading to increased instances of extreme weather events, drought, and fire across New Mexico, the western United States, and the World. This trend is almost certain to continue and increase in severity as we reach a climate change tipping point. From an outdoor recreation perspective, this can lead to heatwaves and storms that make it unsafe to recreate outdoors or to extreme drought conditions that can force closures of recreation areas, including entire forests. Future development in outdoor recreation must consider adaptive infrastructures and policies responsive to our changing climate.

As the State of New Mexico develops climate adaptation measures, outdoor recreation development

also offers important opportunities to fight the worst impacts of climate change. As the 2020 New Mexico Climate Strategy notes, the state's public lands could be a valuable carbon sink, absorbing more carbon emissions than they emit. This strategy recommends eco-tourism and outdoor recreation as low-carbon sources of economic development on public lands (NM Climate Strategy, 2020). Additionally, New Mexico could play an important role in the federal government's goal to permanently protect 30% of US land by 2030 as a means of combating climate change and environmental degradation.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

As the Covid-19 pandemic has increased general interest in and awareness of public health issues, the health and wellness benefits of outdoor recreation are well documented. This section summarizes some of the key connections between outdoor recreation and health trends in New Mexico and recommends broad strategies to strengthen public health and wellness through outdoor recreation development.

The public health benefits of using parks and trails are broad and cross-cutting. For individuals, these resources provide places for physical activity, improve mental health, reduce stress, provide connections to nature, and increase social interactions. Parks and trails can simultaneously provide venues for community events, activities, and public health programs while improving the environment. Parks and trails that contain tree canopy can protect and improve public

health by mitigating urban heat islands. Parks can reduce flooding risks by capturing and detaining floodwaters in wetlands or other park facilities such as playing fields. Parks can also protect human health and prevent property loss by deterring development in areas prone to mudslides, wildfires, and flooding.

To understand the potential public health benefits of targeted outdoor recreation development in New Mexico, it is necessary to first explore the status of public health and physical activity in the state. Twenty-eight percent of New Mexican adults and 14.8% of adolescents are categorized as obese. While obesity rates have remained relatively stable since 2014, rates are higher among Native Americans, Hispanics, people without a high school diploma, and people experiencing poverty. Rates are also higher for men and women between the ages of 35 and 65 years of age (NMDOH, 2021). Data also suggests that New Mexican adults are becoming less physically active. Since 2015, the number of New Mexican adults meeting the CDC recommended physical activity levels has trended downward. Nevertheless, a higher percentage of New Mexicans report meeting physical activity recommendations than the United States as a whole. New Mexico counties with lower rates of physical activity include Mora, Union, Luna, Curry, Lea, Colfax, Hidalgo, Sierra, Valencia, Chaves, and Rio Arriba counties (CDC, 2020).

These data are important to considerations of outdoor recreation development in the state. High-

er levels of physical activity are directly attributable to lower rates of obesity and improved health outcomes (United Health Foundation, 2020). Ninety-three percent of American adults believe that parks and other outdoor recreation facilities are beneficial to public health (National Recreation and Park Association, 2021) and survey data suggests that people living near outdoor recreation facilities are more likely to engage in healthy physical activity outdoors (ORF, Outdoor Participation Report, 2019). The State of New Mexico should preference developing outdoor recreation facilities in areas with lower access to recreation and poorer health outcomes to support greater health equity and maximize the public health benefits of recreation facilities.

Outdoor recreation is especially crucial during a health crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic has reinforced the importance of outdoor recreation to public health and wellness. Eighty-three percent of adults found exercising at local parks, trails, and open spaces essential to maintaining their mental and physical health during the Covid-19 pandemic (National Recreation and Park Association, 2021). Outdoor recreation is not only an important source of physical activity and associated health benefits, but the outdoors also provide a safe environment for recreation and socialization when indoor activities can risk viral transmission. Emphasizing the special health benefits of outdoor recreation during health crises like the Covid-19 pandemic can help justify further support for outdoor recreation development in New Mexico.

As New Mexico seeks to grow and improve outdoor recreation opportunities, the state should invest in outdoor recreation projects that provide strong, measurable public health benefits. The National Park Service has developed a framework to determine whether outdoor recreation facilities are actively improving public health. The framework includes the following measures (Merriam, Bality, Stein, & Boehmer, 2017):

1. **Proximity** - Percentage of the population (city/county/state/national) living within a half mile of a public park or trail corridor boundary
2. **Walking Access** - Percentage of the population (city/county) within less than a half-mile walk route to a public park or trail entrance
3. **Park Connectivity** - Ratio of the number of people within less than a half-mile walk route to a public park or trail entrance to the number of people living within a half mile of that specific park or trail corridor boundary
4. **Land Area** - Percentage of land area designated as public parks or trails
5. **Physical Activity** - Percentage of users engaged in sedentary, moderate, or vigorous physical activity at a specific facility area



Photo Courtesy NM Tourism Department

6. **Visitation** - Annual number of visits to a specific facility area
7. **Frequency** - Average number of visits to a specific facility area by an individual
8. **Duration** - Average time spent at a specific facility area by an individual

Recreation providers should also seek greater collaboration with the New Mexico Department of Health along with federal and local health initiatives to develop policies and programming to ensure that public health goals are addressed in outdoor recreation development projects. The “Parks, Trails, and Health Workbook” provides guidance for collaboration between recreation and public health practitioners (National Park Service, 2016). The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has developed the “Active People, Healthy Nation” initiative with the goal of helping 27 million people become more physically active by 2027. Finally, it is important to note that inequities in health outcomes often overlap with inequities in recreation access. This SCORP dedicates a full chapter to improving equitable awareness of and access to outdoor recreation experiences. Confronting inequities in outdoor recreation access and awareness promises to

CASE STUDY 1: STEP INTO CUBA

Step Into Cuba is a community-powered program focused on improving physical and mental health through outdoor recreation and physical activity. The program was founded by family physician Richard Kozoll and community health center staff who recognized adverse trends in body weight, diabetes, and cancer. To address these issues, the Step Into Cuba program uses a two-pronged approach: encourage residents to walk outdoors and work collaboratively with partners to create better outdoor infrastructure.

To get people outdoors, the organization works with local and county governments, schools, community service providers, the United States Forest Service, and businesses to create trails and destinations and distributes information about these new opportunities to local people and visitors. Aligning with the US Centers for Disease Control and Community Preventive Services Task Force guidelines for physical activity, the program also encourages community campaigns, social support, individual counseling, and street and community-level policy changes to promote physical activity.

To create better outdoor infrastructure, the Step Into Cuba program has been highly successful at creating relationships and partnerships with relevant stakeholders. To achieve better trail access, including a new 25+ mile segment of Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, the organization has negotiated and collaborated with private landowners, the city and county governments, Cuba Public Schools, the Cuba Health Center, the New Mexico Department of Transportation, the Santa Fe National Forest, and the Bureau of Land Management. It has also developed and facilitated successful relationships with local businesses, community members, craftsmen, school groups, and other nonprofit organizations.

A key success for the Step Into Cuba program has been its ability to identify need, innovate strategies to solve that need, and build relationships with the necessary partners to successfully tackle projects. To learn more about Step Into Cuba, visit <http://www.stepintocuba.org>.



Photo Courtesy www.viva-connects.org



have an outsized impact on public health in New Mexico.

TECHNOLOGY

Outdoor recreation has a long and complicated relationship with new technologies. In the last century, the prevalence of motorized vehicles increased access to outdoor attractions and provided new ways to explore and enjoy the outdoors. However, vehicles also contribute to overcrowding, disturbance of natural habitats, and the destruction of natural resources. The emergence of electric vehicles may address some of the environmental issues associated with extractive fuels, but do not address the more direct impacts of vehicles on natural spaces. Similarly, drones allow people to experience the outdoors in new ways, but they can also disturb wildlife and other visitors,

leading to drone restrictions or bans at many parks.

The Internet and social media further complicate the relationship of technology to the outdoors. As the automobile did in the previous century, social media platforms like Instagram are increasing interest and visitation in the outdoors. Previously unknown locations have become popular attractions leading to formal requests that visitors not post their geographic location with pictures of their trip. Recreation providers also note that many popular social media posts by inexperienced visitors reinforce irresponsible behaviors. Conversely, social media introduces many users

to the outdoors and public land managers, including the US Department of the Interior, successfully use social media to reach new participants, encourage responsible outdoor recreation and better understand visitor use patterns (Solomon, 2017). Additionally, mobile applications like iNaturalist can enhance outdoor experiences by educating people about the natural world through a fun and engaging tool. Global positioning systems (GPS) technology helps visitors navigate the outdoors when wayfinding is otherwise difficult or absent. This SCORP seeks to understand the role of technology in the outdoors to minimize negative impacts and take advantage of the positive promotional, educational



Photo Courtesy <https://www.inaturalist.org/>

and accessibility benefits of new technologies.

OUTDOOR TOURISM

In New Mexico's 2020 Climate Strategy, Governor Michelle Lujan-Grisham identifies eco-tourism as a key avenue for sustainable economic development in the state. Visitors spent \$7.1B in New Mexico in 2018, up from \$6.6B the previous year (Tourism, 2018).

Outdoor recreation is an important catalyst for attracting tourism. A survey of out-of-state visitors conducted as part of the SCORP planning process found that the majority of visitors surveyed visited parks and natural areas, went camping, and participated in a non-motorized outdoor recreation activity on their trip to New Mexico. Visitors also reported that they were more likely to visit New Mexico to recreate outdoors than

other neighboring states. Those surveyed were most likely to be visiting from an adjacent state and spent an average of more than two weeks in New Mexico. The survey also analyzed the average spending among outdoor recreation

tourists in New Mexico (Figure 3.4) finding that visitors spent an average of \$1,780 in the state during their trip (EMNRD, Get Outside New Mexico! Visitor Survey, 2021). These data affirm that outdoor rec-

Figure 3.4. Average spending per trip by visitors to New Mexico

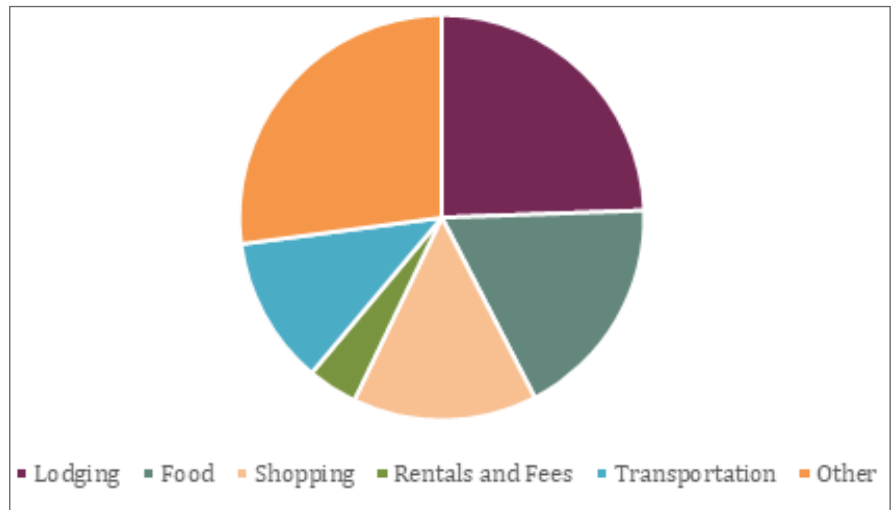


Photo Courtesy NM Tourism Department

recreation is an important part of New Mexico's tourism economy.

OUTDOOR RECREATION PARTICIPATION & PREFERENCES

Aside from the multiple factors and trends influencing outdoor recreation provision and access, it is also important to investigate trends in outdoor recreation participation and preferences at the state and national levels to anticipate present and future needs for outdoor recreation resources.

The Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) is an industry non-profit that produces annual reports evaluating trends in the national outdoor recreation landscape and economy. These reports provide some important insight into emerging outdoor recreation trends that are relevant to this plan and the future of outdoor recreation at the national level. While New Mexico is certainly influenced by national-level outdoor recreation trends, it is important to note that there are also key state-level trends leading to unique outdoor recreation preferences and participation in New Mexico. Survey data from the New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division and the surveys conducted as a component of this planning process inform our understanding of outdoor recreation

preferences and participation at the state-level.

Participation

ORF's 2019 Outdoor Participation Report found that a little more than half of Americans participated in outdoor recreation at least once in that year. While this finding may seem low to outdoor enthusiasts, participation in outdoor recreation has actually grown in the last three years. Of those who participated in outdoor recreation, it should come as little surprise that most (63%) preferred to recreate within 10 miles of their home (ORF, 2019).

Survey data suggests that New Mexicans are more likely to participate in outdoor recreation than the average American. The Outdoor Recreation Division reports that more than 65% of New Mexico residents participate in outdoor recreation and 76% consider themselves outdoor enthusiasts (ORD, 2020). This is supported by Colorado College's State of the Rockies Survey which reports that 62% of New Mexicans surveyed say the ability to live near and recreate on public lands is one reason why they live in the state (Colorado College, 2019).

While overall participation in outdoor recreation increased in 2019, annual outdoor outings among American youth declined by 15% since 2012. This is a particularly worrisome finding considering that the 2019 Outdoor Participation Report also found that people who participate in outdoor recreation as children are twice as likely to recreate outdoors as adults (ORF, 2019). Ensuring adequate outdoor recreation access and opportunities for youth is central to supporting the lifelong health, economic, social, and environmental benefits of outdoor recreation.

Outdoor recreation participation in New Mexico seems to be trending in a more positive direction. The Outdoor Recreation Division reported increased visitation to New Mexico's state and federal lands between 2012 to 2018, with visitation to National Parks in New Mexico growing 35% in the same time period (Table 3.3) (ORD, 2020). This figure is likely to grow even more with the addition of new public lands and newly designated state and federal parks.

Survey data hints at an optimistic outlook for New Mexican children with regard to outdoor recreation.

Table 3.3. Annual visitation on federal and state lands in New Mexico

Agency	Acreege	Visits in 2018	Approx. visitors per acre
Bureau of Land Management	13,485,894	3.3 million	0.24
US Forest Service	9,213,637	4.8 million	0.52
National Park Service	385,127	2.1 million	5.45
State Parks	98,118	5 million	50.95

Respondents to the SCORP Community Survey who participated in outdoor recreation reported living in households with children at a rate of about 26.5%, slightly more than the overall percentage of persons under 18 in New Mexico (Figure 3.5). Of this group, more than 97% said that exposing their children to the outdoors was very important and most reported that their children have a strong influence on their outdoor recreation preferences (EMNRD, Get Outside, New Mexico! Community Survey, 2021).

Participation and the Covid-19 Pandemic

Given the colossal impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the OIA recently released preliminary

findings on how the pandemic has affected outdoor recreation participation at the national-level (ORF, Increase in Outdoor Activities Due to Covid-19, 2020). Their survey found that Americans took up new activities during the spring of 2020, with running, cycling and hiking seeing the most new participants. Day hiking rose the most during the pandemic, growing its participants by more than 8% between 2019 and 2020.

State-level findings in New Mexico similarly identified growth in outdoor recreation participation during the pandemic. A survey of public land managers by the The EMNRD, State Parks Division and EDD Outdoor Recreation Division found that 79% reported an increase in visitation with the majority seeing visitation grow

by more than 25% during the pandemic. This has led to an increase in trash on New Mexico public lands and the need for more funds, education and enforcement to maintain quality facilities (ORD, Covid-19 Impacts on Recreation Patterns in New Mexico, 2020). It is certain that we will learn more in the coming years about the impact of Covid-19 on outdoor recreation, but early findings show that a growth in outdoor recreation participation during the pandemic has exacerbated the need to



Photo Courtesy NM Tourism Department

fund quality outdoor recreation facilities.

Preferences

Running was the most common activity in the United States with a 19% participation rate in 2019 (Table 3.4) (citation). Fishing was the second most common with a 16.4% participation rate, followed by biking, hiking, and camping. Biking and skateboarding were very popular activities among youth (ORF, Outdoor Participation Report, 2019).

The SCORP community survey found that hiking and walking were the most common outdoor recreation activities among New Mexicans, with nearly 54% of respondents saying that going for a hike or walk was their most common activity, an increase from 41% since the 2015 SCORP survey. Camping was the next most common activity, jumping from third to second place since 2015. More than eighteen percent (18.8%) of respondents reported camping as their most frequent activity, followed by fishing and biking. Pickleball, hunting, skiing and birding were other common outdoor activities among New Mexicans. The survey data also compares common outdoor activities with favorite activities (Figure 3.5) suggesting that camping, skiing, and pickleball are more popular than they are common and that many frequent hikers do not necessarily consider hiking to be their favorite

activity (EMNRD, Get Outside, New Mexico! Community Survey, 2021) (EMNRD, 2015).

Hiking and walking have increased in popularity and frequency since

the 2015 SCORP survey.

It is important to support the development and improvement of facilities for popular outdoor recreation activities while also

Table 3.4. Most popular outdoor activities in the United States

Activity	Number of Participants	Participation rate
Running	57.8 mil	19.2
Fishing	49.4 mil	16.4
Biking	47.9 mil	15.9
Hiking	47.9 mil	15.9
Camping	41.7 mil	13.9

Figure 3.5. Common and favorite outdoor recreation activities in New Mexico

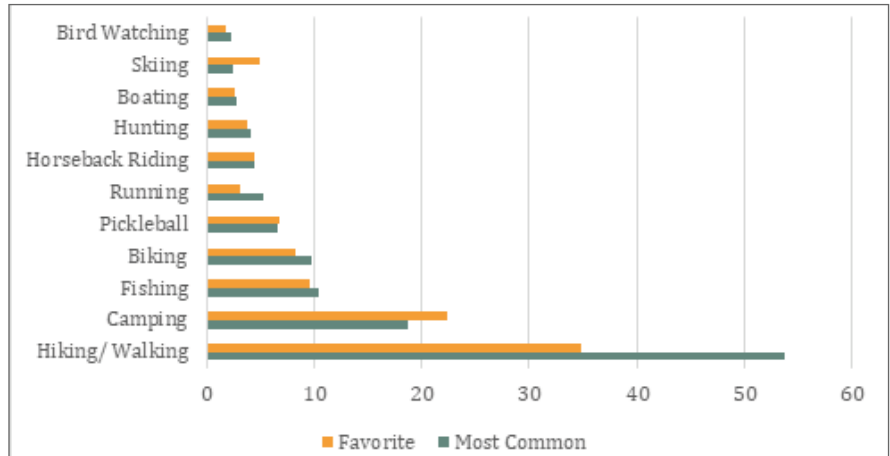


Table 3.5. Participation in popular outdoor activities

Activity	2018 Participation Rate	3-year Change
Biking	15.9%	+1.3%
Camping	13.9%	+0.3%
Fishing	16.4%	+0.9%
Hiking	15.9%	+3.2%
Hunting	5.2%	-0.1%
Running	19.2%	+1.7%
Wildlife Viewing	6.8%	-0.2%

understanding how recreation preferences are evolving (Table 3.5). The Outdoor Recreation Foundation identified a number of other activities that are growing in national popularity including adventure racing, BMX and mountain biking, car camping, running, fishing, cross-country and alpine skiing, hiking, and rock climbing (ORF, Outdoor Participation Report, 2019). Additionally, community survey respondents reported that camping, hiking, biking, and pickleball were activities that they would like to do more if quality facilities were available near them (Figure 3.6). Kayaking, boating and swimming were less common activities among survey respondents but activities that they would like to do more, suggesting the need for improved water access at New

Mexico’s rivers and lakes (EMNRD, Get Outside, New Mexico! Community Survey, 2021).

SATISFACTION & DESIRED IMPROVEMENTS

This planning process consulted experts and community members through surveys and direct engagement to better understand satisfaction with and desired improvements to outdoor recreation facilities. The community survey illustrates a general picture of resident satisfaction with recreation facilities. The survey found that most respondents were “some-

Figure 3.6. Outdoor recreation activities which New Mexicans would like to do more often

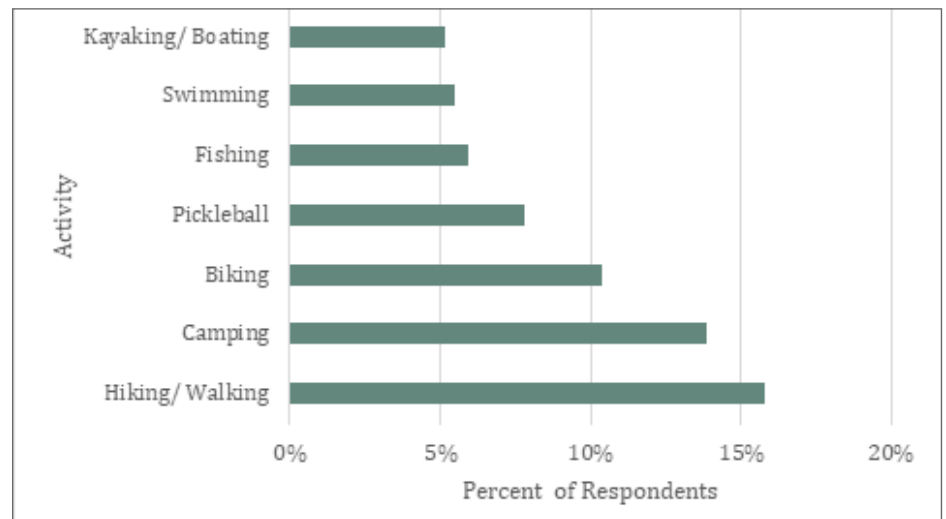
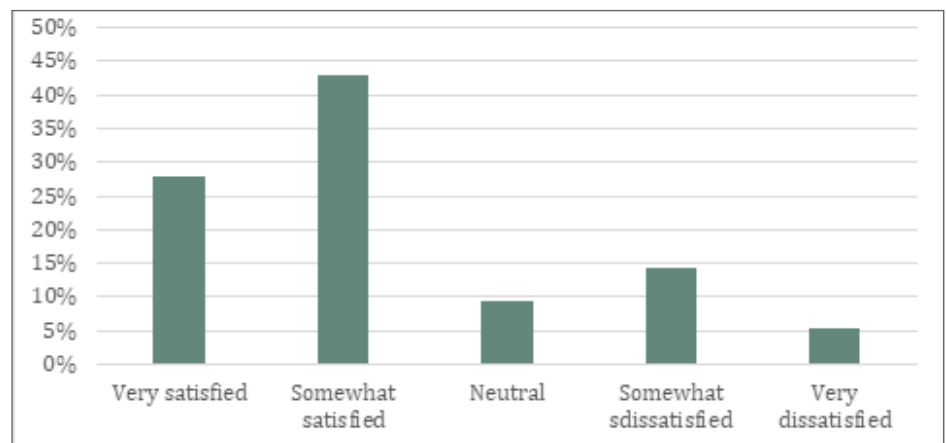


Figure 3.7. Satisfaction with outdoor recreation facilities among New Mexicans



what satisfied” with outdoor recreation facilities in the state (Figure 3.7) although 67% of respondents said that there were not enough facilities in their area (EMNRD, Get Outside, New Mexico! Community Survey, 2021).

When asked about recreation facilities that they would like to see more of in their area, the most common survey responses were trails for hiking and biking, parks, and water access (Figure 3.8). Respondents were split as to whether funding for outdoor recreation should prioritize improving existing facilities or building new facilities (EMNRD, Get Outside New Mexico! Community Survey, 2021). Desired facilities by region will be discussed later in the plan along with recommendations to improve and develop facilities. However, these data help to illustrate the general recreation facility needs and desired improvements among New Mexico residents.

In general, New Mexicans are very supportive of outdoor recreation development and resource preservation in the state. According to the State of the Rockies Survey, 84% of New Mexicans believe that outdoor recreation is important to the state’s future and 66% say that the government should prioritize water, air and wildlife protection while providing recreational opportunities on public lands (Colorado College, 2019). The significant community and institutional support for this planning process further reinforces the importance of outdoor recreation to the state and elevates this SCORP as a comprehensive guide to outdoor recreation development in New

Figure 3.8. Facilities which residents would like more of in New Mexico

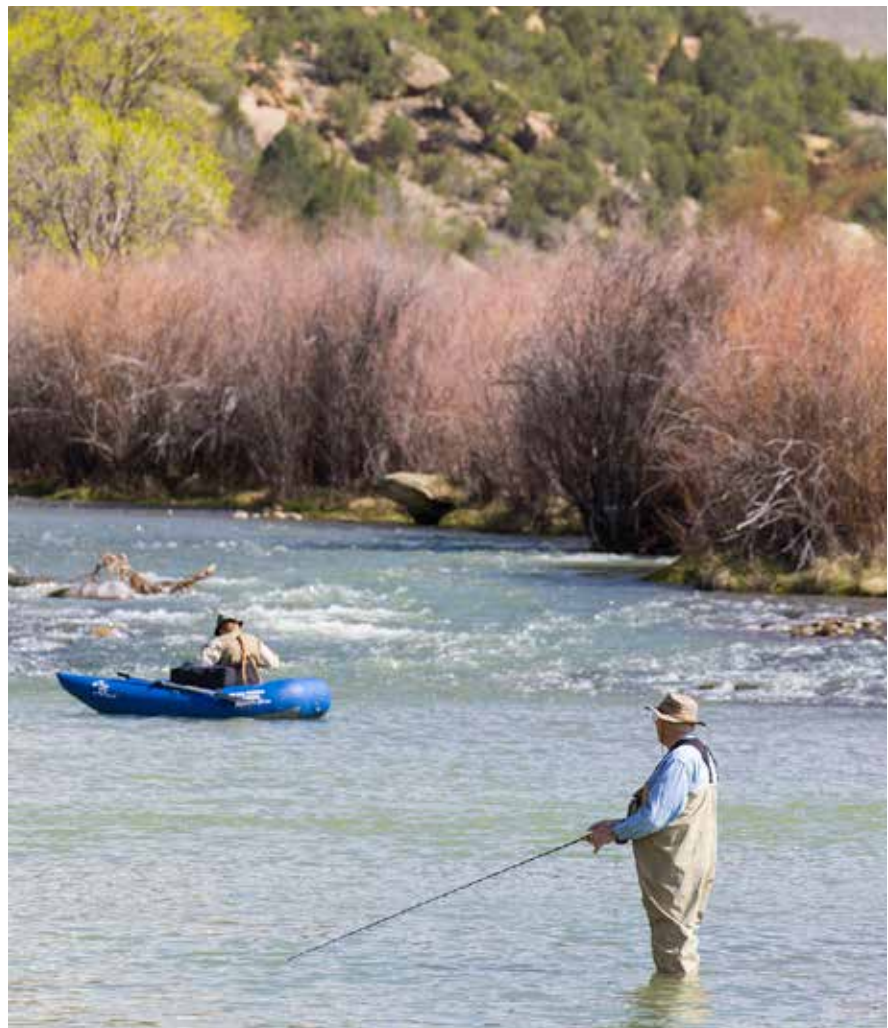
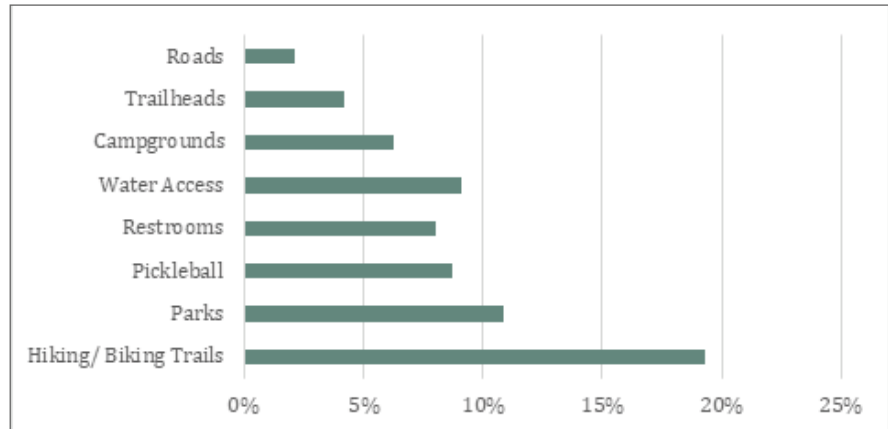


Photo Courtesy NM Tourism Department

KEY THEMES

New Mexico is already a national leader in outdoor recreation participation and equity

New Mexico has abundant public land resources for a range of outdoor recreation activities

Outdoor recreation is an important part of the New Mexico economy and could contribute even more to jobs and incomes

While climate change threatens New Mexico’s economy and natural resources, outdoor recreation can be an important tool to mitigate these impacts and transition to a carbon-neutral economy

Outdoor recreation can have important health benefits for New Mexico residents

Outdoor recreation is important to New Mexicans and further improvement and development of facilities has strong public support



Photo Courtesy Sites Southwest



4

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This chapter will summarize the impacts of outdoor recreation on the United States' and New Mexico's economies and summarize key themes and findings related to economic development.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND OUTDOOR RECREATION

Outdoor recreation has a growing impact on the national and New Mexican economy. New Mexico’s 2020 Climate Strategy highlights development in the outdoor recreation and eco-tourism sectors as a sustainable way for the state to grow its economy while transitioning away from dependence on fossil fuels (State of New Mexico, 2020). Established in 2019, New Mexico’s Outdoor Recreation Division is leading the way in catalyzing and supporting outdoor recreation development. With ample public lands, beautiful and diverse ecosystems, and numerous cultural attractions, New Mexico is in a strong position to continue developing its economy through outdoor recreation.

States Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), outdoor recreation accounted for 2.1% of national GDP in 2019. While the outdoor recreation industry is growing quickly in states like New Mexico, at the national level the outdoor recreation economy grew at a slower pace than the overall economy (1.3% compared to 2.2% in 2019). Outdoor recreation wages and employment also lagged behind the overall economy, growing at 3.9% and 0.4% respectively (BEA, 2019). As New Mexico seeks increased economic development through outdoor recreation, it is important that the state’s outdoor recreation economy support high local employment and wages.

The BEA found that boating, fishing, and RV camping were the largest direct contributors to GDP from outdoor recreation. The Bureau also measured supporting contributions to the outdoor recreation economy, finding that arts, entertainment, accommodation, and food services were the largest supporting industries, followed by retail and manufacturing (BEA, 2019). Indeed, outdoor recreation activities alone are only part of the picture when considering the economic impacts of outdoor recreation. Supporting industries are an important factor that New Mexico must consider as the state grows its outdoor recreation economy.

This chapter will summarize the impacts of outdoor recreation on the United States’ and New Mexico’s economies and summarize key themes and findings related to economic development from the SCORP planning process. Finally, this chapter will list goals, objectives, and actions designed to support outdoor recreation and economic development over the next five years.

NATIONAL IMPACT OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

Outdoor recreation has an important role in the United States’ economy. According to an analysis of outdoor recreation’s economic impact by the United



Photo Courtesy NM Tourism Department



ECONOMIC IMPACT OF OUTDOOR RECREATION IN NEW MEXICO

New Mexico's outdoor recreation landscape is unique in many ways. The state's abundance of high quality cultural and natural environments set it apart and create unique conditions and opportunities for economic growth. This section summarizes the economic development impacts of outdoor recreation in New Mexico and begins to consider opportunities for future growth.

Economic Impact of Outdoor Recreation

The BEA reported that in 2019 outdoor recreation contributed \$2.4B to New Mexico's GDP, 2.2% of the state's total GDP. Of that number, 27% came from direct spending on outdoor recreation activities and 63% came from supporting services like construction and travel. Recreational Vehicle (RV) camping was the top value-added outdoor recreation activity in New Mexico in 2019, followed by equestrian, snow activities, and boating and fishing. The BEA also found that outdoor recreation contributed to the creation of 35,065 jobs in the state and \$1.2 B in total compensation, along with 3.1% and 2.3% of total employment and compensation in the state respectively (BEA, 2019). Table 4.1 shows a breakdown of outdoor recreation employment by sector in 2017, demonstrating the diversity of employment opportunities that the outdoor recreation economy provides for New Mexicans.

While outdoor recreation is an important component of New Mexico's economy, the outdoor recreation industry in New Mexico still slightly trails that of Arizona and Colorado, where outdoor recreation contributes 2.6% and 3.1% of GDP, respectively, to larger state economies. That said, New Mexico's outdoor recreation economy is growing quickly. The state ranks fifth in the country for value-added growth and second for employment growth in the outdoor recreation industry (BEA, 2019). New Mexico's tourism economy is also growing, attracting more visitors to enjoy the state's outdoor recreation amenities. Between 2015 and 2019, the number of total visitors to New Mexico grew 12% and visitor spending grew 18% (NM Tourism Department, 2019).



Photo Courtesy NM State Parks

Table 4.1. Outdoor recreation employment in New Mexico by sector, 2017*

Sector	Number Employed
Professional and business services	443
Construction	702
Manufacturing	385
Transportation and warehousing	563
Retail trade, accommodations, and food services	26,000

* (ORD, Outdoor Recreation and New Mexico's Economy, 2020)

Recent data also demonstrates the outsized regional economic impact of outdoor recreation on communities in New Mexico with exceptional outdoor resources. A 2020 study of recreation in the Gila and San Francisco River basins in southwest New Mexico found that 1,147,082 visitors spent 30,502,930 visitor days recreating on the rivers (Southwick Associates, 2020). This number is particularly impressive given the region's relatively low population. However, this region benefits from a large area of quality public land and outdoor resources, including forests, rivers, wilderness, and important cultural sites. The economic impact of recreation in these watersheds was similarly impressive, creating 5,304 local jobs and contributing \$485M to the state and local economy (Southwick Associates, 2020).

Government entities and educational institutions in New Mexico are taking steps to better understand and grow the economic impact of outdoor recreation. Established by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham in 2019, the New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division has quickly become an important catalyst for further development of the outdoor recreation industry. The University of New Mexico's Anderson School of Business, New Mexico State University's Arrowhead Center, and Sandoval County recently received a grant from the Outdoor Recreation Division to fund outdoor recreation business accelerators. The State should continue to support business development, training, and certificate programs to grow the New Mexico outdoor recreation industry's skill and employment base.

CASE STUDY 2: JACK'S PLASTIC WELDING:

The outdoor recreation economy provides 33,500 jobs directly working within the industry and another approximately 60,000 indirect and induced jobs (BEA, 2019). This represents approximately 8.3% of all jobs in New Mexico. Though the majority of the jobs are associated with retail and food services, New Mexico is also home to several outdoor manufacturing businesses. One such example is Jack's Plastic Welding which has operated for the last 30 years out of Aztec, New Mexico and represents one of the state's premier outdoor recreation gear manufacturers.

Jack's Plastic Welding employs about fifteen people and is devoted to the manufacturing and prototyping of welded plastic products. Their standard product line includes inflatable boats, rafts, and kayaks along with stand up paddle boards, dry bags and self-inflating mattresses which are sold to retailers across the country and, increasingly, sold directly to online consumers.

Though the small manufacturer faces competition from larger national and international manufacturers Jack's Plastic Welding has developed fairly unique manufacturing details and a reputation for high quality manufacturing techniques and products. They have also strategically leveraged their extensive experience into manufacturing industrial products and into the design and prototyping of recreational, scientific and industrial concepts.

A key success to small manufacturing businesses like Jack's Plastic Welding is the insight, skills, and creativity provided by the owners and employees. CEO Errol Baade has been highly active in promoting outdoor businesses and outdoor recreation planning which helps the company stay at the forefront of business and manufacturing trends. Baade and founder, Jack Kloepper, bring decades of experience to designs and prototyping decisions but additional insight and creativity also come from all the production employees who are encouraged to contribute to design and production strategies.



Participants in the SCORP planning process noted a range of needs to support community economic growth through outdoor recreation including promotion of outdoor resources, improved wayfinding on trails and in communities to assist visitors in finding and using recreation resources, trail connections (particularly in towns), and support for businesses like bike shops, outfitters, rental services, and guides which provide essential services for recreationalists.

Tourism Economy

As noted previously, tourism in general and outdoor recreation tourism in particular are important catalysts of economic development in New Mexico. The state's tourism economy has grown consistently over the last five years, with the overall number of visitors and average spending per visitor increasing since 2015 (Table 4.2). A 2018 report by the New Mexico Tourism Department included an outdoor activity index which summarizes the strength of New Mexico's outdoor recreation tourism economy compared to other competitive western states and the United States as a whole. This index found that while New Mexico is highly competitive in attracting outdoor tourists, the state's outdoor tourism economy lags other western states like Colorado and Arizona, suggesting potential for further growth in outdoor tourism (NM Tourism Department, 2018).

Nevertheless, outdoor recreation is central to New Mexico's tourist economy. The New Mexico

Tourism Department reported that in 2019, 67% of recreation employment in the state was supported by out-of-state visitors. Out-of-state visitors spend hundreds of millions of dollars each year on hunting, fishing, and skiing trips in New Mexico alone (NM Outdoor Recreation Division, 2020) (Table 4.3). A 2018 survey of out-of-state visitors by the New Mexico Tourism Department found that 9.1% of tourists reported that visiting the outdoors, skiing or snowboarding

was their primary reason for visiting the state. Also, 18.5% said that they visited parks and 14.4% said that they went hiking or backpacking on their trip to the state (NM Tourism Department, 2018). The visitor survey used for this SCORP found that the majority of tourists surveyed participated in some kind of outdoor recreation activity on their trip to New Mexico and spent an average of \$1,780 in the state (EMNRD, 2021).

Table 4.2. Visitors and visitor spending in New Mexico, 2015-2019 (NM Tourism, 2019)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total Visitors (millions of visitors)	34	35	36.1	37.5	38.2
Day	18.3	19.2	19.7	20.4	20.9
Overnight	15.7	15.9	16.3	17.1	17.2
Total Spending (millions of \$)	\$6,294	\$6,427	\$6,631	\$7,092	\$7,446
Day	\$1,419	\$1,483	\$1,537	\$1,636	\$1,742
Overnight	\$4,875	\$4,944	\$5,094	\$5,457	\$5,703
Per Visitor Spending (\$ per person)	\$185	\$184	\$184	\$189	\$195
Day	\$77	\$77	\$78	\$80	\$83
Overnight	\$310	\$312	\$312	\$320	\$331

Table 4.3. Spending on select outdoor recreation activities in New Mexico, 2020 (ORD, 2020)

Activity	Spending	Recreation Days
Fishing	\$267.7 million (2013)	2.5 million
Hunting	\$342.4 million (2013)	746,000
Alpine Skiing	\$142.3 million (2018-19)	1 million

Participants in this planning process reinforced the importance of outdoor recreation tourism to local economies and identified promotion, wayfinding and improved connections to resources and services as general improvements needed to support economic development through outdoor recreation tourism. Participants also noted the need for more services supporting outdoor tourism including retail and repair, equipment rentals, and tour guiding.

Impact of Outdoor Recreation Events

Outdoor recreation events can be an important and overlooked driver of economic activity. The Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta is a major international draw for balloon enthusiasts and others, generating almost \$190 million in economic return for the state in 2019. The Tour of the Gila and Santa Fe Century bike races also draw large numbers of visitors to stay in hotels, spend money at local businesses, and tour other parts of the state. The SCORP visitor survey found that 15.5% of visitors attended an outdoor recreation event or festival while visiting New Mexico and 14% traveled to New Mexico specifically to attend an outdoor recreation event. Those who attended outdoor recreation events spent an average of two nights in the state, with many staying over a week (EMNRD, 2021). Participants in the SCORP regional townhall events voiced a strong interest in hosting more outdoor recreation events in their communities ranging from cultural events like park concerts to competitive events like bike races. Participants

noted the need for more support and collaboration with recreation providers, better infrastructure, and targeted promotion to encourage more local outdoor events. Several participants suggested a statewide calendar to promote outdoor events and provide a central location for identifying outdoor resources.

Economic Benefits of Protected Land and Access

Protecting land and other natural resources for the purposes of outdoor recreation can have important economic benefits. The SCORP visitor survey found that the state’s natural scenery was a major draw to visitors. Additionally, na-

ture-based outdoor recreation activities occurring in protected natural environments were the largest contributors to outdoor recreation GDP and growth, accounting for 72% of outdoor recreation GDP in New Mexico (NM Outdoor Recreation Division, 2020). Most importantly, New Mexicans want to see their lands and natural resources protected. Sixty-six percent of New Mexicans said that the government should prioritize protecting lands and natural resources (Colorado College, 2019) and SCORP planning participants stressed the local economic importance of access to protected recreation lands. Land and water protection supports heritage outdoor recreation activities like hunting, fishing, and horse-back riding. This SCORP supports these heritage activities along



Photo Courtesy NM Tourism Department



with traditional New Mexican land stewardship practices developed by indigenous and land grant communities such as the Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps.

The Gila and San Francisco River basins once again provide a valuable example of the economic impacts of outdoor recreation and resource protection. Most of the visitors surveyed on the Gila and San Francisco rivers said that they would be more likely to recreate on the rivers if they were given Wild and Scenic River Designation or other similar increased protections. Conversely, the survey found that low river flows resulting from climate change or inadequate protections would diminish recreation activity and the resulting economic benefits on the rivers (Southwick Associates, 2020).

Land protection and outdoor recreation have a strong influence on home values. Headwaters Economics found that US counties with strong outdoor recreation economies including Santa Fe, Lincoln, and Taos counties exhibited higher home values, leading to benefits for existing homeowners and high costs for renters and new homebuyers (Lawson, 2020). While outdoor recreation and land protection are central to building a sustainable state economy, this SCORP also considers strategies to improve land access and ensure that the benefits of outdoor recreation and economic growth are shared equitably.

CASE STUDY 3: GRANTS/CIBOLA COUNTY RECREATION ECONOMY FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES PROCESS

In 2020, the City of Grants received a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency to develop a community action plan around the region's outdoor recreation assets. Like much of New Mexico, the region surrounding Grants is rich in natural and cultural assets.

The purpose of the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities (RERC) program is to help communities diversify their economies, become more environmentally sustainable, and become an outdoor recreation destination. The City of Grants was fortunate to receive planning assistance through a very competitive grant process. However, the lessons learned through the RERC process are applicable to other communities that want to capitalize on their own assets in a comprehensive and coordinated way. To begin the process, the City of Grants established a local 12-person steering committee composed of local and regional agency staff and outdoor recreation enthusiasts. The steering committee was responsible for developing four priorities that established a framework for community action. The process was supported by Federal and State partners representing nine different agencies.

In November 2020, the preliminary work completed by the Steering Committee was discussed and refined through a series of public workshops that took the framework from its initial ideas to a detailed prioritized action plan with specific steps to achieve the area's vision: shape the area's identity as an outdoor recreation destination; improve connectivity; increase attractions, amenities and infrastructure to enhance the visitor experience; and improve coordination among local partners and State and Federal agencies.

Following the RERC process, regional entities have pursued projects that achieve the goals of the strategic plan of action they developed. To shape its identity as a recreation destination, the City of Grants applied for and received funding from the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable in partnership with the VF Foundation to create a promotional guide to the region's attractions and amenities. The guide will showcase diverse recreation activities, including backpacking, hiking, biking, boating, campground and hospitality, equestrian, motorized and non-motorized water sports, and rock climbing, among others. Cibola County received funding for the 25-mile Quartz Hill Trail project, which will create the first designated trail in the Zuni Mountains.

KEY THEMES

Outdoor recreation represents a growing portion of the state’s GDP, but New Mexico’s outdoor recreation economy still trails other nearby states like Colorado and Arizona

Outdoor recreation particularly supports rural economic development in areas with exceptional protected resources

Supporting services like shops, restaurants, and hotels are an important part of the outdoor recreation economy

Outdoor recreation events like bike races and festivals are often overlooked catalysts for economic development

New Mexico communities need improved promotion, connections between resources and communities, infrastructure, wayfinding, and support for local services to encourage economic development through outdoor recreation

Land protection supports sustainable economic development through outdoor recreation

New Mexico’s history, cultures, and heritage complement outdoor recreation. Heritage activities and traditional stewardship practices must factor into outdoor recreation development in New Mexico

Economic growth through outdoor recreation must be shared equitably and benefit New Mexico residents. Economic development should focus on high employment and wages and should address cost of living impacts associated with outdoor recreation development

The goals, objectives and actions identified within this SCORP update provide criteria that should be considered in the Open Project Selection Process (OPSP) for LWCF grants allocated in the next five years. Actions relevant to the LWCF program have been categorized as either ‘Assets and

Infrastructure’, or items that would directly qualify for LWCF funds, or ‘Programming, Planning and Engagement’. This second category, while not directly eligible for funding as outlined by the LWCF Act, can provide support to sustain outdoor recreation assets and advance planning goals. Actions

that fit within the Programming, Planning and Engagement category may be considered as criteria for project selection and prioritization.



RECOMMENDED GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & ACTIONS

Key










Infrastructure




Planning

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Reference	Action	Who	Where
Goal 1: Grow a Robust and Sustainable Outdoor Recreation Economy			
Objective 1.1: Develop infrastructure that supports sustainable growth in the outdoor recreation economy.			
1.1.A 	Invest in public outdoor recreation infrastructure that improves outdoor access in rural communities, increases quality of life, attracts new residents and visitors, and improves public health outcomes.	Recreation providers, NM legislature, public health programs	Statewide
1.1.B 	Invest in infrastructure in response to the major growth in recreation activities like biking, pickleball and others	Recreation providers	Relevant areas statewide
1.1.C 	Provide and maintain bicycle infrastructure (e.g. bike lanes and shoulders) in accordance with AASHTO, NACTO and NMDOT plans and guidelines.	NMDOT, RTPO's, local governments	Statewide
1.1.D 	Develop a centralized database for information on outdoor recreation resources to identify gaps and support economic development planning.	Recreation providers, ORD	Statewide
Objective 1.2: Encourage development in the outdoor recreation economy that supports the health and wellbeing of New Mexicans.			
1.2.A	Work with communities, especially those that have been marginalized and/or disproportionately affected by climate change, to facilitate youth engagement, skill building, and career development with an eye toward creating jobs in New Mexico that pay family-sustaining wages.	EDD, recreation providers, relevant NGO's, higher education institutions	Statewide, relevant communities
1.2.B	Support new and existing programs that increase outdoor access among New Mexican youth.	ORD; recreation providers; relevant NGO's	Statewide
1.2.C	Promote the public health benefits of outdoor recreation and support opportunities to engage with and leverage rural and urban health service programs.	Recreation providers, NMDOH, public health programs, relevant NGO's	Statewide
Objective 1.3: Connect communities with outdoor recreation resources to grow local tourism economy.			
1.3.A	Continue to provide economic support to local outdoor recreation services including bicycle shops, repair, retail, guiding, equipment rentals, and food services.	EDD, recreation providers, state and local business organizations	Statewide
1.3.B 	Connect existing local trail systems to downtowns, main streets, and nearby popular recreation assets.	Recreation providers, relevant NGO's	Communities statewide

Reference	Action	Who	Where
1.3.C 	Connect communities to recreation assets that draw tourists through trail connections, development of supportive services, and designation of routes for the US Bicycle Route System.	EDD, recreation providers, relevant NGO's, NMDOT	Gateway communities to popular resources
1.3.D	Develop and support outdoor recreation events and the development of facilities to support outdoor recreation events.	Recreation providers	Statewide
1.3.E	Implement New Mexico's Cradle to Career strategy to equitably increase family-sustaining jobs in the outdoor recreation industry.	NM legislature, relevant state agencies, local and tribal governments, private business partners	Communities statewide,
Objective 1.4: Collaborate with and support partners to grow New Mexico's outdoor recreation economy.			
1.4.A	Work with higher education institutions, particularly community colleges and tribal universities and colleges, to develop programs which build the outdoor recreation workforce and connect New Mexicans with careers in the outdoor recreation economy.	ORD, higher education institutions and training programs	Statewide
1.4.B	Provide exposure for small outdoor recreation businesses by collaboratively developing outdoor recreation tourism itineraries for New Mexico's economic development regions which highlight local businesses and encourage outdoor tourism.	NM Tourism, EDD, local communities and businesses	Statewide
1.4.C	Connect communities and the New Mexico Tourism Department to collaborate on local promotion and wayfinding.	NM Tourism, local communities	Communities statewide
1.4.D	Collaborate with non-profits, private partners, and New Mexico-based contractors to build capacity to develop outdoor recreation resources in state parks.	EMNRD, private and non-profit partners, local contractors	All state parks
Goal 2: Develop Outdoor Recreation Economy to Protect New Mexico's Outdoor Heritage			
Objective 2.1: Support outdoor recreation that preserves, protects, and highlights New Mexico's outdoor heritage.			
2.1.A	Work with indigenous communities and land grant associations to develop programming which highlights the unique outdoor recreation identity and heritage of the land.	NMIAD; recreation providers, indigenous communities, land grant associations, relevant NGO's	Recreation lands statewide
2.1.B 	Work with indigenous communities and land grants to develop stewardship plans that promote investment in restoration and land-based values on outdoor recreation lands.	Relevant agencies and NGO's, indigenous communities, land grants	Relevant areas statewide
2.1.C	Increase the promotion of New Mexico's hunting and fishing heritage.	EDD, NMDGF, indigenous communities	Statewide

Reference	Action	Who	Where
2.1.D 	Support New Mexican artists by installing public art at outdoor recreation facilities that highlights New Mexico's unique cultures.	Recreation providers, artists, relevant NGO's	Recreation facilities statewide
Goal 3: Incentivize Economic Development Measures Through LWCF			
Objective 3.1: Establish LWCF Criteria which incentivize sustainable economic development.			
3.1.A	Establish LWCF evaluation criteria that incentivizes applicants to include sustainable economic benefits as a component of outdoor recreation infrastructure projects. These criteria will favor those project proposals which support economic development over those that do not.	EMNRD	N/A

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5 RECREATION RESOURCE PROTECTION

This chapter highlights the challenges and opportunities facing efforts to protect natural resources and develop or maintain recreation opportunities in New Mexico.



RECREATION RESOURCE PROTECTION

New Mexico's rich natural and cultural resources are critical to the state's outdoor recreation opportunities. A 2020 study by New Mexico's Outdoor Recreation Division found that 72% of outdoor recreation GDP in the state was generated from activities like hiking and camping in natural environments and 28% came from activities in developed areas like playgrounds and sports fields (NM Outdoor Recreation Division, 2020). These data highlight the importance of resource protection to the continued success and enjoyment of outdoor recreation in New Mexico. While conservation and resource protection increase the appeal of New Mexico's outdoor recreation opportunities, efforts to protect natural and cultural resources are complicated by the direct impacts of recreationists and the infrastructure needed to access and responsibly participate in outdoor recreation activities.

This SCORP seeks to strike an appropriate balance between providing quality, accessible outdoor recreation opportunities while protecting the resources vital to New Mexico's natural environment. This chapter will provide some context regarding outdoor recreation and resource protection in New Mexico, highlight key themes related to resource protection, and recommend goals, objectives, and actions to improve outdoor recreation in the state while protecting those resources.

CONTEXT

As a signatory of the Confluence Accords, an agreement between 13 states aimed at cultivating sustainable recreation economies, the State of New Mexico is committed to land and water conservation and stewardship through collaborative partnerships and conservation.

The relationship of people to the land is at the heart of New Mexican history and cultures. Indigenous land stewardship practices trace their roots back millennia and have allowed communities to thrive in New Mexico for countless generations. Stewardship practices developed in land grant communities have similarly sustained a healthy relationship between

communities and the land throughout New Mexico's history. The thriving hunting and fishing culture in the state embodies and promotes conservation ethics, and has done so for decades. More recently, modern land use patterns and fixation with private property have shifted the balance of resource management away from traditional stewardship and toward development and resource exploitation. This fractured relationship of people to the land has led to social and environmental issues and has contributed to a changing climate. This SCORP document seeks to set an example which promotes a healthy balance between human development and resource protection through and in support of outdoor recreation.



Photo Courtesy NM Tourism Department

Climate change is threatening New Mexico's natural and cultural resources. The Union of Concerned Scientists projects that extreme heat and drought caused by climate change will lead to massive forest loss in New Mexico. At present rates of habitat loss, the piñon pine, New Mexico's state tree, could disappear from much of its current range in northern New Mexico by 2030 (Union of Concerned Scientists, 2016). As climate change presents an existential threat to the state and its natural treasures, it also offers an imperative to reconsider our relationship with the natural world. For example, if New Mexico public land managers were to pivot away from extractive land management practices toward conservation practices, public lands in New Mexico could absorb more carbon than they emit (State of New Mexico, 2020). Additionally, as the federal government calls for the permanent protection of 30% of lands in the United States by 2030 to combat climate change and reverse ecosystem destruction, New Mexico has much to offer both as the home of abundant public lands and as the source of traditional land stewardship practices. Outdoor recreation also has a vital role to play in this movement toward resource protection. Outdoor recreation provides an incentive to protect resources for public enjoyment and an opportunity for people to foster a respect for and connection to the land.

New Mexico's experience with the Covid-19 pandemic further supports the need for parallel outdoor recreation development and resource protection. A survey by State Parks and the Outdoor Recreation Divisions found that 79% of state parks in New Mexico

experienced an increase in visitation during the pandemic. These data are consistent with national trends which suggest that more Americans recreated outdoors more frequently during 2020, leading to increased demand on existing and for new and improved recreation facilities. This increased activity came at a cost to some outdoor resources. Littering and other forms of inappropriate and damaging behavior increased during the pandemic and land managers grappled with limited resources and increased demand. As local, state and the federal governments respond to increased demand for outdoor recreation facilities since the Covid-19 pandemic, it is important to consider the impact of recreation on natural and cultural resources.

The Leave No Trace ethic and the Recreate Responsibly initiative are examples of attempts to inform recreationists (new and experienced) about appropriate uses and behaviors in the outdoors to reduce negative resource impacts. This SCORP recommends further goals, strategies and actions to improve land stewardship and protect resources while developing and improving opportunities and infrastructure for outdoor recreation.



Photo Courtesy New Mexico State Parks Division

The SCORP planning process engaged area experts and community stakeholders to explore challenges and opportunities related to resource protection and outdoor recreation. Participants noted a lack of funding and administrative resources to manage protected recreation resources. They also stressed the need to focus on improving existing facilities, relieving stress on overused facilities through targeted improvements, and providing equitable access to protected spaces when developing new outdoor recreation infrastructure. State and federal recreation providers should seek opportunities to increase budgetary and administrative capacity, including the use of volunteers and revenue generation, when possible, to protect and manage public lands.

CASE STUDY 4: WILDFIRE PROTECTION FOR NEW MEXICO SKI AREAS

Wildfires pose an existential threat to New Mexico's ski areas. Wildfires burning through overgrown forests threaten tree-lined ski runs and resort infrastructure and the resulting scars produce flooding and debris flows which threaten the roads and utilities essential for ski resorts and outdoor recreation. Catastrophic burns can also cause significant damage to downstream river ecosystems. As a keystone economic driver of many New Mexican communities, the loss of a ski area to wildfire would have ripple effects throughout the state.

Forest restoration strategies protect ski areas by reducing the likelihood of a catastrophic fire. Restoration strategies include thinning overgrown forests and conducting prescribed burns in and around ski areas and their surrounding access and utility corridors. Though fires can and should still exist in healthy forest ecosystems, successful strategies result in reduced catastrophic and traumatic wildfire events.

The Taos Valley Watershed Coalition (TVWC) and the Greater Santa Fe Fireshed Coalition (GSSFC) are two collaborative coalitions in New Mexico which develop landscape resilience strategies prioritizing forest restoration and other high-value recreation sites. In Taos, resource protection efforts have followed TVWC strategic resiliency guidelines, focusing restoration work around the ski area and along highway 150 - the only access to the Taos Ski Valley. Near the Santa Fe ski basin, the Santa Fe National Forest has recently completed the first stage of a forest restoration project with guidance from the GSSFC.

Forest restoration and protection strategies have demonstrated success in New Mexico. In August 2020, lightning sparked a fire downhill and upwind from the Santa Fe ski area. Fortunately, the forest thinning projects completed by the Forest Service worked as designed, stopping the fire's spread and protecting the ski area - and corresponding Santa Fe community - from catastrophic recreational and economic damage.



CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

This chapter highlights the challenges and opportunities facing efforts to protect natural and cultural resources and develop or maintain recreation opportunities in New Mexico. The following list summarizes those challenges and opportunities to inform goals, objectives and actions that promote outdoor recreation and resource protection.

Challenges

- Emphasis on resource extraction and development over recreation and conservation in some parts of the state
- Visitors can exceed the limits of existing infrastructure and the natural environment, leading to environmental damage
- Limited budget and capacity to develop new recreation opportunities and to maintain existing recreation infrastructure
- Limited or restricted access to public lands
- Significant impacts of climate change including:
 - Increased frequency and intensity of catastrophic wildfire
 - Reductions in surface water quantity and quality
 - Spread of invasive and exotic plant and animal species
 - Degradation of cultural resources

Opportunities

- New Mexico's unique natural environments attract outdoor recreationists.
- New Mexico has a strong community of public and non-profit resource protection organizations that regularly collaborate to address threats to natural and cultural resources.
- New Mexico's large inventory of protected land provides opportunities to restore functional ecosystems (including species reintroductions) and combat climate change while providing recreation opportunities.
- Our extensive public lands provide numerous opportunities for resource interpretation and education through programming and hands-on citizen stewardship.

In the coming years, the State of New Mexico has an opportunity to become a leader in responsible resource management and community development. Outdoor recreation should be an important tool as New Mexico transitions toward a more sustainable model of resource use and development. It is critical to identify mechanisms to ensure that recreation complements and supports resource protection and does not occur at the expense of conservation objectives.



Photo Courtesy Sites Southwest LLC

KEY THEMES

Resource protection drives demand for outdoor recreation, but recreation use can threaten natural and cultural resources. New Mexico must find the appropriate balance of outdoor recreation development and resource protection

Budget and administrative resources must be available to protect more lands, responsibly develop outdoor recreation resources, and manage existing protected areas

Climate change threatens New Mexico's natural and cultural resources and way of life, but strategic resource protection and conservation can help prevent the worst impacts of climate change. Outdoor recreation is an important tool to justify resource protection and cultivate environmental consciousness

Ensuring equitable access to protected resources and recreation opportunities is central to New Mexico's plan for outdoor recreation development



Photo Courtesy Sites Southwest


Key







Infrastructure







Planning






RECOMMENDED GOALS, OBJECTIVES & ACTIONS**RESOURCE PROTECTION**

Reference	Action	Who	Where
Goal 1: Build Volunteer Capacity and Support Natural Resource Stewardship.			
Objective 1.1: Build volunteer capacity to support recreation, conservation, and stewardship.			
1.1.A	Increase volunteer opportunities that engage local communities and outdoor recreation practitioners in the practice of outdoor stewardship.	Recreation providers, relevant local community partners, outdoor recreation practitioner groups	Relevant areas statewide
1.1.B	Create and implement an interagency centralized website for posting volunteer opportunities to assist with park maintenance and improvement.	Recreation providers, volunteer partners	N/A
Objective 1.2: Foster an ethic of outdoor stewardship which mitigates impacts to natural and cultural resources in high-use recreation areas.			
1.2.A	Continue to foster, fund and promote a collaborative and coordinated public education campaign aimed at educating the public on how to properly use public lands, including applicable rules and responsibilities.	Recreation providers, NGO's, volunteer organizations	Statewide
1.2.B	Continue to create and support local "friends" and volunteer groups to monitor high use locations and act as volunteer educators, landscape ambassadors and natural resource stewards.	Recreation providers, volunteer organizations	Recreation areas statewide
1.2.C	Increase presence of educational rangers, staff, and volunteers in recreation spaces to educate visitors on potential risks to resources to reduce need for enforcement.	Recreation providers, volunteer organizations	Recreation areas statewide
Goal 2: Foster Greater Collaboration to Accomplish Significant Resource Protection.			
Objective 2.1: Foster greater collaboration between departments, governing jurisdictions, and non-government actors to advance conservation and meet demand for recreation opportunities.			
2.1.A 	Increase engagement with tribes, pueblos and nations for project planning and land protection.	Recreation providers, indigenous communities	Statewide
2.1.B	Increase agency collaboration to improve fire safety for outdoor recreation participants by engaging a Tourism Department representative to work with EMNRD to increase public awareness of forest fire prevention and safety.	EMNRD, FD, NM Tourism	Statewide
2.1.C	Ensure that state recreation agencies are providing input into any state or federal planning processes related to mineral extraction and cattle grazing that might negatively affect recreation land or waters.	SLO, ORD, EMNRD, DCA	N/A
2.1.D	Create an outdoor and ecotourism task force to develop a long-term action and implementation plan with strategies to mitigate the environmental impacts of outdoor recreation.	Recreation providers, NM Tourism, ORD, indigenous communities, NGO's	N/A

Reference	Action	Who	Where
2.1.E	Collaborate to develop appropriate and consistent signage across recreation providers educating public on resource protection.	Recreation providers	Statewide
2.1.F	Expand resources and capacity of YCC to increase the pace and scale of ecological restoration and recreational infrastructure improvement in high value recreational settings.	EMNRD, YCC, State legislature	Relevant areas statewide
Objective 2.2: Increase meaningful public participation in outdoor recreation data collection and decision-making.			
2.2.A 	Increase participation in recreation data collection, feedback, decision-making and education, especially in indigenous communities, communities of color and other historically under or unrepresented populations.	Recreation providers, ORD, indigenous and other relevant communities	Recreation areas statewide
2.2.B	Collaborate to monitor outdoor tourism using surveys and other means every 5 years.	Recreation providers, NM Tourism, relevant NGO's	Statewide
2.2.C	Use QR codes or other interactive links on interpretive signs to provide information to visitors, link to resources, and conduct visitor counts.	Recreation providers	Statewide
Goal 3: Restore and Protect Natural and Ecological Resources that support outdoor recreation			
Objective 3.1: Support projects and programs that restore important that ecological resources.			
3.1.A 	Where appropriate, purchase and operate wells/pumps to help flood wetlands for wildlife and recreational uses.	Relevant recreation providers	Relevant wetland areas statewide
3.1.B 	Develop and implement river restoration projects to restore more natural flow regimes and mitigate negative impacts of climate change.	Water use/conservation agencies, recreation providers, relevant NGO's	Statewide
3.1.C 	Develop and implement a statewide plan to restore and protect degraded landscapes and watersheds impacted by overgrazing.	Recreation providers, conservation agencies, relevant NGO's	Relevant areas statewide
Objective 3.2: Develop and implement action plans that restore natural conditions and mitigate the impacts of outdoor recreation on natural and ecological resources.			
3.2.A 	Develop plans to monitor, regulate and mitigate uses and high impact outdoor recreation activities in areas of conservation concern.	Recreation providers	Relevant areas of conservation concern
3.2.B 	Assess the long-term ecological impacts of new proposed recreational initiatives that have the potential to adversely impact ecologically or culturally significant landscapes.	Recreation providers	Outdoor recreation project areas statewide
3.2.C	Support and participate in the Roadmap for Conserving NM's Outdoor Heritage and the "30 by 30" initiatives.	Recreation providers, conservation agencies, relevant NGO's	N/A



Reference	Action	Who	Where
3.2.D	Develop and implement a statewide analysis of important wildlife habitat, with a focus on watershed health, to drive natural resource conservation efforts.	Recreation providers, conservation agencies, relevant NGO's	Statewide
3.2.E 	Develop and implement improved standards for wildlife corridors and wildlife-friendly fencing.	Recreation providers, conservation agencies	Relevant areas statewide
3.2.F	Restore natural areas damaged by unofficial trails and implement actions (e.g. barriers, signage, enforcement) to reduce their development.	Recreation providers, conservation agencies	Relevant areas statewide
3.2.G	Improve use of signage and other forms of public information (e.g. maps, apps) to clearly identify appropriate trail uses, including motorized and non-motorized uses.	Recreation providers	Statewide
3.2.H 	Build, repair or improve trash collection and restroom facilities at parks and trailheads to reduce to reduce trash and human waste in the environment, especially in high-use areas.	Recreation providers	Parks and trailheads statewide
3.2.I	Develop and implement curriculum and training courses teaching safe and responsible participation in outdoor recreation activities.	Recreation providers, recreation businesses and clubs	Statewide
Objective 3.3: Develop and implement projects and programs that mitigate the impacts of climate change on recreation resources.			
3.3.A	Continue a robust initiative to minimize and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions from the fossil fuel industry as well as mandate new standards for vehicle emissions.	NM legislature, Congress, relevant NGO's	N/A
3.3.B	Implement further efforts to transition the New Mexico economy from fossil fuels production to renewable energy production and conservation including support for outdoor recreation development over extractive development whenever possible.	NM legislature, Congress, relevant NGO's	Statewide
3.3.C	Enact vegetation management programs on public lands that remove invasive species and mitigate fire and flood impacts.	FD, recreation providers	Statewide
3.3.D	Strategically plant trees on recreation lands to create shade and provide ecological services.	Recreation providers, volunteer groups	Relevant areas statewide
Goal 4: Grow Capacity and Inventory of Protected Recreational Resources			
Objective 4.1: Support projects and acquisitions that increase the state's inventory of protected open space, low-impact recreation access, and promote conservation.			
4.1.A 	Acquire properties with wells in priority conservation areas and reduce impacts on the aquifer by shutting down these wells or by buying, selling, leasing, or exchanging water rights with willing private property owners.	Recreation providers, willing private property owners	Relevant areas statewide
4.1.B 	Where appropriate, improve access to natural areas through acquisition and easements.	Recreation providers, NM legislature, NGO's	Relevant areas statewide

Reference	Action	Who	Where
4.1.C 	Identify and protect privately-owned, critically important lands at greatest risk for development through acquisition or conservation easements from willing landowners. Determine if additional legislative action to permanently protect them from development is required.	Recreation providers, NM legislature, Congress, NGO's	Relevant areas statewide
4.1.D	Create more permanently protected landscapes to protect critical watersheds, aquifers, landscapes, habitats, and native wildlife using appropriate state and federal designations (e.g. state park, National Park/Monument, National Wildlife Refuge).	Recreation providers, NM legislature, Congress	Relevant areas statewide
4.1.E	Acquire and set aside water rights from willing sellers to maintain instream flows in critical areas of the state, particularly in native trout habitat.	Water use/conservation agencies, recreation providers, NGO's	Rivers and streams of trout conservation concern
4.1.F 	Invest in outdoor recreation resources and lands that promote alternative and active transportation and require minimal maintenance.	Recreation providers	Statewide
4.1.G	Develop additional recreation resources with the intent to reduce pressure on heavily used recreation resources or where outdoor recreation uses are currently in conflict with conservation goals.	Recreation providers	Relevant areas statewide
4.1.H	Develop regulations that require oil, gas, and mining lessees on public lands dedicate ROW for recreation trails.	State and federal leasing agencies, NM legislature, Congress	Relevant areas statewide
Objective 4.2: Develop regulations that require and programs that promote greater recreational and ecological connectivity.			
4.2.A 	Invest in connecting disconnected conservation parcels through land acquisition, trail development and/or connecting riparian areas.	Relevant recreation providers	Relevant areas statewide
4.2.B 	Prioritize land and easement acquisitions in areas that represent gaps in larger outdoor recreation resource projects (i.e. segments of Rio Grande Trail, open space inholdings).	Relevant recreation providers	Relevant areas statewide
4.2.C 	Identify privately-owned lands with the highest value for watershed and critical wildlife habitat protection or connectivity and use LWCF and other funds to purchase these lands from willing sellers and then legislatively permanently protect them from development.	Relevant recreation providers, NM legislature, Congress	Relevant areas statewide
Goal 5: Grow Capacity to Fund Resource Protection Projects and Programs.			
Objective 5.1: Create incentives for local outdoor recreation and conservation funding.			

Reference	Action	Who	Where
5.1.A	Create a fund which will contribute 50% of the LWCF match requirement as an incentive for under-resourced local communities to submit grant applications.	NM legislature	N/A
Objective 5.2: Increase state budget for conservation and outdoor recreation resource management.			
5.2.A	Increase maintenance and infrastructure budgets for State Parks Division and other state resource protection agencies to provide sufficient staffing and to combat degradation of natural and cultural resources.	NM legislature, relevant state agencies	N/A
5.2.B	Enact new state and federal legislation that creates an outdoor recreation equipment excise tax, similar to the Pittman Robertson/Dingell Johnson excise tax on hunting/fishing equipment. The excise tax would apply to all outdoor products to help pay for the upkeep, maintenance and restoration of public lands.	NM legislature, Congress	N/A
5.2.C	Increase park access fees to raise revenue for park improvements, staffing, operation, and maintenance.	NM State Parks Division, NM legislature, Congress	N/A
5.2.D	Develop funding and resources for recreation providers to complete survey, data collection and resource protection projects.	Recreation providers, NM legislature, Congress	N/A
Goal 6: Incentivize Resource Protection Measures Through LWCF.			
Objective 6.1: Establish LWCF criteria that incentivize resource protection measures for outdoor recreation.			
6.1.A	Establish LWCF evaluation criteria that incentivizes applicants to include conservation and natural resource stewardship objectives in outdoor recreation infrastructure and access projects. These criteria will favor those project proposals with conservation elements over those without.	EMNRD	N/A

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6

NEW MEXICO WETLANDS

Wetland habitats across New Mexico offer diverse recreational opportunities to residents and visitors to our state.



INTRODUCTION

Wetland habitats across New Mexico offer diverse recreational opportunities to residents and visitors to our state. Wetlands also provide important ecosystem services and functions that improve our quality of life. For example, wetlands improve our water quality by filtering pollutants, provide a natural buffer against episodic floods, serve as recharge zones that replenish our aquifers, serve as carbon sinks that help to trap atmospheric carbon, and provide essential habitats supporting the life-cycle requirements for many among the rich diversity of fish, wildlife and plant species that make New Mexico so special. It is imperative, therefore, that we thoughtfully couple recreational access and enjoyment opportunities with assurances of long-term preservation, enhancement, sustainability, and expansion of these precious natural resources.

The State of New Mexico defines “wetlands” as those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions (NMED 2012). In more general terms, a wetland is an aquatic ecosystem at the interface, or transitional zone, between upland (dry) ecosystems and deeper aquatic ecosystems, such as rivers or lakes. However, wetlands are also found in isolated locations far from a larger body of surface water. The upland limit of a wetland is where soil and vegetation are not influenced by shallow

water or a water table near the surface and displays predominantly dryland plant cover that cannot tolerate saturated soil conditions. The lower boundary between wetlands and deeper water habitat associated with riverine and lacustrine systems lies at two meters (6.6 feet) below low water, or the maximum depth at which emergent plants normally grow.

PROTECTION PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES

The New Mexico Environment Department’s (NMED) Surface Water Quality Bureau (SWQB) is the state agency responsible for developing and administering programs designed to protect, restore, and increase the quality and spatial extent of self-sustaining and naturally functioning wetlands and riparian areas across the State. To fulfill its’ mission, the SWQB develops and updates a Wetlands Program Plan every five years that describes its goals, objectives, priorities, and program initiatives (<https://www.env.nm.gov/surface-water-quality/wetlands/>). In addition, the New Mexico State Water Plan includes management goals and strategies specifically calling for the restoration, enhancement and expansion of wetlands and riparian areas to help meet the state’s water quality and quantity goals (OSE 2018).

One of the many important initiatives implemented by the SWQB over the past decade has been a program aimed at classifying different types of wetlands and mapping

their spatial extent across different regions of the State. Another important initiative has been developing rapid assessment monitoring tools that can be used by stakeholders to assess the health of individual wetlands so that conservation and restoration management plans can be developed to improve the functional conditions of those identified as impaired or degraded. These two initiatives are especially valuable for aligning state-wide wetland conservation and recreation opportunities and priorities with resources available through the LWCF Program.

STATE-WIDE WETLAND CLASSIFICATION MAPPING & PROGRAM

The NMED-SWQB has been working with the GeoSpatial Services Program at Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota to map and classify wetland types and their spatial distribution across the State of New Mexico. The classification of wetlands follows a procedure developed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers known as the Hydrogeomorphic (HGM) Approach. The HGM Approach (Brinson 1993) places emphasis on the importance of abiotic (physical and chemical) features of wetlands for such functions as the chemical characteristics of water, habitat maintenance, and water storage and transport. An important goal of this approach is to allow for tracking changes in the surface area and quality of different wetland types over time.



The HGM Approach utilizes a wetland classification system based on landscape position and geomorphic and hydrologic characteristics to group wetlands into seven classes defined by Brinson (1993), of which five can be found within and across diverse regions of New Mexico. The five HGM wetland classes in New Mexico include: 1) Riverine Wetlands, 2) Depressional Wetlands, 3) Mineral Soil Flats, 4) Lacustrine Fringe Wetlands, and 5) Slope Wetlands.

Each HGM class is defined by a unique set of field attributes that collectively enable different wetland types to provide a variety of ecosystem services and functions. These attributes, however, are vulnerable to impacts from both human activities and stochastic environmental events (e.g., prolonged drought, insect infestations). Understanding these attributes and their vulnerabilities is important when considering and prioritizing recreational opportunities that could be funded by the State through financial support by LWCF.

Following are general descriptions of the HGM classes, their associated functions, and their known spatial distributions based upon the SWQB and Saint Mary's University mapping efforts to date. We include brief descriptions of HGM sub-classes because these are key components of the state-wide mapping efforts and because they highlight different attributes and ecological functions relevant to management and funding considerations regarding the spectrum of potential recreational opportunities.

Riverine Wetlands

Characteristics

Riverine Wetlands occur in floodplains and riparian corridors in association with perennial, intermittent, and ephemeral stream channels. Dominant water sources to the wetlands are overbank flow or side channel flow from the main channel, or subsurface hydrologic connections between the stream channel and the wetlands (hyporheic flow). Additional water sources may include subsurface flow from adjacent uplands, occasional overland flow from adjacent uplands, tributary inflow, and precipitation. Riverine Wetlands lose surface water via the return of floodwater to the channel after flooding and through surface flow to the channel during rainfall events. They lose subsurface water by discharge to the channel, movement to deeper groundwater, and evaporation.

Riverine Wetlands are the most spatially widespread and one of the most diverse wetland classes in New Mexico. Accordingly, Riverine Wetlands are divided into multiple sub-classes based on their physical attributes as influenced by landscape characteristics (e.g., elevation, slope, and geology). For example, the Montane Unconfined Riverine sub-class includes unconfined streams and wetlands that are associated with mid-elevations between the lowlands and subalpine and alpine elevations (Robertson et al. 2015). Unlike Montane Confined Riverine Wetlands, which are characterized by relatively steep stream systems confined by underlying bedrock that typically have narrow riparian zones and no distinct floodplain, Montane Unconfined Riverine Wetlands occur in lower gradient valleys with well-defined floodplains.



Photo 1. Representative photo of Unconfined Lowland Riverine Wetland, Middle Rio Grande (photo credit: Chad McKenna, GeoSystems Analysis).

Below the pine-dominated montane zone, Riverine Wetlands are split into Lowland Confined (Canyon) Riverine and Lowland Unconfined Riverine sub-classes. Lowland Unconfined Riverine Wetlands are classified as high-volume river systems with large drainage areas that can move various sediment size classes, creating complex fluvial terrains made up of large mid-channel and point bars, as well as multiple terraces and back channels (Muldavin et al. 2011). The Lowland Confined (Canyon) Riverine Wetland sub-class is typically found along confined stream reaches in the same elevation zone. This subclass is characterized by relatively steep stream systems confined by the underlying bedrock or valley sides. These streams typically have a narrow riparian zone and may lack a distinct floodplain. Other Riverine Wetland sub-classes in New Mexico include Sub-alpine/Alpine, Alluvial Fan and Episodic (Robertson et al. 2015).

Healthy, functioning Riverine Wetlands provide a variety of ecosystem functions described by the HGM classification system, although some functions are more strongly associated with certain sub-classes than others. These functions include aquatic invertebrate habitat, fish habitat, waterfowl and waterbird habitat, bank stabilization, nutrient transformation, sediment and other particulate retention, streamflow maintenance, surface water detention, groundwater recharge, carbon sequestration, and unique/uncommon or highly diverse wetland plant communities (Allen et al. 2017).



Photo 2. Representative photo of Confined Lowland Riverine Wetland, Percha Creek (photo credit: Chad McKenna, GeoSystems Analysis).



Photo 3. Representative photo of Unconfined Montane Riverine Wetland, Rio Chama (photo credit: Todd Caplan, GeoSystems Analysis).

Recreational Issues & Opportunities

Riverine Wetlands offer a diverse array of recreational opportunities for New Mexicans and visitors to our State. Outdoor recreationists utilize New Mexico's Riverine Wetlands for activities such as fishing, hunting, bird watching, camping, photography, and others. Riverine Wetlands also provide important access points for recreational boating, such as rafting, canoeing and kayaking. Furthermore, Riverine Wetlands provide important focal areas for environmental education.

The popularity of New Mexico's Riverine Wetlands as recreation destinations renders them particularly vulnerable to degradation and reduced functional integrity. All Riverine Wetlands are vulnerable to point and non-point sources of water pollution, but Unconfined Riverine Wetlands are particularly vulnerable to recreation-related human impacts. For example, Unconfined Riverine Wetlands are more accessible to foot traffic and motorized vehicles than Confined Riverine Wetlands, making them more vulnerable to activities that induce loss of streambank vegetation, increased streambank erosion, sedimentation, and trash deposition. Depending upon the

scale and extent of these impacts, recreation-related degradation to Riverine Wetlands can impair some, many, or in extreme cases, all their core ecosystem services and functions. In addition, Riverine Wetlands are susceptible to environmental degradation associated with erosion, runoff, and airborne sedimentation from unmaintained or poorly designed roads, including those located outside of the immediate wetland boundaries. Funding to improve access for recreational opportunities in New Mexico's Riverine Wetlands should prioritize activities that reduce these vulnerabilities and others, increase distribution and, when possible, facilitate improved functional performance and condition.



Photo 4. Representative photo of Confined Montane Riverine Wetland, Taos Box (photo credit: Maryann McGraw, NMED).

Depressional Wetlands

Characteristics

Depressional Wetlands occur in topographic depressions that allow accumulation of surface water. On a topographic map, these wetlands occur within a closed elevation contour. Dominant sources of water are precipitation and/or overland flow from adjacent uplands, but these wetlands may also have a ground water component to them. The direction of water movement is normally from the surrounding uplands toward the center of the depression. Depressional Wetlands may have any combination of inlets and outlets or lack them completely. They may lose water through intermittent or perennial drainage from an outlet, by evapotranspiration, and, if they are not receiving groundwater discharge, may slowly contribute to groundwater recharge.

Depressional Wetland sub-classes in New Mexico include *Playas*, *Natural*, and *Artificial* (Robertson et al. 2015). *Playa Depressional Wetlands* are filled primarily by precipitation and overland flow following summer monsoon rain events and at higher elevations by snowmelt. *Natural Depressional Wetlands* are distinguished from playas because they receive their water supply primarily from groundwater and overland flow (e.g., ponds, small lakes). *Artificial Depressional Wetlands* are human constructed depressions created intentionally (e.g., as constructed wetlands or to capture drinking water for livestock or wildlife) or unintentionally (e.g., via road construction).



Photo 5. Representative photo of a Playa Depressional Wetland, eastern New Mexico (photo credit: Maryann McGraw, NMED).



Photo 6. Representative photo of a Playa Depressional Wetland, Gullua National Wildlife Refuge (photo credit: Maryann McGraw, NMED).

Healthy functioning Depressional Wetlands provide important habitats for a diversity of animal life including birds, invertebrates, amphibians, and mammals. They are of critical importance as stop-over sites and wintering habitat for sandhill cranes, geese, waterfowl, wading birds, and shorebirds. They also provide numerous other important functions including groundwater recharge, surface water detention, nutrient transformation, and (particularly at higher elevations) carbon sequestration (Allen et al. 2017). Depressional Wetlands occur throughout New Mexico at high, moderate, and low elevations.

Recreational Issues & Opportunities

Recreational opportunities in Depressional Wetlands may include hunting, bird watching, photography, and other artistic endeavors (e.g., painting). With their ability to support diverse plant and animal life, Depressional Wetlands also serve as wonderful outdoor classrooms for students and the general public. However, functional performance of Depressional Wetlands can be negatively impacted by surrounding land management activities that contribute to erosion into and sedimentation in the wetlands (via unpaved roads, certain agricultural/livestock grazing practices, development, etc.). Funding to improve access and recreational opportunities in New Mexico's Depressional Wetlands should prioritize activities that reduce these and other vulnerabilities, increase distribution and, when possible, facilitate improved functional performance and condition.



Photo 7. Representative photo of groundwater fed Natural Depressional Wetland, Valles Caldera National Preserve (Photo credit, Maryann McGraw, NMED).



Photo 8. Representative photo of an Artificial Depressional Wetland, Middle Rio Grande (Photo credit, Todd Caplan, GeoSystems Analysis).

Mineral Soil Flats

Characteristics

Mineral Soil Flat Wetlands are expansive flat areas that lack a well-defined watershed. In New Mexico, Mineral Soil Flats are temporarily and intermittently flooded, primarily during summer monsoon rain events. They are most common on interfluves (a region of higher land between two river valleys), extensive relic lake bottoms, or large floodplain terraces. They receive virtually no groundwater discharge which, in addition to flat topography, distinguishes them from Natural Depressional Wetlands. Dominant hydrodynamics are vertical fluctuations. They lose water by evapotranspiration, saturation overland flow, and seepage to underlying groundwater. They are distinguished from flat upland areas by their poor vertical drainage and low lateral drainage, usually due to low hydraulic gradients.

The clayey and often alkaline soils associated with Mineral Soil Flats may support sparsely distributed, herbaceous plant species but generally lack extensive riparian-wetland plant communities. However, the plant species found in these habitats are often uniquely adapted to the alkaline soils and ephemeral flooding. Some aquatic arthropods have life cycles that are adapted specifically to intermittently flooded Mineral Soil Flats and respond rapidly with population bursts during episodic and short-lived inundation events. Mineral Soil Flats provide important functions for vertebrate and invertebrate wildlife species. They are of critical importance as stop-

over sites and wintering habitat for sandhill cranes, geese, waterfowl, wading birds, and shorebirds. They also provide important physical functions, including surface water storage and groundwater recharge, as well as chemical functions, including retention of sediments and removal of imported elements and compounds (Allen et al. 2017).

Recreational Issues & Opportunities

Mineral Soil Flats are primarily found in southern New Mexico. The most well-known is the Lordsburg Playa (Photo 9) near the bootheel region in the southwest-

ern corner of the state, but others can be found at White Sands National Park (Photo 10) and elsewhere. Recreational opportunities may include but are not limited to bird watching, star gazing, photography, and environmental education. Primary threats associated with recreation include overuse by off road vehicles (ORV's). Funding to improve access and recreational opportunities in New Mexico's Mineral Flats should prioritize activities that reduce these and other vulnerabilities, including institutional controls (e.g. signage, barriers) to preclude ORV damage in these wetlands. When possible, priority activities should facilitate improved functional performance and condition.



Photo 9. Representative photo of the Mineral Soil Flats, Lordsburg Playa (photo credit: <https://www.goodfreephotos.com>)



Photo 10. Representative photo of Mineral Soil Flats, White Sands National Park (photo credit: Maryann McGraw, NMED).

Lacustrine Fringe Wetlands

Characteristics

Lacustrine Fringe Wetlands are found along the perimeter of large lakes where the water elevation of the lake maintains the water table in the wetland. Surface water flow is bidirectional, and lake levels are primarily controlled by streams that supply and drain the lakes of surface water. Additional sources of water are precipitation and groundwater discharge, the latter dominating where Lacustrine Fringe Wetlands intergrade with uplands or Slope Wetlands. Lacustrine Wetlands lose water by flow returning from the wetlands to the lake after flooding, by saturation surface flow, and by evapotranspiration. Lacustrine Fringe Wetlands are supported by lake levels and are distinguished from Depressional Wetlands by the vast size and depth of the water bodies that support them.

In New Mexico, most lakes are actually man-made reservoirs subject to water level control that may cause inundation or draining of associated Lacustrine Fringe Wetlands (NMED 2012). In some cases, water level control in reservoirs makes it nearly impossible for natural Lacustrine Fringe Wetlands dominated by perennial wetland plant species to develop extensively. When Lacustrine Fringe Wetland soils are exposed during periods of low lake levels, common annual plants may dominate. Organic matter normally accumulates in areas where the banks around the lakes are flatter or are sufficiently protected from shoreline wave erosion. Marshy areas bordering Abiquiu Lake are an example of Lacustrine Fringe

Wetlands, as are the extensive bosques that can form in the delta sediments associated with the river-lake interfaces at Cochiti and Elephant Butte lakes.

Lacustrine Fringe Wetlands perform a myriad of important functions. Vegetation provides bank and shoreline stabilization, and wetlands filter sediments and provide habitats for invertebrates, amphibians, shorebirds, fish, and other wildlife. Where extensive wetlands and bosques develop in delta sediments, these productive habitats serve as important sinks for carbon sequestration.

Recreation Issues & Opportunities

Recreational opportunities in Lacustrine Fringe Wetlands commonly include fishing, hunting, canoeing/kayaking, bird watching, and photography. Recreation-related vulnerabilities include frequent, large wakes from motorized watercraft (boats, jet skis) that promote shoreline erosion. Funding to improve access and recreational opportunities in New Mexico's Lacustrine Fringe Wetlands should prioritize activities that reduce these and other vulnerabilities and, when possible, activities that facilitate their improved functional performance and condition.



Photo 11. Representative photos of Lacustrine Fringe Wetlands, Cochiti Lake Delta (photo credit: Todd Caplan, GeoSystems Analysis).



Photo 12. Representative photo of Lacustrine Fringe Wetlands, Caballo Lake (photo credit: Maryann McGraw, NMED).

Slope Wetlands

Characteristics

Slope Wetlands, as defined by Brinson (1993), are wetlands that occur "...where there is a discharge of groundwater to the land surface. They normally occur on sloping land; elevation gradients may range from steep hillsides to slight slopes. Slope Wetlands are usually incapable of depressional storage because they lack closed contours". Principal water sources are usually groundwater flow. However, interflow from surrounding uplands, as well as precipitation, may contribute. Hydrodynamics are dominated by downslope, unidirectional water flow. Slope Wetlands can occur in nearly flat landscapes where groundwater discharge is a dominant source to the wetland surface. Slope Wetlands lose water primarily by saturation subsurface and surface flows and by evapotranspiration. Slope Wetlands may develop channels, but the channels serve only to convey water away from the Slope Wetland. Seepage areas that occur along hillsides and can support the growth of similar obligate and facultative wetland plant species as are found in other wetlands are included in New Mexico's broad Slope Wetlands classification. Five HGM subclasses of Slope Wetlands have been identified in New Mexico, and detailed descriptions and examples have been documented by the Quivira Coalition and Zeedyk Consulting (Walton et al. 2014). The five subclasses include: 1) Pleistocene Lakebed; 2) Monsoon-Driven; 3) Cienegas; 4) Spring-Fed; and 5) Headwater. One important com-



Photo 13. Representative photo of Spring-Fed Slope Wetlands, Valle Vidal, Carson National Forest (photo credit: Mollie Walton, Quivira Coalition).



Photo 14. Representative photo of a Cienega Slope Wetland, Cienega Spring near New Mexico/Sonora border (photo credit: Bob Sivinski)

monality between all five subclasses is each has a confining geologic layer that moves water downslope, underneath the wetland, rather than simply percolating into deeper groundwater reserves through fissures.

As its name suggests, Pleistocene Lakebed Slope Wetlands are distinguished from other Slope Wetlands in that they have formed in ancient lakebeds that filled with alluvial sediment over time. The interaction of alluvial sediment accumulation over the impermeable lakebed promotes sub-surface flow and shallow groundwater such that they can support wetland vegetation.

Monsoon-Driven Slope Wetlands frequently form where alluvial fan sediments aggrade upstream from the confluence of a tributary and a primary stream channel in a valley bottom. The aggraded sediment forms a natural grade control and slows the stream velocity, which in turn raises the groundwater table. These Monsoon-Driven Slope Wetlands may remain saturated during the summer monsoon season (typically July and August).

Cienega Slope Wetlands are marshes dominated by herbaceous species. According to Walton & Zeedyk (2014), Cienegas are formed during events resulting from geologic uplift, such as faulting and large-scale erosion. Faulting can produce a rise within a valley that causes the blocking of a stream in a monsoon-driven system. They can also form when an alluvial fan forms at the mouth of a steep, ephemeral tributary that causes the valley floor to rise at the confluence of a receiving



Photo 15. Aerial image of a Pleistocene Lake Slope Wetland, Tres Piedras Ranger District, Carson National Forest (image and graphics provided by Tamara Gadzia, Quivira Coalition).

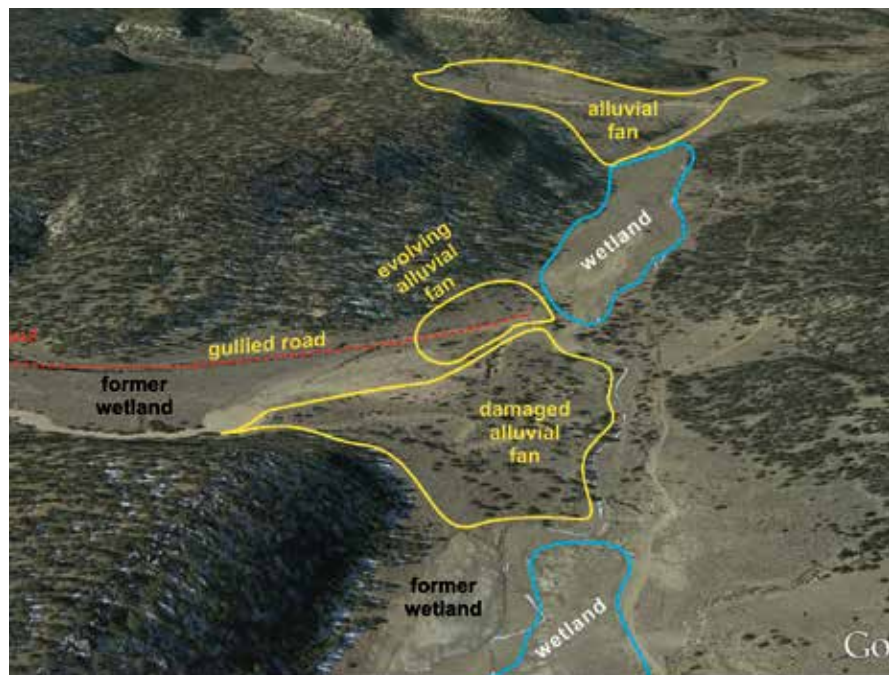


Photo 16 . Aerial image of a Monsoon-Driven Slope Wetland, Cebolla Creek near Grants (image and graphics provided by Tamara Gadzia, Quivira Coalition).

stream. Over time, fine sediments carried by the primary stream accumulate up-valley from the alluvial fan, which impounds groundwater and forms a perched water table above an impermeable layer such as bedrock (Walton et al. 2014).

Spring-Fed Slope Wetlands are mostly formed and maintained by groundwater erupting at the land surface. Unlike other Slope Wetland subclasses, Spring-Fed Slope Wetlands are not as dependent upon erosional events. They may exist anywhere on hillslopes where groundwater stored in the deeper sedimentary aquifers, faults, and other structural conduits discharge water at the ground surface (Walton & Zeedyk 2014). Spring-Fed Slope Wetlands also have both monsoon and snowmelt sources, depending upon the elevation where they are found. Headwater Slope Wetlands, on the other hand, are purely snowmelt-driven in their formation and continued function (Walton et al. 2014).

Slope Wetlands provide a variety of ecosystem services and functions, although these functions can vary somewhat by subclass. Key functions of healthy Slope Wetlands include groundwater recharge, surface water detention, nutrient transformation, and (particularly at higher elevations) carbon sequestration.

Recreation Issues & Opportunities

Slope Wetlands are common across New Mexico, and because they can occur near population centers and in remote wilderness areas, they can offer a wide variety of recreational opportunities. In more remote mountain settings, Slope Wetlands are often visited by backpackers, hikers, horseback riders, and hunters. In more urban settings, Slope Wetlands (e.g., Cienegas) may provide opportunities for bird watching, photography, and environmental education.

Healthy Slope Wetlands have dispersed flows that, when above ground, move as sheet flow across the landscape. Channels are not a component of healthy slope wetland systems. The presence of channels, and particularly incised

channels, are a sign of Slope Wetland degradation. Human recreational activities that facilitate channel formation in Slope Wetlands include poorly sited trails used for hiking, biking, and horseback riding, and roads used by motorized vehicles. Cienegas and other wetland types have also been adversely impacted by excessive groundwater pumping for agricultural purposes. Funding to improve access and recreational opportunities in New Mexico's Slope Wetlands should prioritize activities that reduce these and other vulnerabilities, increase distribution and, when possible, facilitate their improved functional performance and condition.



Photo 17. Representative photo of a Headwater Slope Wetland, Valle Vidal, Carson National Forest (photo credit: Mollie Walton, Quivira Coalition).



STATEWIDE WETLAND MAPPING DATA

The NMED and Saint Mary's University of Minnesota have nearly completed HGM wetland mapping across the entire state. The mapping process has been sequentially implemented by dividing the state into discreet geographic zones (Figure 6.1). As of this report, mapping and classification of wetlands is complete within nearly 20 million acres in the Canadian River basin and Dry Cimarron watersheds, Jemez Mountains and the Upper Rio Grande and adjacent areas, in the Sacramento Mountains and adjacent areas, and all wetlands on USFS Wilderness Areas. These data are included in the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) database and on-line mapper (<https://gis.web.env.nm.gov/oem/?map=wetlands>).

Mapping of wetlands in the Middle Rio Grande and surrounding areas in the mid-eastern portion of the state, in the Gila Region, in the Lower Rio Grande, in northwestern New Mexico surrounding the San Juan-Animas watersheds and the Estancia Basin are currently in progress. The eastern plains and bootheel region in southwestern New Mexico are the remaining areas that require updated mapping.

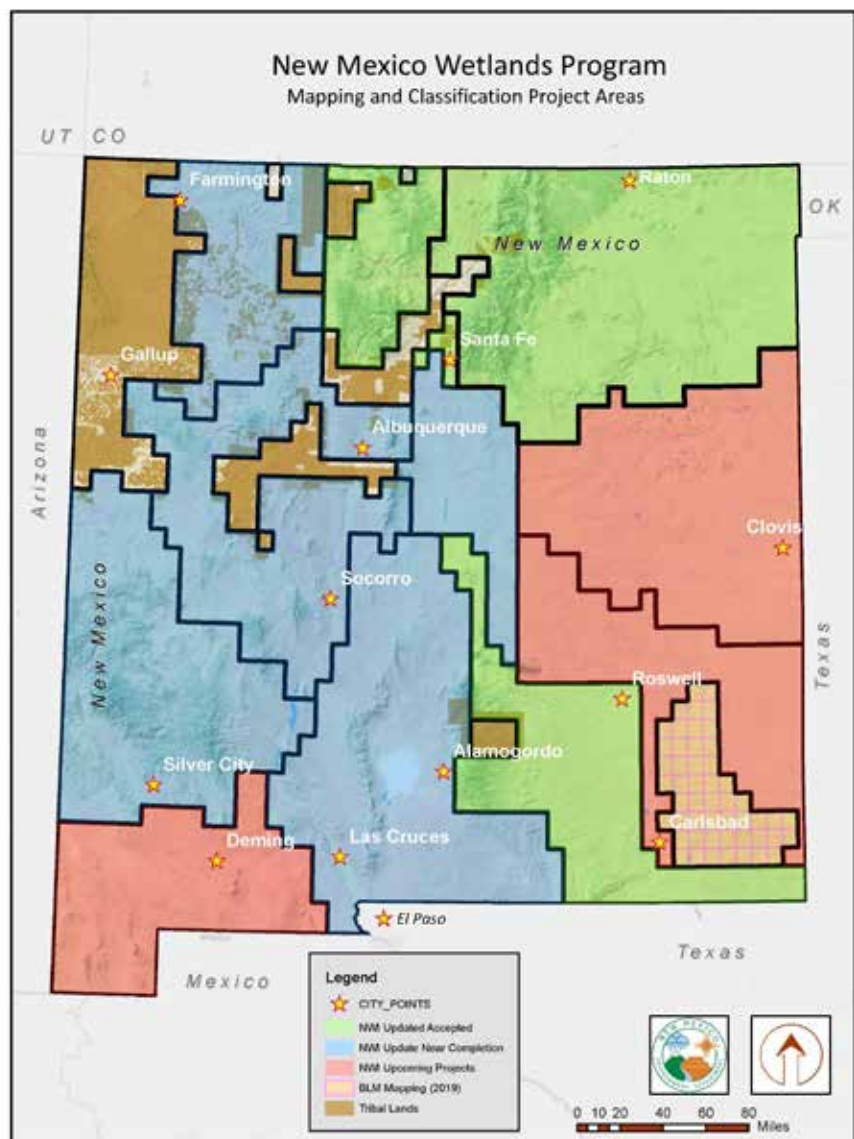
In addition to polygonal and linear wetland feature mapping, the landscape position, landform, water body type, water flow path classification, and descriptors are being applied to all mapped wetlands, and wetland functions are being identified and ranked. The mapped wetlands are classified according to the HGM classification to prepare for New Mexico Rapid Assessment Methods (NMRAM) data collection and to identify classified segments for wetlands

narrative water quality standards to promote more effective CWA §401 Certification.

Participation in the New Mexico Geospatial Advisory Committee and the New Mexico Wetlands Roundtables assists in coordination of wetlands mapping throughout the State. Sixteen Map Book PDFs and instructions for making additional map books were created for use by watershed groups and

others. These map books succinctly show the map overlays developed by mapping projects in a given area and are usable by those without GIS capability. In addition, the first SWQB Wetlands Program on-line Story Map (ESRI) for the Sacramento Mountains area is complete (<https://smumn.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=ced60f87d9b3493e8c874397826538bc>). Similar Story Maps for the entire state are in progress.

Figure 6.1. Mapping and Classification Project Areas



PRIORITIZING WETLAND RECREATIONAL ACCESS FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES IN NEW MEXICO

Wetlands across New Mexico offer diverse recreational opportunities to residents and visitors to our state. All wetland classes and sub-classes described in this chapter are important and each provides essential ecosystem services and functions that must be considered when planning for improved recreational access. The online wetland mapping portal developed by NMED (<https://gis.web.env.nm.gov/oem/?map=wetlands>) is an invaluable tool for

identifying and prioritizing different wetlands classes across the state for improved recreational access. Since each wetland class is considered equally important to the State, this SCORP does not prioritize certain wetland classes over others for recreational access improvement, conservation, and education opportunities. However, since drought and climate change are adversely impacting all of these wetland types, protecting functioning wetlands and restoring

non-functioning wetlands should be a priority.

New Mexico will develop grant award strategies for allocating funding to be used for better protecting, restoring and expanding wetlands while also improving public recreational access to those wetlands, where appropriate.

RECOMMENDED GOALS, OBJECTIVES & ACTIONS

Wetlands

Reference	Action	Who	Where
Goal 1: Continue Statewide Wetland Mapping, Characterization, and Assessment			
Objective 1.1: Complete statewide wetland mapping and HGM wetland classification and use to prioritize wetlands for recreational access, conservation and restoration.			
1.1.A	Continue mapping and HGM wetland classification across the state	NMED-SWQB	Statewide
Objective 1.2: Develop Rapid Assessment Method (RAM) tools for assessing function of all wetland classes across the state.			
1.2.A	Develop RAM tools.	NMED-SWQB	Statewide
Objective 1.3: Develop wetland "story maps" and other web-based public education materials.			
1.3.A	Continue mapping the HGM wetland classification across the state and use to develop public education materials.	NMED-SWQB	Statewide
Goal 2: Incentivize Wetland Protection Measures Through LWCF			
Objective 2.1: Establish LWCF criteria that incentivize wetland protection measures for outdoor recreation.			
2.1.A	Establish LWCF evaluation criteria that incentivizes applicants to include wetland conservation and stewardship objectives in outdoor recreation acquisition and development projects. These criteria will favor those project proposals with wetland conservation elements over those without.	EMNRD	N/A



7 OUTDOOR EDUCATION

This chapter will start by exploring the connection between outdoor recreation and education in New Mexico and identify challenges and opportunities to improving outdoor education programs in the state.



OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Understanding ecosystems and our place in the natural world is intrinsic to forming responsible and healthful relationships with the outdoors. Outdoor learning, or outdoor education, refers to a broad, interdisciplinary set of activities that include discovery, experimentation, learning about and connecting to the outdoors and natural world, and engaging in environmental and recreational activities in an outdoor setting (EENM 2020). Access to quality outdoor education is a fundamental need as New Mexico seeks to become a national leader in outdoor recreation and natural resource stewardship.

Education is central to building a society that values the outdoors and acts on those values, but outdoor education can take many forms. Outdoor education can mean programs that get youth outside and provide experiences that teach about nature. It can be courses to teach outdoor recreation skills and provide a more inclusive environment for recreating outdoors like the Zuni Youth Enrichment Program, referenced as a case study later in this plan. It can mean campaigns to educate adults and the public about New Mexico’s natural, cultural and outdoor recreation resources. In fact, any outdoor recreation activity can be an outdoor education experience, as people visit trails and natural areas to learn more about the environment and how to enjoy nature responsibly.

This chapter will start by exploring the connection between outdoor recreation and outdoor educa-

tion in New Mexico and identify challenges and opportunities to improving outdoor education programs in the state. The chapter will conclude with a list of goals, objectives, and actions for New Mexico to strengthen and grow outdoor education now and in the future.

CONTEXT

New Mexico’s outdoor education landscape is the product of an assemblage of non-profits, government agencies, and educational institutions providing a range of programs that all share the common goal of educating in and about the outdoors. These organizations often operate independently, but there are growing

examples of collaboration resulting in scaled-up educational resources and improved programs. For example, over the past 50 years the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs and Albuquerque Public Schools have collaborated to manage the Sandia Mountain Natural History Center, providing education programs for all ages. The Bosque Education guide has similarly evolved over decades of collaboration to provide outdoor education curriculum for all ages and covering a range of outdoor-related topics. For the past 30 years, Environmental Education of New Mexico, has been supporting successful partnerships by connecting outdoor educators and organizations across the



Photo Courtesy NM Tourism Department



state. There are dozens of other examples of governmental and non-governmental entities providing quality outdoor education. New Mexico does and should continue to support collaborative programs to build the quality and capacity of outdoor education provisions in the state.

Outdoor education infrastructure can take many forms, ranging from trails and interpretive kiosks to covered outdoor classrooms or gardens at schools, parks, and open spaces. While not physical infrastructure, programs, curricula, and inventory also play a crucial role in outdoor education. A recent collaboration between the United States Forest Service, Arizona Association for Environmental Education, and Environmental Education of New Mexico resulted in the development of the State of Outdoor and Environmental Learning in the Southwest (SOEL). The SOEL provides an inventory of K-12 outdoor education initiatives, curricula, and programs in the Southwest and includes decision-making tools, partnership assistance, and regional opportunities for outdoor education. The data visualization, networking, and resourcing tools in SOEL promise to guide the development of outdoor education programs and data-driven solutions to providing meaningful K-12 outdoor learning experiences (EENM, 2021). Through this SCORP, the State of New Mexico seeks to align K-12 education with the guidance provided in Every Kid, Every Day, Every Way and the SOEL tool and help provide additional direction and identify funding for outdoor education curriculum and infrastructure.

The Covid-19 pandemic has further reinforced the importance of outdoor education to New Mexico's social and environmental health. As public indoor activities were closed or restricted to protect public health, more New Mexicans chose to recreate outdoors. This increased demand demonstrated the need to educate new outdoor recreation participants about environmental resources and how to recreate responsibly (ORD, 2020). As schools closed their doors to indoor, in-person learning, the pandemic increased interest in outdoor learning to promote in-person, social learning environments while protecting children from infection. In 2021, the New Mexico State Senate recognized the importance of outdoor classrooms by passing Senate Memorial 1, establishing a taskforce to explore and promote the use of outdoor classrooms throughout the state (NM State Senate, 2021). This legislation is an important first step in a coordinated effort to improve outdoor and environmental learning infrastructure in the state.

New technologies were already transforming the outdoor learning environment before the Covid-19 pandemic. While critics often focus on how smart phones distract from the outdoors, mobile devices can also increase access to information about the outdoors from anywhere including trails, parks and other outdoor recreation environments. Applications, like iNaturalist, enhance outdoor learning for adults and children by educating users about their environment in real time. Web-based maps and guides are occasionally accessible using QR codes or URL links and help to curate outdoor experiences and enhance educa-

tional opportunities at parks and trails. However, access to these technologies remains an issue. Many New Mexicans do not have access to smart phones or broadband internet and connectivity in the state remains low compared to the rest of the United States. According to the 2019 American Community Survey, 74.6% of New Mexicans have broadband access, compared to 82.7% nationally. Any focus on building outdoor education opportunities through wireless technology and broadband should recognize these limitations and the state should work toward providing universal broadband access in New Mexico while valuing in-person outdoor education as an alternative to remote learning.

Through the SCORP planning process, participants identified a number of education-related improvements to outdoor recreation in New Mexico. Participants suggested improved signage and education information at trailheads and other outdoor recreation resources; training opportunities for outdoor recreation participants; developing outdoor classrooms (e.g. gardens) and outdoor education curriculum at public schools; and improved partnerships between public, private, non-profit, and educational institutions. Additionally, an expert focus group on outdoor education recommended improved teacher training and resources, curriculum-based and standards-aligned programming, and improvements to outdoor education access, and increased use of high school to college bridge programs, like Youth Conservation Corps. This SCORP document seeks to identify actions that accomplish these and other recommendations for outdoor education in New Mexico.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

As New Mexico seeks to improve access, facilities and programs for outdoor education, the state must respond to challenges and opportunities impacting outdoor education development. This section summarizes some key challenges and opportunities influencing outdoor education along with key questions. This SCORP document will respond to these challenges, opportunities, and questions through the recommended actions at the conclusion of this chapter.

Challenges

- Organized support and funding for outdoor education providers and infrastructure is limited
- Inequities exist in awareness of and access to outdoor education programs including access to technology
- Lack of degrees in higher education focused on outdoor education and recreation

Opportunities

- Every Kid, Every Day, Every Way offers guidance for improving K-12 outdoor education in New Mexico including opportunities for data-driven decision making
- Collaboration with local educators and community leaders
- Build on existing organizations and programs already engaged in outdoor education
- Build better collaboration with NMPED, NMHED, schools and after-school programs

CASE STUDY 5: EVERY KID, EVERY DAY, EVERY WAY

Environmental Education of New Mexico (EENM) is a non-profit organization advocating for equitable access to environmental and outdoor learning. Through collaborative efforts with over 90 schools, agencies, and other organizations, EENM develops strategies, policies, and training practices for leaders and collaborators to advance environmental education opportunities.

“Every Kid, Every Day, Every Way,” a notable EENM effort, is a multi-year strategy to provide daily equitable access to the outdoors and environmental learning to all preK-12 grade students in New Mexico. The strategy details how every kid can get access to the outdoors, how to support daily outdoor experiences through both in-school and out-of-school opportunities, and how a plethora of approaches is required to create meaningful, relevant, and culturally responsive experiences.

Starting in 2018, EENM spent three years engaged in community conversations with 90 groups, agencies, and schools and more than 200 individuals interested or involved in education and outdoor recreation. Utilizing comprehensive, community focused, systems based, transformational, and contextual conversations about equity and relationships, the effort attempted to facilitate a collaborative space for multiple communities and ideas to mesh into comprehensive and systemic strategies.

The Every Kid, Every Day, Every Way effort attempted to understand systemic challenges to outdoor education and, in doing so, identified critical policy issues, aligned programs, and shared resources which can be leveraged in support of the mission. The framework also identified the need for more professional development, more community networks, and more funding. Recommendations from Every Kid, Every Day, Every Way include:

- a state office devoted to outdoor and environmental education,
- a network of outdoor gear libraries,
- outdoor learning spaces at schools,
- developing standards-aligned curricula related to natural, ecological, and culture-based learning,
- professional development for pre-service and in-service teachers - especially related to outdoor learning,
- support marketing of outdoor spaces and programs available to kids and families, and
- public campaigns highlighting the values, benefits, and opportunities for outdoor recreation and education..

Successfully implemented, these strategies are intended to produce long-lasting, systemic, and positive change affecting current and future generations of kids.

- Build partnerships across organizations engaged in outdoor education to scale-up programs and resources
- Technology allowing greater access to outdoor education programming
- Increased State involvement in outdoor education development through the interagency-creation of an Outdoor Classroom task force and attention to the physical and psycho-social health benefits of outdoor education

KEY QUESTIONS

In addition to the challenges and opportunities identified above, the State of New Mexico should consider the following questions to improve the quality and impact of outdoor education in the coming years:

- How can health fields and economic development better incorporate connections with outdoor education?
- How can outdoor education incorporate the many facets of equity and inclusion into access, facilities, and programming?
- How can elements of outdoor education be integrated into general outdoor recreation development?
- How can K-12 and higher education best support the growth of outdoor education as a profession?

CASE STUDY 6: WESTERN NEW MEXICO UNIVERSITY – OUTDOOR PROGRAM

The Outdoor Program at Western New Mexico University is a unique program in New Mexico which provides college-level educational courses specific to the parks and recreational industries. Differentiating itself from traditional subjects like forestry, fire, natural resources, and natural sciences, the Outdoor Program specifically focuses on providing students with skills needed for outdoor recreation jobs. Curriculum includes wilderness medicine, search and rescue, outdoor risk management, and provides leadership skills relevant to the coordination of outdoor recreation trips and other outdoor and field-related jobs. These courses can be compiled into certificate programs, as college electives, and as an official minor degree within a Bachelor's program.

Dr. Kathy Whiteman, Director of the Center for a Sustainable Future and Outdoor Programs, created the courses ten years ago after identifying that outdoor recreation and public-land management employers struggle to hire skilled employees and that potential employees struggle to acquire necessary skills. Collaboration is key to the program - educators must understand the needs of outdoor recreation employers like the National Park Service, the United States Forest Service, and private companies to develop educational programs that support the next generation of land stewards.

Whiteman, who is also the Chair of the Department of Natural Sciences and a working professor recognizes that increased administrative capacity and collaboration between educational entities would be required to grow outdoor educational programs.



Photo courtesy of <https://wnmu.edu/>

KEY THEMES

Outdoor education programming and/or facilities can and must be a component of any outdoor recreation resource

There is a growing understanding of outdoor education’s importance to physical and social health, particularly since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Outdoor Classroom task force, Every Kid, Every Day, Every Way and the State of Outdoor Environmental Learning tool are helping chart a course for growth and improvement in outdoor education facilities and programming

Partnerships among private, non-profit, government, and educational institutions are key to improving outdoor education in New Mexico

There is a need for curriculum-based, standards-aligned programming and field resources for teachers

There is a need for higher-education certificates and degree-granting programs that are aligned with the outdoor recreation industry and New Mexico’s outdoor workforce needs

There is a need for teacher and educator training to implement outdoor education programs including potential certification programs for outdoor educators

There is a need for improved, equitable access to outdoor education resources



Photo Courtesy NM Tourism Department



Key

Infrastructure



Planning

RECOMMENDED GOALS, OBJECTIVES & ACTIONS**OUTDOOR EDUCATION**

Reference	Action	Who	Where
Goal 1: Grow Quality Curriculum and Facilities for Outdoor Education			
Objective 1.1: Expand the use of quality outdoor classrooms.			
1.1.A	Continue the Outdoor Classroom interagency task force as identified in SM 1 (2021) to promote the use, improvement and expansion of outdoor classrooms and learning spaces across New Mexico.	Relevant task force entities	N/A
1.1.B	Identify gaps in outdoor classroom availability and accessibility and outdoor education programs across the state.	OC Task Force, NMPED, EENM	N/A
1.1.C 	Prioritize projects that include the development or improvement of outdoor classrooms and learning resources.	Recreation providers, NMPED	Relevant areas statewide
1.1.D 	Increase the use of interactive signs and kiosks with educational information at recreation facilities.	Recreation providers	Statewide
Objective 1.2: Develop and implement curriculum-based and standards-aligned programming.			
1.2.A	Increase collaboration to expand, improve and market outdoor education programs and activities.	Recreation providers, NMPED, institutions of higher education, NGO's, local communities, business community	Statewide
1.2.B	Share the values and benefits of outdoor education and environmental learning plans and policies by synthesizing and sharing current research with policymakers and education providers.	NMPED, OC Task Force, EENM, higher education institutions	N/A
1.2.C	Develop coordinated public campaigns to promote the values, benefits, and opportunities for kids, families, and communities to spend time outdoors. This should include information on programming, free parks days, passes, curriculum, and activities.	Recreation providers	N/A
Objective 1.3: Increase awareness of and access to funding and other resources for outdoor education activities.			
1.3.A	Explore and identify opportunities for state and federal funding for the improvement and expansion of outdoor classrooms and education across the state.	OC Task Force, EENM, NMPED	N/A

Reference	Action	Who	Where
1.3.B	Coordinate promotion of existing outdoor programming grant opportunities to increase marketing opportunities and awareness of grant opportunities, and to reduce overhead costs for programming providers.	State and federal granting agencies	N/A
1.3.C	Update and maintain the State of Outdoor Environmental Learning tool, as needed.	EENM, NMPED, relevant education partners	N/A
Goal 2: Build Outdoor Educator Training Capacity			
Objective 2.1: Expand training opportunities for outdoor educators and increase the number of educators in outdoor education training programs.			
2.1.A	Market existing training opportunities for outdoor educators by sharing workshops, webinars, and other materials available for teachers and educators.	EENM, higher education institutions, NMPED, other relevant NGO's	N/A
2.1.B	Establish a task force to explore a new outdoor learning certification and/or micro-credentialing program for teachers, educators, and youth program providers.	NMPED, EENM, other relevant NGO's and agencies	N/A
2.1.C	Support higher-ed programs/Schools of Education that train outdoor educators entering the workforce.	NMHED	Statewide
2.1.D	Develop and support high school-to-college bridge programs (e.g. YCC) to improve recruitment into higher ed outdoor educator training programs	NMHED, NMPED, relevant bridge programs	N/A
Goal 3: Incentivize Outdoor Education Programming Through LWCF			
Objective 3.1: Establish LWCF Criteria which incentivize educational programs.			
3.1.A	Establish LWCF evaluation criteria that incentivizes applicants to incorporate outdoor classrooms and outdoor learning as a component of outdoor recreation projects. These criteria will favor those project proposals with outdoor classroom elements over those without.	EMNRD	N/A

8

ACCESS & EQUITY

This chapter will begin to explore inequality in New Mexico as it relates to and is manifest in outdoor recreation, with particular emphasis on increasing awareness of present and historical inequities in outdoor recreation access and supporting actions which can reduce inequality in access to outdoor recreation opportunities in the state.



ACCESS & EQUITY

New Mexico’s ethnic diversity is one of the state’s greatest assets. As a multi-cultural state with a rich history dating back millennia, there is little question that New Mexico is the heart and soul of the American Southwest. Nevertheless, members of the public who participated in the SCORP process felt it was very important to acknowledge how the state’s history has impacted New Mexico’s contemporary landscape and social fabric. One simple measure of the impact is the state’s high levels of poverty and its uneven distribution. At nearly 20%, New Mexico’s poverty rate is among the highest in the United States. Poverty rates among Black and Hispanic New Mexicans are nearly 25%, 33.6% of indigenous New Mexicans face poverty, and 25% of all New Mexican children under 18 live in poverty (NMDOH, 2019). These disparities extend to all aspects of American and New Mexican life, including access to outdoor recreation. In 2018, higher income persons were more likely to participate in outdoor recreation and participation among white Americans was nearly 10% higher than Hispanic Americans and 15% higher than African Americans (Outdoor Foundation, 2019).

Nevertheless, in recent years, the State of New Mexico has become a national leader in supporting equitable outdoor recreation, in part, through the creation of the Outdoor Equity Fund. The Outdoor Equity Fund offers crucial state funding for programs that provide outdoor experiences for disadvantaged and low-income youth. While this program has supported programs which enrich the lives of youth and begin to increase outdoor equity in New Mexico, there is still significant

work needed to acknowledge the past and dismantle present inequities in outdoor recreation opportunity. This chapter begins to explore this issue in New Mexico, with particular emphasis on increasing awareness of present and historical inequities and those actions that can address them.

CONTEXT

Commenters on this issue stressed that the land use policies rooted in the nation’s history continue to shape outdoor recreation resources and public lands where use has tended to benefit certain groups at the expense of others. Commenters recognized that outdoor recreation resources are critical assets for socialization, environmental preservation, and physical health, but may also be sites of both implicit and explicit exploita-

tion, discrimination, segregation, and trauma. Studies also point to the fact that many marginalized communities lack the opportunity to engage in quality outdoor recreation or feel unsafe or unwelcome in outdoor recreation settings. To address these issues, a focus on access and equity is essential to understanding inequality in outdoor recreation and ultimately removing barriers to full, equitable enjoyment of the outdoors.

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) defines park access as:

“The just and fair quantity, proximity and connections to quality parks, green spaces and recreation facilities, as well as programming that are safe, inclusive, culturally relevant and welcoming to every-



Photo Courtesy NM Tourism Department



one.”

NRPA emphasizes that equitable park access can only be achieved if systemic inequalities are expressly acknowledged and actively countered (NRPA, 2021). The next section provides a brief overview of the historical context relevant to these issues in New Mexico. Finally, this chapter will provide some context on present barriers to equitable outdoor recreation access.

A Brief History of Land, Inequality and Outdoor Recreation

Commenters felt it was important to acknowledge that the indigenous peoples of New Mexico were among the first inhabitants of the United States to experience European colonialism when, in 1598, Spanish Conquistador Juan de Oñate led an expedition of the region that is now known as the Rio Grande Valley. After the northern pueblos launched a successful revolt against Spanish rule in 1680, the Spanish led a second expedition into New Mexico, resulting in permanent settlement.

Later, treaties between the United States government and indigenous tribes were repeatedly signed and broken by settlers, further cementing land theft as a dominant mode of colonization in North America. Today’s system of federal tribal recognition is itself a construct of colonial exploitation (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2007).

Prior to the New Mexico territory’s joining the union, many small towns and villages throughout the territory practiced a form of cooperative subsistence agriculture which utilized shared commu-

CASE STUDY 7: ZUNI YOUTH ENRICHMENT PROJECT

The Zuni Youth Enrichment Project (ZYEP) is a non-profit organization dedicated to developing strong and healthy youth connected with Zuni traditions. ZYEP provides various programs including educational workshops on water conservation and nutritional health, sports programs like a soccer and flag football league, and cultural programs like Zuni dance and historical theater. The annual summer camp is a flagship program which can host as many as 150 youth aged 7 to 12 and which hires young adults from the community to be camp counselors. ZYEP programs utilize the outdoors to recreate, educate, and practice healthy lifestyles and, in response to the specific needs of the Zuni community, these programs also develop resilient youth who are connected to the Zuni culture and recognize a corresponding stewardship over their physical surrounding places.

One example of experiential stewardship education is the multi-day outdoor trips organized a couple times annually for youth aged 16 to 24. ZYEP work with cultural elders to identify culturally significant places, important visiting seasons, and invite cultural leaders and storytellers to assist with educational content. Trips also connect participants with technical experts, stewards, and land managers to understand different perspectives and the variety of careers associated with outdoor recreation and land stewardship. A recent trip related the now intermittent Zuni river with water sources in Taos and the Gila river to understand the cultural and scientific importance of water and the modern challenges to managing water resources. Overcoming significant barriers to access, ZYEP outdoor trips provide many youths with their first camping experience and introduce them to a new way to explore, enjoy, and learn about natural and public lands.

A critical factor to ZYEP success is the constant and meaningful collaboration they have with their community. Many of the major decisions about content and programs are decided jointly with or upon close collaboration with community partners. This ensures that programs reflect the needs of the community and give youth the skills most needed in their specific area.



Photo courtesy of <https://www.facebook.com/zuniyouthenrichmentproject/>

nal land for herding and a system of acequia canals for cultivation. Anglo-American settlers pushed to dismantle this land management system through both legal tactics and direct seizure sanctioned by the United States' territorial government in Santa Fe (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2007). These events concentrated private property holding among wealthy settlers, which became a fixture of what is seen today. The history of American parks and recreation is similarly grounded in land inequity. The modern concept of public parks originated in the nineteenth century as a remedy for urban overcrowding and pollution. From their inception, parks were usually located in areas easily accessible only to the wealthy residents of cities (Moore, 2008). In the mid-twentieth century, as outdoor recreation became the central focus of park infrastructure, systemic exclusion in parks planning persisted. Parks remained concentrated in wealthier communities and automobile-centric policy choices often made park visitation without a personal vehicle difficult-to-impossible.

Since the passage of key environmental and civil rights legislation in the 1960s, including the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968 and the Clean Air Acts of 1963 and 1967, there has been a growing movement to reimagine parks and open spaces that promote just and healthy communities. Most recently, this includes the efforts of outdoor recreation advocacy groups and activists to permanently codify the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund program and support recreation development for low-income communities.

While a legacy of exclusionary land use policies continues to shape outdoor recreation in the United States and New Mexico, a growing understanding of this history and commitment to actively countering inequality in outdoor recreation inspires optimism for the future (NRPA, 2021).

Contemporary Barriers to Equitable Outdoor Recreation

To address barriers to outdoor recreation participation it is important to understand how inequality plays a role. For example, a number of commenters highlighted the dangers people of color face in public spaces, including parks, which has been at the forefront of national conversations across the United States.

At the same time, the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted structural inequalities in access to the outdoors. As many Americans sheltered in place, families living in wealthier areas tended to have better access to adequate and safe outdoor recreation resources compared to families in lower income communities.

Some of the barriers to equitable outdoor recreation this planning process identified include:

- **NIMBYism, gentrification, and displacement:** A not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY) mentality among some residents frequently leads to a dead-end for public projects. Parks are particularly vulnerable to NIMBYism as they can be seen as inviting “undesirable elements.” Conversely, some communities of color are justifiably concerned that “green
- **gentrification”** – a process by which new recreation amenities attract wealthy newcomers and force neighborhood residents out – could follow the development of recreation infrastructure. Finally, some traditional and indigenous communities are concerned about the impacts of new recreation areas or attractions (e.g. trails) near their lands that could result in increased trespass and the degradation of natural and cultural resources.
- **Transportation equity:** Outdoor recreation resources are often far from low-income communities; low-income people are more likely to use alternative transportation methods such as bikes and buses to access recreation resources, but connectivity is often poor.
- **Cost barriers:** Many popular outdoor recreation activities involve significant cost barriers to entry that preclude low-income people participating. Furthermore, an association of some activities with wealth discourage participation by less-affluent people who might otherwise enjoy those activities.
- **Parks and policing:** People of color often feel unsafe and unwelcome in parks and other policed spaces.
- **Climate change and environmental justice:** Communities of color have often lived closest to pollution and tend to experience the most extreme impacts of climate change, such as urban heat. Parks and open space are important facilities for climate change adaptation.
- **Civic participation:** Low-income communities and people of color have been historically

excluded from public engagement and decision-making. The methodologies of civic participation, like public meetings, were developed in this context of systemic exclusion and may inadvertently perpetuate it.

- **Remembering history:** Monuments to historical figures instrumental in oppressing people of color are still pervasive in parks and public spaces across the United States, leading some people to feel unwelcome. In New Mexico, communities are reconsidering the presence of monuments to Spanish colonists and western wars of expansion.
- **Creating inclusive, welcoming, and culturally relevant spaces:** Inclusive, welcoming, and culturally relevant spaces must be created through upfront and intentional engagement with communities. Developing and promoting outdoor recreation resources using culturally relevant methods increases positive awareness and a sense of belonging among historically marginalized peoples. We must reconsider many of the methods that we use to plan, design, and develop equitable outdoor recreation facilities. In New Mexico this should include sustained engagement with indigenous communities to create spaces that honor indigenous culture and experience.

To address the myriad barriers to equitable outdoor recreation access and participation, the National Recreation and Park Association says that planners and policymakers must consider five key elements of outdoor equity (NRPA, 2021):

1. Distributive – Who has physical access to local park and

recreation spaces?

2. Procedural – Who decides the budget, operations, maintenance, and programming?
3. Interactional – How are people treated in local park and recreation spaces? Who feels welcomed? Who feels unwanted?
4. Representational – Do people believe their experiences, culture and history are represented in local park and recreation spaces?
5. Care – How do people steward local park and recreation spaces and the broader environment?

While programs like the Outdoor Equity Fund have made New Mexico a leader in outdoor recreation equity, significant work remains to address structural inequities in outdoor access. As this chapter attempts to illustrate, at a very high level, structural inequality is complex, multi-dimensional, and rooted in history. Developing a methodology which brings low-income people and people of color to the forefront of planning and decision-making will be critical to ensuring that outdoor recreation development addresses the needs of all New Mexicans.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

This chapter briefly summarized the historical context through which inequities in outdoor recreation developed and persist. The chapter also highlighted some contemporary barriers to outdoor recreation equity and considerations for planners and policymakers engaged in confronting and dismantling those barriers. The following list summarizes challenges and opportunities to inform goals, objectives and actions that

promote greater outdoor recreation equity:

Challenges

- Land management and access in New Mexico are rooted, in part, in legacies of colonialism and environmental racism
- Challenges engaging with historically marginalized communities using engagement tools and methods that long facilitated that marginalization
- Myriad barriers to access including physical proximity, transportation, safety, sense of belonging, and cost

Opportunities

- Open networks of communication between the State of New Mexico and tribal governments through government-to-government consultation and other means improves participation by indigenous communities
- Programs like the Outdoor Equity Fund demonstrate the State of New Mexico's commitment to confronting inequity
- Active civil society groups engaged in addressing inequity in outdoor recreation
- Strong public support for confronting inequity in outdoor recreation evident throughout the SCORP public engagement process

KEY THEMES

Systemic inequality is intersectional and multidimensional

Outdoor recreation in the United States and New Mexico is shaped, in part, by legacies of colonialism and racism in land use and public policy

Awareness of systemic inequality along with active efforts to counter inequality and improve access are necessary to advance equity in outdoor recreation

Planners and policymakers must engage with communities first using culturally competent engagement strategies

Creating culturally relevant spaces, promotion, and programs can increase awareness of outdoor recreation opportunities and support a welcoming atmosphere

Access to outdoor recreation opportunities is influenced by a range of factors including physical proximity, transportation, environmental racism, financial barriers, and a sense of safety or belonging



Photo Courtesy NM Tourism Department

RECOMMENDED GOALS, OBJECTIVES & ACTIONS

Key










Infrastructure



Planning

AWARENESS, ACCESS & EQUITY

Reference	Action	Who	Where
Goal 1: Increase Awareness of, Access to, and Equitable Participation in Outdoor Recreation Among Historically Marginalized and/or Underrepresented Peoples			
Objective 1.1: Develop outdoor recreation projects and programs that actively seek participation from indigenous communities including traditional practices.			
1.1.A 	Increase engagement with tribes, pueblos and nations for outdoor recreation project planning and land acquisition.	Recreation providers, indigenous communities, NMIAD, relevant NGO's	Statewide
1.1.B 	Increase opportunities for and remove barriers to performing spiritual, cultural, and traditional practices on lands used for outdoor recreation within constitutional limitations.	Recreation providers, indigenous communities, NMIAD, relevant NGO's	Statewide
Objective 1.2: Develop culturally competent strategies that actively seek to increase diverse outdoor recreation participation.			
1.2.A 	Increase community engagement with indigenous communities, communities of color and other historically under/un-represented populations for the purpose of planning for and providing outdoor recreation opportunities.	Recreation providers, ORD, NMIAD	Statewide

Reference	Action	Who	Where
1.2.B	Increase opportunities for under/un-represented communities to practice outdoor stewardship, including volunteer opportunities.	Recreation providers	Statewide
1.2.C 	Encourage expanded language accessibility in project planning and implementation, including translating meetings, materials, maps, and signage.	Recreation providers	Statewide
Objective 1.3: Remove barriers to outdoor recreation participation.			
1.3.A 	Prioritize development of outdoor recreation resources within easy access from economically disadvantaged and underserved areas.	Recreation providers	Relevant areas statewide
1.3.B	Establish “gear libraries” to supply recreation equipment with the goal of increasing access to outdoor recreation participation among inexperienced and low-income people.	Recreation providers, relevant NGO’s, business partners	Statewide
Objective 1.4: Improve access to outdoor recreation facilities by alternative transportation modes.			
1.4.A	Increase direct public transit service from urban areas to popular parks and recreation areas.	Transit providers, recreation providers, NMDOT	Population centers and popular parks and recreation areas
1.4.B	Develop separated bike infrastructure networks in low-income neighborhoods connecting users to employment, shopping, recreation, and other amenities.	NMDOT, local governments	Statewide
1.4.C	Designate additional walk-in and bike-in camp sites and institute a no turn-away policy for those walking or biking to access recreation areas and campgrounds.	Recreation providers	Statewide
Goal 2: Incentivize Outdoor Recreation Access and Equity Through LWCF			
Objective 2.1: Establish LWCF criteria which incentivize project sponsors to include access and equity components in their projects.			
2.1.A 	Establish an LWCF evaluation criteria which incentivizes increasing awareness, access, proximity, and equity as a component of outdoor recreation infrastructure. These criteria will favor those project proposals with awareness, access, proximity, and equity components over those without.	EMNRD	N/A
2.1.B 	Establish LWCF evaluation criteria that incentivizes applicants to develop detailed, culturally relevant and multi-lingual recreation plans to encourage robust and diverse community recreation plans engagement and feedback. These criteria will favor those project proposals with robust and diverse community engagement over those without.	EMNRD	N/A

9 REGIONAL FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes the findings by region and highlights regional needs and recommendations identified by participants.



REGIONAL FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This SCORP update recommends specific actions that are tailored to the needs of communities across New Mexico. To better understand local and regional outdoor recreation needs, the SCORP development process targeted public outreach efforts to New Mexico’s six tourism regions. The New Mexico Tourism Department groups counties to define the following six tourism regions:

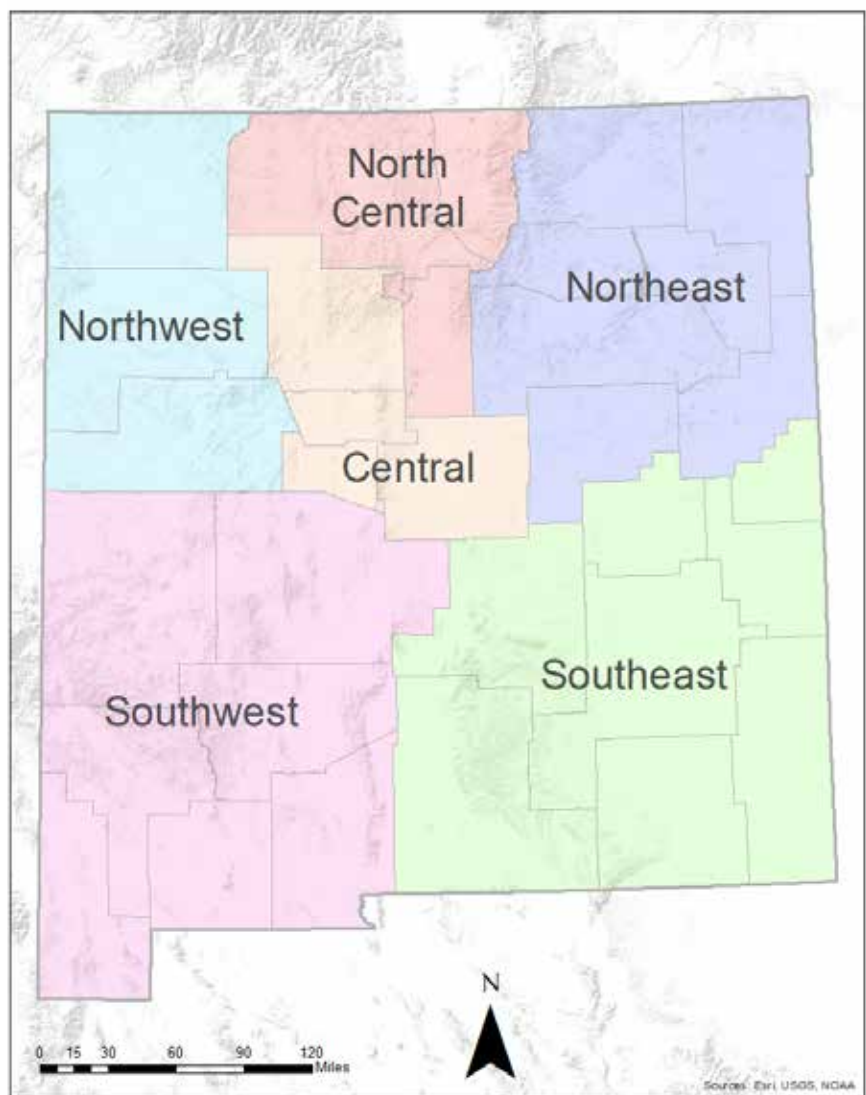
- **Northwest:** Cibola, McKinley, and San Juan counties
- **Southwest:** Catron, Dona Anna, Grant, Hidalgo, Luna, Sierra, and Socorro counties
- **North Central:** Los Alamos, Rio Arriba, Santa Fe, and Taos counties
- **Central:** Bernalillo, Sandoval, Torrance, and Valencia counties
- **Northeast:** Colfax, Guadalupe, Harding, Mora, Quay, San Miguel, and Union counties
- **Southeast:** Chavez, Curry, De Baca, Eddy, Lea, Lincoln, Otero, and Roosevelt counties

To understand the regional dimensions of outdoor recreation needs in New Mexico, SCORP planners organized and analyzed survey results by county and tourism region. Next, planners met with councils of government, economic development districts, and other regional-level leaders to discuss common issues and needs in their regions and constituent communities. Finally, planners hosted individual townhall meetings for each of the six tourism regions. Virtual townhall meetings were attended

by regional and community leaders and staff, community members, and non-profit leaders and included a facilitated discussion of local and regional outdoor recreation needs. The resulting analysis and summary of public input represents the most comprehensive collection of local and regional outdoor recreation needs in New Mexico to date.

This chapter summarizes these findings by region and highlights regional needs and recommendations identified by participants. This chapter should be used when considering how to distribute LWCF and other funding for outdoor recreation equitably across the state and in a manner that meets unique local needs.

Figure 9.1. New Mexico Tourism Regions



NORTHWEST REGION

Survey Results

There were 246 responses to the SCORP survey from residents of the Northwest region. Most respondents in northwest New Mexico reported that facilities in their region met some, but not all, of their needs. Seventy-one percent of respondents said that there are not enough facilities in their area and 65% said that existing facilities were of moderate quality. Most respondents said that the SCORP should prioritize building new recreation facilities including additional trails, restrooms and pickleball courts (Figure 9.2). Respondents also noted that a lack of facilities, poor maintenance and access, and environmental conditions prevented them from participating in outdoor recreation activities.

Hiking, running, camping, hunting, and fishing were the most common outdoor recreation activities among residents of northwest New Mexico (Figure 9.3). Respondents said that they would like to ski, participate in water-based activities, and play pickleball more often if adequate facilities were available to them (Figure 9.4).

Figure 9.2. Northwest region survey results: What type of outdoor recreation facility is most important to you?

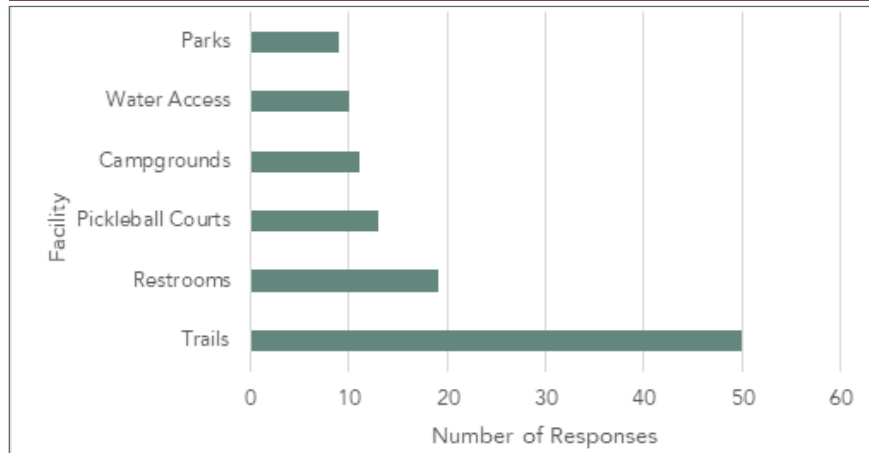


Figure 9.3. Northwest region survey results: What is your most common outdoor recreation activity?

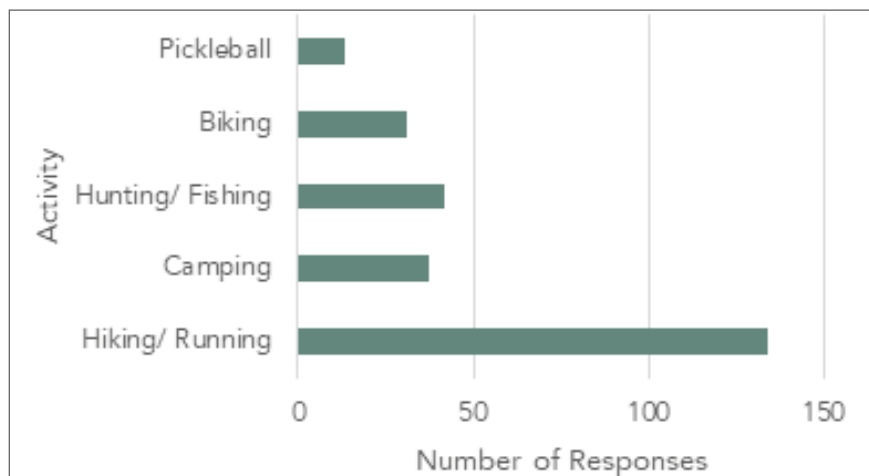
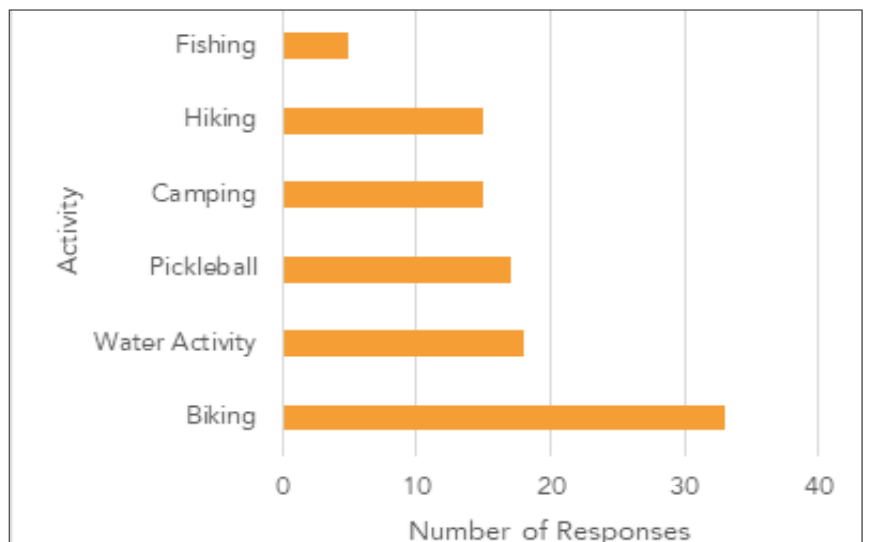


Figure 9.4. Northwest region survey results: What one activity would you do more often, if high-quality facilities or amenities were available?



Public Outreach Findings and Recommendations

SCORP planners met with the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments to discuss issues and key themes impacting outdoor recreation development in the Northwest region. Findings included:

- Outdoor recreation development in the region should connect to local and regional economic development
- There is a need to strengthen collaborative partnerships between local, state, regional, and tribal governments
- Navajo Lake is an important recreation asset to the region
- Outdoor recreation development should leverage the regional popularity of mountain biking

Planners also held a virtual townhall meeting for the Northwest region. During open discussion and breakout sessions, participants identified the following recreation needs and recommendations for their region:

- Develop recreation resources at Navajo Lake and Bluewater Lake State Park
- Develop a comprehensive plan for the Angel Peak area
- Buildout Zuni Mountain trails
- Complete linkage between Cibola County and McKinley County trail systems
- Develop parks, playgrounds, skate parks, and multiuse paths in the Pueblo of Laguna
- Provide support for Pueblos to develop maintenance programs, trail and shade amenities, and culturally relevant signage
- Develop outdoor pickleball courts
- Promote the region as an outdoor recreation destination
- Need for more government staffing
- Develop single track trails at Mount Taylor near Grants
- Improve river access on the San Juan and Animas Rivers
- Support recreation-based economic and employment development including manufacturing, retail, and guide services



Photo courtesy of <https://www.navajomarina.com/>



SOUTHWEST REGION

Survey Results

A total of 848 southwest New Mexico residents responded to the SCORP survey. Most survey respondents reported that facilities in their region met some of their needs. Sixty-five percent said that there are not enough facilities in their area and 69% said that existing facilities were of moderate quality. Most respondents said that the SCORP should prioritize improving existing recreation facilities and favored development of additional trails, RV and parking facilities, restrooms, and camping facilities (Figure 9.5). Respondents also noted that lack of free time, crowds, poor access, and limited facilities in the region prevented them from participating in outdoor recreation activities.

Hiking, running, camping, and biking were the most common outdoor recreation activities in the Southwest region (Figure 9.6). Respondents said that they would like to camp, hike, and ski more often if adequate facilities were available in the region (Figure 9.7).

Figure 9.5. Southwest region survey results: What type of outdoor recreation facility is most important to you?

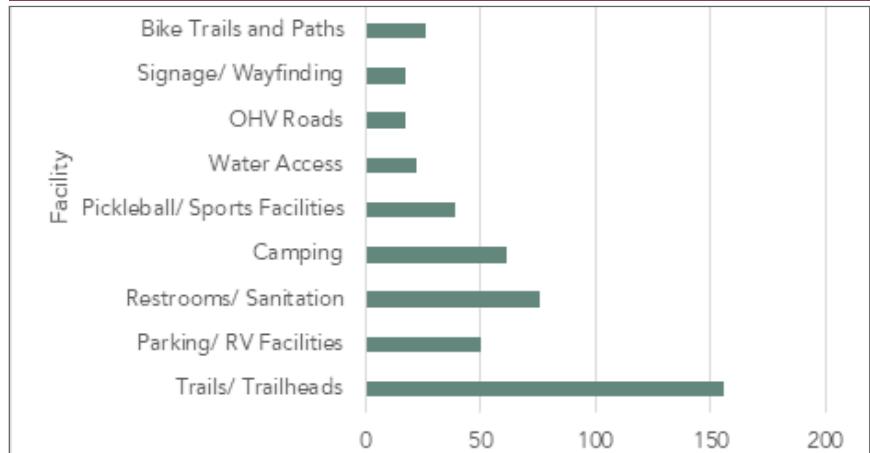


Figure 9.6. Southwest region survey results: What is the most common outdoor recreation activity you do?

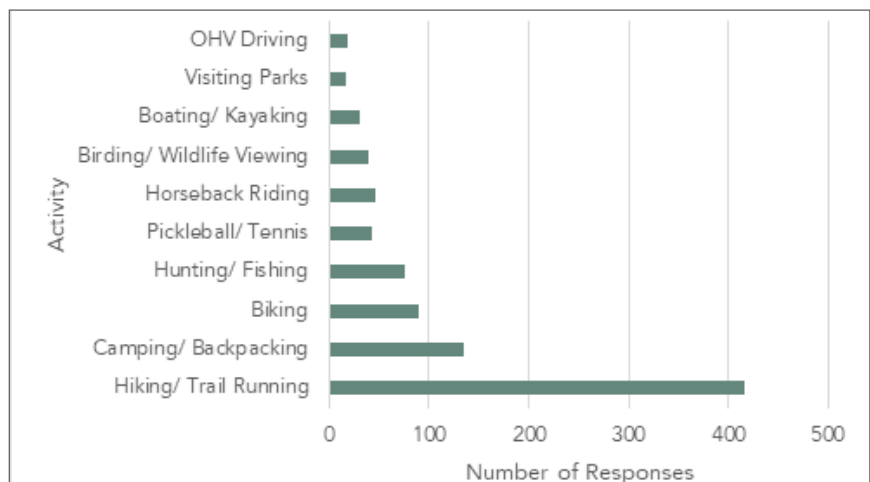
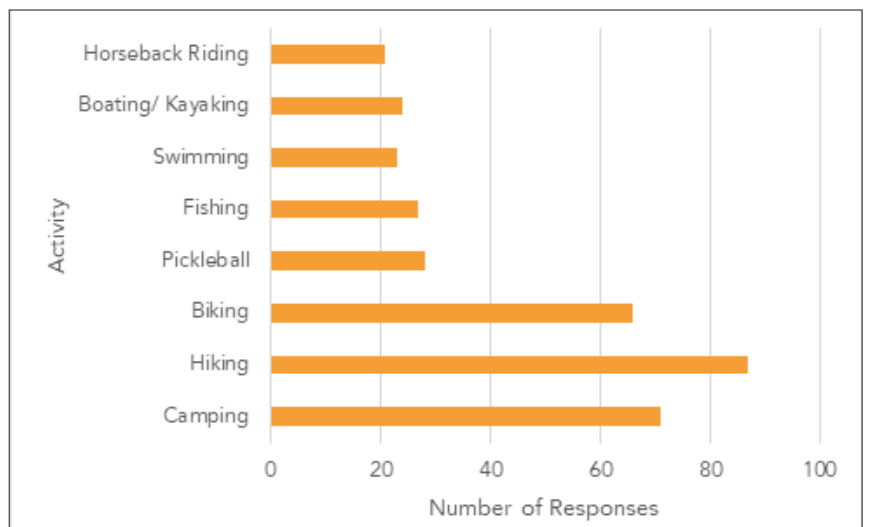


Figure 9.7. Southwest region survey results: What activity would you do more often if high-quality facilities were available?



Public Outreach Findings and Recommendations

In a meeting with the Southwest Public Outreach Findings and Recommendations New Mexico Council of Governments, SCORP planners identified the following key issues and themes impacting outdoor recreation development in the region:

- There is a need to connect local planning efforts with regional, state, and national resources
- Regional recreation development should leverage the increased popularity of cycling, mountain biking, ATV/UTV riding, and rock climbing
- There is a need for multimodal trails connecting communities with outdoor recreation resources
- The Gila National Forest is a major asset to southwest New Mexico

During the southwest regional townhall meeting, participants identified the following needs and recommendations for the region:

- Improve trail connectivity to town centers in the region including the Silver City area
- Develop trail connectivity and hiker resources along the Continental Divide, Camino Real, and Rio Grande trails
- Develop OHV trails, particularly near existing resources like Elephant Butte State Park
- Improve river access along the Rio Grande
- Increase protections for threatened resources like the Radium Springs Slot Canyon
- Improve urban park amenities for children including water and splash parks
- Prioritize land protection and recreation development over mineral and resource extraction where relevant
- Improve cycling amenities along designated US bike routes and other popular routes in the region
- Improve sanitation facilities at parks, campgrounds, and trailheads



Photo Courtesy Sites Southwest



NORTH CENTRAL REGION

Survey Results

Eight hundred and ninety-five residents of North Central New Mexico responded to the SCORP survey. Most survey respondents said that facilities in their region met some, but not all, of their needs. Sixty-four percent of respondents said that there are not enough facilities in their area and 60% said that existing facilities were of moderate quality. Most respondents said that the SCORP should prioritize building new recreation facilities, focusing on the development of trails, parks, and restroom facilities at existing recreation resources (Figure 9.8). Respondents stated that environmental conditions like fire restrictions and weather prevented them from participating in outdoor recreation activities, along with lack of free time, crowded facilities, and limited access.

Figure 9.9 shows that hiking/running, camping, hunting/fishing were the most common outdoor recreation activities in the North Central region. Respondents said that they would like to bike, hike, and camp more often if adequate facilities were available in the region (Figure 9.10).

Figure 9.8. North Central region survey results: What outdoor recreation facilities do you wish there were more of in your area?

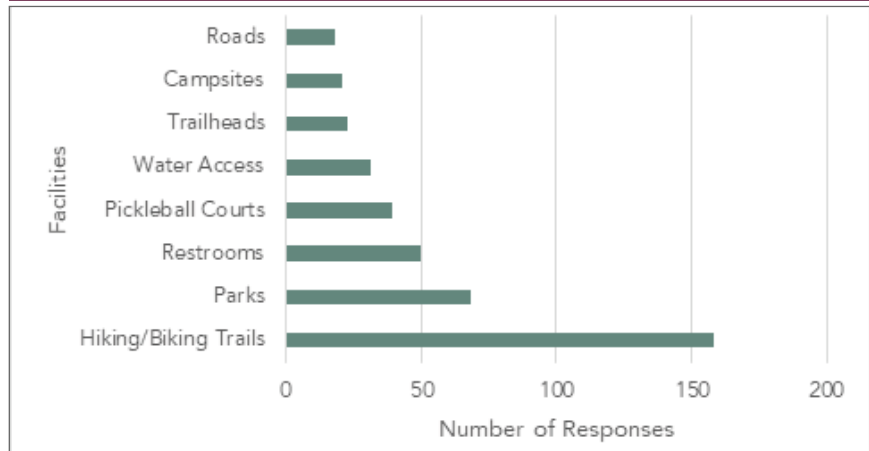


Figure 9.9. North Central region survey results: What is the most common outdoor recreation activity you do?

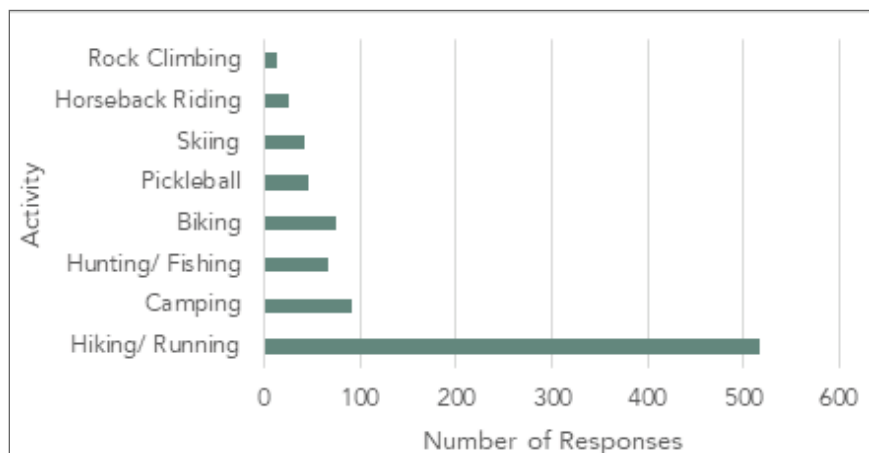
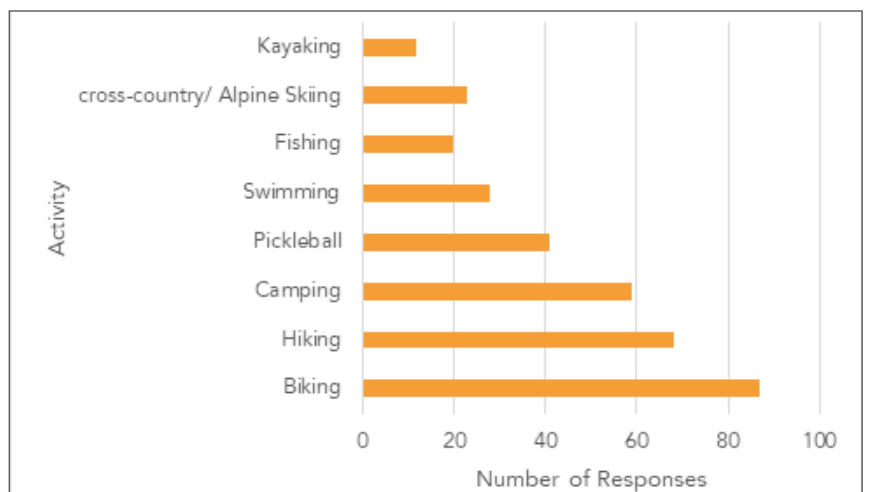


Figure 9.10. North Central region survey results: What activity would you do more often if high-quality facilities were available?



Public Outreach Findings and Recommendations

SCORP planners spoke with regional leaders and hosted a regional townhall event for north central New Mexico. Participants in these public outreach efforts identified the following needs and recommendations for the North Central region:

- Develop local park amenities in Rio Arriba County, particularly recreation facilities for youth and seniors
- Develop more trails and trail amenities in populated areas to mitigate pressure on high-use facilities and resources
- Develop pickleball courts and adapt existing facilities to accommodate pickleball
- Develop paved, multi-use, and ADA accessible trails in communities including Questa and Red River
- Improve educational and wayfinding signage along trails
- Improve trail and resource connectivity in the region
- Support to improve trail and trailhead maintenance and implement planning efforts
- Develop clearly designated and purposefully designed trails for motorized and nonmotorized uses



Photo Courtesy Sites Southwest



CENTRAL REGION

Survey Results

With 1,339 respondents, the Central Region saw the highest number of responses to the SCORP survey. As with other regions, most respondents said that facilities in their region met some, but not all, of their needs. Sixty-seven percent of respondents said that there are not enough facilities in their area and 66.5% said that existing facilities were of moderate quality. Most respondents said that the SCORP should prioritize improving existing recreation facilities and favored development of trails, water access, and restroom facilities at existing recreation resources (Figure 9.11). Respondents stated that crowded facilities prevented them from participating in outdoor recreation activities, followed by environmental reason like drought and weather, lack of facilities and access, and limited personal time.

Hiking, running, camping, and biking were the most common outdoor recreation activities in the central region (Figure 9.12). Respondents said that they would like to camp, play pickleball, and hike more often if adequate facilities were available in the region (Figure 9.13).

Figure 9.11. Central region survey results: What outdoor recreation facilities do you wish there were more of in your area?

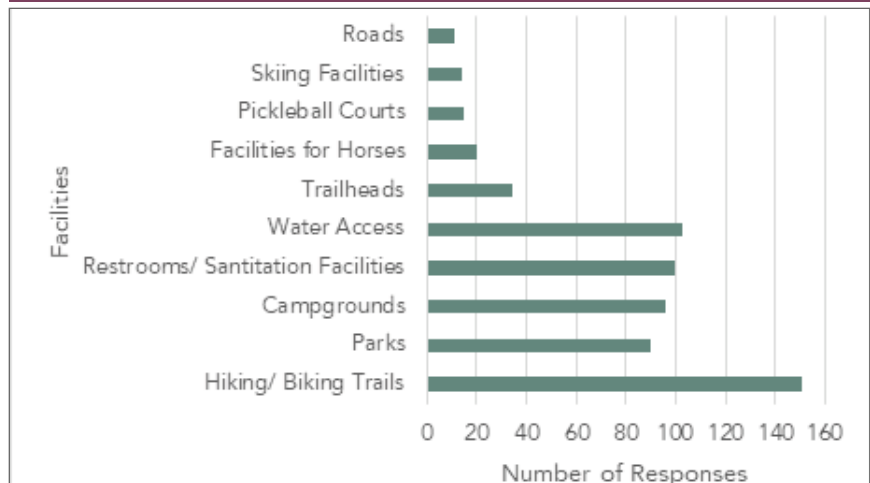


Figure 9.12. Central region survey results: What is your most common outdoor recreation activity?

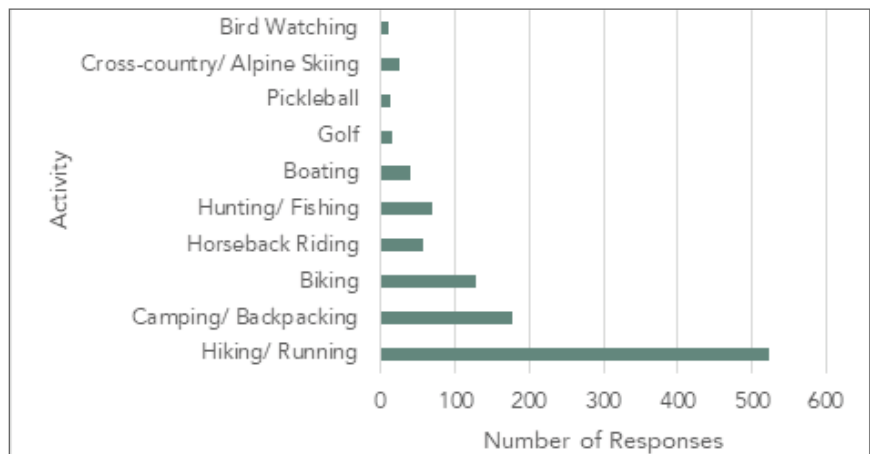
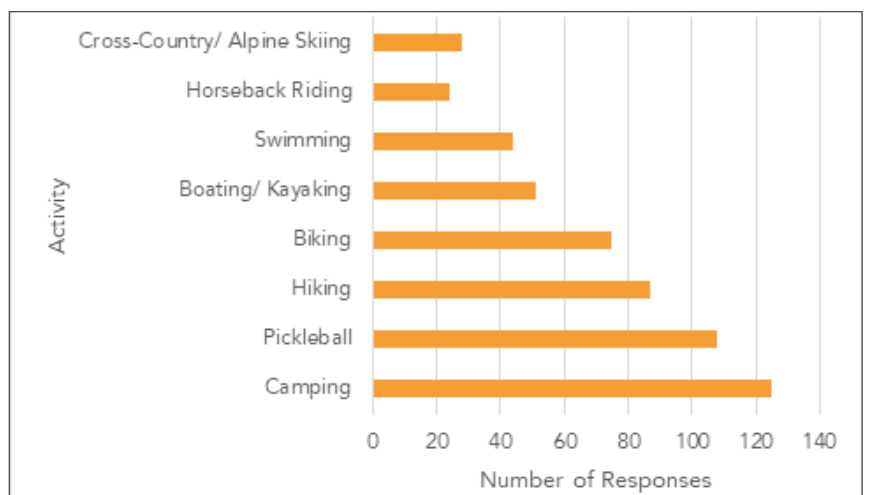


Figure 9.13. Central region survey results: What activity would you do more if high-quality facilities were available?



Public Outreach Findings and Recommendations

The SCORP planning team met with regional leaders including the Mid-Region Council of Governments and hosted an open townhall for the Central region. Participants identified the following recreation needs and recommendations for the region:

- Provide transit routes from urban areas to popular recreation areas including the Sandia foothills, Valle de Oro, Petroglyph National Monument, and Jemez National Recreation Area
- Develop separated bike infrastructure in low-income urban areas
- Improve ADA accessibility at local parks and open spaces
- Improve river access at the Rio Grande
- Plan and develop mountain bike trail system with connections across City, County and Federal lands
- Develop low-elevation hiking and biking opportunities in the Sandias and East Mountains
- Develop trail connections between Continental Divide Trail, Camino Real Trail, and the Rio Grande Trail
- Develop new trail amenities and routes in the Sandia and Manzano Mountains to relieve pressure on fragile resources
- Develop and adapt existing facilities to accommodate pickleball courts
- Develop more trailheads to accommodate increased access



Photo Courtesy Sites Southwest



NORTHEAST REGION

Survey Results

One hundred and twenty-five residents of New Mexico's Northeast Region responded to the SCORP survey. Most respondents said that facilities in their region met some of their needs. Sixty-four percent of respondents said that there are not enough facilities in their area and that existing facilities were of moderate quality. Most respondents said that the SCORP should prioritize improving existing recreation facilities and favored development of trails, parks, and restroom and trash facilities at existing recreation resources (Figure 9.14). Respondents stated that environmental condition like forest closures, crowds, and lack of access to facilities prevents residents of northeast New Mexico from participating in outdoor recreation activities.

The majority of Northeast region respondents said that hiking and running were their most common outdoor activities, followed by camping and fishing (Figure 9.15). Respondents said that they would like to hike, bike, and camp more often if adequate facilities were available in the region (Figure 9.16).

Figure 9.14. Northeast region survey results: What type of outdoor recreation facility is most important?

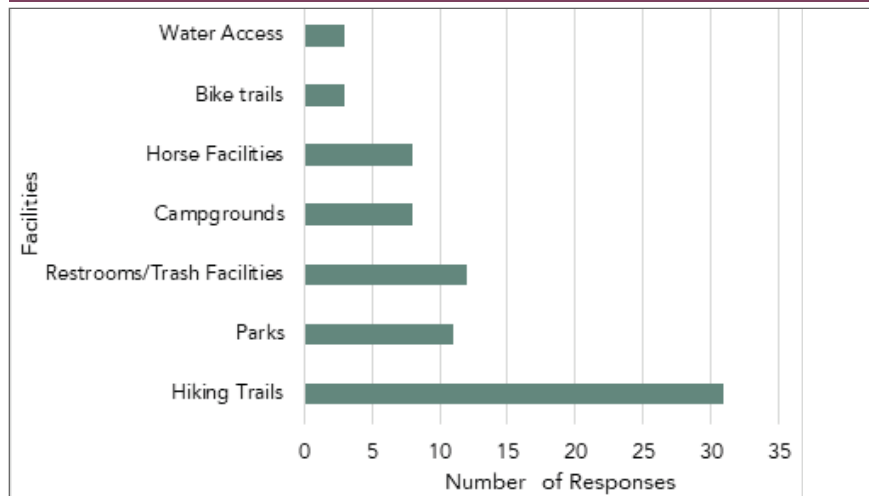


Figure 9.15. Northeast region survey results: What is your most common outdoor recreation activity?

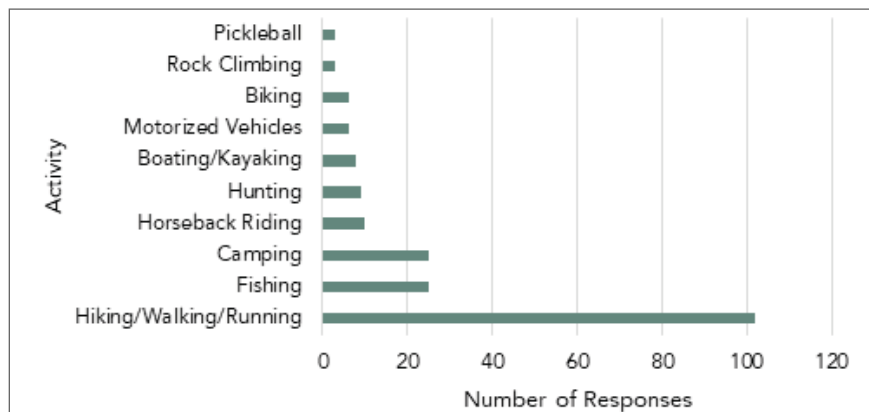
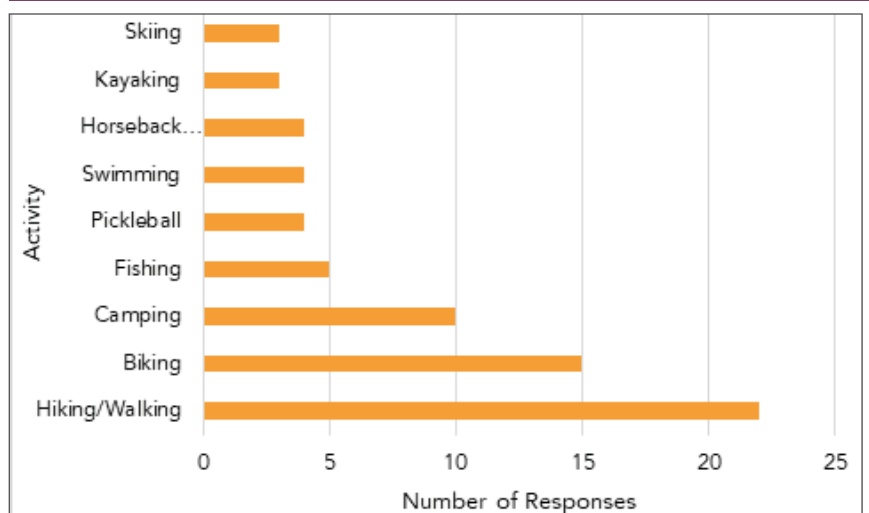


Figure 9.16. Northeast region survey results: What activity would you like to do more often if facilities were available?



Public Outreach Findings and Recommendations

Regional leaders identified the following priority areas for outdoor recreation development in the Northeast region:

- Outdoor recreation development in the region should focus on improvements to community parks
 - The region needs more outdoor sports fields
 - There are underutilized opportunities for recreation development at lakes, rivers, national forests, historic sites, and grasslands in the region
 - Recreation development in the northeast region will require collaboration with private landowners
- Participants in the regional townhall meeting for northeast New Mexico suggested the following needs and recommendations for outdoor recreation development in the region:
- Improve infrastructure for visitors to Conchas Lake including the water system, marinas, boat ramps, refueling stations, concessions, and camping and lodging facilities
 - Improve infrastructure for visitors to Ute Lake including boat ramps and restrooms
 - Develop and promote recreation resources in Valle Vidal
 - Expand designated ATV and OHV opportunities in the region
 - Acquire and protect valuable recreation resources in the region including Bartlett Mesa and Boy Scout facilities available for purchase
 - Develop trail connections between recreation resources including connections between Fisher's Peak State Park in Colorado and Sugarite Canyon in New Mexico
 - Support implementation of outdoor recreation plans in local communities including Raton's Roundhouse Park
 - Develop multiuse trail connections between town centers and recreation resources
 - Plan and develop expansion the region's existing trails network including the extension of the Chicorica Creek Trail



Photo courtesy of <https://www.tripadvisor.com/>



SOUTHEAST REGION

Survey Results

Three hundred and seventy residents of the Southeast Region responded to the SCORP survey. Most respondents said that facilities in their region met some of their needs. Seventy-one percent of respondents in the region said that there are not enough facilities in their area and 67% said that existing facilities were of moderate quality. Most respondents said that the SCORP should prioritize improving existing recreation facilities. Residents favored development of trails, camping facilities, and water access (Figure 9.17). Respondents stated that facilities in southeast New Mexico were too far away, limiting access to outdoor recreation activities. Residents also said that crowds, lack of adequate facilities, and lack of personal time prevented them from participating in outdoor recreation activities

Most southeast New Mexico respondents said that hiking was their most common outdoor activity, followed by camping and horseback riding (Figure 9.18). Respondents said that they would like to participate in these activities more often if adequate facilities were available in the region (Figure 9.19).

Figure 9.17. Southeast region survey results: What type of facility is most important to you

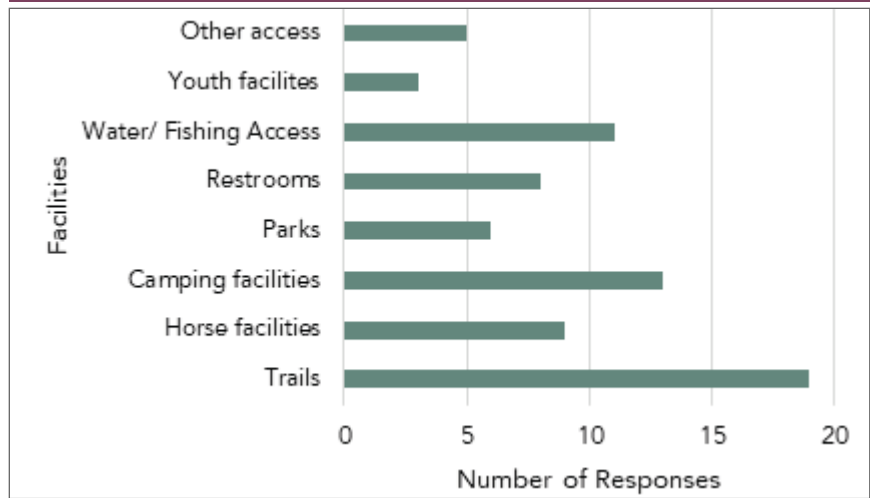


Figure 9.18. Southeast region survey results: What is the most common outdoor recreation activity you do?

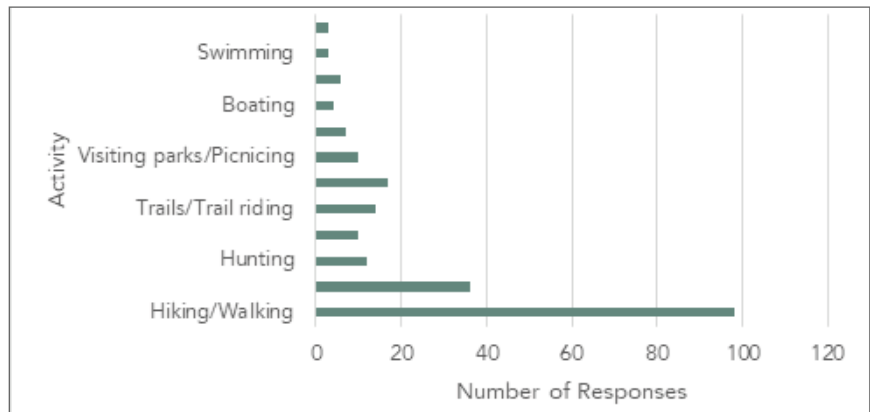
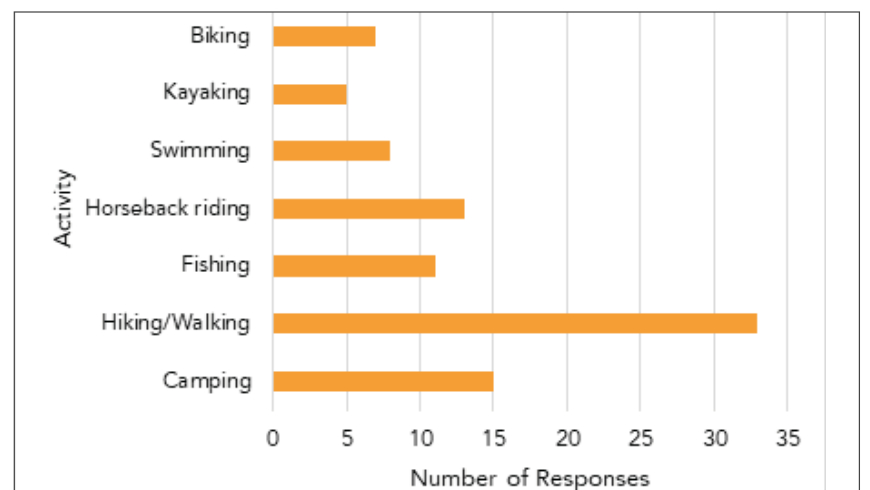


Figure 9.19. Southeast region survey results: What is the most common outdoor recreation activity you do?



Public Outreach Findings and Recommendations

Representatives of the Southeastern New Mexico Economic Development District identified the following key priorities for outdoor recreation development in the Southeast region:

- The region needs multiuse trails in the region's towns
- Community parks need improvement including additional outdoor sports facilities
- Outdoor recreation development should support athletic events and competitions in the region's towns
- The region needs more outdoor recreation facilities for youth and children including splash pads

Participants in the SCORP townhall meeting for the Southeast region named the following needs and recommendations for recreation development in the region:

- Improve facilities at Green Meadow Lake including improved water access and fish cleaning stations
- Develop skate and bike parks in the region
- Improve facilities at Sumner Lake including shelters, fish habitat preservation, removal of invasive species, and resources for staffing
- Improve camping facilities in the region including McAdams Park and Bonito Lake
- Develop additional public camping areas in the region including at Oliver Lee State Park
- Repair and improve damaged trails in the region including motorized and nonmotorized facilities
- Support public art installation at outdoor recreation facilities
- Improve ADA accessibility at popular trails in Lincoln National Forest
- Extend multiuse trails in the region



Photo courtesy of https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bonito_Lake



10 IMPLEMENTATION

The Implementation chapter summarizes SCORP goals, objectives, and actions along with identified responsible parties and a general description of where these actions are most applicable.



IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter provides a select list of financial and organizational resources, as well as policy considerations, that could support SCORP action items found throughout this plan. Together, the action items and these resources represent the implementation plan for this document.

LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

The Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 (P.L. 85-578) created a matching grant program to stimulate, encourage, and assist states with the acquisition, development, and expansion of quality outdoor recreation areas and facilities. The Land and Water Conservation Fund Program (LWCF) is a reimbursement grant program funded by revenues generated from off-shore oil and gas drilling. LWCF provides federal funding for the protection of public lands through two programs. The first is the federal program which provides funding to federal agencies such as the United States Forest Service and the National Park Service. The second is the Stateside Assistance Program, a local grant matching program that provides funds to the state's responsible agency; for New Mexico, this agency is the State Parks Division.

The LWCF program requires the development of a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) for each state every five years to continue to receive state funds. The Stateside

Assistance Program in New Mexico has leveraged federal and local dollars to support over 1,500 projects throughout the state. These projects range from local park and recreation improvements to the acquisition of land to improve access and expand public land.



Bandelier National Monument via NPS flickr: Photo courtesy of <https://lwcfcoalition.org/>

ADDITIONAL IMPLEMENTATION RESOURCES

The planning team recognizes that achieving the goals set out in this plan will require more resources and financial and organizational support than can be provided by LWCF alone. The following sections outline some additional resources (financial, organizational, and policy) that could help meet the goals of this SCORP. Additionally, the following financial resources may help some communities meet the 50% LWCF match requirement.

Funding Resources

Outdoor Equity Fund

Agency: Outdoor Recreation Division, Economic Development Department

Type: Bi-annual grant

Website: <https://www.nmoutside.com/outdoor-grants-equity-fund>

Description: The Outdoor Equity Fund was created to allow all youth equitable access to the outdoors. The grant supports transformative outdoor experiences that foster stewardship and respect for New Mexico's lands, waters, and cultural heritage. Grants range from \$1,500 - \$20,000 and require a 1:1 match.

Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program

Agency: Department of the Interior, NPS

Type: Complementary grant based on LWCF funding cycle

Website: <https://lwcfcoalition.org/orlp>

Description: The Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program is a complementary grant program to the LWCF State-side formula grants program. Project proposals should target low to moderate income neighborhoods that are under-served with respect to parks and other outdoor recreation resources. To be eligible, a jurisdiction must have a population of at least 50,000 people and be located within an Urbanized Area as designated in the 2010 Census.

Outdoor Recreation Trails+ Grant

Agency: Outdoor Recreation Division, Economic Development Department

Type: Annual grant

Website: <https://www.nmoutside.com/outdoor-grants-equity-fund>

Description: This grant invests in conservation minded, shovel-ready projects that are open to the public and increase access to outdoor recreation opportunities. Projects must show a demonstrable economic benefit to the community, by attracting and retaining residents or visitors, and must be open for public use. Grant requests can range from \$5,000 - \$25,000 and a 1:1 match is required.

Kids 'n Parks Transportation Grant

Agency: EMNRD

Type: Grant available for public school teachers

Website: <https://www.emnrd.nm.gov/spd/kids-n-parks/>

Description: The State Parks Kids 'n Parks transportation grants provide teachers with funds for buses to connect their students to the outdoors. Teachers must connect classroom learning to the outdoors and must evaluate their experiences.

Clean and Beautiful

Agency: NM Tourism Department

Type: Annual grant

Website: <https://www.newmexico.org/industry/work-together/grants/clean-and-beautiful/>

Description: New Mexico Clean & Beautiful partners with municipalities, counties, and tribal governments throughout the state to fund projects and initiatives that contribute to the following established goals: end littering, reduce waste, beautify communities, empower youth, increase program capacity.

Cooperative Marketing and Advertising

Agency: NM Tourism Department

Type: Annual grant

Website: <https://www.newmexico.org/industry/work-together/grants/co-op-marketing/>

Description: The New Mexico Tourism Department's "CoOp" program supports our shared vision to grow the tourism economy in New Mexico. Tourism-related, nonprofit organizations and local and tribal governments can:

- Double their tourism marketing impact with dollar-for-dollar matching funds
- Collaborate with for-profit entities to contribute up to half of applicant's investment
- Harness the power of millions of New Mexico True brand impressions with proven creative and media tools
- Build marketing capability through media consultations and technical assistance
- Share measurable results and performance reporting to demonstrate the impact to your destination, attraction or event

Access Fund Conservation Grants and Loans

Agency: Access Fund

Type: Grants provided on a rolling basis

Website: <https://www.accessfund.org/take-action/apply-for-funding>

Description: The Access Fund's Climbing Conservation Grant Program funds projects that preserve or enhance climbing access and opportunities, and conserve the climbing environment throughout the US. Projects must demonstrate local climber support, collaboration with land managers, and a commitment to long-term change.

Recreational Trails Program

Agency: NMDOT

Type: Annual grant

Website: <https://dot.state.nm.us/content/nmdot/en/Planning.html#ATRP>

Description: The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) is a federal reimbursement program providing funding to eligible entities within New Mexico to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both non-motorized and motorized uses. These Federal funds benefit recreationists who enjoy hiking, bicycling, in-line skating, equestrianism, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, off-road motorcycling, all-terrain vehicle riding, and off-road four-wheel driving.

Organizational Resources

Assistance and Capacity-Building Programs

Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program

Agency: National Park Service

Type: Technical assistance

Website: <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/rtca/index.htm>

Description: This program lends NPS staff and expertise to support locally led conservation and outdoor recreation projects. Applicants can request assistance through a form that is open October through February annually. Length of service is generally 1-2 years and may extend longer depending on the project.

Recreation Economies for Rural Communities

Agency: US Environmental Protection Service

Type: Planning assistance

Website: <https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/recreation-economy-rural-communities>

Description: Recreation Economy for Rural Communities is a planning assistance program which helps communities develop strategies and action plans to revitalize their main streets through outdoor recreation.

Outdoor Recreation Asset Atlas

Agency: NM MainStreet & Outdoor Recreation Division

Type: Planning assistance

Website:

https://gonm.biz/uploads/documents/pressReleases/PR-2021_Outdoor_Recreation_Asset_Atlas.pdf

Description: The 2021 pilot program worked with five New Mexico counties with the goal of better connecting communities' downtowns with their natural resources. The Outdoor Recreation Asset Atlas will identify up to five trail development or improvement projects for these communities.

endeavOR New Mexico (New Mexico Outdoor Business Alliance Network)

Agency: N/A

Type: Technical and planning assistance

Website: <https://www.endeavornm.org/>

Description: This outdoor recreation business alliance is comprised of individuals, companies, organizations, municipalities, agencies and tribes working together to ensure that New Mexico's outdoor recreation economy and experiences are getting bigger and better. Mission is comprised of three strategic outdoor recreation endeavors: 1) expand the OR economy, 2) engage the OR community and 3) enhance the OR experience.

Publications & Knowledge Sharing

Rural Development Toolkit (2021)

Agency: Outdoor Recreation Roundtable

Type: Community toolkit

Website: <https://recreationroundtable.org/rural-development-toolkit/>

Description: Compiling the insights of over 60 outdoor recreation practitioners, this toolkit is intended to help communities build their outdoor recreation economy. It includes a series of best practices that are organized according to the stage of outdoor recreation economic development in a community.

Cradle to Career: New Mexico Outdoor Education Strategy (2021)

Agency: National Park Service, Outdoor Recreation Division

Type: Report

Website: <https://files.constantcontact.com/c6415b07101/7ce936be-498a-49ee-b7cd-260825324e38.pdf>

Description: This report provides a roadmap for how to increase the number of New Mexicans in outdoor workforce development programs.

State of Outdoor and Environmental Learning (2021)

Agency: Environmental Education of New Mexico

Type: Inventory

Website: <https://eenm.org/soel/>

Description: The SOEL is a regional inventory of outdoor and environmental learning initiatives, curricula and programs in New Mexico and Arizona. This inventory helps to increase awareness of programs and builds a broader coalition of support around outdoor education in our region.

Every Kid, Every Day, Every Way (2021)

Agency: Environmental Education of New Mexico

Type: Report

Website: <https://eenm.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Every-Kid-Every-Day-Every-Way-New-Mexico-final-smaller.pdf>

Description: This vision and strategy report provides recommendations to ensure that every New Mexican child has access to the outdoors and environmental learning opportunities. Recommendations are shared in four categories: policy, professional development and communities of practice, aligned programs and shared resources, and funding and sustainability.

Urban to Wild Transportation Equity Report (2020)

Agency: The Wilderness Society, Urban to Wild Coalition

Type: Report

Website: <https://www.wilderness.org/sites/default/files/media/file/abq-transit-report-updated.pdf>

Description: This report compiled data for residents of Albuquerque and Bernalillo County related to access to parks, open space, and public lands. It provides comprehensive recommendations aimed to advance multi-modal park connections, transit equity, safety and accessibility, and to prioritize future investments.

Policy & Advocacy

Beyond highlighting additional funding and resources for capacity-building and knowledge-sharing, it is important to understand the power of collective voice and advocacy to achieving common goals for outdoor recreation, both in New Mexico and across the United States. Below is a list of a few organizations and policies that are working to create pools of sustained funding to support outdoor recreation access and equity, environmental conservation, and facilities, amenities, and programming to expand opportunities for experiencing outdoor recreation.

Parks, Jobs and Equity Act

Website: <https://www.tpl.org/parks-jobs-equity-act>

Description: This program would provide a one-time investment of \$500 million for local parks to create jobs, improve local economies, and address park inequity. Elected officials and advocacy organizations are working to integrate this in the Build Back Better package.

Outdoor FUTURE Initiative

Website: <https://outdoorfuture.org/>

Description: This initiative seeks to build momentum for the creation of a national equity fund that will ensure long-term investments in programs to provide all youth with opportunities to explore the great outdoors.

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11 | APPENDICES



APPENDIX A: OUTDOOR RECREATION RESOURCE INVENTORY

As a component of the 2022 SCORP update, planners developed a geospatial database of outdoor recreation resources in New Mexico. The resulting geodatabase will be made available to the public on request and aims to aid outdoor recreation planning and development in the future. The inventory includes spatially referenced data on:

- Select geological features
- Federal, state, and local public lands
- Private recreation lands
- Recreation amenities
- Campgrounds
- Trails
- Recreation roads
- Water features
- Socio-economic and population indicators
- Administrative regions

SUMMARY OF INVENTORY DATA

The 2022 SCORP resource inventory geodatabase maps 76 unique layers relevant to outdoor recreation planning and development in New Mexico. The titles and descriptions of all layers as they are organized in the inventory geodatabase are summarized below. In some cases, layer descriptions include notes on opportunities for future refinement, analysis, and additional data collection.

Feature	Category	Description
golf_courses	Misc_Points	Point layer depicting the location of golf courses.
NMFeatures_falls	Misc_Points	Point layer from NMFeatures layer depicting the location of waterfalls.
NMFeatures_school	Misc_Points	Point layer from NMFeatures layer depicting the location of schools. May be used to consider proximity to schools or recreation assets associated with schools.
NMFeatures_Trail	Misc_Points	Point layer from NMFeatures layer depicting the midpoint location of trails. This layer does not represent trailheads. This layer could be used to locate trails that are not featured in line layers, but it is otherwise not as useful as line layers. Many local trails are missing from this layer and the line layers in this data package. Future work may include collecting more data on local trail locations.



Feature	Category	Description
NMFeatures_summit	Misc_Points	Point features depicting the location of select prominent mountain or hill summits.
El_Morro_Nat_Mon_Campsite	Campsites	Point layer depicting campsites at El Moro NM.
NM_State_Park_Campsites	Campsites	Point layer depicting the location of campgrounds at NM state parks.
NMFeatur_ locale	Campsites	Point layer from the NMFeatures layer depicting the location of campgrounds in NM not depicted in other campground layers.
gnisparks	Local Parks	Point layer depicting mostly historical markers with some parks not depicted in NM_Parks_Local.
NM_Parks_Local	Local Parks	Point layer depicting the location of local parks, sports fields, and recreation centers. Some recreation center locations would not be classified as outdoor recreation for the purposes of the SCORP. Future refinement of this data could include removing recreation centers.
El_Malpais_Nat_Monumnet_Trailhead	Trails_Roads	Point layer depicting trailheads at El Malpais NM. Only one other NM in this data package has points for trailheads.
Gila_Cliff_Dwellings_Nat_Monument_Trailhead	Trails_Roads	Point layer depicting trailheads at Gila Cliff Dwellings NM. Only one other NM in this data package has points for trailheads.
BLM_motorized_roads	Trails_Roads	Line layer depicting motorized roads on BLM land. Includes vehicle classification (4wd, 2wd, etc.).
BLM_not_assessed_trails	Trails_Roads	Line layers depicting trails on BLM property. Includes trail surface.
Albuquerque_Bike_Trails	Trails_Roads	Line layer depicting separated bike trails in Albuquerque.
Aztec_Ruins_Trails	Trails_Roads	Line layer depicting trails in Aztec Ruins NM.
Bandelier_National_Monument_Trails	Trails_Roads	Line layer depicting trails in Bandelier NM.
Capulin_Volcano_Nat_Monument	Trails_Roads	Line layer depicting trails in Capulin Volcano NM.
Carlsbad_Cavern_Nat_Park_Trails	Trails_Roads	Line layer depicting trails in Carlsbad Caverns NP.
Carson_NF_Trails	Trails_Roads	Line layer depicting trails in Carson NF.
Cibola_NF_Trails	Trails_Roads	Line layer depicting trails in Cibola NF.
Continental_Divide	Trails_Roads	Line layer depicting Continental Divide Trail.

Feature	Category	Description
Coronado_Trails_NM	Trails_Roads	Line layer depicting trails in Coronado NF (AZ) in NM.
El_Morro_Trails	Trails_Roads	Line layer depicting trails in El Moro NM.
El_Malpais_Trails	Trails_Roads	Line layer depicting trails in El Malpais NM.
Fort_Union_Nat_Monument_Trails	Trails_Roads	Line Layer depicting trails in Fort Union NM.
Gila_Nat_Forest_Trail	Trails_Roads	Line layer depicting trails in Gila NF.
Lincoln_Trail	Trails_Roads	Line layer depicting trails in Lincoln NF.
Lincoln_Roads1	Trails_Roads	Line layer depicting roads in Lincoln NF. Includes road classification.
National_Monument_Trails_Combined	Trails_Roads	Line layer depicting trailson BLM-managed national monuments.
NM_State_Park_Trails	Trails_Roads	Line layer depicting trails in NM state parks.
Pecos_Trails_Merge	Trails_Roads	Line layer depicting trails in Pecos NHP.
Salinas_Pueblo_Mission_Trails	Trails_Roads	Line layer depicting trails in Salinas Pueblo Missions NM.
Santa_Fe_NF_Trail	Trails_Roads	Line layer depicting trails in Santa Fe NF.
Valles_Caldera_Nat_Monument_Trails	Trails_Roads	Line layer depicting trails in Valles Caldera National Preserve.
NM_outline	NM_outline	A polygon depicting the state of New Mexico's borders.
ZZ_PAD_NM_uncategorized	Public_Lands_NMPAD	Polygons from the original NMPAD layer that are either unnamed or do not fit into one of the categorized layers. These include local parks, ski areas, golf courses, and community centers. Some of these features are depicted in other layers.
Area_Critical_Environment_Concern	Public_Lands_NMPAD	Polygon layer from NMPAD layer depicting designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.
BLM_Land	Public_Lands_NMPAD	Polygon layer from NMPAD layer depicting BLM lands in NM. Does not include data on recreation access. Consider adding recreation data to this layer in the future.
CarlsbadCavernsNP	Public_Lands_NMPAD	Polygon layer from NMPAD layer depicting Carlsbad Caverns National Park.
Conservation	Public_Lands_NMPAD	Polygon layer from NMPAD layer depicting cooperatively managed or private conservation areas.

Feature	Category	Description
DOD_DOE	Public_Lands_NMPAD	Polygon layer from NMPAD layer depicting Department of Defense and Department of Energy lands in NM. Does not include data on recreation access. Consider adding recreation data to this layer in the future.
ElMalpais_Nat_Consv_Area	Public_Lands_NMPAD	Polygon from NMPAD layer depicting El Malpais National Conservation Area.
Forest_Service	Public_Lands_NMPAD	Polygon from NMPAD layer depicting National Forest land and excluding wilderness areas.
Fossil_Area	Public_Lands_NMPAD	Polygon from NMPAD layer depicting designated fossil areas in NWNM.
HistoricalSite	Public_Lands_NMPAD	Polygon from NMPAD layer depicting national historic park designations.
Nat_Hist_Landmark	Public_Lands_NMPAD	Polygon from NMPAD depicting Big Bend Mesa and Killbourne Hole National Historic Landmarks.
NationalMonument	Public_Lands_NMPAD	Polygon from NMPAD depicting NPS-managed national monuments.
Nat_Rec_Area	Public_Lands_NMPAD	Polygon from NMPAD layer depicting Jemez National Recreation Area.
Nat_Wildlife_Refuge	Public_Lands_NMPAD	Polygon from NMPAD layer depicting designated national wildlife refuges.
RecArea	Public_Lands_NMPAD	Polygon from NMPAD layer depicting a variety of recreation areas in northern NM including some managed by BLM, USFS, and NM game and fish properties.
Research_Nat_Area	Public_Lands_NMPAD	Polygon from NMPAD layer depicting designated research natural areas.
Reservation_land	Public_Lands_NMPAD	Polygon from NMPAD layer depicting sovereign reservation land in NM.
Rivers	Public_Lands_NMPAD	Polygon from NMPAD depicting designated wild and scenic rivers.
Scenic_Area	Public_Lands_NMPAD	Polygon from NMPAD depicting designated scenic areas.
State_Park	Public_Lands_NMPAD	Polygon from NMPAD depicting NM state parks.
State_Trust_land	Public_Lands_NMPAD	Polygon layer from NMPAD layer depicting State Trust lands. Does not include data on recreation access. Consider adding recreation data to this layer in the future.

Feature	Category	Description
Wilderness_Study_Area1	Public_Lands_NMPAD	Polygon from NMPAD layer depicting designated wilderness areas and wilderness study areas.
Wildlife_Areas	Public_Lands_NMPAD	Polygon from NMPAD layer depicting designated wildlife areas, wildlife management areas, and national wildlife refuges.
BLM_recs_poly	Public_Lands	Polygon depicting BLM recreation areas identified by the bureau.
NM_State_Park_Boundaries_2019	Public_Lands	Polygons depicting NM State Parks.
Forest_Service_Roadless_Areas	Public_Lands	Polygon depicting Forest Service roadless areas including wilderness areas.
gniswater_lakes	Water_Features	Point layer depicting the location of small lakes.
WildScenicRivers_NM	Water_Features	Line layer depicting Wild and Scenic River designations.
SurfaceWaterRiverReach_NM	Water_Features	Line layer depicting rivers and creeks.
NM_Public_Lakes_and_Reservoirs	Water_Features	Polygon layer depicting large surface lakes and reservoirs. Does not include most natural lakes.
World Boundaries and Places	Reference Names	Basemap including reference names.
racethcit_PerNHWhite	SocioEconomic	2018 race/ethnicity population data by census tract. Relevant variables include hispanic, non-hispanic white, and native american population counts.
racethcit_PerHispanic	SocioEconomic	2018 race/ethnicity population data by census tract. Relevant variables include hispanic, non-hispanic white, and native american population counts.
poverty_bytracts2018	SocioEconomic	2018 ACS poverty data by census tract. Missing data for Rio Arriba County.
incomeearn_bytracts2018	SocioEconomic	2018 ACS income data by census tract. Missing data for Rio Arriba County.
popul_bytracts2018_Youth	SocioEconomic	2018 ACS population data by census tract. Includes under 18, over 65, and other age/sex population variables.
NMTourismRegions_boundaries	NMTourismRegions_boundaries	NM tourism regions without county boundaries.
NMToursimRegions	NMToursimRegions	NM tourism regions with county boundaries.
World Terrain Reference	Reference Roads/ Terrain Basemap	Basemaps including roads and terrain.
World Imagery	Aerial Basemap	Basemap including aerial photos.

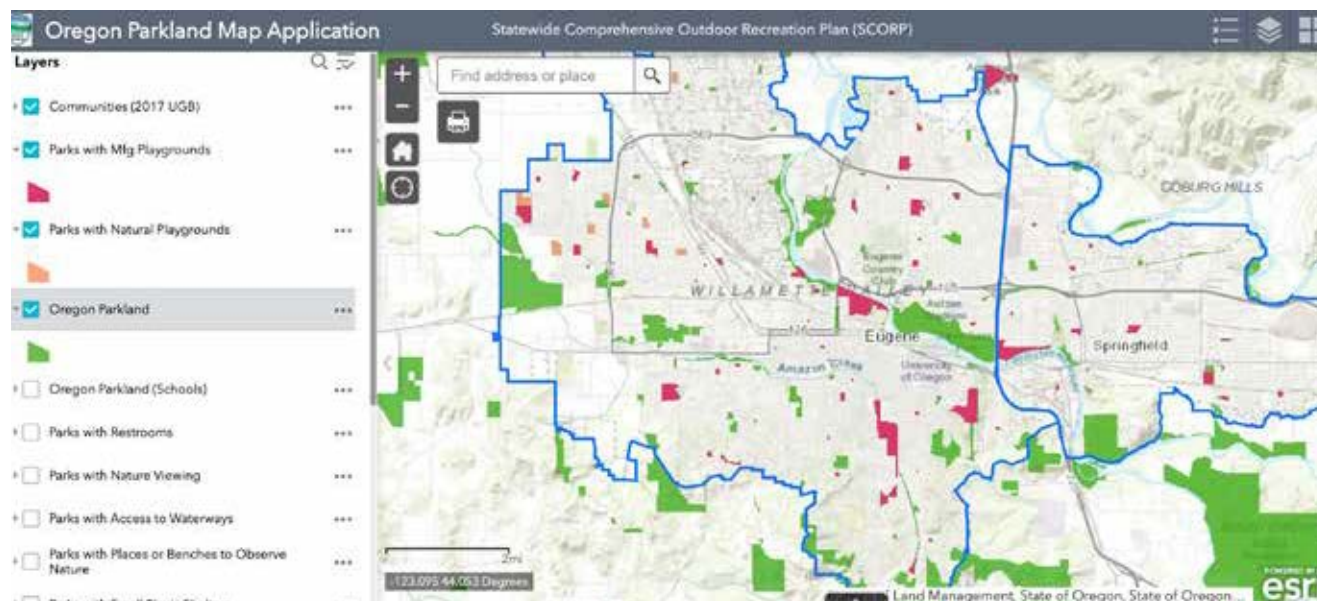
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

The outdoor recreation resource inventory geodatabase was developed through a collaborative effort with a range of federal, state, and local agencies. This geodatabase represents the most comprehensive collection to date of compatible, publicly available spatial data relevant to outdoor recreation in New Mexico.

That said, this resource inventory is not exhaustive. The State of New Mexico should continue to expand this resource with a particular focus on verifying and expanding local-level data and making data available and useable to professionals and the general public alike. For example, the State of Oregon worked with the Geography Department at Portland State University to conduct fieldwork that generated additional data for the State's SCORP resource inventory. The resulting database is highly detailed and publicly available through an easy-to-use web map. The [Oregon Parklands Map Application](#) allows users to explore Oregon's outdoor recreation amenities through a wide range of criteria (Figure 11.1). The State of New Mexico should pursue a similar program to generate additional data and develop a web map tool for the State's resource inventory through a partnership with the University of New Mexico's Geography Department.

This resource inventory also has important research applications. The State Parks Division should make the geodatabase available for download on its website and share this resource with partner agencies and institutions. A widely distributed resource inventory promises to expand our understanding of outdoor recreation resources in New Mexico and contribute to research, planning, policy, and development that benefits New Mexicans.

Figure 11.1. Sample from Oregon's Parkland Map Application



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