

Support a Conservation Trust Fund



For Our Land, Water, Recreation & Cultural Heritage



Problem: New Mexico is leaving federal money on the table for conservation programs that could better protect our communities from wildfire, flood and drought, conserve our land and watershed health, support rural and agricultural communities, and grow our outdoor recreation economy.

Solution: A conservation trust fund to leverage federal dollars using dedicated, recurring state funding for land and water stewardship in all 33 counties. This proposal is a bipartisan compromise stemming from two years of negotiations among a broad coalition of NGOs, legislators, LFC staff and executive agencies.



Opportunity:

- A conservation trust fund would fully fund land and water stewardship programs for the first time in a generation, giving legislators the opportunity to deliver for New Mexico communities and better protect them from extreme weather conditions like historic wildfires, flooding and severe drought.
- It would also preserve our cultural heritage and outdoor traditions, leaving a legacy for our children to hunt, fish, farm, and enjoy the lands and waters the way our ancestors have for generations.

How A Permanent Conservation Trust Fund Could Work:

- Would be structured as a permanent trust fund by the State Investment Council, similar to the recently-created Early Childhood Education and Care Fund.
- Interest earned would be disbursed annually to existing state programs that have a proven track record of success, are popular in communities, or have rarely been funded to their full potential.
- Local entities - including acequias, tribal communities, and Soil & Water Conservation Districts - are primed to apply for projects they know work for them.
- Would not create new programs or additional bureaucracy, but instead utilize existing statutes, boards, and rulemaking.

2023 Legislative Ask:

- **A large initial seed investment of at least \$350 million is necessary to ensure the trust can meet the needs of New Mexico communities and produce enough annual returns to be self-sustaining.**
- This would provide almost \$20 million annually to select state programs, leveraging federal and private support that will be delivered to New Mexico communities over the next several years.

Agency	Program	Purpose
Energy, Minerals & Natural Resources Department (EMNRD)	Natural Heritage Conservation Act	✓ Conserve and restore open space, private working lands, cultural sites and wildlife habitat; leverage federal LWCF dollars
	Forest and Watershed Restoration Act	✓ Protect NM communities from wildfire, flood and drought risk, protect water sources and conserve fish and wildlife habitat
Department of Agriculture (NMDA)	Healthy Soils Act	✓ Promote farming/ranching practices that improve soil health
	Soil and Water Conservation Districts	✓ Improve grassland and rangeland ecosystems, leverage federal Farm Bill dollars, and support working lands
	Noxious Weeds Management Act	✓ Coordinate weed management best practices among local, state, and federal land managers, as well as private landowners
Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF)	Game & Fish Outdoor Recreation Act/ Wildlife Conservation Act	✓ Conserve species of wildlife that are threatened, endangered or in decline and sustainably manage the state's game species
Environment Department (NMED)	River Stewardship Program	✓ Keep NM rivers safe, healthy, and flowing by improving water quality and restoring riparian habitat
Economic Development Department (EDD)	Outdoor Equity Fund	✓ Gets underserved NM youth outside to connect with the land; teach them how to hunt, fish, camp, and overall foster land and water stewardship to help pass down cultural legacies
	Outdoor Recreation Trails+ Grant	✓ Funds infrastructure projects to improve NM's hiking/biking/walking/horseback riding trails, parks/river systems; improve visitor experience to residents & tourists
Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA)	Prehistoric & Historic Sites Preservation Act	✓ Funds public-private partnerships to preserve prehistoric and historic sites in NM communities

