



New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts

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To New Mexico Conservation Partners

Notes for February 5, 2017

This is the beginning of a series of Notes from NMACD to NM Conservation Partners to provide recent information and activities in conservation of the natural Resources in New Mexico. These notes will be sent to a broad group of partners and their staff. If you have information you would like to be shared with partners, please let us know and we will include in our future Notes. (kleiting@cablone.net).

- The NRCS has announced the funding of 5 projects for \$17.8m in New Mexico as part of the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). These 5 projects and their lead partners are:
 - Canadian River Watershed Restoration Project (\$3.6m) – Canadian River Riparian Restoration Project
 - New Mexico Range and Forest Soil Health Initiative (\$7m) – NMACD
 - Building Resiliency in the San Juan-Rio Chama Region (\$3.25m) – East Rio Arriba SWCD
 - New Mexico Acequia Revitalization on Historic Lands (\$2.9m) – NMACD, NM Interstate Streams, NM Acequia Association.
 - North Central NM Watershed Restoration Project (\$1m) – Claunch-Pinto SWCD.

Three of the five projects will be implemented over 5 years with EQIP funds provided to ranchers through the EQIP program process. Two of the projects, Acequia and Building Resiliency, will be implemented with EQIP funds but through a process that provides funds directly to the Lead Partners.

Currently the NRCS and the Lead Partners are negotiating the details for implementation as part of the cooperative agreements for each project. This process will be occurring through the spring and early summer of 2017, with the start of the projects expected in late summer, early fall of 2017.

Ranchers and partners hoping to participate in these projects, where their operations include federal lands, should begin to develop the Coordinated Resource Management Plans CRMPs.

For more information on the RCPP Projects, go to link to the NRCS website:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/farmbill/?cid=nrcseprd1307823>

- Knowledge of the EQIP project is important to the implementation of the RCPP projects and other projects with ranchers in New Mexico. Below is a listing of some NRCS Web Sites that provide information about EQIP, special initiatives, and timeframes:
 - NRCS-NM EQIP <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/nm/programs/financial/eqip/>
 - NRCS-NM EQIP 2017 Cost List
https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/NM/EQIP_FY_2017_cost_list.pdf
 - NRCS-NM EQIP 2017 Cost List Scenarios
https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/NM/EQIP_2017_NM_Practice_Scenario_Descriptions.pdf
 - For more info, contact Kris Graham-Chavez, Asst. State Cons. For Programs.
(kristin.grahamchavez@nm.usda.gov) 505-761-4404.

NMACD Project Managers: Norman Vigil (norman.vigilsr@outlook.com) 505-967-8760; George Chavez (ferminchavezjr@gmail.com) 505-236-9247; Ken Walker (kwalker@yucca.net) 575-562-0492; Donald Ellsworth (dells@cablone.net) 505-918-5559; Ken Leiting (kleiting@cablone.net) 505-259-8681

NM Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Fiscal Year 2017 Projects

New Mexico

Canadian River Watershed Restoration Project

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$3,600,000 (Critical Conservation Area – Prairie Grasslands Region)

Lead Partner: Canadian River Riparian Restoration Project

Number of Initial Partners: 7

Participating States: New Mexico (Lead State)

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

New Mexico Range and Forest Soil Health Initiative

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$7,000,000 (National)

Lead Partner: New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts

Number of Initial Partners: 17

Participating States: New Mexico (Lead State)

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

Building Resiliency in the San Juan-Rio Chama Region

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$3,250,000 (National)

Lead Partner: East Rio Arriba Soil and Water Conservation District

Number of Initial Partners: 21

Participating States: Colorado and New Mexico (Lead State)

Completed by the Bureau of Reclamation in 1976, the San Juan-Rio Chama Diversion is a series of diversion structures and tunnels that together carry runoff 26 miles across the Continental Divide from the Colorado River watershed to the Rio Chama, in the Rio Grande watershed. This diversion, along with the Rio Chama, provides approximately one third of New Mexico's water supply for irrigators, agriculture, industry, communities and fish

critically important region. Forest restoration practices have been shown to reduce high-severity wildfire and to improve watershed health, water quality, and water quantity. Poor historic management of forest watersheds and riparian zones along with current and forecast climate change are creating a dire situation for the condition and availability of New Mexico's forest, rangeland and water resources. This situation must be alleviated with natural resource restoration efforts. Montane coniferous forest watersheds and riparian areas that experience extensive mid- and high-severity wildfires have greatly diminished water storage capacity because the soils do not absorb or hold water after fire. Rainwater runoff generated during storms has the potential to cause extreme flooding, sedimentation, and debris flows into the main tributaries of the burned watersheds. The large amounts of post-fire sediment that move into rivers, streams and reservoirs during these flood events diminish water quality and disrupt water delivery and storage. Wildlife, acequias, rural economies, tourism and outdoor recreation are all at risk from the associated impacts of watershed wildfires. Without a large-scale watershed solution addressing wildfire, more acres will continue to be severely impacted, which will place critical water and other natural resources in jeopardy, and threaten more communities within the Wildland Urban Environment (WUI).

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