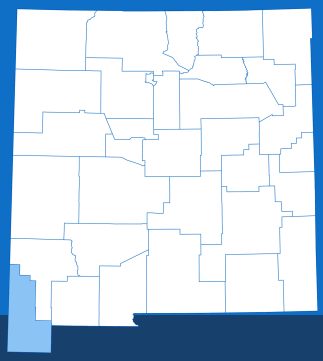


NEW MEXICO WATER FACTSHEET

Hidalgo County

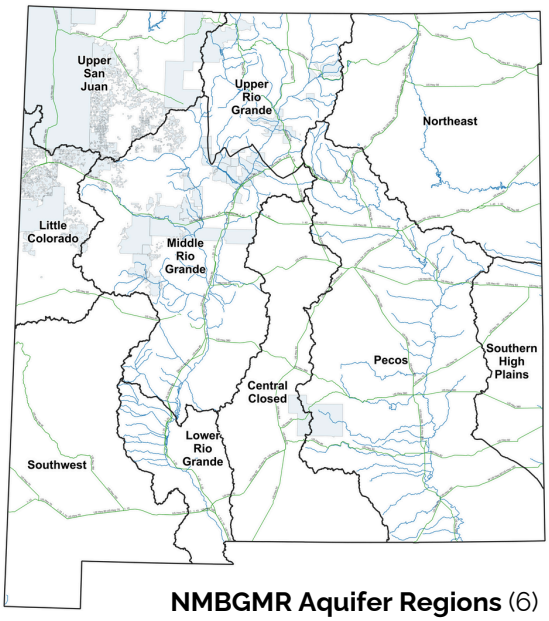
May 8th, 2024

SOUTHWEST ENVIRONMENTAL FINANCE CENTER

swefc.unm.edu/efc-bil

Water in New Mexico

One of New Mexico's biggest challenges is water scarcity. New Mexico has the lowest water to land ratio of all 50 states (1), and climate change is only expected to intensify our water challenges. Water quality is also threatened by contaminants both artificial and natural. Arsenic, uranium, nitrate, fluoride, and bacteria are among the most problematic contaminants in the state (2). New Mexico surface water sources consist of six major river basins: Arkansas-White-Red, Lower Colorado, Pecos, Rio Grande, Texas Gulf, and Upper Colorado (3). Despite the presence of numerous river basins, 78% of New Mexicans rely on groundwater for their drinking water (3). The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) is responsible for managing water infrastructure systems and addressing water quality issues throughout the state (except on tribal lands), including the implementation and enforcement of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act (2). The Office of the State Engineer has authority over the supervision, measurement, appropriation, and distribution of all surface water and groundwater in New Mexico, including streams and rivers that cross state lines (4). The New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission investigates, protects, conserves, and develops New Mexico's waters including both interstate and intrastate stream systems (5). The New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Recourses Hydrology Programs (6) provide an independent geologic mapping collaborative hydrologic research statewide, including the aquifer mapping program (left).

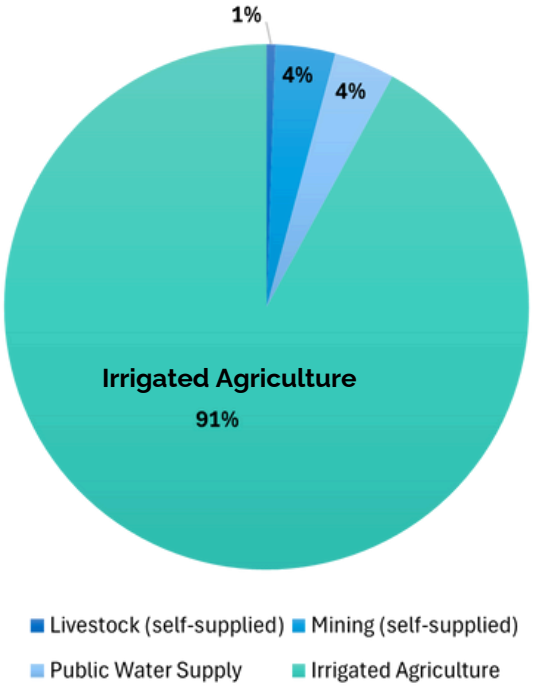


NMBGMR Aquifer Regions (6)

Water in Hidalgo County

Located in the southwestern corner of the state, Hidalgo County is a rural county with a population of 4,214 (9) and an area of 3,445.63 square miles (7). Its only perennial stream, the Gila River, crosses the top of Hidalgo's northern panhandle (9). Most of the water used in the county is groundwater.

In 2015, Hidalgo County water withdrawals totaled 52,201 acre-ft. 90% of total withdrawals corresponded to groundwater withdrawals, while 10% were surface water withdrawals (3). The biggest consumer of Hidalgo's water is Irrigated Agriculture, using a total of 47,626 acre-ft in 2015, equivalent to 99% of the county's surface water demand and 90% of the county's groundwater demand. The next largest water consumers in 2015 were Public Water Supply and Mining, consuming 1936 and 1910 acre-ft respectively, all in ground water (3). The county has 5 Drinking Water Supply Systems: Lordsburg Water Supply System, Glen Acres Water Coop, Virden Water System, Rodeo MDW & MSWA, and New Mexico Tech, Playas Facility (3).

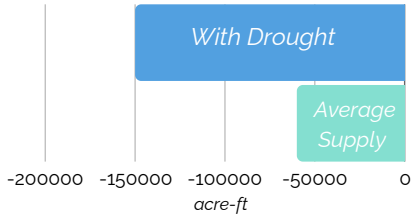


Frequently Asked Questions

What are the water challenges faced by Hidalgo County?

- Population decreases: "Since 2010, the population has declined by 1.7 percent, with the population in 2013 estimated at 4,809 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014a)" (10).
- Depletion of Groundwater: "Many of the old wells in the county have gone dry, so new deeper wells are being drilled, which is expensive." (10).
- Projected decrease of region's ground water supply (11).
- Drought and climate change.

Projected Water Supply Gap in 2060 for SW NM Region

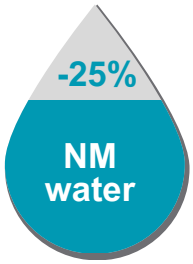


How is Hidalgo moving towards sustainable water management?

Water use in Hidalgo County is guided by the Hidalgo County Comprehensive Plan Update 2011 (CommunityByDesign et al., 2011a). The Plan's goals include (10):

- Encouraging water conservation in a manner that is fair and equitable to all users.
- Allowing for water banking.
- Recognizing and protecting historical water rights for future generations.
- Securing, protecting, and maintaining safe and sustainable water quality and quantity through effective and coordinated watershed and aquifer management.
- Promoting, protecting, and restoring the open spaces and natural resources such as rivers, riparian areas, floodplains, wildlife habitats, forests and grasslands, and migration corridors.
- Encouraging collaboration, cooperation, and partnerships with all mutual domestics, community organizations, municipalities, colonias, and state and federal jurisdictions in determining future land and water uses.

What is the 50-Year Water Action Plan?



The New Mexico Office of the Governor has developed a 50-year water action plan to address the state's water challenges now and in the future. Over the next 50 years, it is predicted that New Mexico will have about 25% less water available in rivers and aquifers (12). Additionally, it is expected that Climate Change will make the state hotter and dryer, change precipitation patterns, and increase occurrence of fires, flooding, and drought. The plan proposes a series of actions to secure New Mexico's water supply through water conservation, new water supplies, and water and watershed protection.

Additional Resources

Statewide

1) NM 50-year water plan
2) 2018 New Mexico State Water Plan – Policies
3) 2018 New Mexico State Water Plan – Technical Report
4) 2018 New Mexico State Water Plan – Legal Landmarks
5) New Mexico Water Data
6) New Mexico Environment Department
7) Climate Change in NM Over the Next 50 Years: Impacts on Water Resources

Regional

1) Regional Water Planning
2) Southwest New Mexico Council of Government

Countywide

1) County Economic Summaries & Data Profiles
2) Hidalgo County

References: **(1)** Drought in New Mexico **(2)** Water Resources & Management – NMED **(3)** New Mexico Water Use By Categories 2015 **(4)** Water Planning in New Mexico – OSE **(5)** Interstate Stream Comission **(6)** NM Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources **(7)** Hidalgo County, NM **(8)** Quarterly Economic Summary Hidalgo County, February 2024 – EDD **(9)** Preliminary work for a hydrologic report on hidalgo county, New Mexico **(10)** Southwest New Mexico Regional Water Plan 2017 **(11)** New Mexico State Water Plan Part II: Technical Report, 2018 **(12)** 50-year Water Action Plan