

NEW MEXICO WATER FACTSHEET

Mora County

August 13th, 2024



SOUTHWEST ENVIRONMENTAL FINANCE CENTER

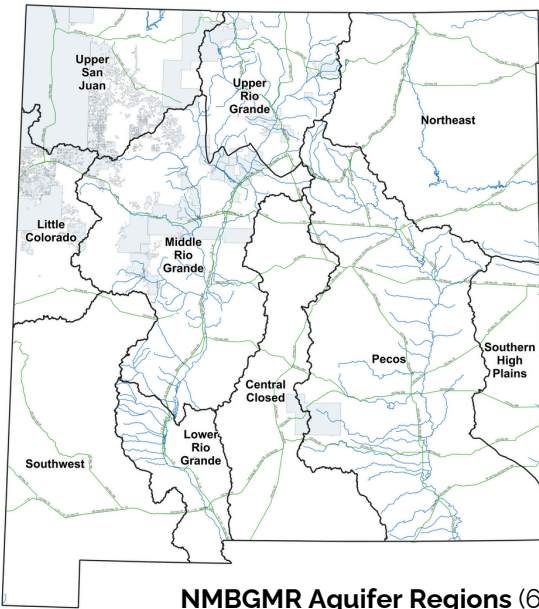
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Water in New Mexico

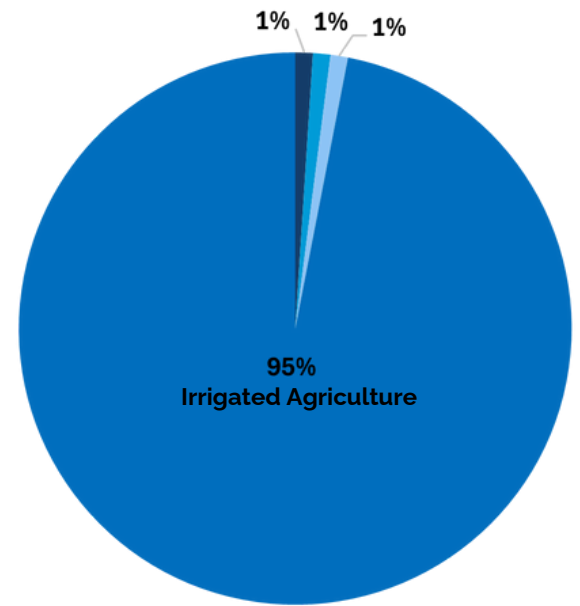
One of New Mexico's biggest challenges is water scarcity. New Mexico has the lowest water to land ratio of all 50 states (1), and climate change is only expected to intensify our water challenges. Water quality is also threatened by contaminants both artificial and natural. Arsenic, uranium, nitrate, 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 Resources Hydrology Programs](#) (6) provide independent geologic mapping collaborative hydrologic research statewide, including the aquifer mapping program (left).



Water in Mora County

Mora County, situated in northeast New Mexico, has a population of 4,189 and an area of 1,9262 square miles (7). Mora County is located within the Arkansas-White-Red River basin and the Pecos River basin (3). Almost all of the water used in the county is surface water. Flows are highly varied from year to year, and the streams are typically characterized by short-duration high flows, with prolonged durations of low flows. The main surface water sources are the Pecos River, the Mora River, and the Canadian River on the east boundary. Smaller surface water sources include the Ocate Creek, the Coyote Creek, and part of the Sapello River, a tributary of the Mora River (8). A small percentage of groundwater is used for public water supply and livestock (3). In Mora County, there are 14 small Mutual Domestic Water Consumer Associations (MDWCAs) and one Water and Sanitation District across the county that serve between 22 to 375 connections each. Most of these systems are in need of infrastructure improvements and many are volunteer-run water systems (9). On the other hand, acequias in Mora are managed as principal local government units for the distribution and use of surface water (8).

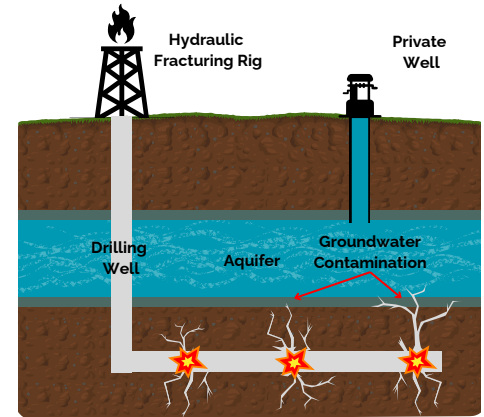


■ Commercial (self-supplied) ■ Livestock (self-supplied)
■ Public Water Supply ■ Irrigated Agriculture

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the water challenges faced by Mora County?

- The 2022 Calf Canyon/Hermit's Peak Fire significantly impacted Mora County (10). The combination of extensive forested land and recent drought conditions has increased the threat of wildfires, as well as the risk of subsequent flooding and sedimentation in streams and reservoirs (8).
- Many water systems in Mora County urgently need infrastructure upgrades, as their components are 20 to 60 years old or even older (9).
- Improperly managed operations associated with hydraulic fracturing for oil and gas extraction have raised concerns. In response, Mora County passed a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing in 2013. This ordinance was challenged in U.S. district court and was struck down in 2015 (8).

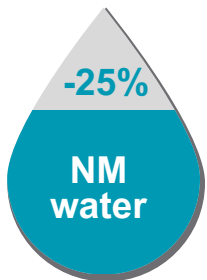


How is Mora moving towards sustainable water management?

Mora County has set goals to meet future water needs in the Mora-San Miguel-Guadalupe Regional Water Plan (8):

- **Create an integrated water plan:** Define water sources and uses, and identify how better management can mitigate environmental issues, water supply concerns, flooding, and other risks (8).
- **Watershed restoration and fire protection:** Minimize fire and flooding damage by implementing forest management practices such as thinning, prescribed burns, and riparian and floodplain restoration (8).
- **Educate on watershed best management practices:** Educate on best management practices for fire prevention, livestock grazing, and road construction and maintenance (8).
- **Improve county data and mapping:** Enhance or create a geohydrology database, map aquifers, and conduct groundwater drilling to lessen vulnerability to drought and ensure dependable groundwater supplies (8).

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 (11). Additionally, it is expected that Climate Change will make the state hotter and drier, 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) [North Central New Mexico Economic Development](#)

District

Countywide

- 1) [County Economic Summaries & Data Profiles](#)
- 2) [Mora County](#)