

Planning our water future in New Mexico

Welcome to Earth Matters, field notes on the geology of New Mexico's enchanting landscapes.

As we've heard all this week as part of this series, water in New Mexico is scarce. And in future years, the science tells us it will likely be even warmer and drier. We need to look ahead with awareness, and thoughtfully plan for a water landscape that will look quite different than it does today.

As a state, New Mexico is looking ahead with eyes wide open, seeing the rather grim reality and, in many ways, actively working to address it. In 2019, legislation was passed – known as the Water Data Act. This statute requires state agencies to collaborate toward making data and information about our water more open and accessible.

The New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources is convening this Water Data Initiative, working with the Interstate Stream Commission, the Office of the State Engineer, the Environment Department, with Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department and many other regional and local groups.

By modernizing how we work with data, we can move toward our warmer and drier future with tools in hand to help us navigate the changes ahead. Just as we use our navigation assistance to find our way to the stores with the best sale prices, we will be able to use modern, accessible data to alert us about water quality concerns, indications of declining aquifers, or perhaps local changes in water use and availability. Also, with more findable and interoperable data, researchers can more accurately measure regional trends and help us discover new views of our hydrologic cycle and our aquifers.

This multiyear project is well underway and as new tools are developed they will be searchable and publicly available at "newmexicowaterdata.org".

Celebrating Earth Science Week, This is Stacy Timmons at the New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources.