

New Mexico Water Leaders Workshop

April 20–22, 2026
Ruidoso, New Mexico

REFERENCE BOOK

OPEN-FILE REPORT 647

Edited by Kate Leary, Alison Elder, and Stacy Timmons

Hosted by New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources
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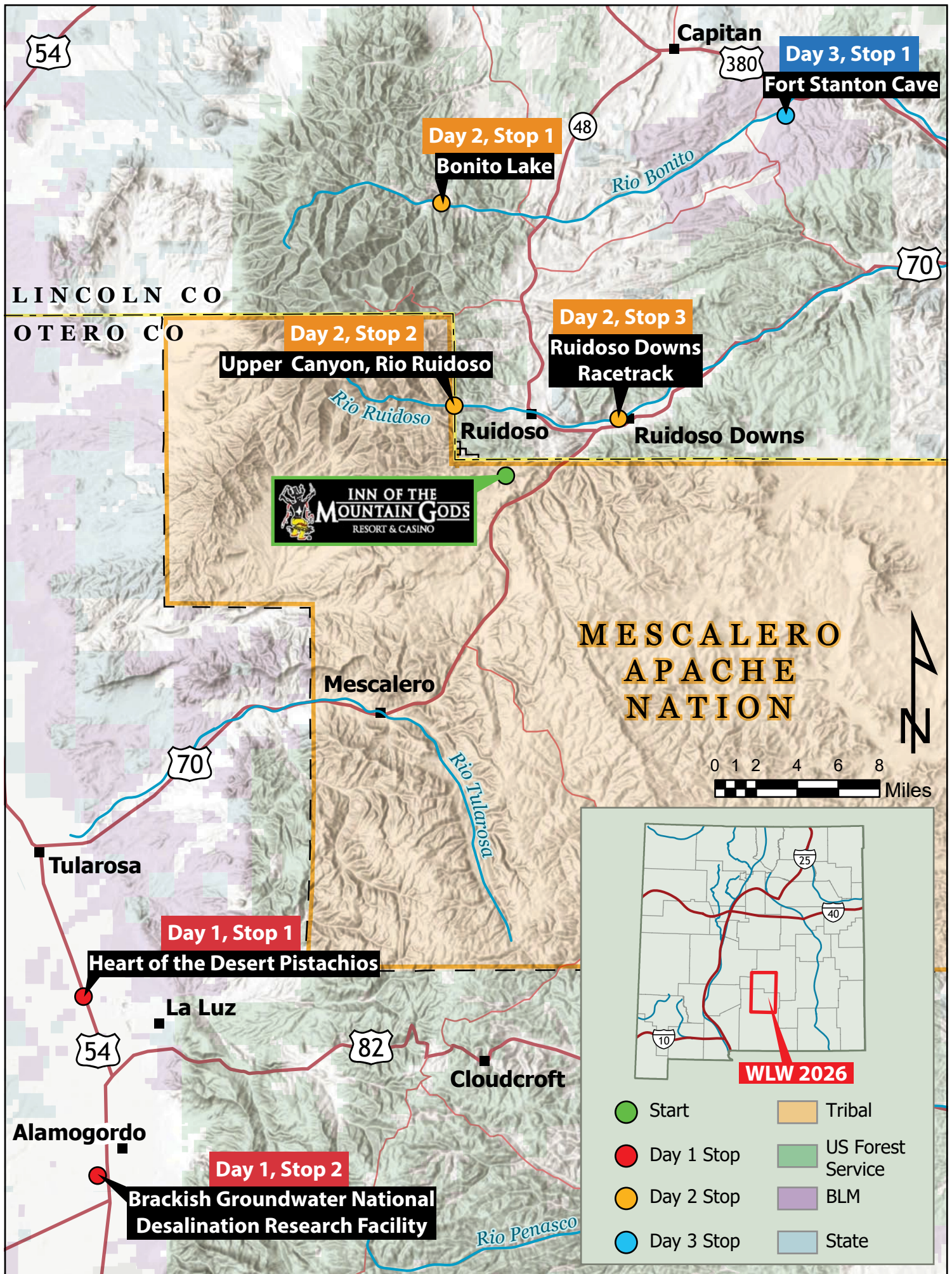


CONTENTS

Regional Map	2
Agenda	3
Presenter Bios and Contact Information	6

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AGENDA

DAY 1: MONDAY, APRIL 20, 2026

11:00 am: Meet at Inn of the Mountain Gods

11:30 am: Depart for field trip by bus

11:30 am–4:30 pm: Field trip

- **Stop 1: Heart of the Desert Pistachios & Wine**
 - History of Pistachio Farming in the Tularosa Basin—Marianne Schweers, Heart of the Desert
 - Hydrogeology of the Tularosa Basin and Sacramento Mountains—Daniel Koning, NM Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources
 - Groundwater Level Monitoring in the Tularosa Basin—Geoff Rawling, NM Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources
 - Water Systems in the Region and Challenges—Cathie Eisen, Walking Water Consulting
- **Stop 2: Brackish Groundwater National Desalination Research Facility (BGNDRF)**
Pants and closed-toed shoes required!
 - Tour by Malynda Cappelle and staff, BGNDRF
 - Alamogordo Desalination Plant Overview—Robert Fowlie, Jacobs Engineering Group

4:30 pm: Return to Ruidoso/Inn of the Mountain Gods

5:30–8:30 pm: Social hour and dinner at Downshift Brewing

DAY 2: TUESDAY, APRIL 21, 2026

7:00–8:00 am: Breakfast at Inn of the Mountain Gods (Mescalero Room)

8:00–8:20 am: Welcome and opening remarks (Exhibition Hall)

8:20–9:20 am: **Panel 1: Statewide Perspectives**

- Water and Infrastructure Update from the Governor's Office—Rebecca Roose, Office of the Governor
- Updates on Water in New Mexico—Elizabeth Anderson, NM Office of the State Engineer
- Interstate Stream Commission Updates—Hannah Riseley-White, NM Interstate Stream Commission
- NM Environment Department Updates—John Rhoderick, NM Environment Department
- Questions (20 minutes)

9:20–10:20 am: **Panel 2: State Investments in Water**

- Overview of State Funding for Water Projects and Progress on the 50-Year Water Action Plan—Tanya Trujillo, NM Office of the State Engineer
- Strategic Water Supply—Jonas Armstrong, NM Environment Department
- Water Reuse Research at New Mexico State University—Tanner Schaub, NM State University
- Aquifer Characterization Update—Stacy Timmons, NM Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources
- Questions (20 minutes)

10:20–10:40 am: Break

10:40–11:50 am: **Panel 3: Local Perspectives: Fire and Flooding in the Ruidoso Area**

- Burn Scars, Rains, and Floods—Mark Fischer, Lincoln County Commission
- Fire and Flooding: A Scientific and Policy Perspective—Laura McCarthy, NM Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department
- Fire and Flooding Mitigation Practices: Mescalero Apache Approaches—East Padilla, Mescalero Apache Tribe

Tuesday, continued

- July 2025 Ruidoso Flooding: A Timeline of Events—Eric Queller, Village of Ruidoso
- Flooding and Cascading Effects—Jeremy Klass, NM Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management
- Questions (20 minutes)

11:50 am–12:00 pm: Get lunch, load buses, and depart for field trip

12:00–5:00 pm: Field trip

- **Stop 1: Bonito Lake**
 - Geology of the Sacramento Mountains—Geoff Rawling, NM Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources
 - Drinking Water for Alamogordo and the Little Bear Fire—Robert Fowle, Jacobs Engineering Group
 - Reforesting after Fires—Jennifer Auchter, New Mexico Reforestation Center
 - U.S. Forest Service Land Management: Postfire Projects—Bill Braun and Jeremy Pritchett, U.S. Forest Service
 - State Forest Management—Nick Smokovich, NM Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department
- **Stop 2: Upper Canyon, Rio Ruidoso (Mescalero Apache Tribe)**
 - Water Infrastructure Damage Due to Post-Fire Flooding—Mark Fischer, Lincoln County Commission
 - Constructing Healthy, Living Forests: Thinning and Restoration Projects—East Padilla, Mescalero Apache Tribe
 - U.S. Forest Service: Postfire Hydrologic Recovery and Reclamation Projects—Brad Allen, U.S. Forest Service
 - Funding for Reclamation and Rebuilding: Natural Resources Conservation Service Buyout Program—Jason Burns, Lincoln County Manager
 - Building a Comprehensive Watershed Restoration Plan for Ruidoso—Joseph Loverich, JE Fuller Hydrology & Geomorphology, Inc.
- **Stop 3: Ruidoso Downs Racetrack**
 - Overview of Flood Impacts at the Racetrack—Lynn Crawford, Mayor of Ruidoso
 - Economic Impacts of Fires and Flooding—Rick Baugh, Ruidoso Downs Racetrack General Manager
 - Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) Program to Help Contain and Stop Wildland Fires—Arron Griewahn, Village of Ruidoso

5:30 pm: Return to Inn of the Mountain Gods

5:30–6:30 pm: Social hour at Inn of the Mountain Gods (Mescalero Room)

6:30–8:30 pm: Dinner and keynote presentation—Robert Mace, Texas State University



ROBERT MACE

Executive Director, The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment /
Professor of Practice, Department of Geography and Environmental Studies,
Texas State University

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Robert Mace has over 30 years of experience in water resources and policy. He earned a BS in geophysics and an MS in hydrology from the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology and a PhD in hydrogeology from the University of Texas at Austin. In 2022, he published a book on groundwater sustainability and is currently working on a book about water resources and climate change.

DAY 3: WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 2026

7:00–8:00 am: Breakfast at Inn of the Mountain Gods (Mescalero Room)

8:00–9:00 am: **Panel 1: Water and Its Role in Economic Development (Exhibition Hall)**

- Economic Development in a Water-Scarce State—Mark Roper, NM Economic Development Department (retired)
- Water and Economic Development: Thinking Across Sectors—Nicole D. Jackson, Sandia National Laboratories
- Data Centers and Water—Ana Pinheiro Privette, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
- Economic Development and Water Needs in the Albuquerque Area—Mark Kelly, Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority
- Questions (20 minutes)

9:00–9:20 am: Break

9:20–10:20 am: **Panel 2: Securing New Mexico's Groundwater**

- The New Mexico Groundwater 360 Report—Gretel Follingstad, Environmental Defense Fund
- Groundwater Challenges in East-Central New Mexico—Ladona Clayton, Ogallala Land & Water Conservancy
- Groundwater Management in the Pecos Valley—Aron Balok, Pecos Valley Artesian Conservancy District
- Groundwater Metering Successes—Joshua Smith, Elephant Butte Irrigation District
- Questions (20 minutes)

10:20–10:40 am: Break

10:40–11:50 am: **Panel 3: Planning Our Water Future**

- Water Security Planning Act Implementation and Regional Planning—Andrew Erdmann, NM Interstate Stream Commission
- Water Quality Challenges with PFAS—Andy Jochems, NM Environment Department
- Water Leadership Programs and the Water Leadership Institutes—Blanca Surgeon, Rural Community Assistance Corporation
- The Role of Alternative Water Supplies in New Mexico's Future—Shannon Spurlock and Bruk Berhanu, Pacific Institute
- Cloud Seeding for Snow in New Mexico—Parker Cardwell, Rainmaker Technology Corporation
- Questions (20 minutes)

12:00–3:30 pm: Lunch and field trip

- **Hydrology of Fort Stanton Cave** with Ben Tobin, National Cave and Karst Research Institute

PRESENTER BIOS AND CONTACT INFORMATION



ELIZABETH ANDERSON

State Engineer, New Mexico Office of the State Engineer
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Elizabeth Anderson, PE, served as senior advisor to former State Engineer Mike Hamman before she was appointed as the New Mexico State Engineer in 2024. Before that role, Ms. Anderson was the chief planning officer for the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority, where she managed the engineering, asset management, and water resources departments. She also worked as an engineering consultant for water and wastewater systems and interned at Sandia National Laboratories. Ms. Anderson holds a BS in civil engineering and an MS in environmental engineering from the University of New Mexico. She is a registered professional engineer, a certified operator for water and wastewater systems, and a LEED-accredited professional.



JONAS ARMSTRONG

Water Protection Division Director, New Mexico Environment Department
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Jonas Armstrong is the director of the New Mexico Environment Department's Water Protection Division and previously served as the department's director of strategic initiatives. Before joining NMED, he served as an attorney for the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission, working with the acequia and water planning programs. Jonas has also worked at the Public Regulation Commission, where he analyzed and advised the commission on legal and policy issues, and at the City of Albuquerque, where he served as general counsel to the Albuquerque Police Department and provided legal services to the Economic Development Department. Jonas began his career with New Mexico's Legislative Finance Committee, analyzing natural resource agency budgets, operations, proposed legislation, and infrastructure projects. He received his Juris Doctor from the University of New Mexico School of Law.



JENNIFER AUCHTER

Director, New Mexico Reforestation Center
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Jennifer Auchter serves as director of the New Mexico Reforestation Center, a multi-institutional initiative working to scale reforestation capacity to 5 million seedlings annually by 2030. Trained in earth science and environmental engineering, with professional roots in the energy industry, Jenn champions forests as critical water infrastructure for New Mexico's communities and watersheds. She holds a PhD from Vanderbilt University, is a current Fulbright Specialist engaged in international science diplomacy, and served on the International Ocean Discovery Program's science evaluation panel. Her career spans academia, industry, and applied research across global environments.



ARON BALOK

Superintendent, Pecos Valley Artesian Conservancy District / Commissioner,
New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission
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Aron Balok is the superintendent for the Pecos Valley Artesian Conservancy District and a commissioner on the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission. He is currently the treasurer of the National Water Resources Association. Aron has a passion for New Mexico's agricultural heritage and a deep appreciation for the complexity of the water issues that face the state and the nation. He has been professionally involved in water-related issues for the past 17 years. Aron was raised on a small cattle ranch in northwestern New Mexico. He attended New Mexico State University, and in 1997 graduated with a BS in agriculture extension education. He and his wife, Hayly, live in Roswell, raising their three daughters.



RICK BAUGH

General Manager, Ruidoso Downs Racetrack & Casino
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Rick Baugh started his career at the famed Phillips Ranch quarter horse facility in Frisco, Texas, in 1981. In 1991, he and his family moved to Ruidoso, New Mexico, where he managed Ruidoso Downs Racetrack & Casino for some 22 years. Rick oversaw operations for both Ruidoso Downs and Zia Park from 2004 through 2007, when Zia Park was eventually purchased by Penn National Gaming. He and his wife, Kim, relocated to Hobbs, New Mexico, where he served as assistant general manager and director of racing until December 2012. Rick held the position of general manager at Sunland Park Racetrack & Casino from February 2013 until September 2021. Rick and Kim returned to Ruidoso Downs Racetrack in October of 2021, where he currently serves as general manager.



BRUK BERHANU

Senior Research Specialist, Pacific Institute
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Dr. Bruk Berhanu is a senior research specialist at the Pacific Institute, where he works on research projects related to water conservation, efficiency, and reuse. Bruk previously worked in the municipal water/wastewater utility industry, supporting infrastructure planning, demand forecasting, and water reuse projects at multiple spatial scales. He received his PhD in civil engineering from the University of Texas at Austin and is a registered professional engineer in Oregon. His doctoral research focused on the feasibility of integrating on-site reuse strategies into water/wastewater utility planning and management.



JASON BURNS

County Manager, Lincoln County
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Jason Burns serves as the county manager for Lincoln County, New Mexico, where he leads strategic initiatives focused on watershed restoration, wildfire mitigation, infrastructure development, and long-term community resilience. With a background in engineering and technical project management, Jason has led the planning and execution of complex, multimillion-dollar infrastructure and water resource projects. He has been instrumental in advancing programs such as the Rio Safe: Lincoln County Watershed Restoration and Community Resilience Program, coordinating with federal, state, tribal, and local partners. Jason is committed to developing practical, sustainable water management solutions that protect communities and natural resources.

MALYNDA CAPPELLE

Facility Manager, Brackish Groundwater National Desalination
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Dr. Malynda Cappelle has more than 25 years of experience in water and energy, specializing in water treatment technologies that improve water and energy security while reducing environmental impacts. She holds a BS and MS in chemical engineering, an MBA, and a PhD in civil engineering. Malynda is the facility manager at the Bureau of Reclamation's Brackish Groundwater National Desalination Research Facility, which supports collaborative research across government, academic, and private partners. Previously, she served as associate director at the University of Texas–El Paso's Center for Inland Desalination Systems and held research and engineering roles at Sandia National Laboratories.



PARKER CARDWELL

Chief Operating Officer, Rainmaker Technology Corporation
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Rainmaker's mission is to increase water abundance in the West and reduce the threat and impact of drought in our communities. By increasing wintertime snowfall, we can rebuild nature's best water infrastructure in snowpack.



LADONA CLAYTON

Executive Director, Ogallala Land & Water Conservancy
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Dr. Ladona Clayton is executive director of the Ogallala Land & Water Conservancy in eastern New Mexico, where she leads a voluntary groundwater conservation initiative in a fully appropriated basin facing long-term decline. Working with agricultural producers and local, philanthropic, state, and federal partners, she advances a model that measures and verifies groundwater conservation to strengthen water resilience for rural communities and support mission continuity at Cannon Air Force Base. Her work focuses on practical, community-based solutions to water scarcity in the Ogallala Aquifer and across the arid West. She also serves on several statewide water policy networks dedicated to advancing collaborative groundwater management.



LYNN CRAWFORD

Mayor, Village of Ruidoso
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Lynn Crawford has served as mayor of Ruidoso since 2018, bringing an entrepreneurial spirit and deep community commitment to the role. A Texas Tech University alumnus, he previously served six years on the Village Council. Crawford champions business growth, tourism, workforce development, affordable housing, and responsible water resource management. He is an entrepreneur with experience in the service industry and currently serves as the general manager of the Ruidoso Jockey Club. Active in numerous civic organizations, Crawford recently served two terms as president of the New Mexico Municipal League. He and his wife, Traci, reside in Ruidoso.



CATHIE EISEN

Founder, Walking Water Consulting
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Cathie Eisen is a New Mexico Environment Department-certified level IV water and wastewater utility operator with over 27 years of experience. She currently serves as chairperson of the NMED Utility Operators Certification Program Advisory Board and secretary of the Land and Natural Resources Advisory Committee for Lincoln County, New Mexico. Her business, Walking Water Consulting, serves small water and wastewater systems and contracts with three local utilities. She has worked in a broad range of positions, including at New Mexico Tech and the New Mexico Bureau of Geology as a hydrogeological water technician.



ANDREW ERDMANN

Water Planning Program Manager, New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission
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Andrew Erdmann is the manager of the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission's Water Planning Program, a position he has been in for the past 4.5 years. The Water Planning Program has three primary areas of responsibility: implementing the state's 50-Year Water Action Plan, implementing the Water Security Planning Act, and state water planning. Since graduating from the University of New Mexico in 2008 with master's degrees in water resources and community planning, Andrew has worked in water for the Office of the State Engineer, the City of Santa Fe, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Interstate Stream Commission.



MARK FISCHER

Commissioner and Chair, Lincoln County Commission
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Commander Mark G. Fischer, U.S. Navy (retired), owns and runs a modest ranch in Arabela with his wife, Tina. He has had successful careers as a U.S. Navy officer (surface warfare), engineering group leader at Intel Corp. in Rio Rancho, and vice president at Matrix International Security Intelligence Center in Roswell. He holds an MS in systems technology from the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, and a BS in biology from the University of Cincinnati, and is a graduate of the U.S. Marine Corps Command and Staff College.



GRETEL FOLLINGSTAD

Senior Manager of Climate-Resilient Water Systems,
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Dr. Gretel Follingstad is a senior manager of climate-resilient water systems at the Environmental Defense Fund. She brings over 18 years of experience in water, land use, and community resilience planning. Gretel is a versatile thought leader and early adopter of resilience-based scholarly research and publications focused on the necessity and urgency of an equitable approach to climate resilience planning. She has broad experience advancing collaborative water resource management and policy, drought risk assessment-based planning, and landcover/land use modeling. Gretel holds a PhD in geography, planning, and design from the University of Colorado, where her doctoral research focused on building water resilience for drought-prone communities under the pressures of increasing aridification. She also holds a master’s in community and regional planning, a Bachelor of Business Administration in international management and Latin American studies, and a certificate in science and technology policy. Gretel is a native New Mexican, is fluent in Spanish, and loves spending time outdoors with her family in northern New Mexico.



ROBERT FOWLIE

Vice President and Client Account Manager, Jacobs Engineering Group
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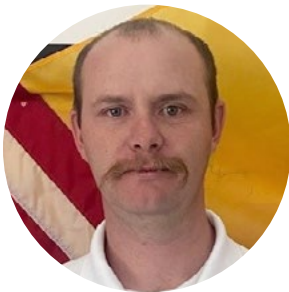
Robert Fowlie is a vice president and client account manager with Jacobs Engineering Group in Albuquerque. He has more than 35 years of experience in the planning, design, and construction of water and wastewater projects, including several brackish water treatment projects in New Mexico, El Paso, and West Texas. Robert is a proud graduate of New Mexico State University and is a registered professional engineer in New Mexico, Texas, and California.



EMILY GEERY

Water Planning Consultant to the New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources, Water + Planning
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Emily Geery is a water planning consultant with expertise in water resources, community and regional planning, and communications. For the past three years, she has helped organize and facilitate the Water Leaders Workshops, bringing together diverse stakeholders to address pressing water challenges and solutions. Prior to consulting, she spent eight years working with the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission, Office of the State Engineer, and Environment Department in various roles. Her experience spans regional and state water planning, the Water Data Initiative, source water protection, and water conservation. Emily holds dual master's degrees in water resources and community and regional planning from the University of New Mexico. She blends her academic background with hands-on experience to create engaging events and educational opportunities focused on water issues. Outside of work, her love for rafting underscores her deep connection to rivers and adventure.



ARRON GRIEWAHN

Director, Lincoln County Office of Emergency Services
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Arron Griewahn has 15 years of experience in the fire and emergency services field. He has served with the U.S. Forest Service, the Alamogordo Fire Department, and the Lincoln County Office of Emergency Services. Over the course of his career, Arron has held leadership roles as emergency services coordinator and emergency services director. In his current role, he focuses on emergency response, preparedness, and fire service administration, supporting and coordinating operations for seven local volunteer fire departments.



NICOLE D. JACKSON

Principal Member of the Technical Staff, Sandia National Laboratories
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Nicole D. Jackson is a principal member of the technical staff at Sandia National Laboratories Earth, Water, and Energy Department. She received a BS and PhD in civil engineering and an MS in materials science and engineering from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, as well as an MS in engineering mechanics from Virginia Tech. Her research focuses on the resilience of critical infrastructure to extreme events and natural hazards, with an emphasis on the electric grid, renewable energy, water resources, and food systems.



ANDY JOCHEMS

Source Water Protection Team Lead, New Mexico Environment Department
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Andy Jochems leads the Source Water Protection Team at the New Mexico Environment Department, where he oversees a team of three in developing source water protection plans focused on mitigating wildfire-related and emerging contaminant threats to public water utilities. He also chairs the interagency per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) technical group. Andy previously worked for the New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources on geologic mapping to delineate hydrostratigraphic units critical for groundwater reserves. He holds an MS in geology from Utah State University and a BS in environmental science from the University of New Mexico.



MARK KELLY

Water Resources Division Manager, Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority
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Mark Kelly is the manager of the Water Resources Division at the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority. He has been at the Water Authority for over 15 years, holding positions in the Compliance and Water Resources Divisions. Mr. Kelly is a licensed professional engineer in the state of New Mexico and has a degree in environmental engineering from New Mexico Tech. In his free time, he enjoys spending time with family, camping, and refereeing rugby.



DANIEL KONING

Senior Field Geologist, New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources
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Daniel Koning is currently a senior field geologist with the New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources. He obtained a bachelor's degree from the University of California–Riverside before joining a firm called EMCON, where he worked in a group specializing in environmental geology at solid waste dumps in California. Mr. Koning then received a master's degree from the University of New Mexico. Since then, his career has largely focused on mapping the stratigraphy and structures of the Santa Fe Group in New Mexico, but he also has experience mapping middle Cenozoic volcanic rocks and Cretaceous strata. He has been a lead author on 38 geologic maps and has participated in hydrogeologic studies of aquifers in the San Agustin Plains and the Albuquerque, Española, and Tularosa Basins. He has also mapped the Tularosa Basin, from Oliver Lee State Park north to Carrizozo, and written four papers on this work that focus on the area's stratigraphy and geologic history.



KATE LEARY

Water Education Program Manager, New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources

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Dr. Kate Leary is the Water Education Program manager at the New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources. Kate has a BA in geology and religion from Whitman College and a PhD in geology from Arizona State University. Before joining NMBGMR, she was an assistant professor of hydrology at the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology. Kate's passion is rivers—both the processes of how rivers evolve through time and how society interacts with and utilizes river systems. As an assistant professor, she studied the nitty-gritty details of sediment transport in sand-bedded river systems such as the Rio Grande. As manager of the Water Education Program, Kate is dedicated to building educational experiences for New Mexico water policymakers and decision-makers to explore, digest, and discuss present and future water challenges facing our state.



JOSEPH LOVERICH

Vice President, JE Fuller Hydrology & Geomorphology, Inc.

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Joseph Loverich is a water resources engineer and vice president at JE Fuller Hydrology & Geomorphology, Inc., with 23 years of experience in hydrology, hydraulics, flood risk analysis, and post-wildfire hazard assessment. He supports communities across Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado in understanding and mitigating complex flood and debris-flow risks. Joe has led major post-wildfire evaluations in New Mexico following the Hermits Peak/Calf Canyon, Salt, and South Fork Fires, delivering rapid-response assessments, watershed recovery analyses, and mitigation strategies. Joe holds a BS in civil engineering from Northern Arizona University and is a professional engineer and certified floodplain manager.



LAURA MCCARTHY

State Forester, New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department

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Laura McCarthy was appointed as New Mexico State Forester in March 2019. She serves as the Forestry Division director and oversees forest management and wildfire response on a jurisdiction of 43 million acres of state and private lands, with 145 full-time equivalent staff and 200 wildland firefighters. She was a lead in the development of the federal Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Act in 2009 and in updating New Mexico's Forest Conservation Act with the Forest and Watershed Restoration Act, Prescribed Burning Act, and Timber Grading Act. Previously, she worked at The Nature Conservancy, where she created the Rio Grande Water Fund to accelerate the pace and scale of forest restoration activities in northern New Mexico. Ms. McCarthy holds a Master of Forestry from Yale University and a BA in government and legal studies from Bowdoin College.

JEREMY PRITCHETT

Recreation Management Specialist, U.S. Forest Service
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Jeremy Pritchett was born in Ruidoso and has worked for the Lincoln National Forest since 2003. He has held multiple positions with the agency, including work with fuels crews, fire engines, hotshots, and trails. He currently works as a recreation management specialist. Jeremy graduated from Northern Arizona University in 2007 with a bachelor's degree in parks and recreation management.



ANA PINHEIRO PRIVETTE

Managing Director, Center for Secure Water, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
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Dr. Ana Pinheiro Privette works at the intersection of science, engineering, technology, and data systems, with over 25 years of experience across government, industry, and academia. Trained as an environmental engineer and earth scientist, she began her career at NASA and NOAA, advancing remote sensing applications for land surface temperature and hydrologic modeling. She currently serves as managing director of the Center for Secure Water at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Her experience includes leadership roles at Amazon and Amazon Web Services, as well as directing major cross-sector initiatives such as the White House Partnership for Resilience and Preparedness and the Climate Data Initiative.



ERIC QUELLER

Emergency Manager, Village of Ruidoso
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Eric Queller serves as the emergency manager for the Village of Ruidoso, leading community-wide preparedness, response, and long-term recovery efforts. His leadership spans multiple complex disasters, including the 2024 South Fork and Salt Fires, subsequent flooding, the 2025 post-burn-scar floods, and recent winter storm impacts. In these incidents, Eric led emergency operations center coordination and supported response and recovery activities for multiple presidentially declared disasters. He earned a Bachelor of Business Administration with a specialization in nonprofit management from Midwestern State University in Texas. His leadership and public safety work have been recognized by the Texas Emergency Management Association, the Texas State Senate, the New Mexico House of Representatives for his leadership during the South Fork and Salt Fires, and the New Mexico Association of Emergency Management Professionals, which named him the 2024 Emergency Manager of the Year. He is also a certified New Mexico emergency manager.



GEOFF RAWLING

Hydrogeologist, New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources
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Geoff Rawling works as a hydrogeologist in the New Mexico Bureau of Geology's Aquifer Mapping and Monitoring and Geologic Mapping Programs. His responsibilities include collecting physical and chemical hydrologic data, conducting geologic mapping, and performing subsequent data analysis and interpretation. He has mapped all or part of more than twenty 7.5-minute quadrangles across New Mexico and created several regional geologic maps, performing all compilations of new and legacy geologic mapping, subsurface geologic interpretation, and digital cartography. In addition to preparing technical reports and peer-reviewed scientific papers, he frequently presents the results of Bureau of Geology research programs to diverse audiences, including scientists, conservation districts, state and local government officials, and groups of concerned citizens.



JOHN RHODERICK

Deputy Cabinet Secretary of Administration, New Mexico Environment Department
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John Rhoderick is the deputy cabinet secretary of administration at the New Mexico Environment Department and has served in this role for the last 16 months. Previously, he served as the director of the Water Protection Division within the Environment Department. John has been with the department for 18 years and spent 8 years in local government, handling public works construction of water and wastewater infrastructure, as well as other infrastructure projects. Before entering public service, John worked as a project manager and health and safety professional with a private firm handling environmental remediation projects at Superfund sites in the western states.



HANNAH RISELEY-WHITE

Director, New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission
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Hannah Riseley-White serves as director of the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission. Previously, she served as NMISC deputy director and chief of the Pecos River Bureau. The NMISC works to support New Mexico in complying with eight interstate compacts, as well as federal environmental regulations, including the Endangered Species Act. In addition, NMISC conducts statewide and regional water planning. Hannah holds a master's degree in environmental science and management from the University of California-Santa Barbara. She is a native New Mexican and enjoys spending time with family and exploring our beautiful outdoor landscapes.



REBECCA ROOSE

Infrastructure Advisor, Office of the Governor
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In October 2023, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham appointed Rebecca Roose to serve as New Mexico's infrastructure advisor. In this role, Rebecca provides strategic leadership for federal and state infrastructure programs to support resilient communities across New Mexico. In her former role as deputy cabinet secretary for the New Mexico Environment Department, Rebecca oversaw New Mexico environmental and public health initiatives across all NMED programs and served as the agency's lead on infrastructure, tribal relations, and water policy. In 2022, Rebecca was one of four executive committee members providing leadership for the New Mexico Water Policy and Infrastructure Task Force. She also served the state as NMED's Water Protection Division director for two years. Before joining the state government in 2019, Rebecca led national environmental programs at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in Washington, D.C., over her 13-year federal career. Rebecca received her law degree from the University of New Mexico School of Law and her undergraduate degree in geography from Valparaiso University.



MARK ROPER

New Mexico Economic Development Department (retired)
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Mark Roper just wrapped up a 30-year career in economic development, retiring from the New Mexico Economic Development Department. During his time at the EDD, he held numerous titles, including leader of the Community, Business and Rural Development team, division director of economic development, acting secretary of economic development, and tribal liaison. He has been involved with some of the state's biggest projects, including Facebook, Netflix, Intel, and Pacific Fusion. Mark was born and raised in Raton, where his dad served 40 years on the Raton Water Board, 25 of those as chairman. Mark is a proud seventh-generation New Mexican who has always sought to improve the lives of New Mexicans.



TANNER SCHAUB

Assistant Vice President for Research, New Mexico State University
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Dr. Tanner Schaub is the assistant vice president for research at New Mexico State University, where he leads the Research Infrastructure and Partnerships unit and founded the university's Research Cores Program, which coordinates institutional core facilities and shared research infrastructure. He manages campus-wide strategies that support research growth, including industry partnerships, faculty startup and cost-sharing programs, high-performance computing initiatives, collaborations with the U.S. Department of Energy national laboratories, and major institutional research initiatives. Dr. Schaub is a research leadership fellow of the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities Council on Research and also serves as a research professor, with research focused on applying advanced high-resolution mass spectrometry to complex problems in environmental systems, biological science, fuels, and materials. He began his research career as a staff scientist at the National High Magnetic Field Laboratory.



JOSHUA SMITH

General Manager and Treasurer, Elephant Butte Irrigation District
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Josh Smith is the general manager and treasurer of the Elephant Butte Irrigation District, having held the position since October 2024. Prior, he practiced law in Las Cruces for 17 years in the areas of water, business, and real estate law, and is a partner in the real estate brokerage of Saenz & Smith. A native of southern New Mexico, he grew up on a ranch in the Bootheel and graduated from Deming High School. Josh attended New Mexico State University, receiving an undergraduate degree in agricultural economics and agricultural business before attending law school at Texas Tech.



NICK SMOKOVICH

Capitan District Forester, New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department Forestry Division
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Nick Smokovich is the Capitan District forester. The district spans the southeast corner of New Mexico and comprises Chaves, De Baca, Eddy, Lea, Lincoln, Otero, and Roosevelt Counties. The district provides technical assistance to landowners and has wildland fire suppression responsibilities that cover 30,877 square miles, encompassing nearly 8.6 million acres of private, nonfederal, and nonmunicipal lands. Nick provides leadership and technical assistance on forest and watershed health projects. He joined the Capitan District in February 2018 after working as the timber management officer for the Socorro District since 2001. Nick earned his bachelor's degree in park, recreation, and natural resource management from Slippery Rock University in Pennsylvania.



SHANNON SPURLOCK

Senior Engagement Specialist, Public Policy and Practice Uptake,
Pacific Institute
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Shannon Spurlock is a senior engagement specialist, Public Policy and Practice Uptake at the Pacific Institute, where she advances public policy and the adoption of strategies that elevate water reuse and stormwater capture. She is a past president of WateReuse Colorado and is passionate about building consensus to achieve outcomes that reflect the shared values and priorities of diverse stakeholder groups.



BLANCA SURGEON

Building Rural Economies Training Coordinator, Rural Community Assistance Corporation
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Blanca Surgeon joined the Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC) in 1995 as an assistant provider, trainer, facilitator, community organizer, and coach. During her tenure at RCAC, Blanca has crafted a long and accomplished career working in various roles to promote and implement leadership development, enhance organizational capacity, and build regional collaborations. Blanca's passion is to work directly with organizations and communities regionally; thus, she spends a lot of time on the ground at the forefront. She is a graduate of the University of New Mexico with a master's degree in water resources administration. Currently, Blanca is the chair of the Water Environment Federation's Small Systems Community. She is a past member of the New Mexico Drinking Water Advisory Committee, the EPA Environmental Financial Advisory Board, and the National Drinking Water Advisory Council.



MIKE TIMMONS

Director and State Geologist, New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources

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Dr. J. Michael Timmons is the director and state geologist at the New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources. Mike received a BS in geology from the University of Nebraska at Omaha, followed by an MSc and PhD in geology from the University of New Mexico. In 2004, Mike was hired as a field geologist and manager of the bureau's Geologic Mapping Program, where he was tasked with leading one of the nation's most successful mapping programs. During the first 18 years of Mike's leadership, the program expanded through soft money contracts, geologic mapping staff, and GIS staff. The New Mexico Bureau of Geology remains the nation's leading geologic mapping program, securing more funding from the U.S. Geological Survey's National Cooperative Mapping Program than any other state survey. As director and state geologist, Mike sees that the Bureau of Geology plays a critical role in the future health and prosperity of New Mexico. Whether it is understanding the quality, quantity, and distribution of the state's fresh and brackish water resources, understanding the availability and potential economic value of critical and strategic minerals, or understanding the geologic framework for geothermal energy or natural storage of carbon and hydrogen in a low-carbon energy future, the bureau has the institutional knowledge, data, and research skills for evaluating all of these resources.



STACY TIMMONS

Associate Director of Hydrogeology Programs, New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources

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Stacy Timmons is an associate director of hydrogeology programs at the New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources. As a hydrogeologist working with the Bureau of Geology since 2004, Stacy's experience has grown from collecting water data and reporting on a wide range of hydrogeologic research to working toward building programs and applied science projects to respond to the state's greatest hydrogeologic science needs. Building from the bureau's Aquifer Mapping and Monitoring Program, Stacy launched the implementation of the Water Data Initiative in 2019 and the Water Leaders Education Program in 2022. Additionally, since 2019, Stacy's service to the state of New Mexico has broadened to include appointments as a commissioner on the Interstate Stream Commission (2020–present) and the Water Quality Control Commission (2019–2022).



TANYA TRUJILLO

Special Advisor to the Governor and Deputy State Engineer, Office of the State Engineer

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Tanya Trujillo is a water lawyer with more than 20 years of experience working on complex natural resources management issues and interstate and transboundary water agreements. She currently serves as a special advisor to the governor and deputy state engineer. Before that, Tanya served as the assistant secretary for water and science at the U.S. Department of the Interior, a project director with the Colorado River Sustainability Campaign, and the executive director of the Colorado River Board of California. She has served as senior counsel to the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources and as counselor to the assistant secretary for water and science at Interior. A native New Mexican, Tanya attended Stanford University and the University of Iowa College of Law.

NOTES

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WATER LEADERS WORKSHOP
2026

