

NEW MEXICO INTERSTATE STREAM COMMISSION

2022/2023 LOWER RIO GRANDE WATER CONSERVATION PILOT PROGRAM



APPLICATION INFORMATION SUMMARY REPORT

In late July and early August 2021, the Interstate Stream Commission hosted three on-line application information sessions for agricultural groundwater users in the Rincon and Mesilla Basins. Coverage of the Lower Rio Grande Water Conservation Pilot Program appeared July 23, 2021 in the Las Cruces Bulletin and other media outlets announcing the meetings and providing a link to information about the program and registration to the general public. The information sessions provided guidance about the purpose of the Lower Rio Grande Water Conservation Pilot Program and the application process.

The sessions were held July 29, August 3 and August 5, 2021. To accommodate a busy growing season and the diverse needs of agricultural groundwater users, sessions were held morning, midday, and early evening. The sessions were moderated by Lilly Irvin-Vitela, MCRP, an independent consultant and staffed by:

- John Longworth, Special Assistant to the State Engineer, Office of the State Engineer;
- Linda Tenorio, Project Manager, Interstate Stream Commission;
- Ryan Serrano, Lower Rio Grande Water Master, Office of the State Engineer;
- Jeffery Nawrocki, IT, Office of the State Engineer;
- Dave Romero, President and Hydrologist, Balleau Groundwater, Inc.

Groundwater users in the region were notified directly via postcard about the meetings. Fliers, meeting dates, and agendas were also posted on the Office of the State Engineer website along with a host of resources to support potential applicants in making an informed decision about the Pilot Program.

A total of 29 people attended across all three sessions. While most participants were farmers or ranchers, other interested people also attended. The application period opens August 9, 2021. Completed applications are due by midnight on August 23, 2021. A link to the information session presentation and application are available at <https://www.ose.state.nm.us>.

The following agenda was repeated at each session. A list of questions and answers are included in the next section of this report:



APPLICATION INFORMATION SESSION AGENDA

New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission

2022-2023 Lower Rio Grande
Groundwater Conservation Pilot Program

Agenda Item	Topic	Time
I. Welcome and Introductions	A. Welcome B. Introductions C. Road Map of the Meeting D. Ground Rules	8 minutes
II. Overview	A. Grant Objectives B. Enabling Legislation C. Phase 1 Highlights D. Eligibility E. Q&A about Overview	15 minutes
III. Application	A. Requirements B. Process C. Database D. Q&A about Application	35 minutes
IV. Logistics	A. Funding B. Timeline C. Q&A about Logistics	20 minutes
V. Next Steps	A. Outstanding Q&A B. Reminder- Important Dates C. Contact Information D. Website	12 minutes

BACKGROUND

- The State Legislature appropriated \$7 million in 2020 to the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission (NMISC) to develop and fund a Water Management Pilot Project for the Lower Rio Grande for fiscal years 2020 through 2023.
- The Groundwater Conservation Pilot Program (Program) is the first phase of this Water Management Project.
- Under the initial year of the Program, conservation grants were provided to compensate irrigators for temporarily conserving groundwater by not irrigating previously irrigated parcels.
- During this period, a total of 24 grant agreements were awarded to participants, encompassing 1,272 acres and a total of \$865,000 in grant payments.
- Between August 9th and August 23rd, 2021, the NMISC will be accepting grant applications from members of the agricultural community that are willing to conserve groundwater during 2022-2023.
- Successful applicants will receive grant funding to temporarily stop the use of groundwater for an 18-month period beginning January 1, 2022.

TIMELINE

Grant applications for 2022-2023 will be accepted between **August 9th at 12:01 AM** and must be **submitted online or postmarked no later than 11:59 PM on August 23rd, 2021.**

The 18-month grant period will begin January 1, 2022 and end June 30, 2023

ELIGIBILITY

Groundwater irrigated parcel(s) are eligible for participation in the Program, if:

- (1) The irrigated acreage within the parcel is at least 10 acres in size.
 - a. Partial parcels are acceptable, provided the 10-acre minimum groundwater irrigated acreage requirement is met.
 - b. Multiple parcels are allowed so long as the total contiguous groundwater irrigated acreage meets the 10-acre minimum requirement.
- (2) The acreage has been irrigated with groundwater only, or a combination of groundwater and surface water, for at least four years out of the five years between 2016 and 2020.
- (3) The water rights associated with the acreage is in good standing with the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer (NMOSE) Water Rights Division.
- (4) Other due diligence contingencies determined by the NMISC are satisfied.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM 2021 INFORMATION SESSIONS

Q- If people have questions while completing the application, who should they contact?

A- Linda Tenorio Linda.Tenorio@state.nm.us or call 505-383-4058.

Q- How can Spanish-speakers navigate the application process?

A- Ryan Serrano Ryan.Serrano@state.nm.us or call 575-524-6161 ext. 1007.

Q- What is the benefit of applying?

A- Participants help conserve water now and for New Mexico's future to help create greater sustainability. They also receive payment.

Q- How was the \$1,100 per acre amount determined?

A- It was based on analysis from the first round of the pilot program, market research, and the extended 18-month timeline. It also includes an additional \$50 incentive per acre.

Q- What is meant by 10 contiguous acres? How does this work if there are roads or other improvements on the property?

A- Applicants with parcels 10 acres or larger that have improvements will be considered.

Q- Will participating have a negative impact on an applicant's water rights in the future?

A- No.

Q- If I've participated before and want to participate in this round too, can I use the same parcels of land I used previously?

A- Yes.

Q- Can I use land for livestock grazing using Elephant Butte Irrigation District water?

A- Surface water cannot be used on Grant Agreement parcels to facilitate the consumptive use by a crop. However, contact EBID to indicate your interest in selling the water available to your account through EBID's administrative policies.

Q- Do I have to apply using e-mail?

A- You may apply via e-mail and it is the preferred way to apply. However, you may print out the application and complete it by hand and mail your application. Directions about both options are on the application.

Q- What happens to water rights in the second half of 2023?

A- Water rights will be pro-rated for the remaining 6 months of