



For immediate release:

August 6, 2021

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Protecting New Mexico's Water in the Lower Rio Grande

(LAS CRUCES, New Mexico) – The New Mexico 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 9-23, 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.

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.
 - Partial parcels are acceptable, provided the 10-acre minimum groundwater irrigated acreage requirement is met.
 - 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.

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(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.

For more information about the Program, visit the NMISC website at --

<https://www.ose.state.nm.us/LRGPilot/index.php>

The Office of the State Engineer is charged with the administering the state's water resources. The State Engineer has power over the supervision, measurement, appropriation, and distribution of all surface and groundwater in New Mexico, including streams and rivers that cross state boundaries. The State Engineer is also Secretary of the Interstate Stream Commission.

The nine-member Interstate Stream Commission is charged with separate duties including protecting New Mexico's right to water under eight interstate stream compacts, ensuring the state complies with each of those compacts as well as investigating, conserving and protecting the waters of the State, in addition to water planning.

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