Ecological Flows in New Mexico - It Has Been Done

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State Ecological Flows
State Storage Permits

Rio Grande & Pecos River Biological Opinion flows stored in “Conservation Pools”

The State Engineer is permitting storage of water needed to support Biological Opinion requirements in Rio Grande & Pecos River reservoirs. Original authorizations of reservoirs should be expanded to clarify the ability of right holders to store water for ecological flows.
The New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission has applied for and received surface water permits to augment the flows of the Pecos River for ESA and Compact compliance.

** Vaughan Pipeline:**
Groundwater irrigation rights transferred to instream flow limited to transfer of Consumptive Use Right

** Seven River Wellfield:**
Surface and groundwater irrigation rights transfers to instream flow in progress
The New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission is authorized to acquire water for ESA & Compact compliance.

**Vaughan Pipeline:**

Groundwater irrigation rights purchased by New Mexico and then leased to Reclamation to meet Biological Opinion minimum instream flow target.

Rio Grande SWR effort underway to offset new habitat surface water ET.
Water rights may be temporarily “retired” but protected from threat of abandonment or forfeiture if placed in a State Engineer approved Conservation Water Project.

**Pecos River CWP:**

Sufficient groundwater irrigation rights purchased and retired by New Mexico to overcome 10,000 a/ft/yr compact delivery deficit.

BLM has enrolled surface irrigation rights in Pecos CWP to maintain flows in the Black River.

**SW NM:**

2 CWP Applications in process.
Local Flows

Pecos Valley Artesian District:
Long-term water right retirement program to regain groundwater elevation.

Carlsbad Irrigation District:
Historically leased surface water to meet Compact delivery requirements.

Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District:
Cut gross diversions in response to environmental pressure.

Photo by Cliff Crawford
The New Mexico Living Rivers Program

The Nature Conservancy’s Living Rivers Program, protecting New Mexico’s freshwater ecosystems for nature, people and the future.

Photo © Anthony Howell