



NEW MEXICO

OUTDOOR RECREATION DIVISION

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Outdoor Recreation Division Celebrates 5 Years of Accomplishments *The division has invested over \$20M in the OR industry*

SANTA FE, N.M. – As the Outdoor Recreation Division (ORD) of the New Mexico Economic Development Department (EDD) commemorates its milestone 5th Anniversary this April, we reflect on a journey marked by innovation, growth, and unwavering commitment to the state's outdoor economy.

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham created ORD in 2019, identifying outdoor recreation as a key target sector to diversify the economy. At that time, there were eight Outdoor Recreation Divisions nationally. Today, 21 of 50 states (42%) have outdoor recreation offices.

“Since I signed the law that created the Outdoor Recreation Division five years ago, New Mexico has become a national model for increasing investment in outdoor trails, infrastructure, and resources to create jobs and bring more opportunities to rural communities,” Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham said. “I look forward to building on this foundation as we expand our partnerships and build a robust and resilient economy for all New Mexicans.”

The division’s investments in New Mexico’s land, water, and cultural heritage through strategic initiatives in this dynamic sector continue to be a consistent economic driver.

According to 2022 data from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), New Mexico’s outdoor industry employs over 28,000 people and contributes \$2.4 billion annually to the state GDP. The BEA report marked 2022 as the largest recorded measure for outdoor recreation contribution to GDP and outdoor recreation compensation in New Mexico since the agency began tracking the sector in 2012.

“New Mexico’s rich natural and cultural resources are a tremendous economic benefit to our state and every citizen,” Acting EDD Cabinet Secretary Mark Roper said. “ORD’s efforts over the last five years have led to increased access to, participation in, and discovery of the endless positive impacts of outdoor recreation. The connection between people enjoying the outdoors and increasing our state’s financial strength is a powerful cycle leveraged by ORD’s work.”

The division’s mission to increase equitable access to the outdoors for all New Mexicans, ensure healthy outcomes, environmental stewardship, and economic prosperity is demonstrated through record grant funding reaching communities statewide and through strong programs that uplift individuals in the state’s OR industry.

Since 2019, some of the top achievements of ORD initiatives include:

- Creating the first-of-its-kind Outdoor Equity Fund, a grant program that has funded nearly 250 organizations with \$5.7 million and introduced over 72,000 young New Mexicans to the outdoors.
- Awarding over \$13 million to 134 projects in 26 counties through the Outdoor Recreation Trails+ Grant, an outdoor infrastructure funding program supporting projects that enhance community outdoor recreation opportunities and contribute to economic development, prosperity, and wellness.
- Awarding \$874,000 through the state’s first Outdoor Marketing Grant program, funding 41 recipients in 17 counties to magnify marketing initiatives that increase outdoor participation, stewardship, and access.
- Sponsoring a paid high school outdoor internship program that has placed 67 students in outdoor industry jobs with 14 New Mexico employers, catalyzing over \$177,000 in funding to better connect underserved and nontraditional student interns to college and careers.
- Conducting the New Mexico Uplift Initiative, a year-long statewide outdoor recreation asset and project audit creating county-by-county and state-level recommendations and best practices for equitable outdoor access to improve residents' and visitors' quality of life.
- Ensuring outdoor recreation was considered under Gov. Lujan Grisham’s 30 x 30 Executive Order.
- Successfully leading a petition to designate 125 miles of rivers in New Mexico as Outstanding National Resource Waters based on their “outstanding” recreational significance to the state.
- Awarding two \$50,000 grants to incubators to assist early-stage outdoor businesses.
- Investing \$60,000 in three programs to support 70+ companies through the Outdoor Recreation Business Accelerator grant.
- Hosting the annual Adventure Pitch competition, an outdoor business entrepreneur event that has awarded \$35,000 in cash prizes to startups pitching their outdoor recreation business ideas.
- Reigniting collaboration and serving as an active leader in the designation of the Rio Grande Trail, driving the project forward.
- Developing a statewide cradle-to-career education and workforce development strategy, in partnership with the National Park Service’s Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program, to identify New Mexico outdoor industry career opportunities and create pathways for our state’s youth.

“Our commitment to sustainability and conservation while expanding access and supporting our outdoor recreation economy has remained steadfast,” ORD Director Karina Armijo said. “I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all who have contributed to our success – from our dedicated staff to our valued partners, stakeholders, and residents of New Mexico. We have achieved so much through your support, dedication, and passion.”

ORD plans to continue its strong track record of funding projects that increase access and connect people to the outdoors. An additional \$10 million of FY25 Trails+ Grant funding was designated during the 2024 legislative session.

This year’s legislative session marked another historic milestone for New Mexico with the passing of Senate Bill 9, allocating \$300 million for the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund. The fund creates the state’s first-ever dedicated source of recurring funding for land and water conservation, agriculture, and outdoor recreation projects.

ORD is gaining momentum fueled by the state’s notable investment in outdoor recreation. The division looks forward to the next chapter as it continues to build a more vibrant, sustainable, and connected outdoor community in New Mexico.

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Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signs the bill that created New Mexico's Outdoor Recreation Division in 2019.



Gila Back Country Horsemen of New Mexico - Trail work on Bear Canyon Trail for the Gila Centennial through a Trails+ Grant.



New Gateway to the Desert Kiosk at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park in Doña Ana County.



Outdoor Equity Fund awardee Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program youth outdoors for education programming.

The mission of the Outdoor Recreation Division, a division of the New Mexico Economic Development Department, is to increase equitable access to the outdoors for all New Mexicans, ensuring healthy outcomes, environmental stewardship, and economic prosperity.