



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**New Mexico Department of Agriculture to host Healthy Soil Program virtual listening sessions**

*Eligible Entities, farmers and ranchers invited to participate*

LAS CRUCES – The New Mexico Department of Agriculture’s Healthy Soil Program is hosting four virtual listening sessions in an effort to gather input, encourage soil health project ideas and discuss grant application steps.

Eligible Entity leaders and representatives – as well as farmers and ranchers who are members of the Eligible Entities’ communities – are invited to participate. As defined in the 2019 Healthy Soil Act, Eligible Entities include tribes, nations and pueblos; land grants and acequias; Soil and Water Conservation Districts; and New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service.

The listening sessions are designed to hear from Eligible Entity communities and the farmers and ranchers within them:

- Tuesday, March 23: Nations, tribes and pueblos.
- Thursday, March 25: Land grants and acequias.
- Tuesday, March 30: Soil and Water Conservation Districts.
- Thursday, April 1: NMSU Cooperative Extension Service.

To view times and to register for a listening session, please go to:

<https://www.nmda.nmsu.edu/nmda-homepage/divisions/apr/healthy-soil-program/>.

“We are focusing on specific Eligible Entity communities during each session, so those individuals may be heard,” said New Mexico Secretary of Agriculture Jeff Witte. “We aim to improve upon the entire Healthy Soil Program process every year. The listening sessions will allow us to gather input regarding the program, to encourage soil health project ideas and to discuss the next steps, including applying for grant funding using our new web-based process.”

NMDA will host a final session for all Eligible Entity types in mid-May. During that session, NMDA staff will introduce the new web-based application that Eligible Entities and farmers/ranchers will use to apply for a Healthy Soil Program grant.

Grant funding may be used for agricultural projects in New Mexico that focus on one or more of five basic soil health principles named in the Healthy Soil Act: keeping the soil covered; minimizing soil disturbance on cropland and minimizing external inputs; maximizing biodiversity; maintaining a living root; and integrating animals into land management, including grazing animals, birds, beneficial insects or keystone species, such as earthworms.

Created in 2019, the purpose of the Healthy Soil Program is to promote and support farming and ranching systems and other forms of land management that increase soil organic matter, aggregate stability, microbiology and water retention to improve the state's soil health, yield and profitability.

For more information, visit [www.nmda.nmsu.edu](http://www.nmda.nmsu.edu), email [hsp@nmda.nmsu.edu](mailto:hsp@nmda.nmsu.edu) or call 575-646-2642.

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The strip-till conservation system aligns with the Healthy Soil Act's basic soil health principles. The New Mexico Department of Agriculture is hosting four virtual listening sessions for its Healthy Soil Program in an effort to gather input, encourage soil health project ideas and discuss grant application steps. (Photo courtesy of New Mexico Department of Agriculture)



By only disturbing the portion of the soil that is to contain the seed row, the strip-till conservation system aligns with the Healthy Soil Act's basic soil health principles. The New Mexico Department of Agriculture is hosting four virtual listening sessions for its Healthy Soil Program in an effort to gather input, encourage soil health project ideas and discuss grant application steps. (Photo courtesy of New Mexico Department of Agriculture)