



EDD

ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT

OUTDOOR RECREATION DIVISION

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\$2.74 Million in Funding Awarded Through Trails+ Grant *Trails+ Grant funds projects that expand access to the outdoors and helps grow the New Mexico outdoor industry*

SANTA FE, N.M. – The Outdoor Recreation Division (ORD) of the Economic Development Department (EDD) announced the first 15 recipients of 2022 Outdoor Recreation Division Trails+ grant funding. ORD is investing \$2.74 million in these first-round outdoor recreation projects to expand access to the outdoors and grow the outdoor industry throughout New Mexico.

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham identified the outdoor recreation industry as a key target sector to diversify the New Mexico economy and created the Outdoor Recreation Division in 2019. Since then, the office has invested about \$2 million in outdoor recreation grants and business programs, including the first-of-its-kind Outdoor Equity Fund and the state's first outdoor business accelerator. The outdoor industry contributes almost \$2 billion a year to state GDP and employs over 25,000 people, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

The governor and lawmakers created the Outdoor Recreation Trails+ in 2019 to support projects that enhance communities' outdoor recreation opportunities. Trails, river parks, wildlife viewing areas, and more contribute to economic development, prosperity, and wellness.

On March 1, Trails+ opened on a rolling basis with \$7 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act funding, which was appropriated in the 2021 December special session. This investment enables ORD to broaden the scope and ambition of the grant, with local awards of up to \$99,999 and regional awards up to \$500,000.

"The Outdoor Recreation Trails+ grant invests in the infrastructure that New Mexico outdoor industry businesses rely on – healthy and accessible outdoor places to recreate," Economic Development Cabinet Secretary Alicia J. Keyes said. "By funding these projects, the grant

program works toward both equitable outdoor access and a sustainable, robust outdoor economy.”

The Trails+ grant remains open to applications through 2022, with the second round of announcements anticipated in the fall.

A four-person review committee selected the first cohort of 15 awardees. The committee was comprised of Tourism Development Director Lancing Adams, State Land Office Outdoor Recreation Director Craig Johnson, ORD Deputy Director Alyssa Renwick, and Youth Conservation Corps Director Sarah Wood.

Awarded projects are located in the following 11 counties: Bernalillo, Cibola, Colfax, Curry, Doña Ana, Grant, Lincoln, McKinley, Sandoval, San Juan, and Taos.

“The Trails+ Grant is an incredible opportunity for communities to develop their outdoor economies through targeted investments that enhance and expand outdoor recreation infrastructure,” Department of Tourism Cabinet Secretary Jen Schroer said. “We are excited to see these projects move forward for the benefit of both our residents as well as visitors that are drawn to the outdoor activities of our beautiful state.”

“We intentionally opened Trails+ with a rolling grant submission deadline in order to encourage as many communities as possible to apply for these funds,” ORD Director Axie Navas said. “We are so excited about these first 15 projects, which are blazing amazing new outdoor access throughout the state.”

Read the [2022 program guide for more details](#) on how to apply.

Meet the 2022 Trails+ Awardees:

Bloomfield (\$78,930, Tier I): The City of Bloomfield will purchase and install steel bollards and wire cable within the Verde de Rio San Juan trails. The bollards will provide a barrier between vehicle traffic within the ingress/egress roadways/parking areas and trails. This will provide protection to the public as well as the trail pavers, paving, landscaping, and wildlife. The funding will also be used to construct standard size and van accessible ADA parking spaces in Verde de Rio San Juan trails system allowing adaptive access. Finally, it will enable purchasing and installing bike racks at all public buildings/facilities within the city.

Cibola Trail Alliance (\$99,999, Tier I): The Mt. Taylor Ranger District signed decision memo for the Lobo Canyon Trail has provided authorization for the construction of 23.8 miles of singletrack, non-motorized multi-use trail on Cibola National Forest Land parallel to New Mexico Highway 547. The proposed trail segments will ultimately connect three existing recreation sites: The Continental Divide Trail and trailhead, Lobo Canyon Picnic Area, and Coal Mine Campground.

Cimarron (\$238,000, Tier II): The Cimarron Tourism Enhancement Project includes work to install a pavilion, sidewalks, lighting, and provide handicap accessibility in the public park located at the center of the village. The park will support equitable outdoor access for local residents and create welcoming infrastructure for visitors, contributing to the economic development of the community and region.

Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District (\$498,408.28, Tier II): Ciudad Soil & Water Conservation District, in collaboration with the City of Albuquerque Open Space Division, Hero’s Path Palliative Care, Nature Matters Academy, and other partners will build

an ADA accessible trail at the Tijeras Creek Environmental Educational Center. The ADA accessible trail will be complete with activity stations, interpretive signage, picnic tables under a shade structure, and an outdoor classroom space. This trail will become a pilot trail for other local and state properties that will enhance the community, provide equitable access to outdoor recreation, and provide opportunities for people of all abilities to explore nature together.

Friends of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks (\$33,000, Tier 1): This project will pave a section of the popular La Cueva Trail from the Dripping Springs visitor center, the most popular area for visitors to Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument. The paving of the trail will make access for those in wheelchairs and with limited mobility. It will be the only trail of its kind within the monument. Close to three-quarters of a mile will be paved, including pullouts for wildlife and scenery viewing. This is a joint project between the Friends of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks and the local Bureau of Land Management office.

Gila Chapter Back Country Horsemen of New Mexico (\$85,000, Tier I): Funding will be used to prepare for the 2024 Gila Wilderness Centennial and promote a sustainable economy for the coming decades. It includes reopening 100 miles of interconnecting trails in and around the Gila Wilderness and creating and disseminating updated trail information for public safety and enjoyment. The Gila Chapter Back Country Horsemen (Gila BCH) is a 501c3 organization with a primary mission of "perpetuating the recreational use of horses on public lands through the maintenance and improvement of trails" for all users in the Gila.

Global Opportunities Unlimited (\$54,297, Tier I): This project expands capacity infrastructure and increases participation in off-road handcycling activities for people with disabilities who are unable to ride standard mountain bikes. Using revolutionary adaptive three-wheel cycles, participants without lower limb mobility can enjoy inclusive outdoor cycling opportunities with their able-bodied family, friends, and peers. This project supports the growing needs in our community for off-road adaptive handcycling activities. The community benefits through additional handcycle availability, increased storage and maintenance capacity, and trailering ability to transport equipment around the state to various riding opportunities.

Insights Science Discovery (\$92,300, Tier I): The [DinoTracks site](#) is home to thousands of fossilized dinosaur footprints, hundreds of geology teaching sites, modern history artifacts, and millions of aquatic fossils. This site holds immense educational and outdoor recreational potential as the future trailhead of the Rio Grande Trail and hub to the [Paso del Norte, Mt. Cristo Rey](#) and [Sunland Park trails](#). Although Insights is building a simple outdoor classroom, the current plan does not include the amenities needed to transform the site into a tourism destination. The Trails+ funding will enhance visitor experience with the installation of native landscaping, green infrastructure, and hiker comfort zones.

Mental Health Resources (\$66,559, Tier I): Mental Health Resources, Inc (MHR) will convert four acres of vacant land into the Richard Lucero Wellness Trail on its 21st St property in Clovis, New Mexico, for public, client, and staff use. The trail will be located in a rural/urban area in a desert climate.

McKinley County (\$400,000, Tier II): McKenzie Ridge Trail Connector is a 22-mile segment that links Hilso (McGaffey) Trail System to the Twin Springs Trail System as part of the overall 186-mile Zuni Mountain Trail Project. This project climbs along McKenzie Ridge providing a majestic viewshed and a challenging climb. This project was partially funded by NMDOT's Recreational Trail Program and has been bid to Singletrack Trails, a contractor that

will start construction in spring 2022. This request will cover the gap needed to complete this regional trail project spanning McKinley and Cibola counties.

Red River (\$99,000, Tier I): The Town of Red River will install proper restroom facilities to compliment the town's substantial investments in the recreational features at Mallette Park. The park enjoys growing popularity with local residents and visitors alike who come together for the playground equipment, disc golf course, picnic areas, new pump track, new skatepark, tennis, and access to the adjacent national forest. Proper facilities will enhance the quality of experience for local residents to enjoy outdoor activities and add yet another valued destination that the region offers visitors. This project fits with the long-term objective to provide ideal settings that will give reason for citizens to remain in Red River and for visitors to return. The new restrooms will be much more convenient and appealing for guests, much needed to meet the growing usage of park.

Ruidoso (\$202,340, Tier II): The scope of this project will follow implementation guidelines from the 2021 Grindstone Recreation Area Master Plan to meet the needs of Ruidoso residents and visitors. The popularity and increased use of Grindstone Canyon for recreation justifies amenity improvements to facilitate enjoyable recreation and comfort for all visitors. Sheltered picnic areas, restrooms, pavilions, ADA, and dock improvements are all part of this plan, which fits within the Village of Ruidoso's larger vision to diversify the economy and support ongoing development of outdoor recreation.

Sandia Nordic Ski Club (\$39,005, Tier I): Sandia Nordic Ski Club, Inc. (SNSC) designs, constructs, and maintains groomed cross-country ski trails at the top of the Sandia Mountains and provides cross-country ski instruction to the public free of charge. In March 2021, the USFS Sandia Ranger District granted approval for SNSC to improve and expand the network of groomed trails that the club maintains. SNSC is applying for this grant to help offset costs of sustainable trail improvements which include widening, rerouting, and leveling sections of the trail system, improving natural contour alignment, installing signage at trailheads and along trails, and increasing skier safety and accessibility.

San Juan County (\$250,000, Tier II): The Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad (D&RGW) between Farmington, New Mexico and Durango, Colorado, was constructed in 1902 and abandoned from service in the 1960s. Ownership of the remaining right of way for the line was transferred to local governments including the City of Farmington, City of Aztec, and San Juan County. The project, dubbed the Lower Animas Valley Recreation Trail, will create an eight-mile, non-motorized trail along the former rail alignment between Farmington and Aztec and will connect the Animas River Trail System in Farmington to the Hartman/Riverside Park complex in Aztec.

Silver City (\$500,000, Tier II): The Town of Silver City, in partnership with Southwest New Mexico Arts, Culture, and Tourism (swnmACT) will complete all revitalization/restoration projects planned for the five-acre Waterworks grounds. The Waterworks Site is an outdoor recreational and educational hub that connects Grant County communities and businesses with economic, cultural, educational, and entrepreneurial opportunities for the entire region. It will serve as a southern trailhead terminus for the Continental Divide Trail.



Photo courtesy of Gila Backcountry Horsemen

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