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Outdoor Recreation Investments set to benefit 20 communities, create 175 jobs

Over \$2 million awarded for outdoor infrastructure: Clovis, Springer, Zuni, Capitan among project recipients

SANTA FE, N.M. - New Mexico Economic Development Cabinet Secretary Alicia J. Keyes announced today the second round of Outdoor Recreation Trails+ Grant recipients for 2022. The Economic Development Department's Outdoor Recreation Division is awarding 20 projects at a total of \$2,015,565 throughout the state to expand outdoor access and grow the New Mexico outdoor recreation economy.

Of the 20 projects awarded for the second round of 2022, 65% are supporting rural or tribal communities and will create over 175 new jobs in New Mexico including at least 61 full time, 20 part time, 17 seasonal, 6 temporary or contract, and over 77 youth positions.

In 2019, the Outdoor Recreation Division was created when Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham identified the outdoor recreation industry as a key target sector to diversify the New Mexico economy. The office has since invested over \$11.74 million in funding outdoor access, including through the Outdoor Recreation Trails+ grant and Outdoor Equity Fund programs. The Outdoor Recreation Trails+ grant was created in 2019 by Gov. Lujan Grisham and lawmakers to support projects that enhance outdoor recreation opportunities for communities, including parks, trails, wildlife viewing areas, and more.

"Outdoor recreation was identified early on by Gov. Lujan Grisham as one way to diversify New Mexico's economy and to create jobs and more opportunities for rural communities," Economic Development Cabinet Secretary Alicia J. Keyes said. "We

now see that all parts of the state are benefitting from these initiatives with 65% of the projects announced today supporting rural or tribal communities.”

Overall, since the Outdoor Recreation Trails+ grant was created, a total of \$5,339,990.17 has been awarded to 66 projects across the state. For 2022, Trails+ opened March 1 of this year on a rolling basis with \$7 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act funding. This second round of awards, in addition to the first round announced in June, brings Trails+ to a total of 35 projects and \$4,755,565 in funding for this year.

The review committee for the second round of awards was comprised of State of New Mexico Public Education Administrator Dr. Susan Chaudoir, ORD Outdoor Recreation Planner Carl Colonius, endeavor New Mexico Co-Director Jim Glover, ORD Deputy Director Alyssa Renwick, and Center for a Sustainable Future and Outdoor Programs Director Dr. Kathy Whiteman.

“The Trails+ applications reflect the passion and dedication of New Mexico’s community leaders who work tirelessly to improve the quality of life for the people and communities they serve,” Center for a Sustainable Future and Outdoor Programs Director Dr. Kathy Whiteman said. “The diversity of the project proposals illustrates the many ways New Mexicans engage in the outdoors as well as the importance of outdoor infrastructure improvement to statewide economic development.”

"The New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division is very excited about working with another 20 communities in New Mexico through the Trails+ grant program to increase the investment in outdoor recreation infrastructure," ORD Outdoor Recreation Planner Carl Colonius said. "This grant program increases access to public lands and recreational opportunities, and is a powerful strategy to ensure healthy, livable communities across the state for generations."

There is currently an additional \$2.2 million in funding available for Outdoor Recreation Trails+ projects, with a third and final round of application reviews for 2022 scheduled for later this fall. The tentative deadline for the final review is November 1, and organizations are encouraged to get their applications in by that date. [Read the 2022 program guide](#) for details on how to apply.

Meet the Second Round 2022 Trails+ Awardees:

Albuquerque Mountain Bike Association (AMBA) (\$99,999, Tier I): Albuquerque Mountain Bike Association (AMBA), in collaboration with the Sandia Ranger District of the Cibola National Forest, is requesting funds to build upon and improve the existing downhill designated mountain biking trails on the east side of the Sandia Crest. This scalable project was scoped and approved in the USFS’s April 2021 Sandia Trails Improvement Project, but requires supporting labor and funding from the biking community and collaborating organizations. The project will use a hybrid development approach, pairing machine and hand-built construction mechanisms, to create unrivaled progressive features, while maintaining the character and experience of the existing trails.

Aldo Leopold Charter School (\$51,450, Tier I): Aldo Leopold Charter School (ALCS) is working to develop an outdoor classroom and recreation area that will be made available to the community outside of school hours. This area will serve to support ALCS student learning in this unique charter school with a focus on sustainability and experiential learning. Further, this site will allow residents and visitors to play on a neighborhood basketball court, host gatherings, and engage in a demonstration native plant garden supported by natural, hand-built erosion control structures and pathways.

Audubon Southwest (\$25,000, Tier I): The Randall Davey Audubon Center continues its 35 years of success in connecting Santa Fe with the outdoors. Their new Nature Discovery Area features hands-on play, wildlife viewing, and an awesome tree house. The requested funds will support bilingual interpretive and wayfinding signage to connect visitors with Audubon's conservation work, the natural and cultural resources of the center, and promote outdoor experiences beyond just a play area. Interpretive signs will include topics such as local bird species, bird watching basics, climate change, native plants, water conservation, the historic Acequia del Llano found on the property, and more.

City of Alamogordo (\$99,000, Tier I): This project will enhance and improve approximately 1,400 linear feet of trail access for pedestrians and bicyclists. It will be located away from traffic lanes, providing safe, ADA-accessible access to all members of the public. Senior citizens can use it to access the Senior Center and a nearby public transportation bus stop. It will particularly benefit the youth by providing safe access to playgrounds, tennis courts, parks, recreational fields, the Family Recreation Center, the public pool, public library, and Washington Park. Additionally, all citizens will benefit from safer walking access to grocery stores, City Hall, and other businesses.

City of Albuquerque Parks and Recreation Department, Open Space Division (\$295,000, Tier II): The City of Albuquerque Parks and Recreation Department plans to develop a multi-use trail system on open space lands located on the city's West Mesa. The fast-growing west side of Albuquerque is currently deficient in trails for mountain biking and equestrian use. The City of Albuquerque is planning a 24-mile system of trails on open space lands adjacent to and surrounding Petroglyph National Monument. The city and National Park Service are coordinating to provide an integrated trail system for a variety of recreation users. The pedestrian-only trails within the monument will be augmented by city multi-use trails.

City of Clovis (\$80,000, Tier I): The City of Clovis will hire a planning company to collaborate with the general public, Parks & Recreation board, and city staff to create a master plan for the 3,200-acre city-owned Ned Houk Park. Existing and new facilities, including trail systems and recreational areas, will be incorporated into the plan with an emphasis on ADA accessibility. The detailed master plan will be implemented by the City of Clovis and an ADA accessible parking area will be included as part of this project.

City of Sunland Park (\$29,084, Tier I): This project will provide upgrades and improvements to the 1.3-mile Paseo Del Sol Trail and existing amenities. This trail includes river access and is used by runners, horseback riders, hikers, and other recreationists. In addition, the river provides refuge to many bird species. The vision is to provide residents and trail users access to amenities such as canopies and picnic tables to enjoy nature. Updates will incorporate trail improvements such as wayfinding, picnic shelters, and wildlife viewing, including birdwatching and nature walks. This project provides an opportunity to reinvent communities by creating healthier and more resilient cities. For the City of Sunland Park, this is an opportune time to develop an expansive trail network along the Rio Grande and for the residents in New Mexico.

Healing America's Heroes (Fiscal sponsor Village of Capitan) (\$99,999, Tier I): The Healing America's Heroes (HAH) project initially will address twelve miles of trail improvement and the creation of a wildlife viewing area. Primary benefits will include increases in school outing locations, tourist appeal, and regional employment. Trail improvements include enhanced facilities for hikers, bikers, and horse riders. Wildlife includes deer, elk, and predatory birds for viewing. Signage will be important to each activity and will be visible in several locations of the 20-mile project span.

Los Alamos County (\$65,000, Tier I): This project entails planning and designing improvements to a half mile section of existing trail. The trail will be updated to an ADA Certified crusher fine trail utilizing US Forest Service standards to increase outdoor access.

New Mexico Wildlife Federation (\$71,958, Tier I): New Mexico Wildlife Federation (NMWF) and partners worked with private landowners to provide the public with permanent access across private land in order to reach the soon-to-be expanded Marquez Wildlife Management Area (WMA). NMWF will install signs along the 16 miles of easement to ensure visitors stay off adjacent private land on their way to public lands. This project will ensure permanent, public access to 70,000 acres of public lands, including the Marquez WMA and the recently acquired L Bar Ranch.

Pueblo of Acoma (\$99,999, Tier I): The Sky City Trail project is designed as an open public space concept to create a four-mile paved trail for bicycle and pedestrian use. The trail is intended to enhance physical activity, intercultural understanding and social engagement for local community members and visitors. The trail will include solar powered lights along with designated trail markers throughout the entire route which will identify cultural notations, describe geological elements, list historical features, and share other useful and interesting information with all users of the trail.

Rio Grande Return (\$94,078, Tier I): The Rio Grande Return (RGR) project goal is to conduct green stormwater infrastructure analysis, surveys, and design planning. The project will also continue restoration efforts along the Santa Fe River Park and Trail by replanting native cottonwood and willow species. RGR is expanding on the work of three separate replanting efforts in the Spring of 2019, 2021, and 2022. RGR is now also working to design engineered GSI restoration approaches for arroyos

feeding the river whose soils, banks, and channels are rapidly degrading. Continued investments in these systems protect both our community and our environment.

Rocky Mountain Youth Corps (\$99,999, Tier I): The Village of Taos Ski Valley Trails Project will integrate and extend a network of village trails that will create an interconnected trails system. A crew of eight corps members from Rocky Mountain Youth Corps will construct and improve several trail segments and in the process, they will receive comprehensive life skills training, workforce credentials, and an academic scholarship. These segments will link village residential neighborhoods, providing visitors and residents direct access to trails. Providing trail access to the public protects sensitive natural resources, supports the regional economy, and lengthens and connects trails.

Sandoval County (\$25,000, Tier I): The project entails contracting with a vendor to conduct a feasibility study on the completion of a pedestrian, bicycle, and multiuse trail along NM-165 in Placitas. The trail would be approximately 9 miles in length and help connect the residents and visitors of Placitas, as well as help provide children of Placitas a safe route to the elementary school.

Santa Fe Fat Tire Society (\$93,000, Tier I): The Santa Fe Fat Tire Society (SFFTS), a non-profit International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) affiliated organization, project will assist in establishing a new recreational trail system to provide multi-use and single-use trails with diverse levels of challenge, viewpoints, and distances to serve a variety of users in the Arroyo Hondo Headwaters, 5 miles southeast of Santa Fe. SFFTS seeks to build 20+ miles of new and existing, natural surface trails, creating a sustainable network that connects to the Dale Ball and Glorietta trails systems and expanding the hiker, equestrian, biker access in the Santa Fe area.

Spirit of Hidalgo (\$92,000, Tier I): Explore Hidalgo County Outdoors (EHCO) seeks to increase economic opportunities and community wellness around outdoor recreation in Lordsburg and Hidalgo County. The Shakespeare Hub project is the development of a system of trails from the intersection of Shakespeare Ghost Town, Shakespeare Cemetery, and Shakespeare CDT Trailhead. From this hub, there is access to miles of the CDT, interesting gravesites at the cemetery, walking tours at the ghost town, offshoot roads and trails that go through old mines and ranch land, the Veterans Park with overnight camping and picnic areas, the archery range, and the water towers to see for miles around.

Taos Academy Charter School (\$96,000, Tier I): Taos Academy seeks to expand their Green Leadership programming by increasing outdoor educational spaces and refurbishing the native garden and greenhouse so that these aspects of the campus can be incorporated into the school's 21st Century Sustainability curriculum strand. They are also building an outdoor instructional space where Taos Academy students and families, as well as the greater Taos community, may come together to learn about our land, culture, heritage, climate, and resources.

Taos Land Trust (\$99,000, Tier I): The Taos Land Trust project includes four infrastructure improvements to Rio Fernando Park. The first is to design, plan, and construct a universal-access trail that will increase access, improve drainage across the trail, and add access to the Vigil y Romo acequia. The second is to extend the existing wetlands access trail to provide further interaction with wetlands habitat. The third improvement is to develop a landscaping plan, incorporating existing and new elements based on green infrastructure concepts. The fourth is to design and plan an energy efficient indoor/outdoor classroom space for ecological education.

Town of Springer (\$300,000, Tier II): This project would provide a community outdoor multiuse facility. The project scope would include a pavilion, solar lighting, and handicap accessibility to the public. This park is conveniently located right next to I-25 and is easily accessible to the Town of Springer residents - easy access to all those who would be enjoying the area. The park will provide equitable access and welcoming infrastructure for visitors. This facility would be an asset to the town and contribute to the economic development of the community and region.

Zuni Youth Enrichment Project (\$99,999, Tier I): This project makes significant structural investments in Zuni's Community Trail System, intentionally investing in trails close to newer neighborhoods in Zuni where young families are moving. A major focus on the development of the 3-mile Cottonwood Trail is increasing trail accessibility for people with disabilities, young families with children in strollers, and bicyclists. This project also works to ensure respectful use of trails near Zuni sacred sites by rerouting trails and providing community education. Finally, they will improve trail safety through increased signage in places where pedestrians and bikers travel closely to, or share roads with, motorized vehicles.



Zuni Youth Enrichment Project



Rio Grande Return



Aldo Leopold Charter School

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The Outdoor Recreation Division (ORD) works to ensure that all New Mexicans gain from the public health, environmental, and economic benefits of sustainable outdoor recreation. ORD works to achieve positive, measurable impacts within economic development, conservation, education, and public health through collaboration with New Mexican businesses, nonprofits, and partner state and federal agencies. Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed New Mexico's ORD into law in April 2019. Since then, ORD has invested over \$11.74 million in outdoor access through its marquee grants, including the Outdoor Recreation Trails+ and Outdoor Equity Fund programs. These initiatives have supported more than 175 Tribes, local governments, and nonprofits to improve outdoor infrastructure and introduce almost 40,000 young New Mexicans to the outside world. The New Mexico outdoor industry is a powerhouse of meaningful job and wealth creation, employing over 25,000 people and contributing \$1.9 billion to state GDP.
