



Office of the Governor

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Nora Meyers Sackett
Office of the Governor
nora.sackett@state.nm.us

Jan. 26, 2022

Governor introduces bipartisan “Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund” proposal for land and water conservation

Historic investment would establish state’s first dedicated funding source for conservation, agriculture, outdoor recreation programs

SANTA FE – Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham on Thursday announced the introduction of Senate Bill 9, the “Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund,” sponsored by Senator Peter Wirth, Senator Steven Neville, and Rep. Nathan Small. The fund would be a historic investment in land and water conservation programs that will leverage hundreds of millions of dollars in federal money for all 33 counties and tribal communities in New Mexico.

“This first-of-its-kind fund will provide resources to protect and preserve the lands and waters that New Mexicans so treasure,” said **Gov. Lujan Grisham**. “By dedicating increased and stable supports for critical conservation programs, we will ensure that New Mexico continues to be the Land of Enchantment for generations to come.”

The proposal builds on the vision laid out by Gov. Lujan Grisham in her [executive budget recommendation](#), prioritizing funding for existing state programs spread across six agencies to protect New Mexico communities from wildfire, flood and drought; safeguard urban and rural water supplies; support rural and agricultural communities; and grow our outdoor recreation economy. The proposal would not create any new programs but instead utilize existing statutes, boards, and rulemaking. It would be the state’s first-ever dedicated source of recurring funding for conservation, prioritizing land and water stewardship, forest and watershed health, outdoor recreation and infrastructure, agriculture and working lands, historic preservation, and wildlife species protection. These programs have either not been funded or been funded sporadically in the past, and state investments would unlock potentially millions of dollars in federal matching funds.

“We’ve made steady progress on land and water stewardship in recent years, but never had the dedicated source of state funding that our communities deserve,” said **Senator Wirth**. “New Mexico is reeling from the effects of climate change, and this fund will help communities be more resilient as we continue to deal with wildfires, flooding and long-term drought. I’m excited

to introduce this bipartisan bill with Senator Neville and Rep. Small and take advantage of the historic opportunity we have before us to provide more state and federal dollars to New Mexico communities.”

“The Land of Enchantment Fund will leave a legacy for our children to hunt, fish, farm, ranch, and enjoy the lands and waters the way our ancestors have for generations,” said **Senator Neville**. “I’m proud to support this bill to deliver resources to our rural, tribal and agricultural communities so they can apply for projects they know work best for them.”

“This fund is many years in the making, and it’s the right approach at the right time,” said **Rep. Small**. “It is smart fiscal policy to make these investments now and into the future so our communities can access untapped federal dollars to better prepare for the environmental challenges we face.”

“Establishing the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund would be a monumental step toward solidifying Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham’s vision of conserving New Mexico’s beautiful natural landscapes for future generations,” said **EMNRD Secretary Sarah Cottrell Propst**. “New Mexicans from every corner of the state will benefit from the Legislature’s approval of this fund.”

The Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund is the product of five years of collaboration among a broad and bipartisan coalition of legislators, state agencies, community stakeholders and non-governmental organizations.

Beginning with an initial investment of \$50 million, the Fund would make annual disbursements beginning in fiscal year 2024 to existing state programs spread across six agencies, including the Energy, Minerals & Natural Resources Department, Department of Agriculture, Department of Game and Fish, Environment Department, Economic Development Department, and Department of Cultural Affairs. These existing programs prioritize land and water conservation, forest and watershed health, outdoor recreation and infrastructure, agriculture and working lands, historic preservation, and wildlife species protection.

A second, permanent trust fund would be established with an initial investment of \$25 million that would be managed by the State Investment Council, similar to the Early Childhood Education and Care Fund. Interest earned would be disbursed annually to existing state programs that have a proven track record of success, are popular in communities, or have rarely been funded to their full potential.

The text of the bill, Senate Bill 9, can be viewed [here](#).

###