



NEW MEXICO

OUTDOOR RECREATION DIVISION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

December 20, 2023

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham
Acting Cabinet Secretary Jon Clark
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New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Division Awards Another \$1.74M For Outdoor Infrastructure

12 new projects approved for Trails+, nearly 70% in Tribal and rural areas

SANTA FE, N.M. – The Outdoor Recreation Division (ORD) of the New Mexico Economic Development Department (EDD) has awarded outdoor trails and infrastructure grants to 12 projects as part of the Outdoor Recreation Trails+ Grant initiative, ORD Director Karina Armijo announced today.

The 12 awardees for fiscal year 2024 total \$1,746,310, while organizations will be bringing in an additional \$2.53 million in matching funds.

Nearly 70% of the projects in this second round of Trails+ funding for the fiscal year are based in rural and Tribal areas, located throughout the state in 12 counties. This round of awards ranges from \$35,773 to the Continental Divide Trail Coalition (CDTC) to \$500,000 going to the City of Farmington.

“The Outdoor Recreation Trails+ Grant invests in conservation-minded shovel-ready projects that are open to the public, increase access to outdoor opportunities, and demonstrate a clear economic benefit to the community through improved quality of life, better public health outcomes, and/or increased eco-tourism,” Acting EDD Cabinet Secretary Jon Clark said. “Many of these initiatives also leverage federal dollars – and that creates jobs and grows New Mexico’s economy.”

“We are pleased to support these 12 new outdoor recreation infrastructure projects throughout the state that improve access to the outdoors while bolstering the state’s outdoor recreation economy,” ORD Director Karina Armijo said. “Investments in trails and infrastructure for outdoor recreation uplift communities and support expanding access to the outdoors for all New Mexicans.”

“These grants are supporting some very impactful projects,” said ORD’s Outdoor Recreation Planner, Carl Colonius. “We’re especially excited about a concept coming from the Eastern Agency of the Diné (Navajo) Nation in Crownpoint. The project involves the construction of trail amenities utilizing hands-on student learning. The K’é Community Trails Coalition will partner with Navajo Technical University’s summer STEM and Skills dual credit program to plant trees and construct signage, shade structures, picnic tables, and benches. The amenities will create a more inviting trail that encourages users of all ages and abilities.”

Eligible projects for the Outdoor Recreation Trails+ Grant awards are broken into two tier types. Local projects can be funded up to \$99,999 and regional projects can apply for awards up to \$500,000. Three out of the 12 projects awarded in this round of funding were Tier 2 regional plans in Bernalillo, San Juan, and Sierra Counties. Local projects in the Tier 1 category consisted of facility improvements, accessible trail reconstruction,

signage, river park implementations, habitat restoration planning, trail connectivity, and more.

“The Friends of Valle de Oro are so excited about this new connection that will provide community members an additional way to access to the Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge and visitors better access to the Albuquerque Open Space lands in the bosque,” Katie Dix, Executive Director, Friends of Valle de Oro, said. We are thrilled to be able to increase accessibility and the educational and recreational opportunities tied to the bosque and the Rio Grande.”

“This project truly aligns with the values of Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge. It has and will be a collaborative project, bringing together many agencies like Bernalillo County, the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, City of Albuquerque and now the State of New Mexico along with passionate community members and organizations such as the Friends of Valle de Oro, New Mexico Paddlers Coalition and Adobe Whitewater Club to increase equitable access and support our work to inspire the next generation of conservation stewards.” Jennifer Owen-White, Refuge Manager, Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge, said.

Each application was reviewed by multiple committee members, and Tier 2 applicants presented their projects to a review team. The review committee consisted of Holly Kelley from the Tourism Department, Desi Ortiz of New Mexico Game and Fish, Hannah Schlechter of the Bureau of Reclamation, and Maria Trevino from the National Park Service’s Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Program.

There is \$5.8 million in funding available for Outdoor Recreation Trails+ projects, with review cycles until FY24 funding is expended. There are over 100 application drafts pending for ORD for this competitive grant. Organizations are strongly encouraged to complete applications early. Read the [2023 program guide](#) for details on how to apply. The next application review cycle deadline is Jan. 31, 2024.

2023-2024 (FY24) Outdoor Recreation Trails+ Grant Round Two Awardees:

Bernalillo County (\$256,962, Bernalillo County, Tier II): Bernalillo County will use funds to construct the Bosque Bridges that serve as a connection from Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge to the adjacent Rio Grande bosque. These bridges connect the Paseo del Bosque bike path (the future Rio Grande Trail route) to the Refuge’s perimeter trail for pedestrian, cycling, and equestrian activities. This new connection will provide community members with easy access to the 570 acres of restored farmland from areas outside the main east-side entrance and connects Refuge visitors to Albuquerque Open Space.

City of Farmington (\$500,000, San Juan County, Tier II): Farmington has worked with Spohn Ranch skatepark designers to reimagine a first-generation community skatepark of approximately 24,000 square feet. The skate community requires a facility that is safe, interesting, and unique, and can be used by multiple ages and skill levels. The redesign includes amenities that provide tandem usage for low- and high-skilled skaters, adapted features to accommodate a variety of wheels, lighting, and gathering areas for spectators. Once completed, this will be the largest skate facility in the Four Corners region.

City of Santa Fe (\$99,999, Santa Fe County, Tier I): Santa Fe's Pueblos del Sol Park needs improvements and expansion. The city has funds for new, adaptive play equipment and expects users from across the city. Funds will be used to create an environmentally sensitive park with natural shade and landscaping, arroyo stabilization, water conservation, and educational installations. The surrounding neighborhoods have grown to capacity and this area is isolated from other outdoor facilities.

City of Truth or Consequences (\$322,874.04, Sierra County, Tier II): The City of Truth or Consequences will make improvements at Ralph Edwards Park along the Rio Grande to enhance the experience for residents and tourists. Enhancements include trailhead signage, new boat access ramp and dock, shade structures at existing picnic tables and benches, replacing aging structures, and addressing areas without shade. This project will create a safer environment for river access and offer shaded areas for fishing,

birdwatching, picnicking, exercise, and contemplation.

Conservation Legacy (\$69,995.04, Hidalgo County, Tier I): Conservation Legacy will partner with the Continental Divide Trail Coalition to install and repair gates along the Boot Heel section of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail to improve accessibility to the trails within this area. The project will promote increased use of segments of the trail that were once not accessible or not easily accessible. Additionally, the project will recruit and train a crew of youth and young adults to complete work. Throughout their service, they will receive comprehensive life skills training, workforce credentials, and an academic scholarship.

Continental Divide Trail Coalition (\$35,773.07, Rio Arriba, Sandoval, and Grant Counties, Tier I): The Continental Divide Trail Coalition (CDTC) will utilize funding to support the design and installation of two interpretive trailhead kiosks in the Carson National Forest. Funding will also support community-based stewardship work on the CDT, including four single-day community stewardship events, one in each designated CDT Gateway Community in New Mexico. These combined efforts will engage CDT communities in stewardship of the trail and improve conditions and accessibility through the establishment of new trail infrastructure.

Doña Ana County (\$85,366.74, Doña Ana County, Tier I): Doña Ana County's Shalem Colony Trail Park will transform a 21-acre area along the Rio Grande River, whose uncontrolled access has caused damage to native vegetation, and increased erosion and sedimentation. The park will serve as a legitimate recreational option, providing controlled river access. The Shalem Colony Trail Park Master Plan includes picnic areas, beach areas, a boardwalk, a hiking trail, rafting and kayaking staging areas, and a playground area. The park lies directly on the state's Rio Grande Trail and will complement the existing eco-tourism in Southern New Mexico. Awarded monies will fund the design and implementation phase of the project.

Heart of the Gila (\$54,900, Grant County, Tier I): Heart of the Gila will re-establish the Gila River Trail from the Sapillo Confluence to the Grapevine Campground, a 14-mile section of the CDTA that traverses remote Gila River canyons through America's first wilderness. This critical section of trail was severely damaged during record post-fire flooding events caused by the 2022 Black Fire (+300,000 acres). Re-establishing the trail and the dozens of river crossings will allow CDT hikers to get back on the trail connecting them to the Gila Hot Springs community and to trails further north, to coincide with the centennial celebration of the Gila Wilderness.

K'é Community Trails Coalition (\$78,095, Navajo Nation, McKinley County, Tier I): The Crownpoint community has over 15 miles of informal pathways that contribute to outdoor recreation, however, knowledge of these trails is sparse, and access is limited to users of certain ages and abilities. The Empowering Pathways program aims to formalize a mile of trail with amenities that include shade structures, picnic tables, benches, signage, and trees. Amenities will be constructed by Navajo Technical University's Summer STEM and Skills dual credit program, who will use the hands-on project to introduce regional high school students to college and career pathways in STEM fields.

Native Plant Society of New Mexico, Gila Chapter (\$49,865, Grant County, Tier I): Gila Native Plant Society has been developing Silva Creek Botanical Garden for over 15 years, in cooperation with other organizations and community members. The new master plan helps focus and hone these efforts to increase the enjoyment of our region's rich, diverse native plants in an educational and aesthetically pleasing manner. This first phase will provide a habitat thicket that showcases how to attract wildlife, redesign the front entrance to be more welcoming and educational, install interpretive signs, construct a safety wall around the historic water tank that provides a surface for an educational mural, and update the butterfly garden.

Pueblo of Isleta (\$94,752.1, Pueblo of Isleta, Valencia County, Tier I): Isleta Pueblo will re-pave a popular trail segment and install outdoor exercise stations and shade structures. This will give the community another option for healthy outdoor activities and provide many elders and individuals with special needs a safe place to walk, ride, play, and engage in healthy outdoor activities.

Wild Arizona (\$97,729, Catron County, Tier I): Wild Arizona will restore and connect key sections of the Gila National Forest Trail System, providing access to two outstanding day hikes, and connecting visitors to over 100 miles of the Gila Centennial Trail. The project directly contributes to the Gila Wilderness Centennial Celebration, emphasizing the region's unique natural assets and promoting a sustainable economy for decades to come. One project objective is to meaningfully breakdown barriers to outdoor recreation and stewardship through a partnership with Latino Outdoors and Catron County. Trail restoration efforts led by Wild Arizona's professional field crew will restore sections of trail made inaccessible by fire, flood, erosion, and lack of maintenance.

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Off road handcycling



*Gateway To The Desert ribbon cutting,
Dec. 3, 2023*



*NMWC pathway paving Native Cactus
Garden and Flight Arena*



*Silva Creek Trail
2023 before and after photos*

The Outdoor Recreation Division, a division of the New Mexico Economic Development Department, aims to increase the overall mental and physical well-being of New Mexicans through the power of outdoor recreation, enabling residents throughout the state to hold jobs that afford them dignity, joy, and stability. We strive to commit to all residents to protect their state's natural heritage - its lands and waters, flora and fauna - and find a future on that path. We aim to parlay this commitment into long-term, sustainable investment, both in infrastructure and education.



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