



**State of New Mexico**  
*Office of the Governor*

**Susana Martinez**  
*Governor*

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**Governor Susana Martinez Announces Plan to Protect  
New Mexico Rivers and Watersheds**

**Bernalillo** - Governor Susana Martinez today announced her plan to protect the health of rivers and watersheds through the New Mexico River Stewards Initiative. The River Stewards Initiative will fund projects that will clear vegetation in river areas, lower river banklines, replant native species vegetation, revitalize wetlands, and install erosion control.

The initiative will place a major emphasis on maintaining the hydrology of streams and rivers to better handle overbank flows to reduce flooding downstream as experienced in recently burned watersheds.

“With wildfires, monsoons, and drought placing a strain on our precious water resources in New Mexico, we have to protect our rivers and watersheds,” said Governor Martinez. “I’m also challenging all of New Mexico’s communities to use existing resources to safeguard river habitats. We have to take advantage of funding that is available to invest in sustainable river environments and protect our critical water sources.”

Governor Martinez will pursue \$1.5 million in state capital outlay dollars for the New Mexico River Steward Program. Martinez will seek to leverage those state funds to secure federal and local partner contributions of as much as \$2.6 million in additional funds for river and watershed protection efforts.

“This funding would lead to a significant federal and local match that will allow us to bolster our water protection efforts across the state and restore critical river habitats,” said Governor Martinez.

Governor Martinez made her announcement in front of the Rio Grande River at the Coronado Historic Site in Bernalillo. The Governor was joined by New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) chief Ryan Flynn, Beth Bardwell of Freshwater Conservation for Audubon New Mexico, and Garrett VeneKlasen of Trout Unlimited.

“The River Stewards Initiative will help restore rivers to their natural state and protect our precious water in New Mexico,” said NMED Secretary-Designate Ryan Flynn. “The Governor has made it her priority to make sure our water conservation efforts focus on sustainability for the future. These funds will go a long way to help secure our water future here in New Mexico.”

Flynn also pointed out that healthy river habitats have the added effect of attracting tourism around existing river areas and historic sites. The additional funds will also create restoration projects that could lead to positive economic benefit to local communities.

Several environmental conservation groups applauded the River Stewards Initiative at today’s news conference.

“Freshwater Conservation for Audubon New Mexico is committed to restoring healthy rivers for the birds, wildlife and people and our thanks to the Governor for her bold investment in our natural resources and the future of New Mexico,” said Beth Bardwell of Audubon New Mexico.

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