



“Most Endangered”

A national conservation group calls out the threats to all the rivers of New Mexico

FROM YOUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Just a few weeks ago, our long-time partner, American Rivers, named all the rivers of New Mexico as the “Most Endangered Rivers” in the country. For 39 years, this national conservation organization has created its annual list of rivers at risk, and this is the first time the group named every river in a state. It is sobering. It is directly linked to the Supreme Court decision scaling back the Clean Water Act which harms our state far more than most.

We can reshape a protection policy on a state level, and we’re hard at work on that now. Here is a shout-out to our members and donors who provided the funds to allow us to add staff focused on water issues and the challenges now facing our rivers. Your support

could not have come at a better time.



Mark Allison
Executive Director
New Mexico Wild

“New Mexico’s rivers are its lifeblood, providing clean drinking water, irrigation, fish and wildlife habitat, and rich cultural resources. But a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision, Sackett v. EPA, has stripped federal clean water protections for small streams and wetlands nationwide—arguably harming New Mexico the most out of all the states. To address the gap in clean water protections left by the Supreme Court decision, New Mexico must secure durable funding to establish a state-led surface water permitting program to protect its rivers, streams, and wetlands. The state’s heritage, environment, people, and economy depend on it.” This is the conclusion of American Rivers and the rationale for why all our rivers were ranked #1 for threats in 2024.

Last year’s Sackett v. EPA ruling overturned key protections of the Clean Water Act that had been in place since 1972. This ruling affects the vast majority of New Mexico streams and wetlands creating unprecedented harm to clean water, agriculture, acequias, wildlife, cultural resources, and outdoor recreation. New Mexico Wild is working with partners to reduce this harm with new state policies and funding.

You can read or download the full American Rivers report at: <https://mostendangeredivers.org/river/the-rivers-of-new-mexico/>

1

RIVERS OF NEW MEXICO

AMERICA'S MOST ENDANGERED RIVERS®

THREAT: Loss of federal stream and wetland protections

STATES: New Mexico

AT RISK: Clean water, wildlife habitat, recreation, agriculture, cultural resources

AMERICAN RIVERS
Life Depends on Rivers™

What we can do to protect our rivers

Surface water permitting must be a priority

Permits regulate pollution and can mitigate damage to waterways and wetlands from some wastewater treatment plants, mines, industrial sites, and development projects. Under the current federal Clean Water Act, these protections may not be in place and many, if not all, New Mexico's streams and wetlands would be at risk. New Mexico is one of only three states that leaves permitting of waters still federally protected up to the EPA. The state also doesn't yet have a permitting program for those waters that are no longer protected.

In this recent legislative session, \$7.6 million was appropriated to the New Mexico Environment Department to set up a surface water quality and groundwater permitting program.

The new program will have three components:

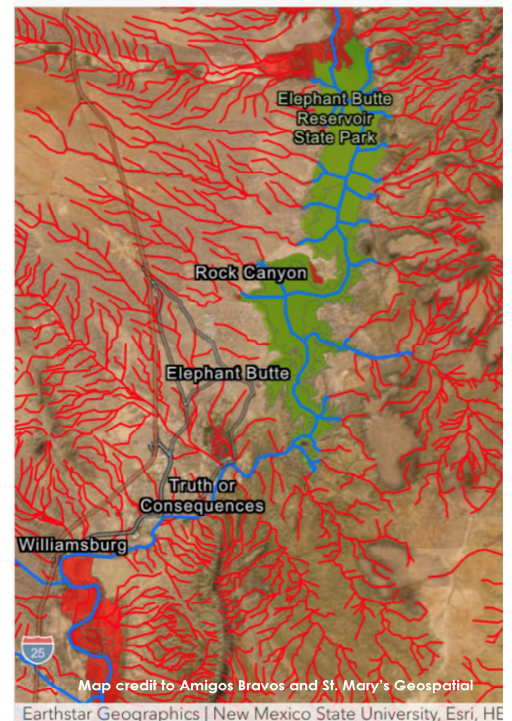
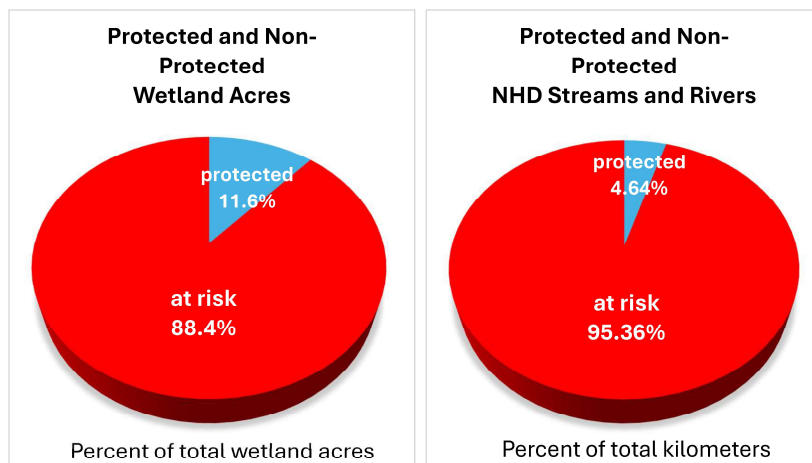
taking over primacy to issue surface water permits for those waters still federally protected; setting up a program to issue surface water discharge permits for state waters with no federal protection; and a wetland specific component that addresses permitting around dredging and filling for those waters no longer federally protected.

Public engagement is vital to get protections in place

The public has an opportunity to influence the development of this program as the New Mexico Environment Department begins the process of determining what should be included. This is an opportunity for the communities who know these waters best to have a say in how they will be managed for future generations.

New Mexico Waters Protected and At Risk in the Wake of the Sackett Decision

There is still a lot of uncertainty about how the 2023 US Supreme Court Sackett decision will be implemented. This mapping exercise represents a worst-case scenario in terms of removing protections from New Mexico's streams and wetlands.



You can find more information about the waters and rivers of New Mexico at: nmwild.org/rivers-waters/



If protecting our rivers is important to you,
Please use the enclosed donation form and envelope
or donate online at:

NMWILD.ORG

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance / PO Box 25464 / Albuquerque, NM 87125 / 505-843-8696