



VIVA NEW MEXICO

A Statewide Plan for Outdoor Adventure

Strategic Plan 2016-2020
December 2015

This plan attempts to illustrate the complete picture of outdoor recreation in New Mexico across federal, state, local and private lands. It is not intended to be used solely by State Parks, but rather by all outdoor recreation stakeholders - both public and private - to achieve a common vision: one that improves our state's economic, physical, and environmental health.

The preparation of this plan was financed in part through a planning grant from the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, under the provisions of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 (Public Law 88-578, as amended).

Additional information on the plan can be found at <http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/SPD/scorp/>



State of New Mexico

Susana Martinez
Governor

January 6, 2016

Mr. Cameron Sholly
Midwest Regional Director
National Park Service
601 Riverfront Drive
Omaha, NE 68102

Dear Mr. Sholly:

I am pleased to present *Viva New Mexico: A Statewide Plan for Outdoor Adventure*, New Mexico's 2016-2020 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. This plan provides a common vision for outdoor recreation providers and residents throughout our state and helps to determine our priorities for outdoor recreation over the next five years.

Outdoor recreation is an important asset to the state of New Mexico. It benefits our economy, our health, and our quality of life. New Mexico's unique geography combined with its abundant natural resources and the outdoor recreational opportunities that accompany them are part of the reason New Mexico is known as the "Land of Enchantment."

A statewide survey completed for the plan found that 93 percent of adult New Mexicans participate in at least one outdoor recreation activity. According to a 2013 study by the Outdoor Recreation Association, outdoor recreation in New Mexico supports around 68,000 New Mexico jobs and ultimately brings in \$458 million in state and local tax revenue. A visitor survey panel completed for the plan found that visitors from Utah, Texas, Oklahoma, Arizona, and Colorado spend approximately \$385 million a year on outdoor recreation activities in New Mexico.

The public participation process provided ample opportunity for public involvement, and over the past year, over 1,000 New Mexicans have taken the time to provide feedback on this plan and helped to guide the future of New Mexico's outdoor recreation opportunities.

I have approved New Mexico's 2016-2020 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan and certify that there has been ample opportunity for public participation during the development of the plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susana Martinez".

Susana Martinez
Governor

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CONTENTS

The Need For a Plan..... 1

Land and Water Conservation Fund 2

Major Factors Affecting Outdoor Recreation 3

 Recreation Providers..... 3

 Demographic and Social Trends..... 7

Planning Process 12

 Stakeholder Input..... 12

Participation Preferences and Perceptions 14

 Nationwide Outdoor Recreation Participation and Trends..... 14

 New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Favorite and Common Activities 15

 Recreation Preferences 16

 Technology..... 17

Economic Benefits 18

 Outdoor Recreation Economic Contributions..... 18

 Outdoor Recreation Events as an Economic Driver 18

 Attracting Out of State Visitors 19

 Key Trends Summary 19

Recommendations..... 20

 Community Livability..... 21

 Trails 24

 Health 28

 Economic Vitality..... 31

 Environmental Health 34

Regional Recommendations 37

 Statewide 37

 Central Region 38

 North-Central Region 38

 Northwest Region 38

 Northeast Region 39

 Southeast Region 39

 Southwest Region 39

COMPANION REPORTS

- A. Outdoor Recreation Influences and Assets***
- B. 2015 Statewide Resident Survey Results***
- C. Out-of-State Visitor Panel Results***
- D. Priorities and Objectives Audit***
- E. Outdoor Recreation Economic Contributions***
- F. Public Draft Comments***

Reports available at <http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/SPD/scorp/>

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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- Monica Kimbrough, US Fish and Wildlife Service
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ACRONYMS

| | |
|--------|---|
| ACOE | Army Corps of Engineers |
| ADA | Americans with Disabilities Act |
| BLM | Bureau of Land Management |
| BOR | Bureau of Reclamation |
| EMNRD | New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department |
| LWCF | Land and Water Conservation Fund |
| NGO | Non-governmental Organizations |
| NMDOT | New Mexico Department of Transportation |
| NMOHVA | New Mexico Off Highway Vehicle Alliance |
| NMRPA | New Mexico Recreation and Parks Association |
| NOHVCC | National Off Highway Vehicle Conservation Council |
| NPS | National Park Service |
| NWI | National Wetland Inventory |
| NWR | National Wildlife Refuge |
| OHV | Off-Highway Vehicle |
| RTP | Recreational Trails Program |
| SCORP | Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan |
| SWQB | Surface Water Quality Bureau |
| USFS | U.S. Forest Service |
| USFWS | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service |

THE NEED FOR A PLAN

New Mexico is the “Land of Enchantment” for many reasons – abundant natural resources, untrammelled vistas, unique culture, fascinating history and unparalleled opportunities for outdoor recreation. From the caves at Carlsbad Caverns National Park to the forested slopes of the Angel Fire ski resort to the mountain bike trails of Gallup, there are more exciting outdoor adventures than can be explored in a lifetime. The intent of this report is to communicate the value of New Mexico’s outdoor recreation resources, provide a common vision for outdoor recreation priorities, and document the needs and challenges of outdoor recreation in New Mexico.

Although *Viva New Mexico* was spearheaded by the State Parks Division (State Parks) of the New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD), the plan attempts to illustrate the complete picture of outdoor recreation across New Mexico. It is not intended to be used solely by State Parks, but rather by all stakeholders who are involved in promoting, providing and managing outdoor recreation activities, facilities and programs. *Viva New Mexico* identifies the most pressing outdoor recreation trends and needs, and defines goals to help federal, state, local governments, and other providers strengthen the quality of life for all New Mexicans, as well as steward our outstanding natural environment. It also highlights participation preferences and perceptions, economic and health benefits, and includes non-regulatory actions that can be implemented by various stakeholders if they choose to participate.

This five-year update is correlated as far as practicable with other state, regional, and local plans. It helps local recreation providers and all stakeholders position for funding, and enables New Mexico to continue receiving its apportionment of federal recreation funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), which is allocated annually by Congress.



Taos Ski © New Mexico Tourism Department

This Strategic Plan and its companion reports present a data-rich reference - from visitor use and trends to specific recreation needs. These references can be used to provide data, analysis, and goals for federal, state, and local agencies to create outdoor recreation plans; to connect the wide array of outdoor recreation interests; and to serve as a resource for larger environmental and recreational planning projects.

Through the process of the strategic plan, multiple agencies gathered in the same room to identify key recommendations and priorities. These common priorities and actions will ensure that outdoor recreation continues to add to New Mexico’s economy and quality of life.

Key facts and findings, presented here in the Strategic Plan, can be taken before the Legislature, boards and councils to justify and demonstrate the need for recreational funding, and it can also be used to educate civic leaders, the public and media on the many positive impacts of outdoor recreation. The companion reports act as a “State of the State’s Outdoor Recreation” that identify critical gaps and needs in more detail.

LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

The federal LWCF program has provided a legacy of public parks, facilities, and open space statewide – including national parks, forests, wildlife refuges and recreation areas – and voluntary conservation on private land. LWCF investments secure public access, improve recreational opportunities and preserve ecosystem benefits for the public.

LWCF brings federal funding from offshore oil and gas revenues to New Mexico through two programs: a federal program and a stateside assistance program. The federal program provides funding to federal agencies such as U.S. Department of the Interior, Forest Service (USFS) and the National Park Service. The stateside assistance program is a local grant matching program that provides funds to the state’s responsible agency. In New Mexico, the State Parks Division is the designated agency. New Mexico has received approximately \$212 million for federal agencies, \$42 million for stateside grants, and \$7 million for its Forest Legacy program, in the last five decades. Those funds have been used to protect places such as the Petroglyph National Monument, to improve local parks, such as Ned Houk Park in Clovis, and to renovate state park facilities such as the campground at Pancho Villa State Park.

The LWCF requires each state to develop a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) at least every five years to receive Stateside Assistance Funding (this 2015 *Viva New Mexico* serves as New Mexico’s SCORP). *Viva New Mexico* provides many key benefits beyond unlocking LWCF funding.

Through a 50% federal and 50% local matching grant program, stateside funding from LWCF has supported over 1,200 projects across New Mexico, viewable through an interactive map at <http://www.doi.gov/lwcf>. The annual appropriation ranges significantly year to year. LWCF stateside funding took a significant cut in 2006, but has steadily been increasing since that time (see Table 1). In the past few years, LWCF funding has been used for State Parks Division projects throughout the state. There is a current push in Congress to reauthorize the LWCF Act, which expired on September 30, 2015, after 50 years. Supplemental funding pursuant to the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act (GOMESA) was appropriated in 2009.

Table 1: Land and Water Conservation Fund

| Year | NM LWCF Appropriation | GOMESA |
|------|-----------------------|----------|
| 2014 | \$490,834 | \$16,273 |
| 2013 | \$463,459 | \$1,128 |
| 2012 | \$489,038 | \$1,181 |
| 2011 | \$430,720 | \$3,256 |
| 2010 | \$429,214 | \$10,207 |
| 2009 | \$218,632 | \$94,373 |
| 2008 | \$266,457 | |
| 2007 | \$322,708 | |
| 2006 | \$322,708 | |
| 2005 | \$1,037,078 | |
| 2004 | \$1,555,060 | |

MAJOR FACTORS AFFECTING OUTDOOR RECREATION

Viva New Mexico analyzes several factors that will influence how agencies provide outdoor recreation in New Mexico over the next several years. These include recreation providers, population trends, socio-economic patterns, public preferences and other factors. An important conclusion is that New Mexico has a mix of elements that shape how residents and visitors perceive its outdoor recreation opportunities and needs. A complete summary of trends is covered in Companion Report A.

Recreation Providers

Recreation providers often focus on a specific range of settings along a recreation spectrum. From primitive to developed, each setting is based on factors that include level of development, density of users, acceptable uses, regulations and controls, accessibility, management intensity, level of available services and maintenance requirements. This last factor is often overlooked and is at least as important as the construction of new facilities. Within New Mexico, provider roles often overlap. However, it is important to understand that each entity serves specific market segments (*i.e.* niches) and satisfies a specific range of user preferences.

Of New Mexico’s 121,000 square miles, more than half are publicly managed land (see Table 2 and Figure 3). Federal agencies manage 32% and of this amount; Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is the largest public land manager followed by the USFS. The remaining public lands are managed by various state, tribal, and local government entities that are responsible for the outdoor recreation needs of the state’s 2.1 million residents, as well as for the protection and preservation of land for future generations.

Federal and State Lands

In 2014, more than 13.5 million people visited federal lands in New Mexico (see Table 3). Annual visitation to state parks topped 3.8 million in the 12 months between July 1, 2012, and June 30, 2013.¹ Nearly three quarters of all New Mexicans live within 40 miles of a state park. About 90% of state park visits are associated with reservoirs, lakes, or rivers. The lands managed by the State Parks Division saw nearly 20 visitors per acre – three times more than the entire federal agency lands combined. The lands managed by NPS attracted the second most visitors relative to acreage, at 4.3 visitors per acre.

1. National Association of State Park Directors. Statistical Report of State Park Operations: 2012-2013, Annual Information Exchange. Dated April 2014.

| Ownership | Acres | Square Miles | % |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Federal Agencies | | | |
| Bureau of Land Management | 13,485,894 | 21,072 | 17.3% |
| Bureau of Reclamation | 54,489 | 85 | 0.1% |
| Department of Agriculture | 109,478 | 171 | 0.1% |
| Department of Defense | 2,518,094 | 3,935 | 3.2% |
| Department of Energy | 36,509 | 57 | 0.0% |
| Fish and Wildlife Service | 383,236 | 599 | 0.5% |
| Forest Service | 9,213,637 | 14,396 | 11.8% |
| National Park Service | 385,127 | 602 | 0.5% |
| Valles Caldera National Preserve | 89,867 | 140 | 0.1% |
| Pueblos, Tribes, and Nations | | | |
| Pueblos, Tribes and Nations | 8,315,983 | 12,994 | 10.7% |
| State Lands | | | |
| State Land Office | 8,973,877 | 14,022 | 11.5% |
| State Game and Fish | 199,651 | 312 | 0.3% |
| State Parks Division | 118,910 | 186 | 0.2% |
| Total | 43,794,886 | 68,430 | 56.3% |

BLM lands total nearly 13.5 million acres in New Mexico. Those lands are open to outdoor recreation activities including backpacking, hiking, biking, whitewater boating, fishing, caving, off-road vehicle driving, picnicking, wildlife viewing, and cultural site touring. Owing to the amount of BLM land and its multiple-use mandate, BLM lands receive more visits by recreationists than other federal lands. Visitation has risen over the past five years, amounting to 5.8 million visitors in 2010. Two national monuments were recently designated, which may have contributed to the increase in visitors. The Rio Grande del Norte National Monument was designated in 2013. This new national monument contains the Wild Rivers Recreation Area, located at the confluence of the Río Grande and Red River, and offers camping, whitewater rafting, hunting, fishing, hiking, and mountain biking. The Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument was designated in 2014 and includes four distinct areas that offer a variety of recreation. The most developed of the four, Organ Mountains, includes four national recreation trails open to mountain biking, horseback riding and hiking.

The USFS manages more than nine million acres of New Mexico's most ecologically diverse lands ranging in elevation from 4,000 to over 13,000 feet. Six national forests span across the state, including the Carson, Santa Fe, Cibola, Gila, Lincoln and Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. On average, the National Forest System hosts 3.7 million visitors annually, with the Cibola hosting the most visitors.

The NPS manages 13 sites with visitor centers, trails, historic, cultural, and natural and scenic sites. Visitation has been steady over the past few years and reached 1.6 million people in 2014.²

The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) manages eight National Wildlife Refuges (NWR). Of these, only Rio Mora NWR is closed to the public. Visitation to the state's NWRs was 285,000 in 2014, which has grown by 13% over the past five years. Valle de Oro NWR opened 570 acres five miles south of Albuquerque to the public in 2014. Urban refuges such as Valle de Oro offer unique environmental education and recreation opportunities in highly populated areas, while promoting the mission of the refuge system to protect wildlife and their habitats for the benefit of present and future generations.

Wilderness

Twenty-five Wilderness Areas totaling **1,651,056 acres** have been designated in New Mexico. This represents approximately **2%** of the lands within the state. These lands are part of the National Wilderness Preservation System which was established in 1964 by Congress.

Wilderness areas provide many benefits including opportunities to recreate. Wilderness can be used to hike, hunt, fish, ride horses, ski and raft. Mechanized (e.g., bicycling) and motorized recreation are prohibited within wilderness. Each of the federal managing agencies (BLM, USFWS, USFS, and NPS) manages wilderness areas in New Mexico.

Table 3: Visitors Per Year Per Acre

| Agency | Total Visitors per Year | | | | | Visits per Capita | |
|-------------|-------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | Total Acres | Visits per Acre in 2014 |
| BLM | 5,851,817 | 4,942,782 | 5,550,284 | 6,667,065 | 7,892,917 | 13,485,894 | 0.6 |
| USFS* | 3,744,000 | | | | | 9,213,637 | 0.4 |
| NPS | 1,602,114 | 1,512,529 | 1,502,808 | 1,491,144 | 1,657,550 | 385,127 | 4.3 |
| USFWS | 248,080 | 240,651 | 237,184 | 291,223 | 285,693 | 383,236 | 0.7 |
| State Parks | 4,768,710 | 4,244,739 | 4,055,455 | 3,852,111 | 3,802,115 | 196,677 | 19.6 |

Source: BLM, USFS, NPS, USFWS, and the State Parks Division.

* National Visitor Use Monitoring program surveys over 100,000 visitors to National Forest System lands every five years, with 20% of the national forests conducting surveys each year

2. For more information on NPS lands, see <http://www.nps.gov/state/nm/index.htm>.

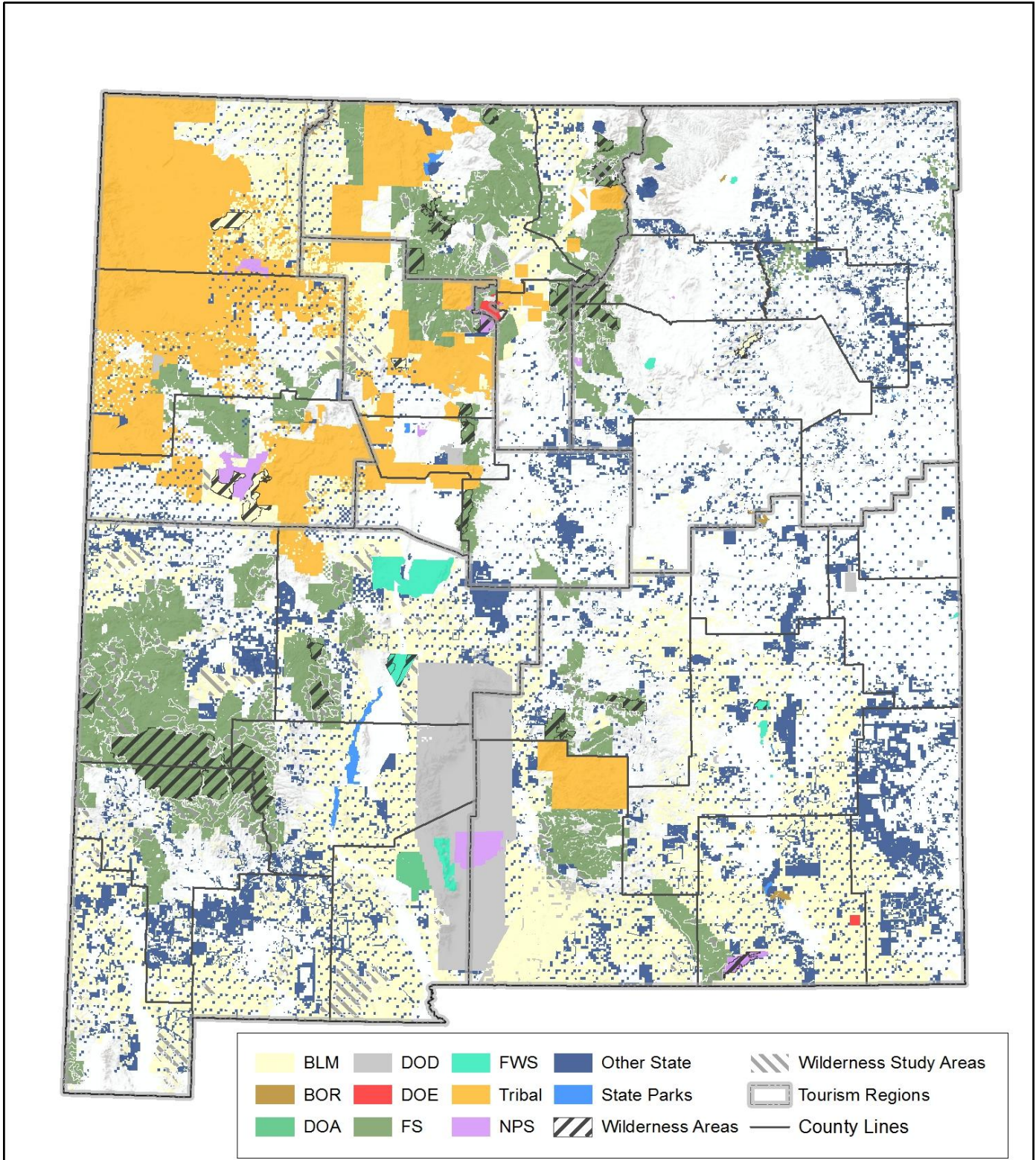


Figure 1: Federal and State Land Ownership Map. U.S. Bureau of Land Management, New Mexico Office. 2015.

| | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Bureau of Land Management (BLM) | Department of Defense (DOD) | Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) |
| Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) | Department of Energy (DOE) | Indian tribes, nations, and pueblos (Tribal) |
| Department of Agriculture (DOA) | Forest Service (USFS) | National Park Service (NPS) |

Other federal agencies include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), which manages five recreation areas associated with reservoirs in New Mexico, and the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR). Recreational use on BOR reservoirs is managed by the State Parks Division.

New Mexico's 35 state parks are managed by the State Parks Division. The purpose of the state parks program is to efficiently create the best recreational opportunities possible in state parks by preserving cultural and natural resources; continuously improving facilities; and providing quality, fun activities.³ The parks contain 135 miles of trails, numerous historical areas, and two environmental education areas (Rio Grande Nature Center and Mesilla Valley Bosque State Parks).

Pueblos, Tribes, and Nations

New Mexico's 22 Indian tribes, nations, and pueblos account for about 11% of New Mexico's land area and 11% of the population.⁴ As sovereign governments, tribes are responsible for the quality of life of their members and ensure adequate recreational facilities and opportunities for the tribal public. In addition, these entities have long provided visitors the opportunity to learn about their unique and special cultures through outdoor events such as feast days, arts and crafts shows, and tours. A wide variety of outdoor recreation activities are available on tribal lands. For example, golfers come from all over the country to golf at the premier Black Mesa Golf Course at Santa Clara Pueblo as well as the Buffalo Thunder Golf Resort and Towa Golf Resort in the Pueblo of Pojoaque. The Santa Clara Pueblo also operates a 63-site RV resort. Cochiti Pueblo also offers golfing and is home to Cochiti Lake and Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument. Santa Ana Pueblo offers two golf courses. Sandia Pueblo offers golfing as well as fishing, wildlife viewing, picnicking, and playgrounds at Sandia Lakes. Isleta Pueblo has a golf course as well as Isleta Lakes, where people can fish and camp. The Mescalero Apache tribe offers golfing, skiing, zip lining, hunting and fishing.

Visitors to Nambé Pueblo can explore Nambé Falls Recreation Area, which features a spectacular waterfall, a fishing lake, boating, hiking, and camping. Acoma Pueblo hosts the Tour de Acoma bike race every September, where cyclists of all abilities can ride through the scenic pueblo. The Navajo Nation offers numerous outdoor recreation opportunities that are provided by the Navajo Parks and Recreation Department and include camping, fishing, hiking and canoeing, as well as tribal fairs. Some of the many beautiful recreation areas include Asaayi Lake and Bowl Canyon Recreation Area.

Some Native American lands permit camping, hiking, hunting and fishing. The Mount Taylor Game Ranch is located on Laguna Pueblo and offers trophy elk hunting and trout fishing, along with an RV park and Paguate Lake for fishing. The Jicarilla Apache Nation offers big game hunting and the country's largest elk enclosure along with great fishing opportunities. One of the best lakes in the state for large rainbow trout is Stone Lake on the Jicarilla Apache Reservation. San Felipe Pueblo and Ohkay Owingeh Pueblos also operate RV parks. Visitors can fish, picnic and hike at the Ohkay Owingeh Tribal Lakes, the Tutah Fishing Lake at the San Ildefonso Pueblo, the Zuni Area Lakes, and at the San Ildefonso Fishing Lake.



Taos Pow Wow © New Mexico Tourism Department

3. New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department. Strategic Plan, Fiscal Year 2015 – 2016.
4. For more information, see the Indian Affairs Department at <http://www.iad.state.nm.us/>.

Local Governments

While many New Mexicans travel to enjoy the vast opportunities on federal and state public lands on the weekends, local and tribal governments provide most outdoor recreation opportunities used by their residents on a daily or more frequent basis. Parks, playing fields, courts, pools, picnic areas, playgrounds, and trails are offered by many local and tribal governments. Cuts in federal and state spending combined with increased citizen concern for protecting land have spurred cities and counties to take on a larger role in recreation and conservation funding. Funding through local and tribal governments can often be found in the departments of planning, health, parks, public works, and transportation.

While there is no consolidated inventory of local government parks and open space, local open space programs continue to expand in both acreage and popularity. Vigorous open space programs exist in Albuquerque, Santa Fe County, and Bernalillo County, among other New Mexico communities.

Private Recreation Providers

The legacy of the Spanish and Mexican land grant system has created a unique land ownership pattern, especially in northeastern New Mexico where federal land is limited. Properties in excess of 50,000 acres continue to operate as ranches or private hunting/fishing grounds. Public access across private property is limited, and advance permission is often required to avoid trespassing. At a regional and community scale, commercial outfitters and guides are the primary vehicle for the public to access otherwise off-limit private land. Examples of other private recreation providers include golf courses (day fees, annual memberships), ski resorts (day fees, seasonal passes), shooting and archery ranges (day fees), and fishing and hunting clubs (free or membership fee).

Several for-profit, non-profit, academic, professional, and civic organizations support New Mexico's recreation providers. For-profit businesses function as asset providers (e.g., concessionaires) or experience providers (e.g., outfitters, guides). However, these organizations serve a supporting role and rarely own land-based facilities. Land-based providers include colleges/universities, school districts, water conservation districts, and special districts.

Demographic and Social Trends

Economic Strength

- New Mexico's focus is on improving job growth. State and local governments, cooperating with industry, educators and investors are all concentrating on creating more New Mexico jobs. In this setting, the positive economic impact of recreation cannot be overstated as an important contributor to this change. Outdoor recreation supports 68,000 New Mexico jobs and ultimately \$458 million in state and local tax revenue.⁵ Active outdoor recreation creates sustainable long-term economic growth and community development throughout New Mexico.
- Differences in socio-economic conditions, such as income and education, significantly influence the physical activity level of New Mexicans. As described in New Mexico Department of Health's, *The State of Health in New Mexico, 2013*, "In our state, poor people are less likely to engage in physical activity than those who have high incomes, and are more likely to subsequently suffer the effects of not exercising, including stress, weight gain and depression."⁶ Interestingly, the job growth forecast for the tourism sectors over the next several years is strong, as it is for oil and gas production, mining, technology and transportation.
- The New Mexico True tourism campaign began in 2011, focusing on New Mexico's mountains, water activities, outdoor recreation, Native American and Spanish culture, and New Mexico's unique cuisine, in short, its greatest strengths. Recreation providers are contributing to and strengthening the image of "The Land of Enchantment" every day.

5. The Economic Contributions of Outdoor Recreation: Technical Report on Methods and Findings. 2013. Prepared by Southwick Associates for the Outdoor Recreation Association.

6. 2014. The State of Health in New Mexico 2013. New Mexico Department of Health. Available at <http://nmhealth.org/publication>.

CASE STUDY—SINGLE TRACK AND NATIVE AMERICAN DANCE

HOW ADVENTURE GALLUP & BEYOND HAS CREATED A TRULY UNIQUE ADVENTURE MECCA WITH A 24-HOUR NATIONAL MOUNTAIN BIKE RACE MIXED WITH NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURAL FESTIVAL

Named the Adventure Capital of New Mexico, Gallup is a model of adventure tourism, community-based initiatives and partnerships (<http://www.adventuregallup.org/>). In 1999, a group of 150 community members attended a forum to define an asset-based community development program that led to a homegrown initiative around harnessing and promoting adventure tourism as an economic driver for the area. Adventure tourism is locally defined as both spectator and participatory outdoor activities in which people enjoy the natural beauty of the area—whether it’s horseback riding, fishing, ballooning, or birdwatching.

For decades, Gallup was the gateway to tribal lands and thrived on cultural tourism. It was the source for authentic Native American jewelry, art, and crafts—showcased most fully by the oldest continuous New Mexico event, the Gallup Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial. Linking Gallup’s strong hospitality base and its cultural tourism niche with the outdoor opportunities of the high desert was a unique formula for success.

Gallup is a special place, “where a person can ride singletrack ‘til their wheels bleed, and then attend nightly Native American dances in the downtown square.” (<http://www.adventuregallup.org/>). The Adventure Gallup & Beyond Board continues to harness the passion of community and its willingness to share its wondrous and diverse backyard. Its mission is to promote and use the trail and outdoor recreation venues around Gallup and McKinley County as an economic driver. Adventure Gallup & Beyond works to maintain and manage these venues so that they can sustain use over time.

Gallup was awarded the USA Cycling Mountain Bike 24-Hour National Championships in 2013 and 2014. This was a huge honor that began with an \$187,894 grant for trailhead construction and trail enhancements on the Cibola National Forest and resulted in building 26 miles of single-track trails, with the help of the New Mexico Youth Conservation Corps. Great vision and partnerships led to an event that gathered 3,000 racers, spectators, and support teams with a total economic impact of \$2.6 million.



High Desert Trail System © Paul Dewitt

Population Changes

- Forecasted population changes likely will continue to show migration out of rural areas toward already urbanized parts of the state (*i.e.*, the Central region).⁷ The availability and affordability of recreation opportunities has long been a core attraction for both employers and employees who increasingly choose where they want to locate based on an area's quality of life.
- Overall projections are for New Mexico's population to grow about 35% over the next 25 years. Much of the growth will be in the urbanized central region of the state, which includes Bernalillo County and currently includes 42% of the state's total population. Additionally, Doña Ana County (southwest region) is expected to continue strong growth, especially among college-aged adults.
- Tribal population patterns differ from non-tribal population patterns, since more tribal members may be moving back to rural reservation lands.
- Much of the Northeast and Southwest (other than Doña Ana County) regions, as well as some counties in other regions, may experience declining population, partially as a reflection of expected economic conditions in those areas. Some rural communities in New Mexico could also experience declining population.
- Participation in outdoor recreation activities, attitudes about facilities and opportunities, and other aspects related to outdoor recreation varies from region to region in New Mexico. Recreation providers at all levels need to understand predicted population changes in their area, and what their customers and constituents want. The Statewide Resident Survey Report that was conducted as part of this SCORP planning process, located in the Companion Report B, defines public preferences by region.



White Sands Footprints © New Mexico Tourism Department

Socio-Economic Diversity

- New Mexico continues to be one of the most ethnically diverse states in the entire United States, a historic pattern expected to continue. The diversity of New Mexico means that different people will seek different types of outdoor recreation, as demonstrated by the Statewide Resident Survey Results.
- New Mexico has the highest concentration of Hispanics and second highest concentration of Native Americans in the United States. In fact, Hispanics in New Mexico are the largest ethnic group (about 47% total). Projections are for Hispanics to continue to be the fastest growing ethnicity in the United States. The strong growth among Hispanics also means that New Mexico has one of the youngest populations in the United States with a median age of 35.2 years old (versus 36.4 for the United States). This is largely the result of the age distribution among Hispanics. Interestingly, about one in five New Mexicans is over 55 years old (23.1%), meaning that New Mexico also has a higher proportion of residents over 55 years old than about half the other states.
- The fact that socio-economic trends influence outdoor recreation choices is well known and well documented.⁸ As population grows or declines and demographic changes occur, recreation needs will change. Successfully attracting visitors to an area requires responding to those changes, which may affect management strategies. These generally influence everything from maintenance requirements for facilities to the types of recreation offered.
- People of different ages look for different types of recreation. The increased interest in wildlife watching, outdoor photography and similar activities⁹ observed over the past decade and more, is consistent with

7. University of New Mexico Bureau of Business and Economic Research. "New Mexico Economy: Recent Developments and Outlook. Presented at the 2014 Annual New Mexico Economic Outlook Conference.

8. McLean, D., and A. Hurd. 2015. Kraus' Recreation and Leisure in Modern Society. Jones and Bartlett Learning (pub.) Burlington, MA. 346 p.

9. Cordell, H. Ken. 2012. Outdoor recreation trends and futures: A technical document supporting the USFS 2010 RPA Assessment. Gen. Tech. Rep. SRS-150. Asheville, NC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, USFS, Southern Research Station. 167 p.

the aging of the “Baby Boomer” generation, who as they age are typically interested in maintaining a connection with the outdoors while seeking less strenuous activities. Coupled with this is the fact that early exposure to outdoor recreation typically spawns a life-long interest in outdoor recreation activities. This reinforces the need to encourage kids and even young adults to participate and enjoy nature and the outdoors, as well as to accommodate aging citizens who continue to enjoy the outdoors.

Health, Physical Activity, and Preventable Illnesses

- New Mexico is seen as a leader in working to get more kids outdoors and active through educational programs. New Mexico provides programs for teaching teachers, including downloadable standards-based education guides, the State Parks Division Outdoor Classroom Project, the State Parks Division Kids n’ Parks transportation program, the National Parks Foundation Ticket to Ride program and related efforts involving other state agencies and school districts. Since 2007, the State Parks Division reports that 166,000 students were involved in the Outdoor Classroom Project, while grants totaling about \$120,000 were made available to cover transportation costs for school districts to get kids into the parks for educational purposes.
- A higher percentage of adults and adolescents in New Mexico report meeting physical activity recommendations compared with those in the United States as a whole, and these physical activity rates appear to be increasing slightly. This may prove to reduce the 25 to 30% of residents who are classified as obese.¹⁰ Physical activity rates have a direct bearing not only on preventable physical illness (such as obesity and heart disease), but also mental problems (such as stress, depression and anxiety). Low activity rates also bring a host of economic impacts such as days missed at work and health care costs. The foundation of one’s quality of life rests on individual and family health.
- Time spent engaged with digital devices and television has increased exponentially in the last decade. Not only has screen time replaced play time, it decreases direct experiences with nature. While losing contact with the natural environment, today’s youth are missing key opportunities for physical activity, stress reduction, attention restoration, and healthy development. Sedentary lifestyles and physical inactivity have contributed to health problems plaguing New Mexico’s future.¹¹
- The National Conference of State Legislatures reported that 18.5% of children in New Mexico were overweight and 14.4% were classified as obese (exceeded the 95 percentile in BMI) in 2011.¹² Despite the disturbing nature of these statistics, the obesity rate actually improved from 2007 when the percentages were 16.7 and 16.0 respectively.¹³ New Mexico may be making progress, however considerable efforts are still needed.
- A proven and effective way to address obesity is exercise, especially if done outdoors.¹⁴ Outdoor recreation provides a means to help improve the health of New Mexico citizens, which in turn enhances the quality of life and the economic vitality of the state. This cascade effect requires thoughtful and well-designed recreation opportunities as well as effective outreach to citizens so that they can take advantage of available opportunities.

10. New Mexico’s Indicator-Based Information System (NM-IBIS). Available at <https://ibis.health.state.nm.us/indicator/view/PhysicalActAdult.Cnty.html>.

11. Ludwig DS (2007). *New England Journal of Medicine*, 357(23): 2325-27.

12. National Conference of State Legislatures. Cited from: <http://www.ncsl.org/research/health/childhood-obesity-trends-state-rates.aspx>

13. The 2003 statistics from the same source were 12.1 percent overweight and 16.8 percent obese.

14. Gonzalez, B. 2015. “Indoor vs. Outdoor Exercise: Which is more productive?” Cited from: <http://www.athleticbusiness.com/fitness-training/indoor-vs-outdoor-exercising-which-is-more-productive-br.html>.

CASE STUDY—TULAROSA CREEK DISCOVERY TRAIL

DISCOVERING HOW TRAILS CAN TRANSFORM HEALTH

The NPS has created a Parks, Trails, and Health Workbook in a community workshop setting to determine local health disparities, to inform trail plan implementation, and to engage health partners in New Mexico (http://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/helpfultools/ht_publications.html). The Mescalero Apache Tribe, located in south-central New Mexico, was a recipient of a New Mexico Department of Health Community Transformation Grant award. To help determine the success of the grant, the Mescalero Apache agreed to these population performance measures by 2016:

- 5 percent decrease in prevalence of childhood obesity;
- 5 percent increase in prevalence of children’s healthy eating behaviors; and
- 5 percent increase in prevalence of children’s increased physical activity behaviors.

The Mescalero Apache Healthy Kids Coalition, the New Mexico DOH, and the NPS Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program planned a three-quarter-mile trail along Tularosa Creek and assessed other walking opportunities within the Mescalero community. This stakeholder group used the 2015 NPS Parks, Trails & Health Workbook to:

- fully understand the health issues facing the Mescalero Apache people;
- engage a broader section of health partners including Indian Health Services, Senior Programs, health education and mental health services; and
- help stakeholders understand how properly designed trail corridors could help address a multitude of health issues.

Following an orientation to the Workbook steps, the Mescalero Healthy Kids Stakeholder Group collected community health data from various sources. The Stakeholder Group held a workshop to share data and learn about trail design as it relates to physical, mental, and social well-being. Workshop participants engaged in discussions about how the Tularosa Creek Discovery Trail could affect change in increased physical activity among youth and hypertension and depression among adults. Mescalero residents became engaged in park and

walkability audits. A draft trail plan was developed, which was walked by the Stakeholder Group and Mescalero community to refine the “healthy trail” ideas. A final Tularosa Creek Discovery Trail Plan was presented to the Mescalero Tribal Council and adopted by tribal resolution.

KEY OUTCOMES

- The Tularosa Creek Discovery Trail became the anchor for other informal walking paths within Mescalero tribal land, including the Diabetes and Senior “walking routes.”
- To address social and mental health, the trail will become a gathering place featuring a drumming/singing circle; Mescalero War Chiefs memorial; and places for community gardens, flea markets, and rustic pavilions.
- To address physical activity, discovery play pockets are envisioned for climbing, balance, and swinging, along with new traditional playgrounds.
- A liquor store will be relocated away from the trail corridor.
- Tribal members performing community service will provide trail and walking path maintenance.



Mescalero Apache Boys and Girls Club Participants at Trail Design Charrette

PLANNING PROCESS

The intent of this planning process was to illustrate a strong linkage between the key themes and the intended actions. This plan provides goals that can be achieved over the term of the SCORP and enables participants to complete actions which accomplish portions of multiple goals.

The planning process took place over a 10-month period and included a general inventory of available outdoor recreation opportunities throughout the state and involved various forms of public and agency outreach. Several companion reports were prepared to support the development of recommendations. Four of these reports, described below, were developed through stakeholder input and provide valuable insight on participation preferences and trends.

Stakeholder Input

Interactions with the stakeholders occurred at multiple points during the planning process. A summary of outreach is presented in Table 4. Public and stakeholder involvement included the following:

Stakeholder Interviews

To kick-off the project, the planning team conducted a statewide tour to interview recreation providers from cities and counties large and small. Over 32 stakeholders shared a range of issues and challenges that shaped the scope of this project.

Board and Committee Workshops

The project team met with a Technical Advisory Committee, the New Mexico Recreation and Parks Association (NMRPA) Board, and State Parks Advisory Board. Members of those groups assisted in helping to distribute messages, requests for feedback and the development of the draft plan.

Statewide Resident Survey (Companion Report B)

A telephone survey of 806 New Mexico adult residents was conducted. The survey sampling was conducted in a stratified manner to gather results for the state as a whole and also to focus on each of the six tourism regions of the state; Central, Northeast, North Central, Northwest, Southeast, and Southwest (see Figure 2).

Table 4: Summary of Public Outreach

| Event | Date | Participants/Recipients |
|---|---------------------|-------------------------|
| SCORP Kick-off meeting | 1/20/2015 | 17 |
| Statewide Stakeholder Interviews | 1/21/15 - 1/23/15 | 15 |
| Advisory Committee and Stakeholders Ranking Previous SCORP Priorities | 3/3/15 - 4/1/15 | 53 |
| Resident Survey | 3/15 – 4/15 | 806 |
| East Mountain Regional Trails Council Presentation | 4/7/2015 | 14 |
| Out of State Visitors Panel | 4/15 – 5/15 | 310 |
| Preliminary Draft Sent to Advisory Committee | 6/30/2015 | 21 |
| Priorities Workshop | 7/14/15 – 7/15/15 | 22 |
| SCORP Draft Posted on State Parks Website | 10/2/2015 | N/A |
| Press Release Inviting Public Comment | 10/5/2015 | N/A |
| KRQE Story/Interview Asking for Public Participation | 10/8/15 | N/A |
| Email Asking Advisory Committee and Stakeholders to Review Draft | 10/8/2015 | 75 |
| Legal Ad in Abq Journal Inviting Public to Comment | 10/11/2015 | N/A |
| Online Survey to Rank Outdoor Recreation Priorities Begins | 10/15/15 – 11/15/15 | 1,057 |
| Public Meeting/Webinars | 10/15/2015 | 12 |
| Email “Blast” to Reserve America Subscribers | 10/28/2015 | 14,000 (Approximate) |
| Email “Blast” to State Employees | 10/28/2015 | 35,000 (Approximate) |
| NMRPA Presentation | 11/5/2015 | 25 |
| Close of Public Comment Period | 11/16/2015 | N/A |

A minimum of 80 surveys from each region was obtained. In each of the six regions, the surveyors asked questions related to types of participation that took place, barriers or constraints to participating in outdoor recreation, overall user satisfaction, and what activities people are leaving the local area to do.

2015 Out-Of-State Visitor Panel (Companion Report C)

Data was collected from panelists of an online survey research company. Respondents were required to be residents of neighboring states (*i.e.*, Texas, Oklahoma, Colorado, Utah, or Arizona), had stayed overnight in New Mexico within the past three years, and had participated in some form of outdoor recreation during a visit within the past three years.

These five states represent four of the top five markets for New Mexico for out-of-state visitors.¹⁵ While visitors from further afield may have some different characteristics, these five states were deemed to be the core of the visitor market. The panel survey collected a total of 310 responses.

Panels are often used as a proxy for a survey in instances where the population is difficult to reach via standard survey methods, which is the case with visitors to New Mexico. Questions asked included what is missing from recreational opportunities in the state, spending patterns, barriers to visiting, etc. Out-of-state visitors identified the recreational activities that they participated in while visiting the state as well as their overall thoughts about New Mexico's outdoor recreation (See Figure 3).

Plan Audit (Companion Report D)

The Plan Audit questionnaire solicited responses from a variety of outdoor recreation professionals and agencies across New Mexico. Participants were asked to rank each of the 2010 SCORP priorities on a scale of very important, somewhat important, neutral or not at all important. Participants were also asked about other needs they thought should be addressed in the revised plan. The Plan Audit questionnaire was sent to the SCORP Advisory Committee, including the State Parks Advisory Board, SCORP stakeholders, and the New Mexico Parks and Recreation Association. A total of 62 responses were collected.

Public Draft Outreach (Companion Report F)

The public draft of this Strategic Plan was shared throughout the state and posted online. Public feedback was sought from citizens, NMRPA members, industry groups, and other providers. The public was provided multiple opportunities to comment on the draft plan including via email, webinars, and an online questionnaire. Two statewide webinars were held to present the key findings and recommendations of the plan. A total of 267 complete online responses were completed with over 750 partial responses. An additional 13 emails and letters were received. A complete summary of comments is provided in Companion Report F.

15. The fifth state is California. While California produces a large number of visitors, they represent a smaller proportion of the state's population, and therefore would have been notably less cost-efficient to survey. It was deemed to be a better tradeoff of resources to concentrate on contiguous states where New Mexico visitors make up a larger proportion of visitors.

The Regions of New Mexico
For this 2016 *Viva New Mexico* plan, inventory findings appear by county and by the six planning regions previously established by the New Mexico True Tourism campaign.

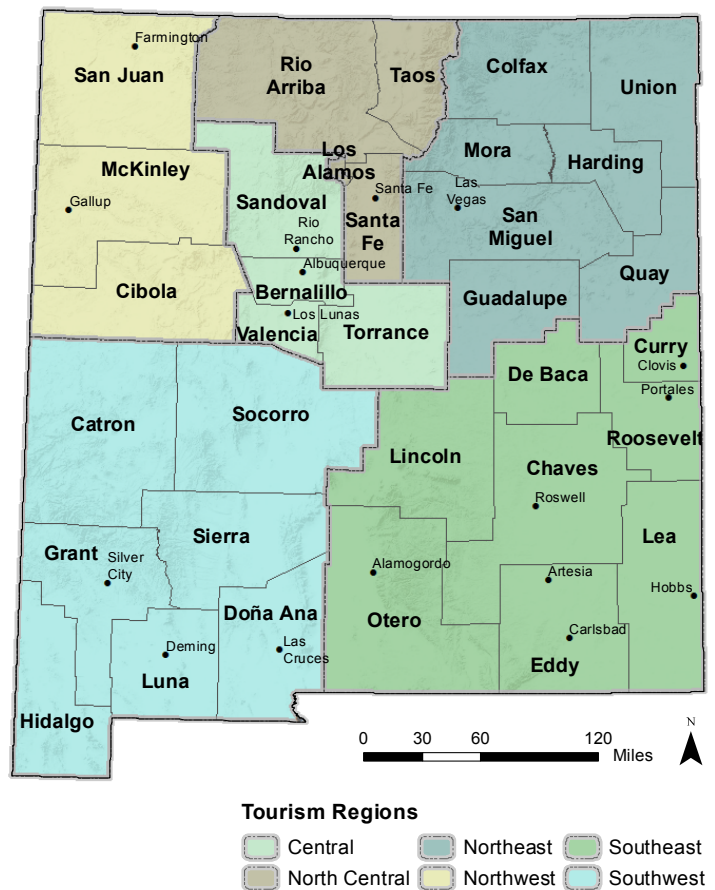


Figure 2: New Mexico Tourism Regions

PARTICIPATION PREFERENCES AND PERCEPTIONS

Nationwide Outdoor Recreation Participation and Trends

The Outdoor Foundation studies participation in non-motorized outdoor recreation. The Foundation’s 2015 Topline Report indicated nearly half of all Americans, 48.4%, participate in an outdoor recreation activity (see Figure 3).¹⁶ There has been a slight decrease in participants over the past year and number of outings continues a slight downward trend over recent years. Activities with the greatest participation continue to be biking, fishing, hiking, and camping. However, camping and fishing, along with hunting and downhill skiing/snowboarding, have seen a downward trend over the past three years.

Paddle sports, especially stand up paddle boarding, continue to grow in popularity. Nationally, participation in races, especially adventure racing and triathlons, has increased significantly over the past three years (see Table 5).

Favorite activities and participation rates range with demographics. Running was the most popular outdoor activity for Americans regardless of age, ethnic or racial affiliation. Outdoor participation is highest among Caucasians and lowest among African Americans. While Hispanic Americans make up a small percentage of total outdoor participants in a national basis, those who did participate averaged the most annual outdoor outings per person.

| Activity | 3-Year Growth |
|------------------------------------|---------------|
| Adventure Racing | 38% |
| Non-traditional/Off-Road Triathlon | 34% |
| Stand Up Paddling | 31% |
| Kayak Fishing | 20% |
| Traditional/Road Triathlon | 19% |
| BMX Bicycling | 16% |
| Traditional Climbing | 16% |
| White Water Kayaking | 15% |
| Boardsailing/Windsurfing | 13% |
| Sea/Touring Kayaking | 13% |

Source: <http://www.outdoorfoundation.org/research.participation.2015.topline.html>

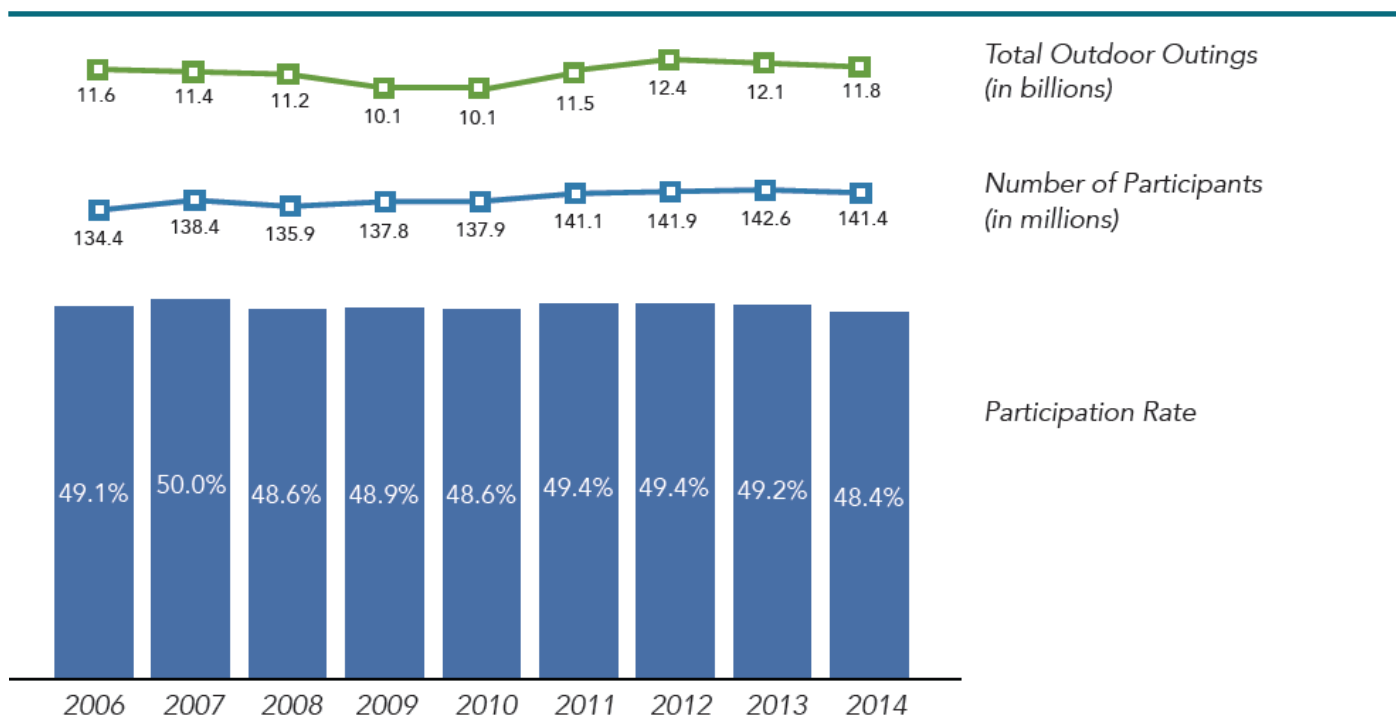


Figure 3: Outdoor participation, 2006 to 2014.

16. The 2015 Outdoor Recreation Participation Topline Report is available at <http://outdoorfoundation.org/research>.

New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Favorite and Common Activities¹⁷

Outdoor recreation is popular across the state and within every demographic segment. Indeed, 93% of adult residents participate in at least one outdoor recreation activity. Traveling trails on foot (*i.e.*, walking, hiking, and running) is very popular. Wildlife related activities (*i.e.*, hunting, fishing, shooting, and wildlife watching), camping, and visiting parks are also popular (see Figure 4).

New Mexicans would like to hunt, fish, and watch wildlife more than they do, and they would also like to swim and boat more than they do.

While walking, hiking, and running are clearly the most common activity statewide, this is not true in every region (see Figure 5). Hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching are just as likely as walking and running to be the most common outdoor activity in the northeast and northwest regions. Visiting parks and lakes is more common in the southern regions than statewide, and camping is more common than average in the northwest.

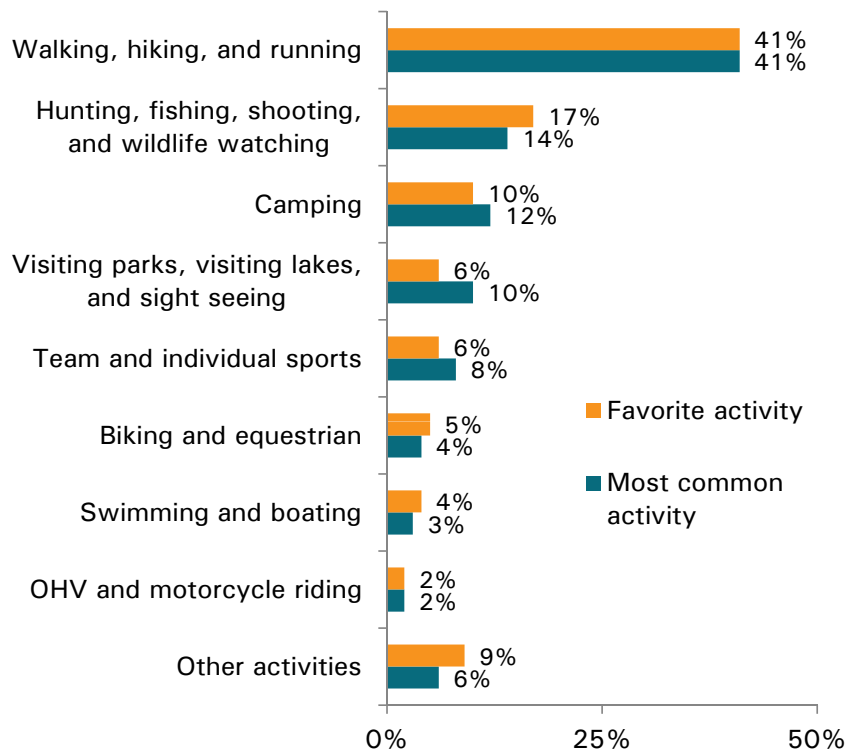


Figure 4: Favorite and Most Common Outdoor Recreation Activities Among New Mexico Residents

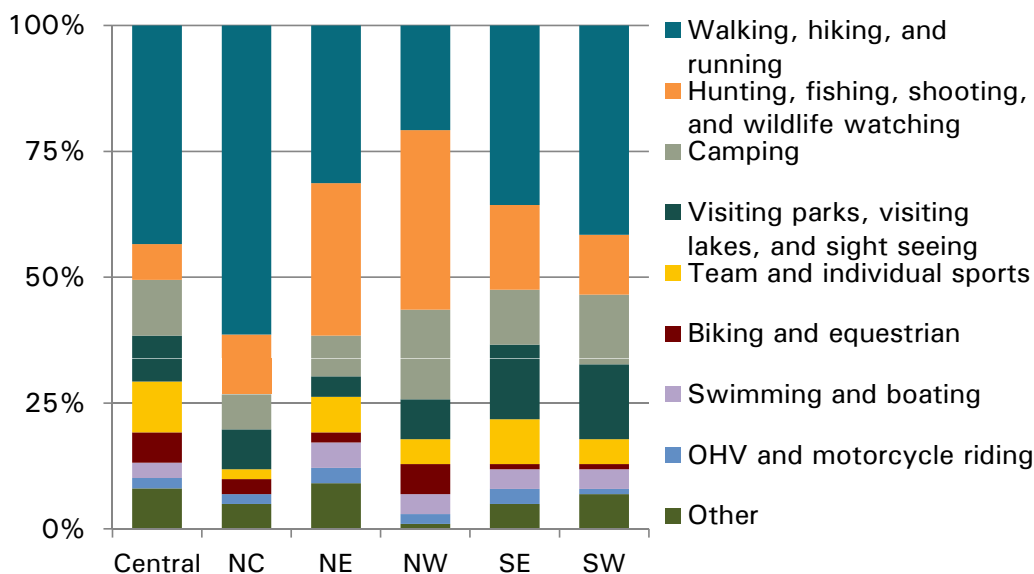


Figure 5: Most Common Activities among New Mexico residents by region

17. Findings in this section are drawn from Companion Report B, Corona Insights. 2015. Outdoor Recreation in New Mexico, 2015 Resident Survey Results. Prepared for the State Parks Division as part of the New Mexico SCORP Update.

Recreation Preferences

Satisfaction

On average, residents are “somewhat satisfied” with outdoor recreation options, although satisfaction differed by region (see Figure 6) and demographics. Males are more satisfied than females and urbanites are more satisfied than are rural residents. As resident age increases, so too does satisfaction with recreation options.

Facilities and Desired Experiences

At a statewide level, 66 percent of residents would prefer that funds be used to improve or maintain existing facilities and amenities, while 25 percent would prefer new facilities and 10 percent would like none of the above. Those who would prefer to maintain existing facilities indicated that current facilities are of higher quality, as opposed to residents who would prefer to build new ones. The opinion of the people who would like to see more facilities varies by region. Facilities in the southwest region may be the most “off target” in terms of serving preferred activities, while facilities in the North-central region are most likely to be well targeted to residents’ needs (see Figure 7).

Residents in the north-central region report the strongest beliefs that they have the right number of facilities that met some or all recreation needs. Southwest residents report the lowest belief that local facilities and amenities were meeting their needs, while residents in the northwest and northeast were most likely to indicate there are too few facilities and amenities.

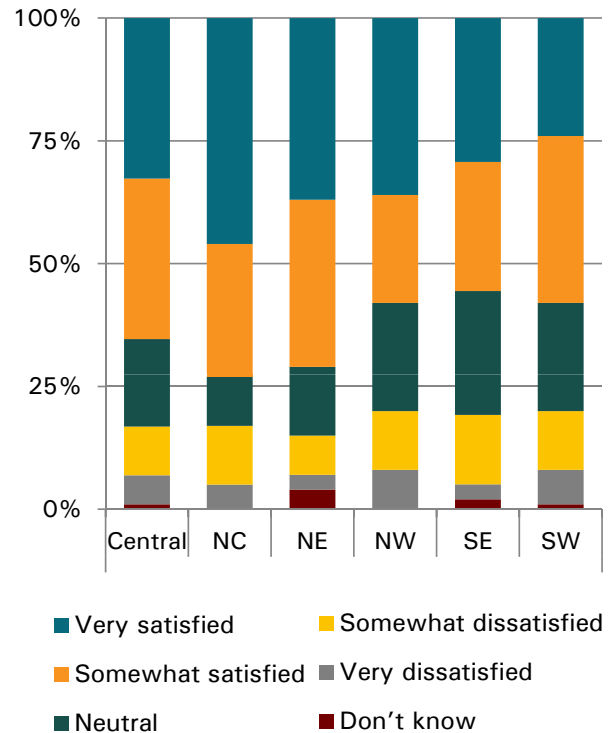


Figure 6: Satisfaction with Outdoor Recreation Options



Elephant Butte © New Mexico Tourism Department

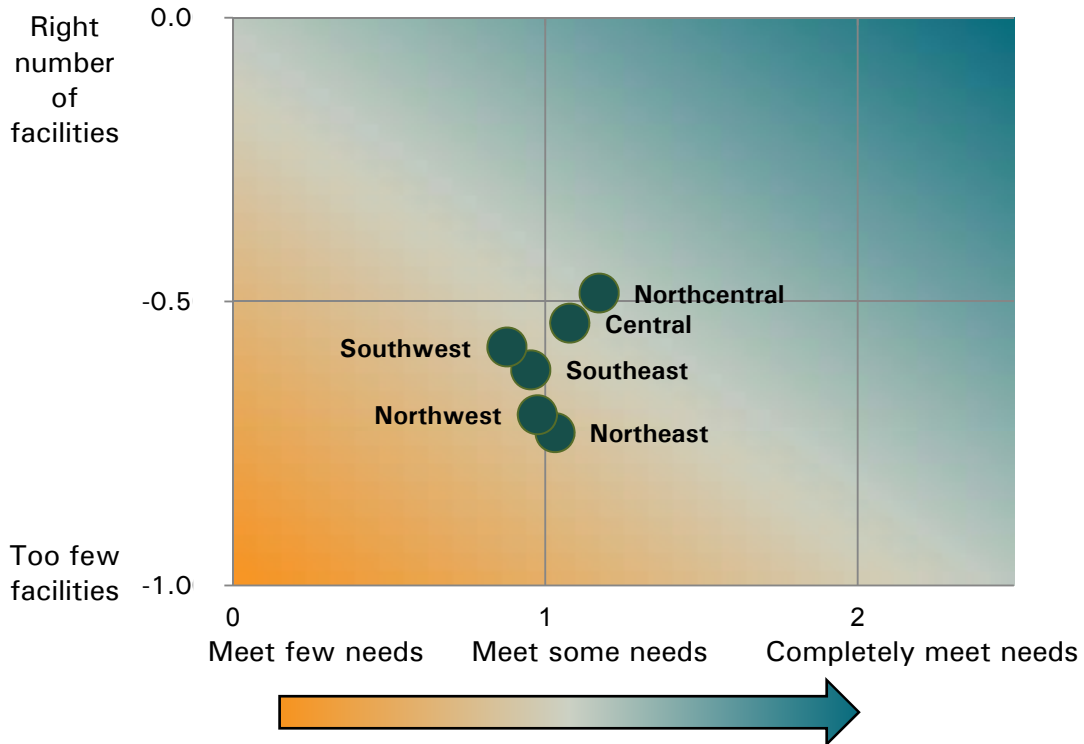


Figure 7: Local Facilities Meeting Needs, by Amount of Facilities

Desired outdoor recreation experiences align into three categories: nature seekers, thrill seekers, and socializers. A vast majority of the population are nature seekers who desire to feel connected to nature, observe scenic beauty, and enjoy the quiet. About 40 percent of residents are thrill seekers who desire to take personal risks and develop skills and abilities. Another 40 percent are socializers who desire to connect with other people while recreating (because some people desire more than one type of experience, the total percentage is greater than 100). User conflict may arise to the extent that behaviors among these recreation types interfere with the recreation goals of others. One could theorize that the nature seekers’ desire for peace and quiet might be inherently at odds with the goals of thrill seekers but less so with those of socializers. However, as desire for beauty in nature increases, so does desire for thrills and skill development.

Technology

The influence of technology on recreation activities cannot be overstated. The popularity of kayaks and other self-propelled water sports increased after manufacturers shifted to lightweight materials. Off-Highway Vehicles (OHVs), including ATVs, provided opportunities for new enthusiasts interested in motorized off highway recreation. Digital cameras enable people to enjoy the results of their outdoor photography almost instantly. These examples are but a few of many that demonstrate that innovation and technology continue to create opportunities for people to enjoy the outdoors.

Conversely, technology can also work against outdoor recreation participation. The use of the internet and social media is documented and prodigious.¹⁸ Roughly, 60% of all adults, regardless of ethnicity, use some form of social media. Additionally, about 80% of teens used social media in 2012.¹⁹ Estimates are that kids may be spending seven hours per day watching TV, using phones, computers or other electronic devices. The increased use of in-home technology is correlated with less physical activity and less outdoor time.

18. Source: <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/01/09/social-media-update-2014/>, (in association with the University of Michigan, Nicole Ellison and Cliff Lampe)

19. Source: <http://www.pewinternet.org/data-trend/teens/social-media/>

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Outdoor recreation significantly contributes to New Mexico’s economy. From lakeshore bait shops to high-end mountain lodges, outdoor recreation helps bring in tourism dollars, increase the tax base, and create jobs (see Figure 8). In fact, about three-quarters of overnight visitors from neighboring states participate in outdoor recreation, equating to about three million visits annually.

Outdoor Recreation Economic Contributions²⁰

Outdoor recreation generates \$6.1 billion in direct consumer spending in New Mexico, supporting 68,000 New Mexico jobs, providing \$1.7 billion in wages and salaries, and contributing \$458 million in state and local tax revenue.²¹ Outdoor recreation spending contributes \$2.91 per New Mexico resident, which ranks 21st among the 50 states.

Outdoor Recreation Events as an Economic Driver

Planned outdoor recreation events are an often-overlooked economic driver. On average, out-of-state visitors who attend outdoor recreation events spend about \$900 due to the event. Large recreation events, such as the Santa Fe Century and the Tour de Gila, provide significant economic development opportunities. An annual total spending estimate for outdoor recreation events from visitors from Utah, Texas, Oklahoma, Arizona, and Colorado is approximately \$385 million. This represents a floor on the estimates; spending figures will be higher when considering the impact of out-of-state visitors from non-contiguous states who attend outdoor events. Not only do outdoor events bring in out-of-state money, they are associated with visitors who are likely to return to New Mexico (see Figure 9).

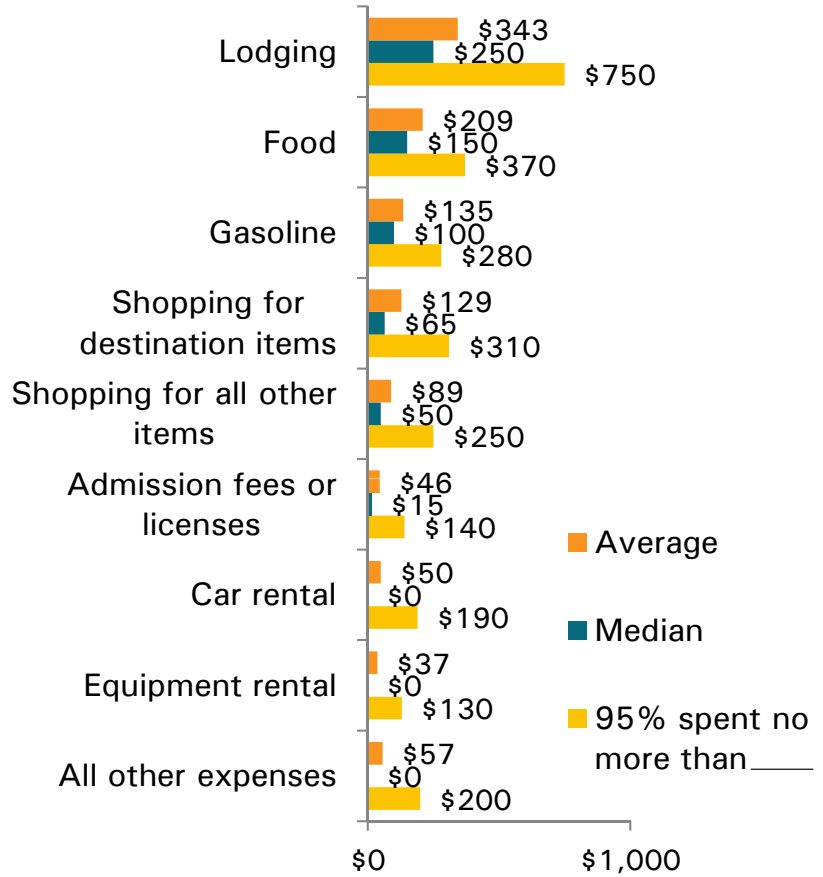


Figure 8: Money Spent by Out of State Visitors Per Trip

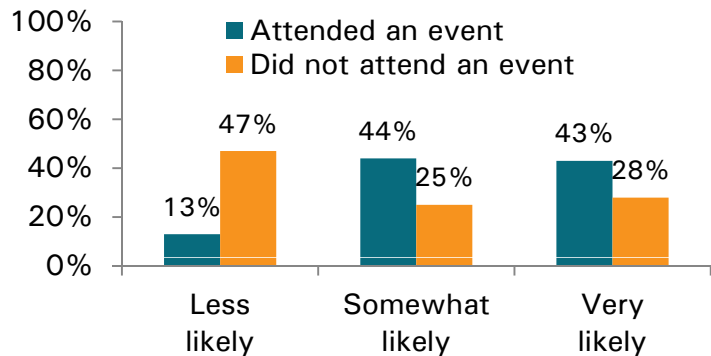


Figure 9: Likelihood of Visiting New Mexico Again by Attendance at New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Event

20. Findings in this section are drawn from Companion Report E, Corona Insights 2015 Outdoor Recreation Economic Contributions Prepared for the State Parks Division as part of the New Mexico SCORP Update

21. The Economic Contributions of Outdoor Recreation: Technical Report on Methods and Findings 2013 Prepared by Southwick Associates for the Outdoor Recreation Association

On average, the **3 million out-of-state visitors** who participate in outdoor recreation annually spend approximately **\$1,000 per trip, or \$290 per day.**

Attracting Out of State Visitors

Keys to continued tourism success include attracting out-of-state visitors who might otherwise recreate in neighboring states and understanding New Mexico’s unique competitive positions. For example, New Mexico attracts residents of Arizona, Colorado, and Utah, as well as Texas and Oklahoma, but there are differences in the activities that attract these groups. Texans and Oklahomans are much more likely to travel to New Mexico for snow sports (skiing, snowmobiling), whereas residents from Arizona, Colorado, or Utah are more likely to visit New Mexico for cultural events and festivals.

New Mexico is a clear regional leader in attracting visitors to participate in outdoor cultural events or festivals, an activity for which 87% of past New Mexico outdoor recreation visitors would leave their home state to do so. Compared with its regional competitors, New Mexico is well positioned to attract OHV riders, out-of-state campers, and those playing outdoor sports, but not as well positioned to attract anglers, hunters, and those who participate in snow sports (see Figure 10).

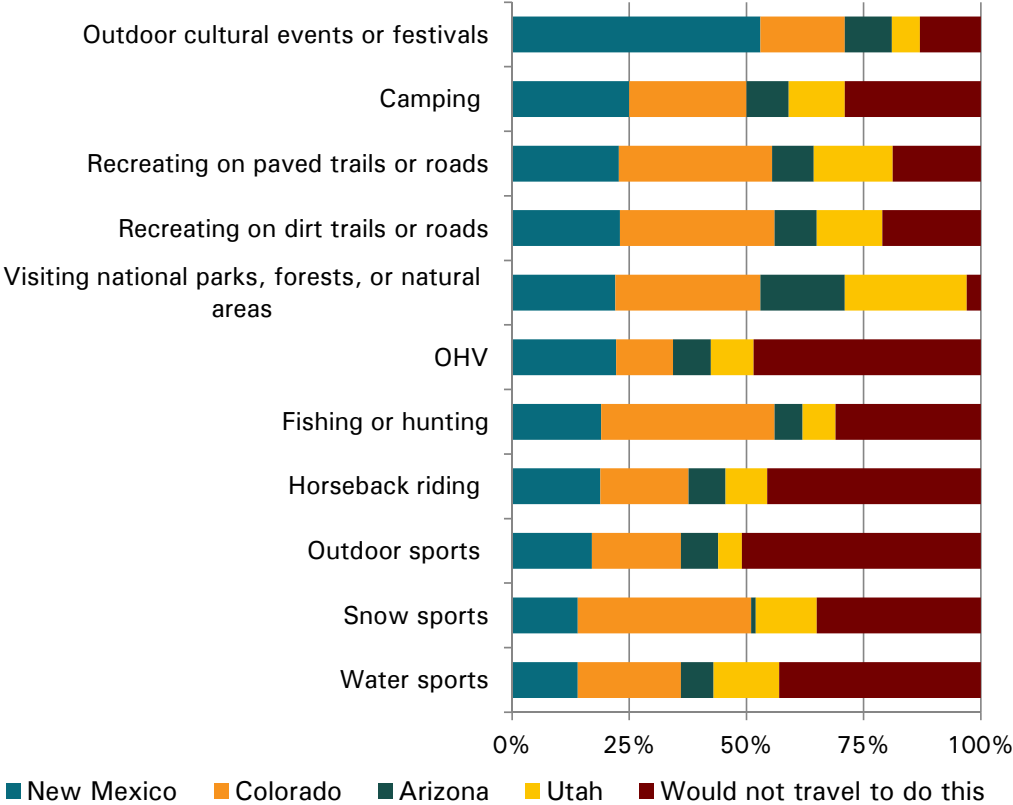


Figure 10: New Mexico’s Competitive Position Among Neighboring States: Where Respondents Would Travel For Outdoor Activities

Key Trends Summary

New Mexico is a state that encompasses a broad range of ethnic, economic and age categories, with a corresponding diverse mix of interests in outdoor recreation activities. As shown in the “Statewide Resident Survey Results” outdoor recreation is very important to New Mexico citizens, and is also important to visitors as shown in the “Out-of-State Visitor Survey Results.” Quality outdoor recreation, when available, improves the quality of life for New Mexico’s residents and visitors. Those visitors can provide economic benefits to the communities they visit. Finally, this means that recreation providers at all levels, along with key decision makers, need to understand the needs and expectations of their constituent communities and how those fit within their organizations’ mission and goals. There are many challenges facing recreation providers in New Mexico, and many possible solutions.

22. See Companion Report C, Corona Insights. 2015. Out of State Visitor Survey Report. Prepared for the State Parks Division as part of the New Mexico SCORP Update.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With the future of LWCF funding in limbo, the question arises: Why prepare a SCORP? As with many other states' SCORPs, *Viva New Mexico* is first and foremost a strategic plan that identifies the priorities and actions that will have the greatest impact on New Mexicans' lives economically and physically. There is great potential for positive change if local, regional, state, federal and non-governmental interests participate individually, and as partners, to increase awareness and achieve the goals that have been developed to address the most imperative opportunities and demands in various regions and across the state.

Viva New Mexico identifies five key themes that emerged through the process:

- Community Livability
- Trails
- Health
- Economic Vitality
- Environmental Health

These themes are directly related to the benefits that outdoor recreation can provide for the state, and agencies should make concerted efforts to address them as they plan, strategize and prioritize development, management and operations. The following goals, objectives, and actions appear below by theme, based on key findings revealed in the companion reports (see the Influences and Assets Report, the New Mexico Resident Survey, the Out-of-State Visitors' Panel, and the Economic Impacts from Outdoor Recreation) and input from local and state agencies and key stakeholders from across the state.

Viva New Mexico provides outdoor recreation providers and partners with the opportunity to find common ground while providing outdoor recreation throughout the state. While there are a variety of outdoor recreation providers and partners that could assist in the implementation of these actions, this document includes an initial list of key agencies and organizations that could lead efforts individually or collectively. A variety of agencies and organizations provided input on the initial list of stakeholders that could help to accomplish the various actions listed below. The organizations and agencies that are listed under "lead organization" would voluntarily work to achieve the goals. It is not the intent of State Parks to complete, lead or fund all of the listed actions. Furthermore, additional studies and public involvement may be necessary in the implementation of the following actions. Statewide goals, objectives, and actions are followed by suggested actions by region.

The strategic plan concludes with ways to implement *Viva New Mexico*, which will require leadership at the state and local levels. Regular, annual reports on progress toward achieving beneficial outcomes will keep the interest and commitment going. It is imperative for local, state, and federal governments to work collaboratively with private sector organizations to secure a future where New Mexicans live healthier lifestyles and communities have opportunities for sustainable economic well-being, while collaborating broadly for the conservation of wildlife and natural resources.

The following objectives, actions, and responsibilities are not listed in priority order.



City of Rocks State Park © State Parks Division



Golf PaaKo © New Mexico Tourism Department

Community Livability

A vibrant community is the sum of many attributes, including outdoor recreation resources, wise land management, and public involvement through coordinated planning efforts. Community livability represents the total of all quality of life factors that contribute to a locality's perceived attractiveness to residents and visitors. This includes natural and built features, economic as well as educational opportunities, and cultural and recreational characteristics. Many communities across the state offer many of these attributes, yet struggle to achieve desired levels for some segments of the population. With the state's special uniqueness, New Mexicans can build on those strengths to enhance the overall livability of their communities.

There is a clear need to understand the needs and challenges associated with typically underserved populations. The research for *Viva New Mexico* demonstrated that many areas in the state need more playgrounds for children. This is one of the areas where additional analyses could help to identify where such needs exist, enabling local action to address the issue. Research found that areas for children to play safely, such as playgrounds, are widely desired throughout the state. Satisfaction with local outdoor recreation options for youth is lower than general satisfaction with outdoor recreation options. Residents would do more swimming if facilities were available, and those who like to swim or boat strongly believe there are not enough facilities for them.

Wherever communities need to address challenges, funding is likely to be a problem. For that reason, *Viva New Mexico* encourages efforts to develop collaborative partnership efforts to identify new and alternative funding sources. As identified in the Plan Audit and Resident Survey, a need exists to fund the maintenance and management of existing facilities. Providing safe and clean facilities will promote their use as well as limit potential liabilities. Communities should focus primarily on the maintenance and repair of outdoor recreation facilities. Corporate and foundation resources are often available. Oftentimes those are challenging to obtain due to lack of information or connections for the communities who could benefit from such assistance. Developing those opportunities as well as maximizing available federal funding sources is another key recommended action, including use of LWCF for grants to local governments if the appropriate master plans exist.

Regular reporting must accompany all plans to inform decision makers and stakeholders that the plans are working through the accomplishment of identified goals and actions. The New Mexico Recreation and Parks Association provides a very appropriate avenue for such reports as it provides a means to inform recreation professionals and local decision makers across New Mexico.

Collectively, New Mexico's recreation community needs to strengthen the understanding of the many benefits of outdoor recreation for health, wellness, education, community livability, and other positive factors. These benefits are well documented and accepted, not only among recreation professionals but also in the medical community. Building a broader understanding of the benefits of recreation is a critical challenge to recreation providers.

Effective programs are key to great park attendance.²³ Nationwide, park attendance is declining and the public is less likely to visit parks unless they are attending programs. Fewer programs reduce usage rates for parks, eventually diminishing public support for traditional parks. Lack of public support leads to reduced park budgets for underutilized parks. New Mexico's "Outdoor Classroom" and "Kids 'n Parks" programs already enjoy national kudos. Yet New Mexico's citizens and decision makers need to understand that the contributions these and similar programs provide contribute to the "livability" of New Mexico and that these can be used to attract new industries and jobs. There are many opportunities to publicize New Mexico's matchless attributes and successes.

Among the challenges facing New Mexico is that there is not a one size fits all approach. New Mexico is a broad mix of rural and urban, plains and mountains, agricultural and metropolitan areas with a wide diversity in ethnicity, income and other factors. Collectively, recreation providers and stakeholders need to recognize the uniqueness of each community and work collaboratively to understand their community's distinctive needs, preferences and priorities.

23. Highlighted in "Where Are We Going? Trends that will impact the future of parks and recreation," in National Recreation and Park Association's 2015 Field Report, available at http://www.nrpa.org/uploadedFiles/PageBuilder_Prorgis/Content/common_elements/Field-Report.pdf

Goal: Address local needs, expand access to, and reduce barriers to outdoor recreation and trails.

| Objective 1.1: Increase the number of communities that have prepared parks, recreation, open space and trail master plans. | |
|--|--|
| Actions | Lead Organizations |
| Identify local government gaps and needs by preparing city and county parks, trails, open space and recreational facilities inventories, assessments, level of service and accessibility analyses. Create recreation management strategies that provide a mix of experiences for different users. At a minimum, these plans should be integrated with overall community land use, infrastructure and transportation, economic development and environmental protection master plans, and identify and prioritize gaps, estimate costs of priority projects, and identify possible funding sources. The plans should be updated at least every ten years. | County, City, and Town Parks, Recreation, Planning, and/or Public Works Departments; Native American Nations; NMRPA; New Mexico Outdoor Coalition. |
| Work to implement existing local park, recreation, trail and open space plans. | County, City, and Town Parks, Recreation, Planning, and/or Public Works Departments; Native American Nations; NMRPA; New Mexico Outdoor Coalition; Private Businesses. |
| Continue to build and maintain an online inventory that identifies current trails and parks using NRPA Proragis online database and GIS mapping tools. | NRPA, Local Governments, State Parks Division |
| Prepare and update management plans for each state park on an as-needed basis. | State Parks Division |
| Use planning and other related departments in public universities to assist in development of local plans and to help build a cadre of skilled outdoor recreation planners. | New Mexico State University, College of Health and Social Services; University of New Mexico, School of Architecture and Planning; University of New Mexico Design and Planning Assistance Center |
| Use the existence of a current parks, recreation, open space and trails master plan as one criterion for receiving state or federal grants for implementing projects. | State and federal agencies |
| Use federal programs to aid in the planning and implementation of park and recreation plans. | NPS Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, NPS National Trails Program, Stateside LWCF funding at levels recommended by the National Association of State Outdoor Recreation Liaison Officers |
| Provide LWCF stateside funding to local governments. | State Parks Division |

Objective 1.2: Increase local government capacity, resources and partnerships to address community recreation priorities.

| Actions | Lead Organizations |
|---|--|
| Assist local governments in preparing a gap inventory showing areas that are underserved with play areas and programs. | New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Dept., New Mexico Resource Geographic Information System, New Mexico Department of Health, NMRPA |
| Work with New Mexico corporations and NMRPA to help local governments and organizations find funding for underserved areas and to help maintain existing areas. | NMRPA, New Mexico based corporations (See http://www.inc.com/inc5000/list/2014/state/nm/ for possible corporate candidates) |

Objective 1.3: Provide lower cost, close to home, and accessible activities that are socially equitable and inclusive - targeting senior citizens, youth, low income and underserved populations.

| Actions | Lead Organizations |
|---|--|
| Increase transportation options via walking, bike, bus, shuttles, etc. throughout New Mexico communities and to outdoor destinations in particular. | Local and regional transit authorities, schools, NMDOT, Federal Agencies, Federal Land Access Programs |
| Develop and support outdoor education classrooms and citizen science programs that enhance knowledge and appreciation for the outdoors. | Schools, Get Outdoors New Mexico, Take it Outside New Mexico, Tribal Governments Universities (teacher education programs), Federal Agencies |
| Create accessible, inclusive park features that address social and mental wellness. Employ best practices to meet or exceed Federal Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. | All land managers |

Objective 1.4: Increase awareness of the benefits of outdoor recreation.

| Actions | Lead Organizations |
|--|---|
| Improve awareness and partnerships with allied professionals such as Game and Fish, public works departments, stormwater, etc. | NMRPA, Local Governments, Federal and State Departments |
| Promote the economic, health and environmental benefits of outdoor recreation to elected and appointed officials. | All land managers and private business |
| Communicate to school systems how outdoor activities contribute to educational goals and core competencies criteria, as well as health benefits. | State Departments; Local Parks and Recreation Agencies |

Trails

Traveling trails on foot (*i.e.*, walking, hiking, and running) is clearly the most desired activity as well as the most common activity of New Mexicans, especially for those who are not outdoor recreation enthusiasts. Trail facilities also accommodate bicycling, horseback riding, skateboarding, and a host of other activities. On a statewide basis, trails are far and away the type of facility or amenity that residents wish there were more of, and the type of facility or amenity that they think is more important to them in considering where to live. Convenient, walkable access to parks and cultural amenities improves community resilience and draws millennials and young families. Trails provide a means of introducing people to outdoor recreational experiences and increasing levels of activity, as well as supporting active and alternatives forms of transportation.

Both the Resident and Out of State surveys reported the need for better trail maintenance. A recurrent action throughout this theme is leveraging volunteers to help with trail construction and maintenance. Many times corporations or other organizations display an interest in finding volunteer projects for employees that serve to boost team and morale building. The key is having the knowledgeable staff and time to pursue these opportunities.

Currently the rate of trail construction and maintenance lags behind the demand for quality trail recreation, often times due to limited funding and staff resources. The popularity of trails in New Mexico demonstrates how new or improved trails increase community livability. Since trails are attractive to out-of-state visitors as well as in-state residents, partnering with the New Mexico Tourism Department is an important early step. Given the widespread appeal of trails, there is potential to tap into alternative transportation or environmental mitigation funding, while appealing to volunteer organizations such as trail alliances to leverage funds and time.

Research shows that New Mexicans need to design and build trails to safely access parks and play areas. Again, this approach can serve several compatible purposes such as expanding access for kids, families, and underserved populations, while increasing the convenience of healthy activities, and opening options to tap into alternative funding sources rather than relying exclusively on scarce “recreation” dollars.

Motorized trails are recreationally and economically important to the state.²⁴ OHV riders share some facilities with campers, equestrians, hikers, and mountain bikers and desire similar experiences such as solitude and scenery, yet often have different impacts than most other recreating populations. Motorized activities are attractive to out-of-state visitors and New Mexico is well-positioned compared with nearby states. However, planning and design for motorized recreation must be cognizant of user conflicts, reducing environmental impacts, and increasing visitor experience. The need to continue a dialogue on how to continue balancing recreation users and multi-use areas is critical.

New Mexico does offer many OHV trail opportunities, however additional advertising would expand these opportunities where appropriate and draw in the motorized tourism dollars that would help many rural communities. OHV organizations, such as the NMOHVA and national OHV organizations can assist with design, construction and maintenance of motorized trails, and assist management agencies with educational outreach to ensure appropriate OHV use.



Tent Rocks © New Mexico Tourism Department

²⁴ As a comparison, see economic impacts of OHV for Idaho, Utah, Texas, and Colorado. In Colorado, the total economic contribution of motorized recreation in the 2007-2008 season exceeded \$1 billion: http://www.nohvcc.org/docs/economic-impacts/CO_OHV_Economic_Impact_FR.pdf?sfvrsn=0.



Cerrillos Hills State Park © State Parks Division

Trail systems usually begin at a local level, and subsequently provide opportunities to contribute to the development of a regional attraction. In the 2015 session, the New Mexico State Legislature passed HB 563 establishing the Rio Grande Trail Commission to study a route for establishing a Rio Grande Trail. Governor Susana Martinez has designated six segments within New Mexico State Parks. Work on the Continental Divide Trail goes back over 30 years with several segments in New Mexico already in use. There are about 15 miles of proposed trail segments within state parks. To develop this and potentially other regional trail connections in New Mexico, key early steps need to include identification of existing or proposed trail components and long-term funding sources.

Goal: Develop Trail Networks Throughout the State That Facilitate Recreation, Transportation and Health

| Objective 2.1: Provide leadership in trail planning initiatives. | |
|---|--|
| Actions | Lead Organizations |
| Develop a state wide trail inventory and integrate mapping. | NPS, NMRPA, State Parks Division, New Mexico Tourism Department, Scenic Byways, New Mexico RTP |
| Work with New Mexico Tourism Department to highlight trails in New Mexico since out-of-state visitors indicated a preference for hiking among their top activities. | New Mexico Tourism, NMRPA, Chambers of Commerce, local and regional tourism-oriented agencies |
| Make better use of and support volunteer groups and youth crews to maintain and build trails. | Trail Alliances, American Trails Alliance, Local Governments, New Mexico Volunteers for the Outdoors |

Objective 2.2: Increase the rate of trail construction and support trail maintenance training and techniques.

| Actions | Lead Organizations |
|---|---|
| Construct previously planned local trails within communities. | Trail Alliances, local and tribal governments |
| Increase rate of trail construction through alternative funding sources such as alternative transportation funding, clean air mitigation and volunteers. | Trail Alliances, Transportation Alternatives Program, federal agencies |
| Complete ADA self evaluation assessments, implement transition plans to address deficiencies, and add ADA accessible trails to the statewide trail inventory. | Local Governments |
| Develop mountain bike trail systems and maintenance programs. | NMRPA, Trail Alliances, local International Mountain Biking Association Chapters / local mountain biking groups, Federal Agencies |

Objective 2.3: Improve local non-motorized transportation connectivity (sidewalks, trails, etc.) to parks and other community destinations by creating safe neighborhood access routes.

| Actions | Lead Organizations |
|--|--|
| Develop recreation facilities that include alternative transportation and infrastructure options and “Safe Routes to Everywhere” principles. | Local Governments (Transportation, Public Works, Parks Departments), Transportation Alternatives Program, School Districts, federal agencies |
| Include bicycle and pedestrian improvements meeting national engineering standards as an integral part of larger projects. | Local Governments (Transportation, Water and Sewer, Parks Departments), Transportation Alternatives Program, NMDOT |
| Review and leverage the most appropriate funding sources for bicycle and pedestrian projects such as congestion mitigation, air quality improvement program or the surface transportation program. | Local Governments (Transportation, Planning, Parks Departments), Transportation Alternatives Program, NMDOT |

Objective 2.4: Develop more sustainable OHV trail systems throughout the state.

| Actions | Lead Organizations |
|--|---|
| Create dedicated OHV trail systems to give riders what they desire while minimizing conflict with other user groups. | Federal Land Management Agencies, NMOHVA, NOHVCC |
| Accelerate the implementation of federal and county travel management plans to adequately designate and implement suitable OHV routes. | Federal Land Management Agencies, Counties |
| Increase education and outreach to OHV users to improve resource stewardship and “Leave No Trace” principles. | New Mexico Game and Fish Department, BLM, USFS, NMOHVA, NOHVCC. |



Tour of the Gila © New Mexico Tourism Department

Objective 2.5: Plan, prioritize, and implement new statewide and regional trail connections between cities, towns, and tribal communication.

| Actions | Lead Organizations |
|---|--|
| Build capacity to coordinate implementation and management of the Rio Grande Trail. | New Mexico RTP, EMNRD/Rio Grande Trail Commission |
| Identify the priority segments of the state’s long distance trails and implement by 2020. | Continental Divide Trail Coalition, Rio Grande Trail Commission |
| Work with partners to identify and complete new National Recreation Trails and side-connecting trails to communities along National Trails and major state trails. | NPS, NPS Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, New Mexico RTP, BLM, USFS, USFWS |
| Work with the NMDOT Bicycle, Pedestrian, Mountain Bike, and Equestrian trails coordinator to improve bicycle infrastructure statewide, especially for long distance routes. | New Mexico DOT |
| Acquire fee-simple, trail easements, or complete land swaps to close the gaps in trails and open spaces to create contiguous recreational opportunities. | New Mexico State Land Office, Realtors Association of New Mexico |

Health

The promotion and development of programs and facilities for recreational and health benefits is a win-win – both for the users (who benefit from improved access) and for the providers (who benefit from cost-sharing partnerships). Projects that are closer to home are most likely to make the most difference. However, younger populations are currently less satisfied with outdoor recreation opportunities. Nature deficit disorder, physical activity rates, and associated health outcomes are critical issues facing New Mexicans, especially the youth. Common experiences that residents desire when recreating outside align into three categories: 1) nature-seekers who want to observe scenic beauty and enjoy peace and quiet, 2) thrill-seekers who want to take personal risks and develop new skills, and 3) socializers who want to spend time with friends and family and not feel alone.

More and more recreation providers are finding logical and opportune partnerships with health providers, partnerships that leverage funding and include cross-marketing and integrated programming. The focus begins with young people. In part, this is driven by concerns over the health issues related to obesity, as discussed earlier, among New Mexico’s youth, and in part by the ready connection between schools, recreation and healthful activities. New Mexico already demonstrates a successful approach linking schools and the outdoors through “Outdoor Classrooms”, Elev8 (a Youth Development Inc. Foundation program), Healthy Kids New Mexico, Action for Healthy Kids and other efforts.

Healthy change is not restricted to youth. Partners should encourage people to increase their activity levels through increased walking and outdoor play. Healthcare programs, recreation providers and organizations can encourage improved activity through information outreach efforts explaining the existing opportunities and benefits.

Partnerships expand opportunities to leverage limited funding and staffing. Recognition of these shared objectives and building understanding about how to work together through shared information and dialogue to improve our alliances sets up successful symbiotic interactions.



Taos Ski Area © New Mexico Tourism Department

Goal: Promote health, wellness and physical activity to improve health outcomes and assure safety net services for all people of New Mexico.

| Objective 3.1: Increase the use of outdoor recreation resources and physical activity levels by engaging youth, especially via the schools and summer programs. | |
|---|--|
| Actions | Lead Organizations |
| Extend physical activity and learning opportunities for youth beyond the classroom and traditional school year. | Schools, New Mexico Department of Education, Elev8 New Mexico, Healthy Kids New Mexico, Universities (teacher education programs), Local Parks and Recreation Agencies |
| Develop ways for parents to be actively involved in their children’s education and physical activity goals through school-based extended-learning programs and providing services to parents (English learning, employment services, accessing healthcare). | Schools, New Mexico Department of Education, Elev8 New Mexico, Healthy Kids New Mexico, Universities (teacher education programs) |
| Develop effective plans at schools to improve the health of students by implementing district wellness policies and strong health programs and practices. | Schools, New Mexico Department of Education, Action for Healthy Kids, Universities (teacher education programs) |
| Develop programs at schools that correlate environmental education and physical fitness programs to the state common core standards. | Schools, New Mexico Department of Education, Action for Healthy Kids, Universities (teacher education programs) |
| Continue supporting Safe Routes to Schools programs and partnerships. | NMDOT Transportation Alternatives Program, School Districts, Local Governments, Healthy Kids New Mexico |

Objective 3.2: Get people walking and playing.

| Actions | Lead Organizations |
|---|---|
| Develop partnerships between the healthcare community and local organizations and governments that will lead to increased activity through the use of parks and open space. | Local Governments, New Mexico Takes on Diabetes, Prescription Trails |
| Develop a media campaign (TV, Social Media, Print) that promotes health via outdoor recreation. | New Mexico Department of Health, State Parks Division |
| Promote the “fun” aspects of outdoor recreation to change societal focus from exercise to play. | NMRPA, Get Outdoors New Mexico; Healthy Kids New Mexico |
| Create events that combine play, exercise, and social opportunities that resonate with youth and younger adults. Integrate technology and social media into outdoor challenges and games. | Schools, Local Parks and Recreation Agencies, Federal Agencies |
| Improve directional/wayfinding signage and maps to facilities on roadways and within parks. Provide wayfinding at critical park areas. | Local Parks and Recreation Agencies, Local Governments (Public Works), Federal Agencies |
| Improve the community infrastructure to create more parks, playgrounds, safe sidewalks, improved crosswalks, bike lanes and bike and walking trails. | Local Governments, Health Care Organizations, Volunteer Organizations, Sports-related Businesses and Organizations, State and Federal Agency funding, NMDOT |

Objective 3.3: Continue creating partnerships with health care providers and leverage funding opportunities.

| Actions | Lead Organizations |
|--|---|
| Provide health care providers in every community with a database of outdoor recreation resources. | Local, State and Federal Land Managers, Healthy Kids New Mexico, Take it Outside New Mexico |
| Create partnerships and support local community programs such as Healthy Kids New Mexico and Elev8. | Schools, New Mexico Department of Education, NMRPA, New Mexico Department of Health |
| Partner with organizations to develop and distribute materials demonstrating the positive impacts of outdoor recreation on health and wellbeing. | Local Governments, New Mexico Department of Health, Health Care Organizations, Schools |

Economic Vitality

Decision makers at all levels of government face tough choices about funding priorities and face an electorate that actively watches how government spends public funds. Recreation agencies need to recognize that this requires smart strategies, especially those that can attract new dollars into communities, enhance the understanding of the benefits from recreation to the community, and demonstrate the link between tourism, recreation, livability and economic vitality. Helping state and local officials and governing bodies understand this is a critical step for recreation provider agencies and their supporters to pursue.

New Mexico enjoys a special place among mountain west states. Not only does the state offer great natural beauty in many different forms, it also offers an unmatched wealth of historic and cultural attractions. Out-of-state and in-state visitors seek the unique cultural events and festivals offered in New Mexico, and desire activities that “connect to nature”. Interestingly, the best attributes New Mexico has to offer are all those attributes that are unique to New Mexico.

Outdoor recreation not only enhances economic vitality through tourism and recreation spending, it can also attract key employers to locate in our cities and towns, which brings jobs and taxes to our communities. One of the most important factors influencing a business location decision is quality of life.

Recreational opportunities are an important part of the quality of life that firms and workers seek.²⁵ New Mexico Tourism already does an exemplary job promoting the state. Partners should also work to provide visitors with quality, well-maintained facilities that connect them to the State’s history and culture.

For many visitors, there is a natural link between tourism, the outdoors and recreation. As described in the Visitor’s Panel, tourists from Texas and Oklahoma particularly see New Mexico as the affordable winter vacation spot for snow sports. When traveling out-of-state, about 60% of respondents pick a destination before picking an activity to do there, about 30% take the opposite approach, and slightly more than 10% fall into a third category of picking a time- and location-specific event.

Tourists coming for outdoor recreation in New Mexico seek a spectrum of recreation experiences, while often looking for specific types of facilities. Many tourists prefer developed camping over dispersed backpacking experiences, although these tourists still want a connection to nature as part of their experience. Understanding this could lead to a consideration of new camping locations and experiences across the state, which in turn may create the potential for private or public-private development.

Comparatively, New Mexico’s counties and rural towns are facing an infrastructure deficit, which means parks will have to fight harder for public dollars. As a result, recreation providers are collaborating, rather than

25. McAliney, Mike (ed) December 1993 Arguments for Land Conservation: Documentation and Information Sources for Land Resources Protection, Trust for Public Land, Sacramento, California



Balloons at White Sands © New Mexico Tourism Department

competing with public works projects. This includes trails on top of water lines, greenways created after floods, and practice fields in stormwater retention basins. Multi-use opportunities are more likely to succeed if brought up early in the public works planning process rather than as an afterthought.

During the recession, special districts with dedicated funding and agencies with revenue-producing facilities fared much better than others. Retaining revenues for agency operation is a key to the model's success. However, funding is often easier to obtain for new facilities versus the maintenance of existing facilities. Other sources of funding for operations that can be targeted include capturing property taxes related to the proximity of parks, dedicated sales tax on recreation-related goods and equipment, and lodging taxes to capitalize on event revenues.

Goal: Enhance economic vitality through promoting recreation and tourism.

| Objective 4.1: Support, promote, and encourage cultural festivals and outdoor recreational events. | |
|--|---|
| Actions | Lead Organizations |
| Promote economic opportunities and build community marketing coalitions along regional, state, and national trails modeled after the scenic byway program. | NPS National Trails Program, New Mexico Tourism Department, Trail Coalitions, Federal Agencies, Chamber of Commerce |
| Continue communication and meetings with partner agencies including Tribal Nations to showcase the heritage of the state. | New Mexico Tourism Department, New Mexico Indian Affairs |
| Promote New Mexico's cultural events and festivals to people in neighboring states, especially in Arizona, Colorado, and Utah. | New Mexico Tourism Department |
| Promote events, such as adventure racing, mountain biking trail races, on-road bicycling events and tours, and birding festivals to attract repeat visitors. | New Mexico Tourism Department, Local Tourism Programs |
| Develop facilities and interpretive programs that connect visitors to the history/natural history and culture of New Mexico. | Local, State and Federal Agencies, New Mexico Tourism Department, New Mexico Indian Affairs |

| Objective 4.2: Link tourism with recreation opportunities | |
|---|--|
| Actions | Lead Organizations |
| Orient the New Mexico True campaign to highlight areas where New Mexico competes well, such as visiting cultural events, OHV opportunities, and camping. | New Mexico Economic Development, New Mexico Tourism Department |
| Integrate the ability to "feel connected to nature" and "feel excited" in New Mexico into New Mexico True activities. | New Mexico Economic Development, New Mexico Tourism Department |
| Target more New Mexico True activities and add campaigns to first-time visitors. | New Mexico Economic Development, New Mexico Tourism Department |
| Channel visitation dollars/lodging taxes, etc. into recreation facilities. | State and Local Governments |
| Expand on New Mexico True activities to include more outdoor recreation information and promotion. | New Mexico Economic Development, New Mexico Tourism Department |
| Develop more co-visitor centers to integrate administrative resources and a one stop shop for recreation materials thereby saving money and increasing cross awareness. | Federal and State Land Management Agencies |

Objective 4.3: Promote recreation’s contribution to economic development to state and local governing bodies and elected officials.

| Actions | Lead Organizations |
|---|--|
| Prepare data on visitation and dollars spent in the local economy and share it with our legislature, elected officials. | New Mexico Economic Development, UNM and New Mexico State University |

Objective 4.4: Continue providing a wide spectrum of recreation resources, but recognize there are unmet demands for specific facilities, such as camping and boating.

| Actions | Lead Organizations |
|--|---|
| Create an online resource for boaters that shows the managing agency, acres, expected season, updates on reservoir levels, and desired capacity for water bodies throughout the state. | New Mexico Tourism, New Mexico Resource Geographic Information System |
| Identify the best areas for developed camping and construct additional campsites. | State and Federal Land Management Agencies |
| Work with New Mexico Tourism and other agencies/businesses to establish campsite categories that correspond to levels of development to help visitors locate the types of campsites they desire. | New Mexico Tourism, State Parks Division |

Objective 4.5: Promote quality places for residents, which then attract employers and retirees.

| Actions | Lead Organizations |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Develop local “adopt a recreation facility” programs that encourage communities to assist with maintenance and up keep of local facilities. | Local governments |
| Develop strategies to brand outdoor recreation and facilities to businesses looking to relocate. | New Mexico Economic Development |

Objective 4.6: Actively engage the private recreation industry to promote, sponsor, and deliver outdoor recreation services.

| Actions | Lead Organizations |
|---|---|
| Work to develop partnerships with large employers to provide and promote outdoor recreation opportunities. | New Mexico Economic Development |
| Bring private/public providers together to better deliver services similar to the Get Outdoors partnership in Albuquerque and Santa Fe. | Recreation Industry, NMRPA, Get Outdoors New Mexico |

Environmental Health

In many ways, New Mexico is a collection of special places, cherished by New Mexicans and visitors. The six regions used in *Viva New Mexico* relate to something or someone with special meaning to that region. Be it “Indian Country” in the Northwest Region or “O’Keeffe Country” in the North Central Region, the links between those who live in New Mexico and the land and resources that make up New Mexico are strong, vibrant and undeniable. The land and resources of New Mexico, going back to the time of the “Ancient Ones” and millennia beyond, shaped the culture and people of the state today.

The preservation of New Mexico’s natural beauty rests on the sound stewardship and conservation of resources. Recreation facilities and infrastructure helps protect those resources while allowing people to enjoy them. However small, all recreation activities have some degree of environmental impact. Mitigation measures and design standards should be implemented to the greatest extent possible. Special places warrant special stewardship.

People are seeking out special places while looking for a variety of outdoor settings and experiences. The capacity to use and attract volunteers offers ways to accomplish maintenance and construction projects while providing people with healthy activity and connection to the outdoors. The New Mexico Outdoor Coalition formed several years ago in response to the America’s Great Outdoors initiative at the federal level. The organization focuses on dialog and actions that improve conservation, youth engagement, recreation, health, job creation and other aspects.

While the natural resources of New Mexico are one of its most valuable assets, that does not mean they are without threat. New Mexico has lost about 36 percent of its wetlands since 1780.²⁶ Recognizing the links between wetlands and riparian areas, recreation, quality of life and other factors, *Viva New Mexico* recommends several actions to identify and restore wetlands for conservation and recreation.

Among these are actions to inventory and classify existing New Mexico wetlands, establish effective monitoring for management and restoration purposes, share information among partners, establish sustainable funding

sources and strategies, and continue the existing strong partnerships related to protecting rivers and wetlands in New Mexico.

Wildlife habitats and migratory corridors may also suffer from development. Fortunately, strong partnerships between New Mexico Game and Fish, local governments and other organizations are in place to map and protect critical areas. The recommendation is to continue these efforts and where possible expand the sharing of information and cooperation with local governments.



Bosque del Apache © New Mexico Tourism Department

26. Yuhás, Roberta H. 2013 “Loss of Wetlands in the Southwestern United States” Cited here from: <http://geochange.er.usgs.gov/sw/impacts/hydrology/wetlands/>

Goal: Manage natural resources and recreation infrastructure through commitment to stewardship and the preservation of natural beauty and conservation of resources.

| Objective 5.1: Expand volunteer capacity and volunteerism among local, state and federal land managers. | |
|---|---|
| Actions | Lead Organizations |
| Create volunteer opportunities that will get users outside in an active way and will strengthen a desire to protect the outdoors. | Trail Alliances; Federal, State, Local agencies |

| Objective 5.2: Preserve scenic areas and special places. | |
|--|--|
| Actions | Lead Organizations |
| Create a diverse spectrum of recreation settings. | Federal Agencies, New Mexico Outdoor Coalition, International Mountain Biking Association |
| Conserve the special places in and around each community through fee-simple acquisition or conservation easements. | Local governments, LWCF, State Parks Division, land trusts such as New Mexico Land Conservancy, Santa Fe Conservation Trust, The Nature Conservancy, Trust for Public Land |
| Update development regulations, such as wetland regulations, to conserve environmentally sensitive lands and improve resiliency to natural disasters. | Local Governments |
| Provide technical assistance to local governments to initiate open space programs. | Universities, land trusts such as New Mexico Land Conservancy, Santa Fe Conservation Trust, The Nature Conservancy, and Trust for Public Land, NMRPA |
| Preserve views and areas that are quiet and “away from it all,” and create separation or barriers between these places and socialization areas (e.g., group shelters). | Land Managers |

Objective 5.3: Identify and restore wetlands that contribute to large-scale conservation of wetlands and recreation opportunities.

| Actions | Lead Organizations |
|---|--|
| Continue and expand on strong partnerships through state-sponsored programs such as the proposed Healthy Rivers Initiative, and through partnerships associated with New Mexico Mapping Consortium and NGO and Agency Wetlands Roundtables. | Government Partners, NGOs, New Mexico Riparian Council, Surface Water Quality Bureau (SWQB) Wetlands Program |
| Develop sustainable funding sources including wetlands banks, in lieu fee programs, matching grants through foundations; restoration through mitigation projects; organize and assist voluntary programs; and obtain in-kind resources and assistance through the efforts of watershed groups and their volunteers. | Foundations, Banks, State Revolving Fund, Non-profits (<i>i.e.</i> , Trout Unlimited, Ducks Unlimited) |
| Create a complete inventory, classification and baseline assessment of New Mexico's wetland resources. | ACOE, National Resource Condition Assessment, SWQB. USFWS NWI |
| Develop and adopt simple, effective and efficient monitoring methods to determine the success of wetland restoration projects and establish best management practices. | USFWS NWI, Geospatial Advisory Committee, SWQB, Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program |
| Develop and integrate efficient and accessible data management with other water databases. | USFWS NWI, Geospatial Advisory Committee, SWQB |
| Develop and improve ordinances and jurisdiction at the state or local level that protect wetlands, riparian areas, and the buffers around them at the local level, and that ensure that vulnerable and isolated wetlands are protected from impacts. | Local Governments, Watershed Groups, SWQB |

Objective 5.4: Identify and restore critical wildlife habitats and migratory corridors that contribute to recreation opportunities.

| Actions | Lead Organizations |
|---|--|
| Continue and expand on strong partnerships through state-sponsored programs such as the proposed New Mexico Mapping Consortium. | Government Partners, NGOs, Tribal Nations |
| Improve growth management tools by improving development ordinances and jurisdiction at the state or local level that protect and enhance critical wildlife habitats and the buffers around them to limit habitat impacts and fragmentation and increase wildland connectivity. | Local Governments, New Mexico Game and Fish Department, NGOs |

REGIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

A goal of the strategic plan is to provide statewide and regional recommendations that are relevant to recreation planners and land managers across the state and at local levels (e.g., city and county) so that planners and managers can prioritize resources among competing populations, projects, and demands. The following tables provide these suggestions. Key findings are facilities or amenities that residents statewide and in individual regions are most likely to “wish there was more of in their area,” as derived from question 19 on the Statewide Resident Survey.

Statewide

Residents across the state expressed that they would prefer improving and maintaining existing facilities over building new facilities. However, the survey also found that there is a statewide desire for more trails, campsites, boating and swimming opportunities, playgrounds, and more outdoor recreation options for youth.

| Statewide Findings | |
|--|---|
| Key Findings | Actions |
| Hiking, walking, and running on trails is the most common and favorite activity in the state. | Build more trails throughout the state. |
| Swimmers and boaters are least satisfied with their recreation options. | Create more facilities for boaters such as boat docks and boat ramps and improve access to existing boating facilities. Designate swimming areas in lakes and reservoirs. |
| | Create diverse opportunities for boaters by creating water trails and adding facilities that accommodate paddle sports and non-motorized boating activities. |
| | Improve recreational access to rivers and streams. |
| Satisfaction with local outdoor recreation options for youth is relatively low and may reflect a lack of facilities suitable for children and youth. | Build more playgrounds throughout the state. |
| | Build facilities that will attract youth, such as biking and skateboarding facilities. |
| | Provide Wi-Fi connections at highly used outdoor recreation areas where possible in order to attract more youths. |
| People would go camping more often if there were more high quality facilities and amenities available. | Build more high quality campgrounds. |
| People generally prefer improving and maintaining existing facilities over building new facilities. | Maintain or repair existing outdoor recreation facilities. |
| Establish goals for the management of recreation areas to align with desired experiences identified in the Resident Survey. | Manage recreation areas so that at least: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> eighty percent of local areas enable those seeking beauty and escape in nature by protecting view-sheds, reducing noise pollution, limiting crowding, protecting habitat, etc.; forty percent of local areas enable risk and skill building, such as offering advanced or technical trails, instruction, etc.; and forty percent of local areas enable socialization through group shelters picnic areas, accessibility, etc. |

Central Region

Residents were most likely to wish there were more trails, areas where children can play such as parks, sports fields, and playgrounds, and parks in their local area.

| Central Region Findings | |
|--|---|
| Key Findings | Actions |
| Parks are very important and, compared to other regions, residents were most likely to wish there were more of them. | Prioritize parks, including the building of new parks and maintaining and improving existing parks. |
| The importance of and desire for trails is very high. | Prioritize trail construction over new campsites. |
| Likely to say economic development and improved health are most important, compared to other potential priorities. | Support special outdoor recreation events that attract out-of-region and out-of-state economic contributions. |
| | Design parks and recreation areas in ways that facilitate exercise. |

North-Central Region

Residents were most likely to wish there were more trails, areas where children can play, campsites, and rock climbing opportunities in their local area.

| North-Central Region Findings | |
|--|--|
| Key Findings | Actions |
| Trails are very important and residents wish there were more of them. | Prioritize trails, especially construction of new trails and maintaining current trails. Consider trail management plans to improve trail use experience. |
| Residents prefer more focus on maintenance and upgrades of existing facilities versus development of new facilities. | Maintain high satisfaction through maintenance and improvement of current facilities and amenities, such as keeping trails in good shape and implementing management plans |

Northwest Region

Residents were most likely to wish there were more campsites, areas where children can play (such as parks, sports fields and playgrounds), and trails in their local area.

| Northwest Region Findings | |
|---|---|
| Key Findings | Actions |
| Strong desire for new facilities, especially for campsites. | Prioritize the construction of new highly-developed (e.g., electric hookups and paved roads) and moderately-developed campgrounds. |
| Strong desire to spend time with friends and family. | Design facilities such as campgrounds and picnic areas to facilitate socialization. Meet ADA specifications to ensure equitable access to facilities and amenities. |
| Less desire than other regions for swimming areas. | The Northwest Region reported the fewest local facilities that met their needs, so facilities other than new swimming areas should be prioritized. |
| Likely to say economic development is most important, compared to other potential priorities. | Attract visitors from other regions or out-of-state to spur local economic development. |

Northeast Region

Residents were most likely to wish there were more areas where children can play and trails, especially trails oriented toward foot traffic in their local area.

| Northeast Region Findings | |
|---|--|
| Key Findings | Actions |
| Compared to other regions, most likely to say there are too few facilities, and residents would go camping and fishing more than they do now if they had access to better facilities. | Prioritize the construction of more high quality camping and fishing areas, and promote areas locally. |
| Desire recreation that enables enjoyment of peace and quiet. | Reduce noise pollution and avoid overcrowding in recreation venues. |
| Residents prefer maintenance and upgrade of existing facilities rather than development of new ones. | Focus on maintaining or improving existing facilities and amenities, especially trails. |

Southeast Region

Residents were most likely to wish there were more trails, swimming areas, and areas where children can play in their local area.

| Southeast Region Findings | |
|---|--|
| Key Findings | Actions |
| Compared to other regions, most likely to say there are too few facilities, and residents would go camping and fishing more than they do now if they had access to better facilities. | Prioritize the construction of more high quality camping and fishing areas, and promote areas locally. |
| Desire recreation that enables enjoyment of peace and quiet. | Reduce noise pollution and avoid overcrowding in recreation venues. |
| Residents prefer more focus on maintenance and upgrades of existing facilities, especially trails, versus development of new facilities. | Focus on maintaining or improving existing facilities and amenities, especially trails. |

Southwest Region

Residents were most likely to wish there were more trails, swimming areas, and restrooms in their local area.

| Southwest Region Findings | |
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| Key Findings | Actions |
| Residents suppress activities due to lack of facilities, and they are most likely to say current facilities and amenities do not meet their needs. | To better meet needs, balance improving and maintaining existing hiking, cycling, camping, and swimming facilities with building new facilities. |
| Lowest level of satisfaction with general recreation opportunities and opportunities for youth. | Along with the Southeast region, prioritize this area for in-flow of funds, new construction, and improvement. |



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