



Saving Water in

# New Mexico

Water is a precious resource everywhere in the country, but its importance is magnified in New Mexico's arid climate. The capital, Santa Fe, receives less than 15 inches of rain per year on average, and parts of the state receive less than 10 inches annually. New Mexico's natural beauty and open space help to draw new residents to the state, putting additional pressure on water resources. In fact, New Mexico's population is projected to increase by more than 15 percent between 2000 and 2030.

## WATER SOURCES

New Mexico relies on both groundwater and surface water sources, but about 87 percent of New Mexico's public water supply comes from ground water. No other southwestern state gets such a large percentage of its domestic water from groundwater sources.

Such a heavy dependence upon ground water has its downsides. Severe declines in groundwater levels have occurred in some parts of the state. Some municipalities such as Santa Fe have seen water levels in their groundwater wells decline as much as 300 feet in the past 10 years. Santa Fe is fortunate, however, because it has both groundwater and surface water sources; many other New Mexico communities are not located near a surface water body such as the Rio Grande.

New Mexico also has long periods of drought and inconsistent precipitation, so relying on surface water can lead to shortages as well. Water withdrawals from New Mexico, Colorado, Texas, and Mexico have greatly reduced the volume of the Rio Grande over the past 50 years. New Mexico and several other states also draw water from the Colorado River Basin, and demand for water from that river exceeded supply more than a decade ago.



## DROUGHT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The Upper Colorado River Basin, which extends into western New Mexico, has been experiencing a protracted, multi-year drought that began in 1999. Prolonged droughts, in conjunction with climate change, have the potential to reduce snowpack, increase temperatures, and create earlier mountain snow thaws, which all reduce water supplies.

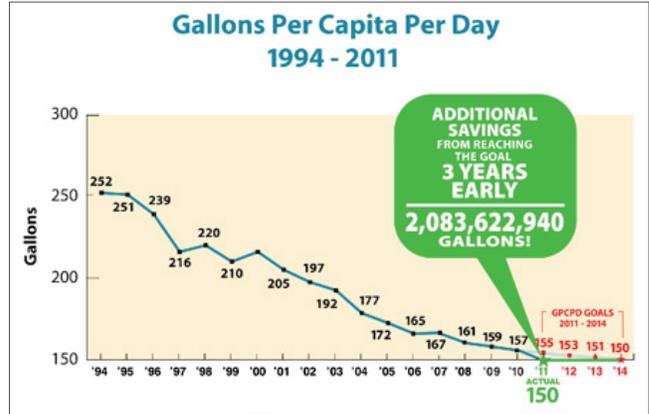
Climate change could also create a longer, hotter warm season in New Mexico. The state is concerned this will result in prolonged periods of extremely low water flow, as warmer temperatures increase water loss from surface sources by evaporation. The City of Santa Fe has recognized this challenge and has partnered with the US. Bureau of Reclamation to

assess the long-term impacts of climate change on local water resources.

**NEW MEXICANS EMBRACE EFFICIENCY**

Although faced with a number of water supply challenges, New Mexico agencies are working to preserve and protect their water resources for the future. The Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority (ABCWUA), a partner of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA’s) WaterSense® program, has implemented several water efficiency measures. ABCWUA’s Operation Low Flow program offers rebates on WaterSense labeled showerheads, toilets, and flushing urinals to make it easy for residents to save both water and money. These efforts have paid off; from 1994 to 2011, ABCWUA’s customers reduced their water use from 252 gallons per day to 150 gallons per day.

Throughout the state, smaller cities are also doing their part to reduce water use. In Gallup and Santa Fe, residents can receive rebates for WaterSense labeled toilets and other products. These individual efforts can add up to big impacts. If every home in New Mexico replaced its existing showerheads with WaterSense labeled models, the state could save nearly 2 billion gallons of water, more than \$10 million in water costs, and nearly \$20 million in energy costs annually. Additionally, New Mexicans can use water more efficiently on their landscapes. Water restrictions



As of 2011, Albuquerque customers had reduced their water use by more than 100 gallons per day. (Source: ABCWUA)

throughout Albuquerque ban sprinkler usage between 11:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. from April through October to cut down on evaporation. In Santa Fe, irrigation professionals can become certified through the Qualified Water Efficient Landscapers program, a WaterSense labeled certification program that focuses on water-saving techniques and technologies. In Las Cruces, customers can learn how to keep their yards and gardens “lush and lean” by attending periodic workshops hosted by the city’s water utility.

For more information on WaterSense labeled products and new homes, or other water-saving tips, visit [www.epa.gov/watersense](http://www.epa.gov/watersense).

**Fix That Bad Flapper**

NEW MEXICO OFFICE OF THE STATE ENGINEER

**WANTED "BAD" FLAPPER**

**AGE:** Unknown  
**DESCRIPTION:** Noisy, Creaked, Grimy  
**CRIME:** Wasting Water  
**REWARD:** Saving Water, Saving Money!  
 This reward will be received for capture and replacement of a bad toilet flapper.  
 Is Your Toilet Flapper an Offender?

**IF SO, CAPTURE IT NOW!**

To learn how, visit [www.fixaleaknm.org](http://www.fixaleaknm.org)

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To help promote EPA’s Fix a Leak Week, the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer, a 2012 WaterSense Excellence Award winner, launched a statewide media campaign featuring a “Bad Flapper” from the 1920s to educate residents on how to fix worn toilet flappers and stop wasting water from leaks.

The campaign included television commercials, “wanted” posters of the Bad Flapper for hardware stores, leak detection kits, and a New Mexico Fix a Leak Week website. Local utilities distributed materials and hosted events in five New Mexico cities featuring Flo, the WaterSense spokesperson, to encourage home and business owners to read meters, check flappers, and fix leaks. For more information, visit [www.ose.state.nm.us/FixALeak](http://www.ose.state.nm.us/FixALeak).