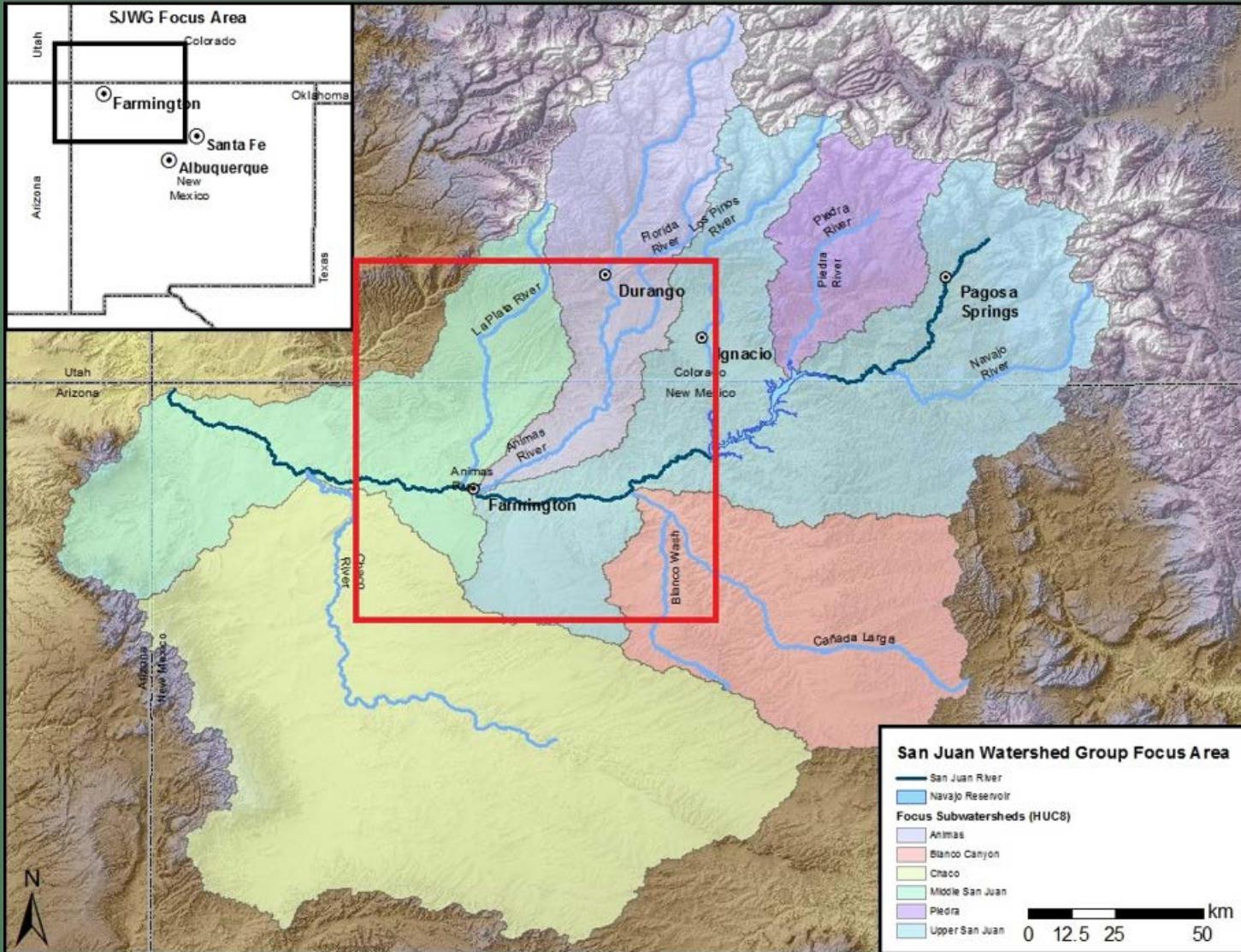


# Building Watershed Group Capacity Tips, Tricks, and Lessons Learned from the San Juan Watershed Group of Northwest New Mexico

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# The San Juan Watershed Group



Vision: A clean and healthy San Juan River Watershed for current and future generations

Mission: To find collaborative solutions to protect and restore water quality in the San Juan River Watershed

First convened with help from NMED in 2001 to address worsening nutrient, sediment, and bacteria impairments in the Animas and San Juan Rivers

- Water Quality Research
- Implementing Projects to Improve Watershed Health and Water Quality
- Community Outreach and Education

# San Juan Watershed Group Legacy

Year/Period	Activities and Projects
2000-2005	San Juan Watershed Group Formation and Early Planning
2002-2008	Water Quality Sampling
2008-2011	Source ID and BMP reports, AWP Animas Watershed Plan
2005-2014	Non-point Source Reduction Pilot Projects in Animas and San Juan Watershed
2013-2016	Lower Animas River Watershed Planning
2013-2014	San Juan and Animas Rivers Microbial Source Tracking Study and Nutrient Tracking
2016	EPA Approval of the Lower Animas Watershed Based Plan
2017-present	Implementation of Lower Animas Watershed Based Plan
2018-present	San Juan Watershed Planning
2020-2021	San Juan Human Bacteria Sampling
2023	Finalized San Juan Watershed Based Plan

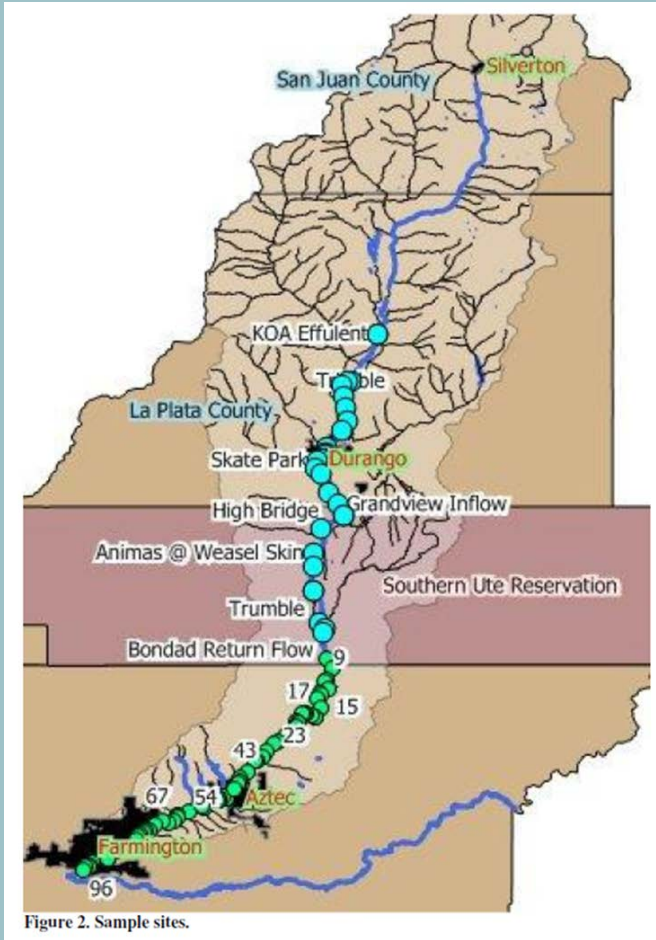
Shoutout to Abe Franklin, NMED SWQB Watershed Protection Section Program Manager  
for his support for the SJWG from the beginning

# In House Capacity Building

- ✓ Establish fiscal sponsor
- ✓ Hire a coordinator (staff over contractor for institutional knowledge) with technical skills
- ✓ Form a key group (Board/Steering Committee) to provide direction for the coordinator
- ✓ Agree on a mission & vision statement + bylaws
- ✓ Diversify funding sources (grant funding, donations, business partnerships)

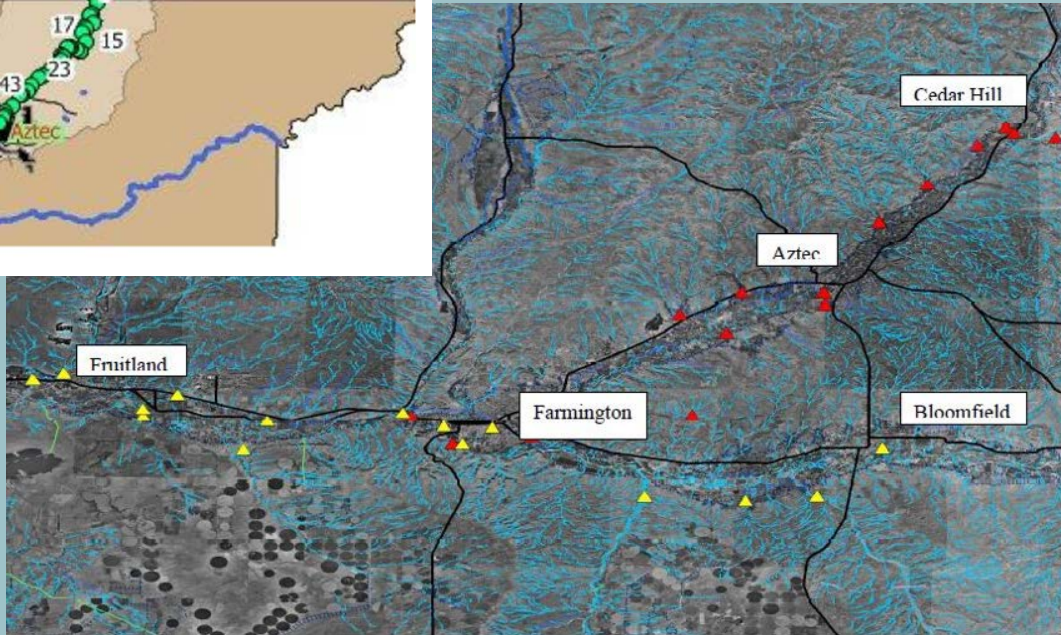


# Data Collection Isn't Everything



- In early planning, sampling locations (bacteria + nutrients) were selected for all tributaries, ditch inflows, outflows, and sections of main waterways to quantify contributions and prioritize sources

- Provided a baseline, but couldn't solidly connect water quality and specific nonpoint source pollution sources
- Outreach to landowners and other stakeholders in the beginning better informs sampling efforts and leads to more immediate project opportunities



2007-2008 SJWG Nutrients and Bacteria Sampling

## Developing the Network: Put Yourself Out There!

- Inventory the future team
- Attend and/or guest speak in as many meetings as possible
- Discuss collaboration potential as soon as meaningful contact is made
- Building relationships has a domino affect
- Host private or group virtual meetings to share information, collaborate, and plan

Stakeholders	Engagement Method
Bureau of Land Management	One on one conversations. Project specific
San Juan Basin Recovery Implementation Program	Attend/present at quarterly Biology Committee Meetings
Natural Resource Conservation Service	Share an office with SJSWCD
US Bureau of Reclamation	Attend quarterly Navajo Dam meetings
US Geological Service	One on one collaboration after meeting at conference
Bureau of Indian Affairs	Attend monthly meetings
Navajo Nation EPA	One on one conversations. Research specific
Dine' College	Partnership on workshops/summer internship program
Navajo Nation Chapter Houses	Attend chapter house meetings – Partnership with Dine' College
City of Farmington, Bloomfield, and Aztec	Attend city commission meetings. Reach out one on one with staff for projects
San Juan County	Attend county commission meetings
Animas Watershed Partnership	Serve on Steering Committee
San Juan Soil & Water Conservation District	Attend monthly board meetings
River Reach Foundation	Attend monthly board meetings
NMSU San Juan County Extension Office	Co-hosting healthy soil workshops

# Engaging the Community

- Think of educational booths, events, and workshops as the vehicle for meaningful connection, collecting local knowledge, and developing projects
- Select workshops with multiple benefits that get people excited or answer their burning questions (reach out to landowners as soon as possible while they're excited about what they learned)
  - 2012 San Juan Watershed Forum
  - 2019 Low Impact Development Workshop at San Juan Nursery
  - 2019 Water Weeds & Wildlife
  - 2019-Present Backyard Conservation Workshops



# Innovative Projects that Leverage Partnerships

## Ranchmans Terrell Diversion Improvement and Restoration Project

2015-2021

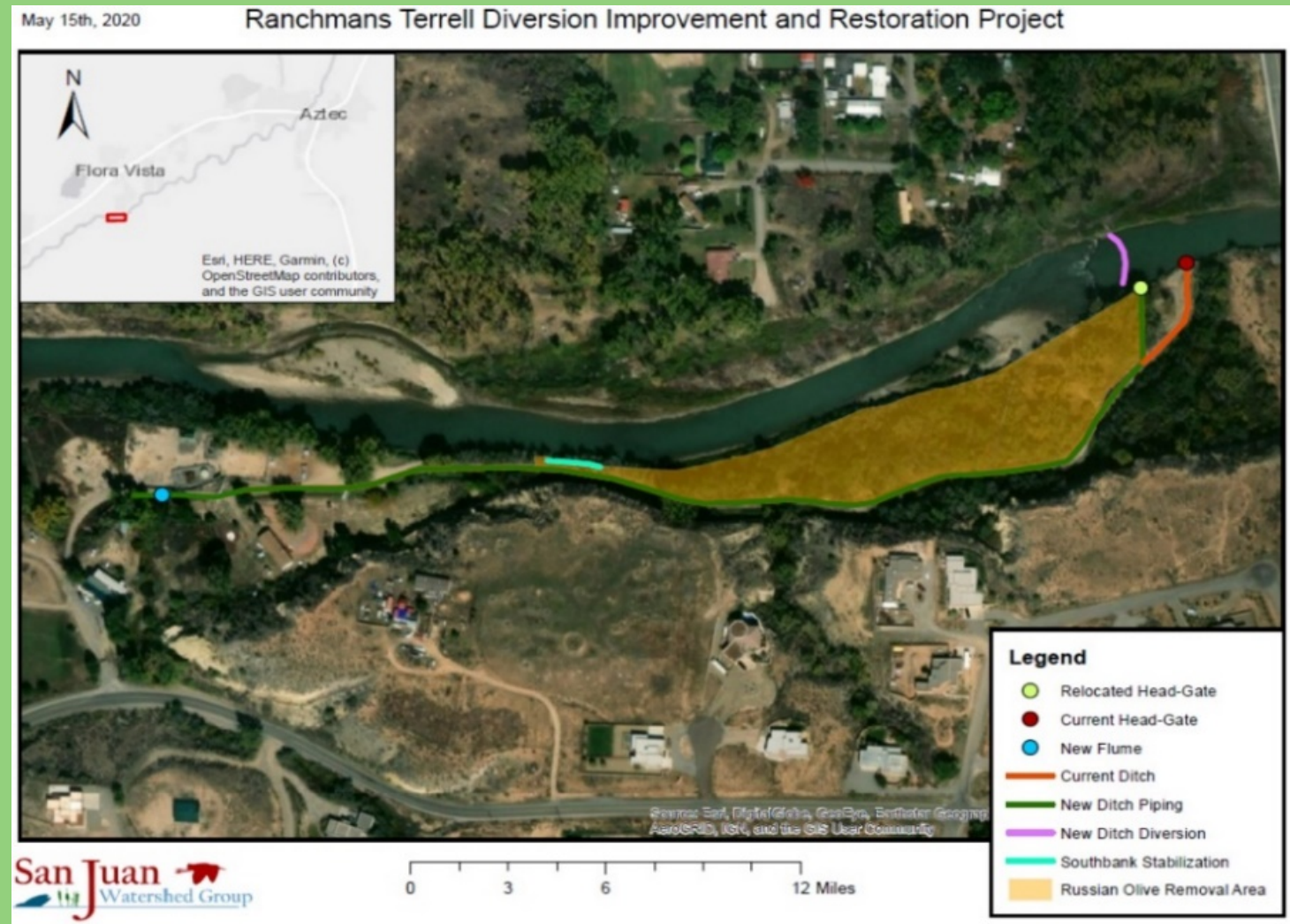
- Keep yourself open to projects that meet land manager needs first, then build showcasing methods for water quality, quantity, and restoration benefits
- The Ranchmans Terrell Irrigation Ditch requested help meeting their irrigation diversion needs, and the project grew from there with agency partnerships





# Ranchmans Terrell Diversion Improvement and Restoration Project

- Interconnected Project Components
  - Bendway Weir Bank Stabilization (reduced erosion endangering headgate access road & ditch)
  - New Diversion Structure and Headgate (less channel bed disturbance and sediment, safe fish and boater passage, meets ditch user needs)
  - Piping Start of Ditch (water conservation, less maintenance and disturbance of bluff rock fall)
  - Non-native Phreatophyte Restoration (floodplain restoration, invasive species management)



## •Countless Partners

- San Juan Watershed Group
- San Juan SWCD
- Ranchmans Terrell Ditch
- Landowners
- Basin Hydrology Inc.
- NM Association of Conservation Districts(NMACD)
- NM Office of the State Engineer (OSE)
- NM Interstate Streams Commission (ISC)
- US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- Animas Watershed Partnership
- Volunteers

## •Several Funding Sources

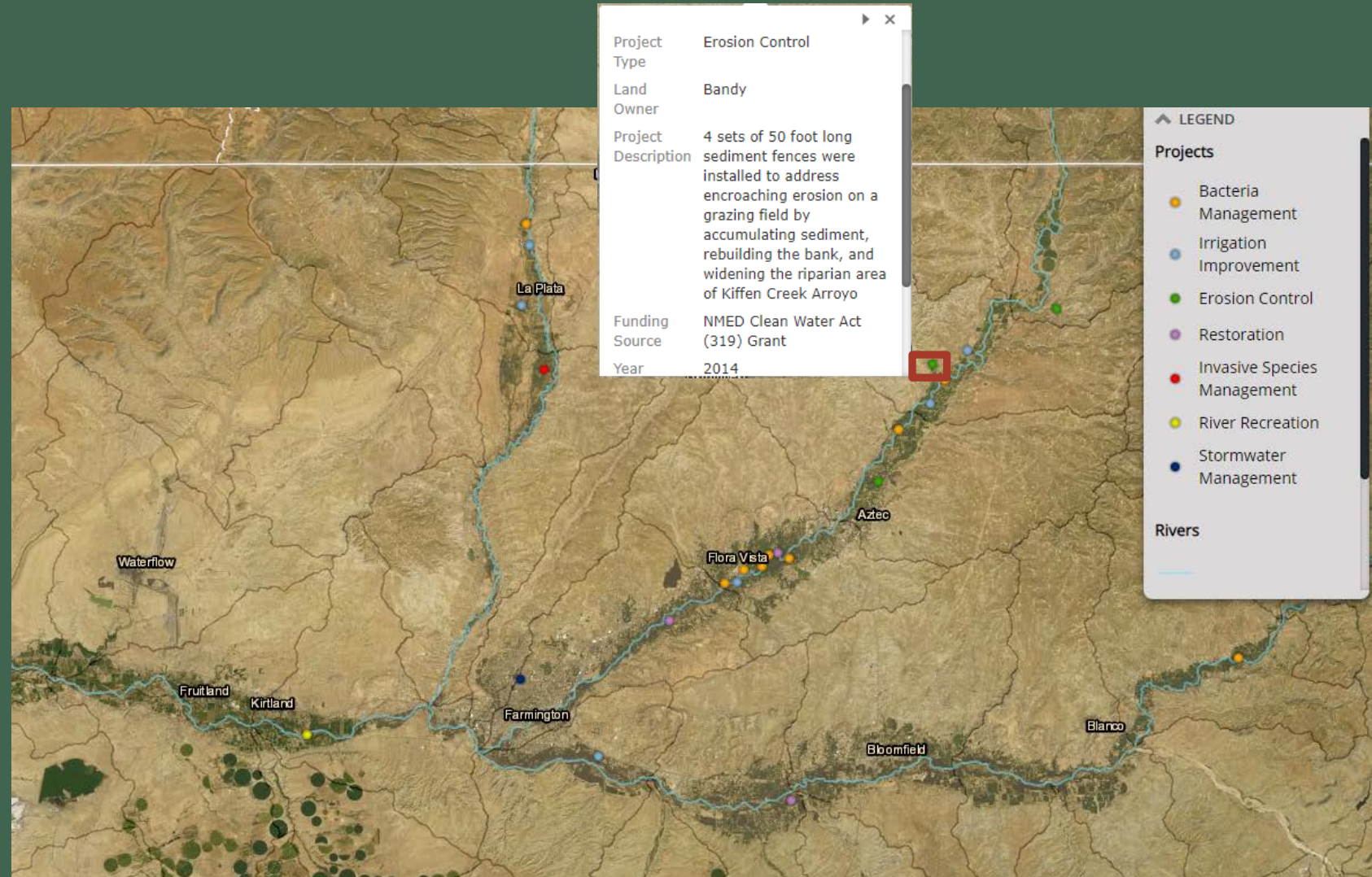
- Clean Water Act (319)
- Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART,
- ISC Acequia 90/10 Cost Share Program
- NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
- The Nature Conservancy
- And more ...

•Assume that things will not go according to plan – and that’s a learning opportunity!



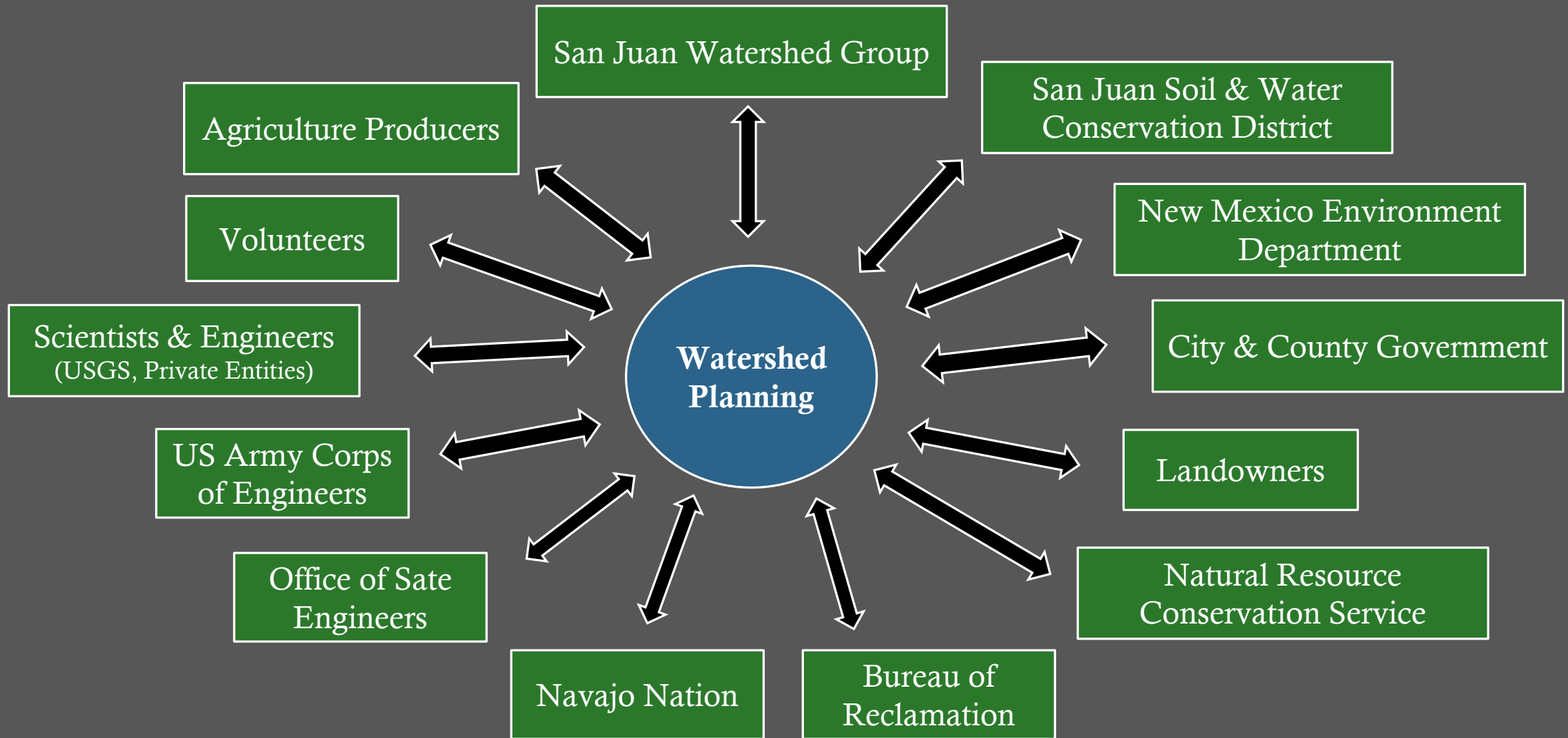
# Documenting Progress for the Group and Community

- In 2020 we created an interactive map available on our website of all SJWG projects done since 2011
- Shared our mission and progress with the community while keeping us focused
- You know it's effective when the staff and Steering Committee use it as a reference!



This interactive map is available to explore at <https://sjswcd.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=713f3b0f200f440c9714ffb1306bc40c>

# Watershed Planning Empowers Everyone



# Wait What Have We Been Talking About?

## Final Tips and Tricks

1. Data collection is important, but it won't give you all the answers
2. Public Outreach and Education = building relationships and ID'ing future projects
3. Collaborate, don't compete
4. Water data collection, outreach, and projects all happen at the same time and feed each other
5. Attend as many partner meetings as you can, even if it doesn't feel like it applies yet. They will!
6. Don't be afraid to ask smart people "dumb" questions
7. Diversify, diversify, diversify that funding!
8. Keep those watershed smarts in house as much as you can
9. No single person is an expert on all things watershed science, but collectively the expertise shines
10. Don't take things "too" seriously, the process should be fun!



Check out the Lower Animas  
Watershed Based Plan



# Thank You!

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Special Thank You to Our Funders:

