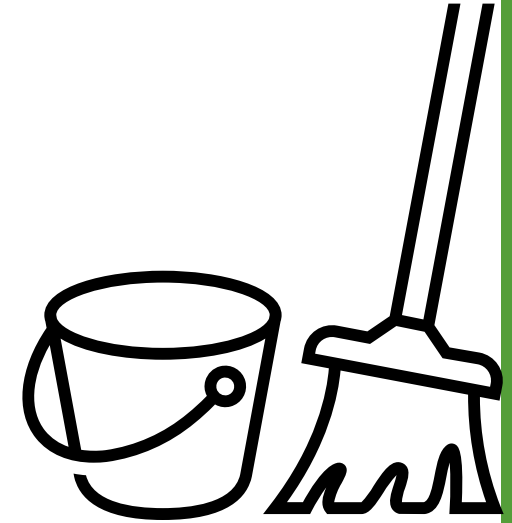




How to develop your Healthy Soil Program project

Presented by Dean Bruce and Katie Crayton,
Co-leads of the Healthy Soil Program at the New Mexico Department of Agriculture

Welcome and Housekeeping



We invite you to introduce yourself in the chat, noting where you are in New Mexico and how you manage your land (for crops, livestock, wildlife, etc.)

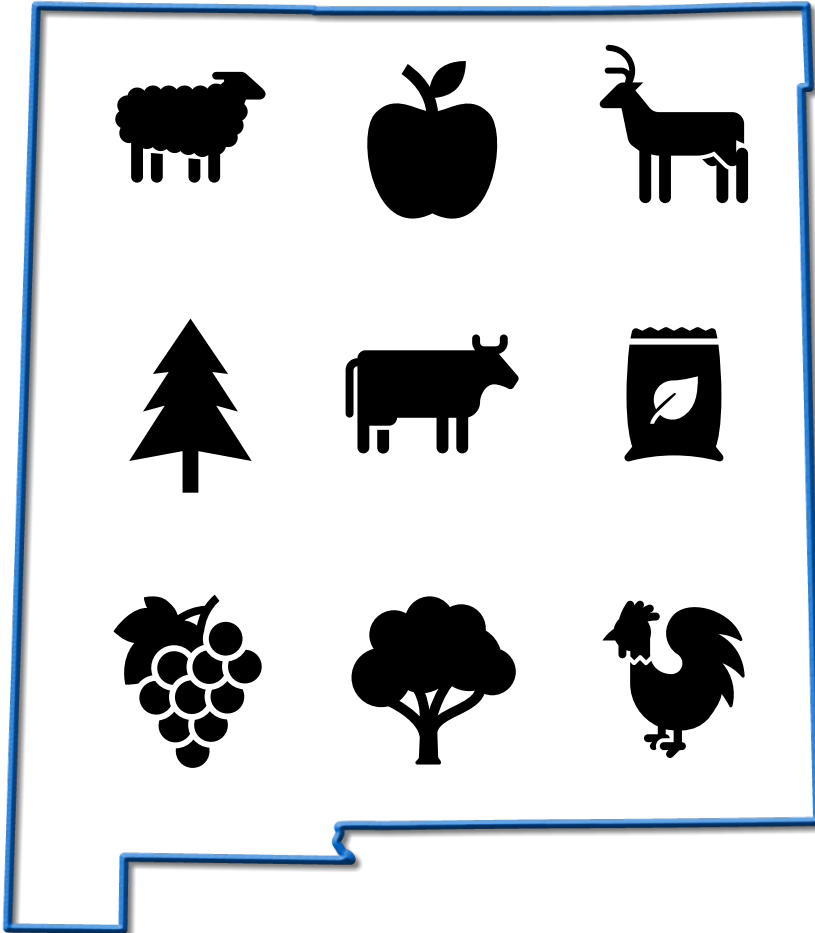
DURING the presentation:

- Please stay muted with your camera turned off to preserve bandwidth.
- Type your questions in the chat.

AFTER the presentation:

- Please raise your hand and we'll invite you to unmute to ask questions in real time.

Where projects can happen under NMDA's Healthy Soil Program



- Anywhere in New Mexico
- On any type of operation, and on any amount of land: cropland (all food, fuel, and fiber), rangeland, irrigated pasture, forest land...in orchards, vineyards, gardens
- Any manner of ownership: you own it, you lease it, you manage it on another's behalf
 - **You must have landowner permission** to implement a soil health project on land you don't own
- Projects can be measured in acres or square feet

When projects can happen under NMDA's Healthy Soil Program

Projects can last nearly 15 months,
starting mid-July 2026 and ending September 2027.

	July 15, 2026	August	September	October	November
December	January	February	March	April	
May	June	July	August	September 30, 2027	

Who can apply for NMDA's Healthy Soil Program grants?



1. ELIGIBLE ENTITIES

- New Mexico's "local **governmental** [entities] with proven land management capacity to support healthy soil", including:
 - Pueblos, tribes, and nations
 - Acequias
 - Land grants
 - Soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs)
 - NMSU Cooperative Extension Service
 - Other parties meeting the Eligible Entity definition above

Apply for up to
\$100,000.00



2. INDIVIDUAL APPLICANTS

- New Mexico's **non-governmental** parties that are directly engaged in farming, ranching, or another form of land management:
 - Individuals, businesses, and nonprofits
- To apply for NMDA's Healthy Soil Program grants, Individual Applicants **must**:
 - Complete NRCS conservation planning **by Feb. 20, 2026**
 - Secure project sponsorship from their SWCD or tribal gov't

Apply for up to
\$24,999.99

Visit NMDA's Healthy Soil Program website to **subscribe for weekly updates**, including funding announcements

NMDA

This webinar for Individual Applicants builds on our August 12 webinar, which focused on Steps 1 and 2 of their unique step-by-step application process.

Step 1. Contact the partners for your project.	-
Step 2. Complete conservation planning by February 20, 2026.	-
Step 3. Develop your project idea.	-
Step 4. Work on the online application.	-
Step 5. Secure project sponsorship by your intended Project Sponsor's deadline.	-
Step 6. Finalize and submit the online application.	-

A quick refresher on Steps 1 and 2 follows, but we strongly encourage you to review those steps – and our August 12 webinar slides and recording – on the Individual Applicant webpage.

Step 1. Contact the partners for your project.

Identify and contact the partners you must work with to apply for a Healthy Soil Program grant. Tell them you intend to apply for a grant from NMDA's Healthy Soil Program.



1. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Identify the nearest office of [USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service \(NRCS\)](#). See **Step 2** to learn more.

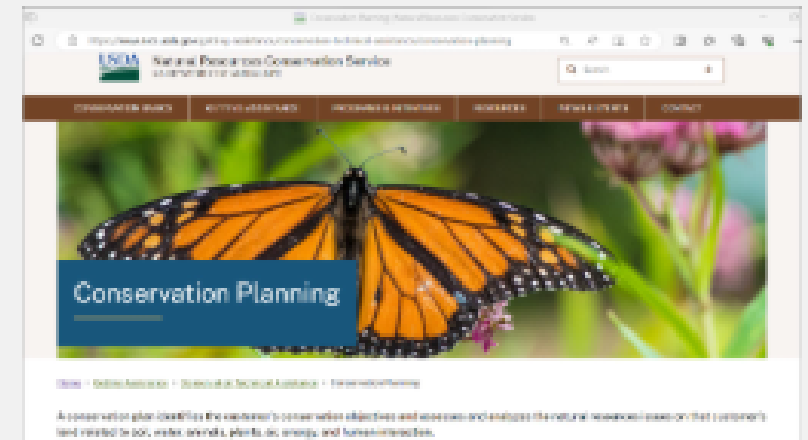
2. Project Sponsor: SWCD or Pueblo/Tribe/Nation

Identify and contact the New Mexico [soil and water conservation district \(SWCD\)](#) in which you reside or the New Mexico [pueblo, tribe, or nation](#) of which you are a member. The earlier you involve your SWCD or tribal government, the better your chances of putting forward a strong, well-informed grant application. See **Step 5** to learn more.

Step 2. Complete conservation planning by February 20, 2026.

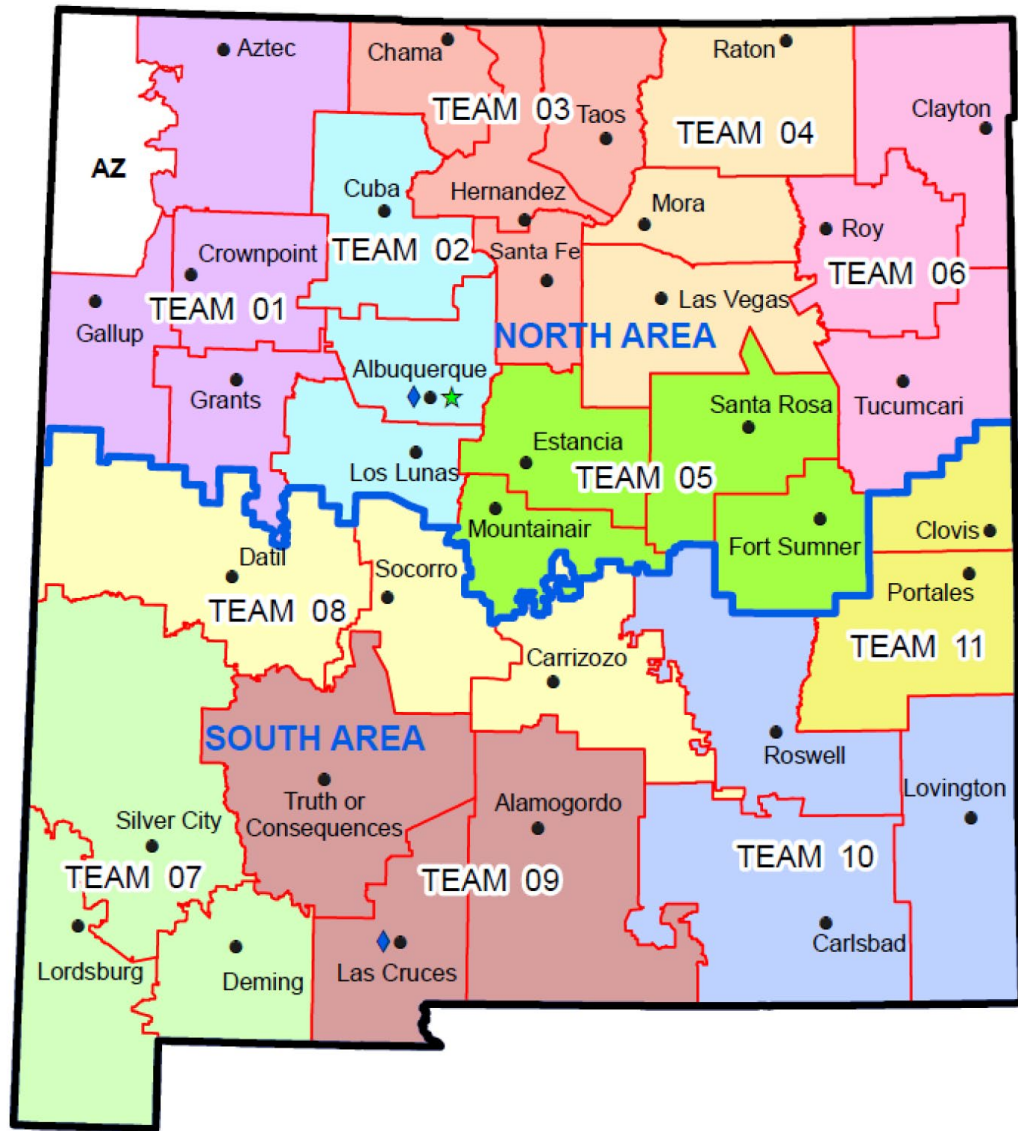
Learn more by creating a simple map of your soils first, then by completing conservation planning with NRCS.

Deadline to complete both steps: February 20, 2026 at 5 p.m. Mountain Time.



Quick refresher on Step 2: Complete conservation planning with USDA-NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service)

- NRCS conservation planning is a collaborative, step-by-step process in which NRCS planners collaborate with landowners to develop a plan to manage and protect natural resources on their land
- Conservation planning is a process that identifies soil health-related resource concerns on the land you manage
- The process of conservation planning provides you with recommended conservation practices, plus various alternatives that you can choose from to help you improve your soil



Where do I find NRCS?

- NRCS in New Mexico has staff across the state to meet the unique resource needs of farmers, ranchers, and other land managers
- There are 35 USDA Service centers located across the state that provide customer service at the local level
- Call, email, or stop by your local service center after doing a simple search online or using this QR code →



On to Step 3: Develop your project idea.

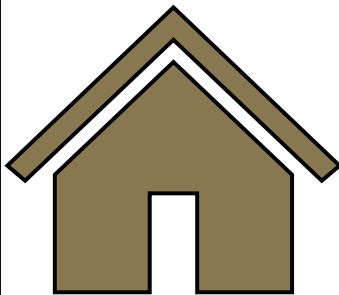
Step 1. Contact the partners for your project.	-
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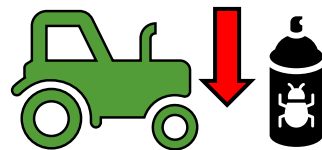
To qualify for NMDA's Healthy Soil Program grant program, projects must revolve around 1+ of **the 5 soil health principles**

**The 5
soil health
principles**

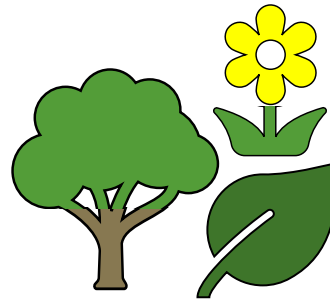
1. Keep soil covered.



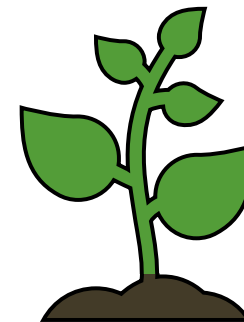
2. Minimize disturbance on cropland and minimize external inputs.



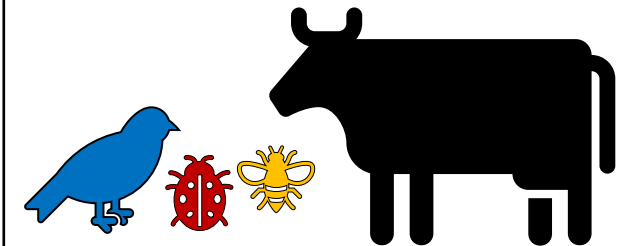
3. Maximize biodiversity.



4. Maintain a living root.



5. Integrate animals into land management, including grazing animals, birds, beneficial insects or keystone species, such as earthworms.



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A sampling of grant-funded project activities on CROPLAND



A sampling of grant-funded project activities on rangeland



SUBSOILING

To see where subsoiling has happened in the photo above, look for the areas parallel to **this red line**.

Photo courtesy
Rangeland Solutions, LLC,
Curry County, NM



INTENSIVE ROTATIONAL GRAZING

Photo courtesy CS Ranch
Colfax County, NM



BALE GRAZING

Photos courtesy M-Scar Farm & Ranch, Colfax County, NM



NMDA

Enter the INDIVIDUAL APPLICANT'S name
in the box at right:

TIMELINE of PROJECT ACTIVITIES in chronological order		FISCAL YEAR 2027 (FY 27) INDIVIDUAL APPLICANT TIMELINE + BUDGET -- NMDA'S HEALTHY SOIL PROGRAM														
NMDA will not reimburse actual expenses in excess of line-item totals. Thus, you should account for any applicable taxes, shipping and handling charges, etc. in each line-item's cost per unit.																
TIMELINE	PROJECT ACTIVITIES	A. Non-Durable Goods (tangible, short-lived items like cover crop seed, compost, etc.)					B. Durable Goods (tangible, long-lived items like PVC pipe, T-posts, wire, etc.)					C. Services (specialized work performed by a business)				
Click on a box below, then click the dropdown menu ▼ to the right of each box to note the quarter in which each project activity will occur:	Do not list only what you plan to buy. (That information will appear in a column at right.) Example of what NOT to do: 5-way cover crop mix	* See FAQs regarding exclusion of certain non-durable goods, such as topsoil, cash crop seed, etc.					* See FAQs regarding exclusion of certain durable goods, such as building materials and power tools; and any durable good costing \$5,000 or more.					* See FAQs regarding exclusion of certain services, such as labor performed by the Individual Applicant, their workers, or their household members.				
1st Quarter (July-Oct 2026)																
2nd Quarter (Nov '26-Feb '27)																
3rd Quarter (March-May 2027)																
4th/Final Quarter (June-Sept 2027)																
1	1st Q (July-Oct 2026)	As you develop your project idea, use our timeline/budget template (screenshot shown here) to start documenting project activities, as well as the goods and services you'll need to buy to do those activities.														
	REQUIRED: Get soil sample(s) from project site(s) for lab-based soil testing -- in addition to (free) in-field soil assessment -- before starting the project															
2																
3																
4																
5																
6																
7																
8																



Maximum award = **\$24,999.99** per Individual Applicant project



No matter the size of the grant award,
85% goes to your project expenses. (**Max. amount: Just above \$21K**)

Project costs will consist of pre-project, laboratory-based soil testing, followed by the goods and services associated with the activities that are specific to your project – whether that's cover cropping, applying compost/mulch/biochar, bale grazing, etc.

No matter the size of the grant award,
15%
goes to your
Project Sponsor.

Project Sponsors help Individual Applicants with their pre-project soil tests and assessments, and by serving as liaison to NMDA; processing critical documents; disbursing grant funds; and issuing tax forms.

NMDA

Today's top takeaway message: Don't put the cart before the horse.
Translation: Follow the step-by-step instructions for Individual Applicants.

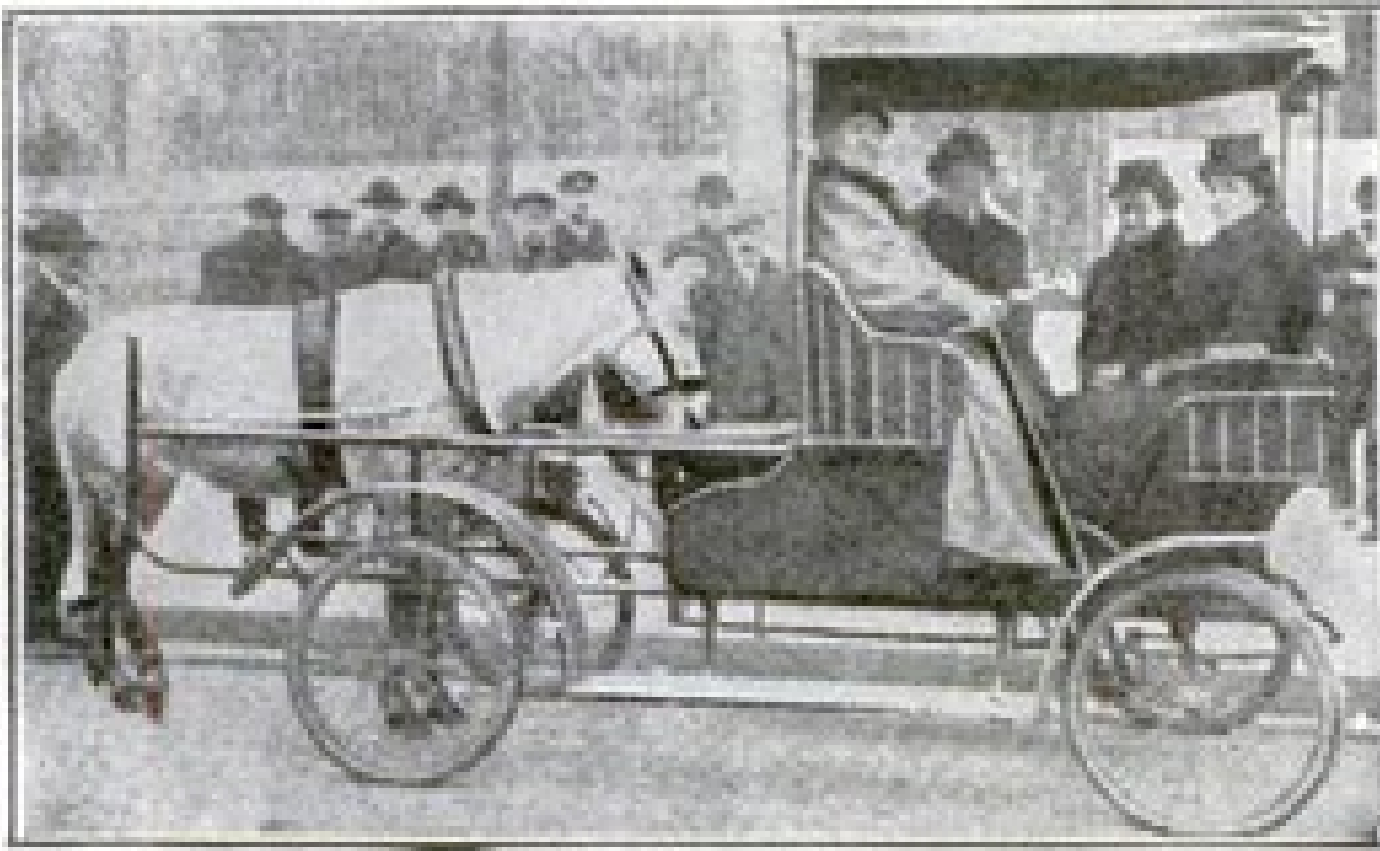


Image credit: Popular Mechanics magazine, April 1907, p. 425

Your “wish list” of things you want to buy for your land should not guide how you develop your project idea.

Instead, what you learn from conservation planning with NRCS should guide how you develop your project idea.

Questions?

- Visit <https://nmdeptag.nmsu.edu/healthy-soil-program.html>, where you can subscribe to our weekly e-newsletter for soil health events and more
- Help us finalize our FAQs for Fiscal Year 2027!
Email your burning question(s) by the end of this week for possible inclusion
- Email hsp@nmda.nmsu.edu
- Call 575-646-2642

