

Conservation planning with NRCS:

The foundation to apply for NMDA's Healthy Soil Program grants

Presented by:

NMDA Healthy Soil Program co-leads Dean Bruce & Katie Crayton
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Welcome and Housekeeping

We invite you to **introduce yourself in the chat**, noting **where you are in New Mexico** and **what type of land you manage** (cropland, rangeland, etc.)



DURING the presentation:

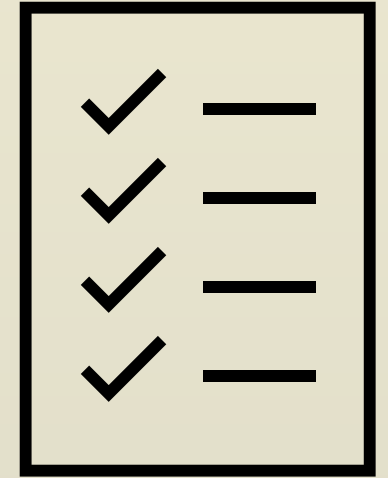
- Please **stay muted** with your **camera turned off** to preserve bandwidth.
- Place any questions in the chat.

AFTER the presentation:

- Please **raise your hand and we'll invite you to unmute** to ask questions in real time.
 - Again, **we'll address questions *specific* to NRCS conservation planning** for NMDA's Healthy Soil Program grant applicants

Agenda

- About NMDA's Healthy Soil Program
- About conservation planning with NRCS
- Question & Answer session
 - **We'll address questions *specific* to NRCS conservation planning** for NMDA's Healthy Soil Program grant applicants



About NMDA's Healthy Soil Program

- **Created in 2019** following enactment of the Healthy Soil Act
- Of the program's several facets, our **grants are the centerpiece**
- Grants go to **on-the-ground projects that implement 1+ of the 5 soil health principles**

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



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 conservation planning with NRCS**
 - **Secure project sponsorship** from their SWCD or tribal government

Apply for up to
\$24,999.99

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

This webinar is exclusively for Individual Applicants...



The screenshot shows the New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) website. The URL in the browser is <https://nmdeptag.nmsu.edu/hsp/requirements-for-individual-applicants.html>. The page title is "FY27 Requirements and Outreach Opportunities for Individual Applicants", which is circled in red. The page content includes a sidebar with news items, a main section with introductory text and a list of outreach opportunities, and a table of steps for the application process.

News:

- "The Fix: An Aggie Chile Roast" heads to D.C. 16
- Last call to nominate Matriarchs of NM Agriculture.
- NMDA public hearings July 29 and 31 on proposed rule amendments
- NMDA seeks applicants for meat processing grant
- Ag Workforce Development Program application period starts June 16
- Cover crop initiative launches in Lower Rio Grande
- NMDA launches "Matriarchs of New Mexico Agriculture" campaign

More NMDA News

Feature Stories

Resources

Events:

- AG Day
- Rounders Award Ceremony
- Rulemaking Hearings

FY27 Requirements and Outreach Opportunities for Individual Applicants

Individual Applicants are individuals, businesses, and nonprofits directly engaged in farming, ranching, and/or other forms of land management in New Mexico.

The step-by-step application process outlined below pertains to the next (Fiscal Year 2027, or FY27) Healthy Soil Program grant application cycle.

Learn more about the FY27 program by reading the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ - coming soon) and by attending the following outreach opportunities:

- **August 12, 2025 webinar:** Conservation planning for NMDA's Healthy Soil Program grants. [Register to attend.](#)

For Healthy Soil Program updates – future funding opportunities, as well as soil health news and events – subscribe to our weekly electronic newsletter using the form at the bottom of the [Healthy Soil Program web page](#).

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.	-

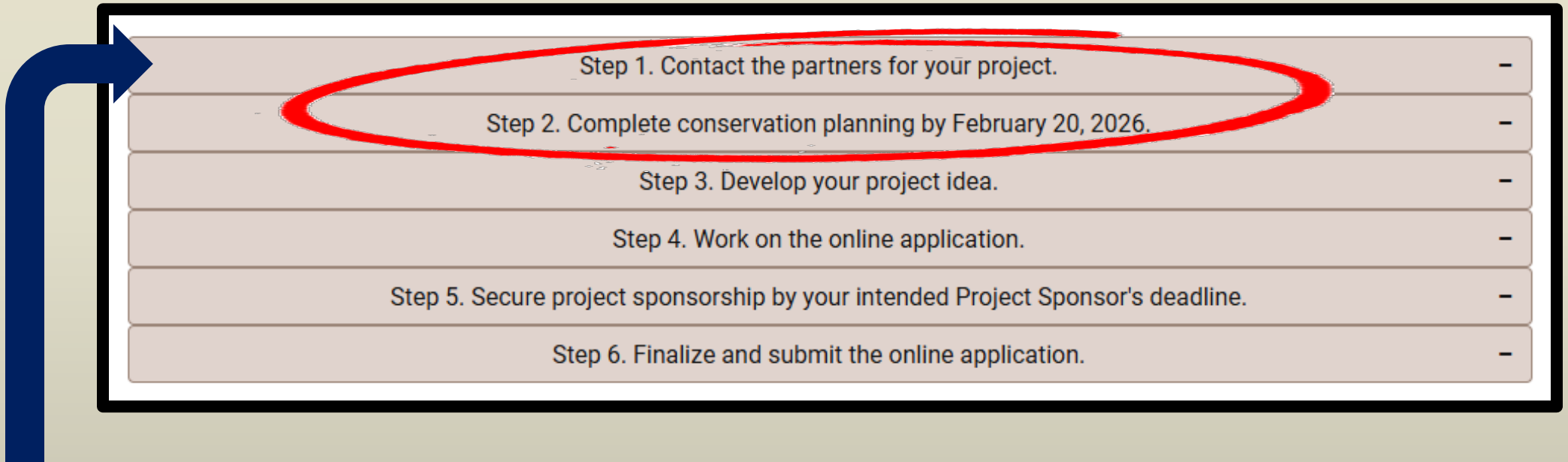
Questions? Email NMDA's Healthy Soil Program team at hsp@nmda.nmsu.edu.

...,and this webpage is where you'll find **everything** you need to apply for a grant from NMDA's Healthy Soil Program.

It outlines the **sequential, step-by-step process** Individual Applicants must follow.

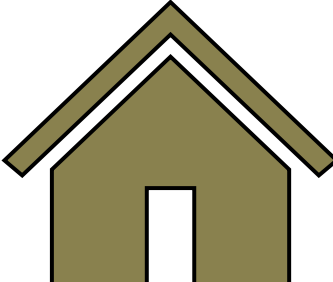
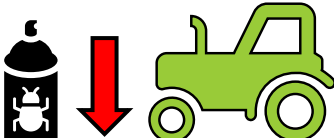
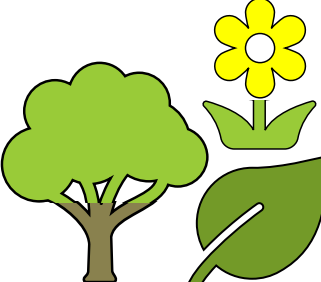
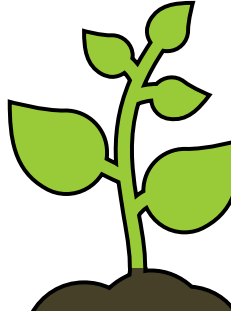
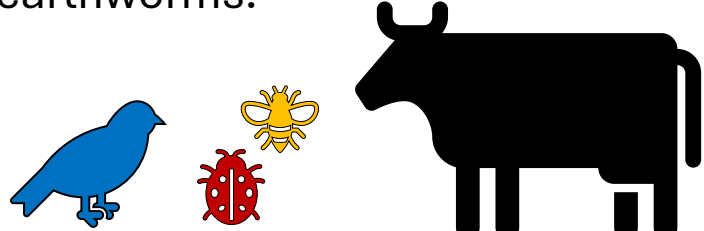
<https://nmdeptag.nmsu.edu/hsp/requirements-for-individual-applicants.html>

...and this webinar is exclusively about
Steps 1 and 2 for Individual Applicants



Again, this is the **sequential, step-by-step application process**
for Individual Applicants outlined at
<https://nmdeptag.nmsu.edu/hsp/requirements-for-individual-applicants.html>

To qualify for NMDA's Healthy Soil Program grants, projects must address 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. 
EXAMPLES of practices arising from the 5 soil health principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planting a cover crop Leaving crop residues in the field to decompose Prescribed grazing to maintain cover on rangeland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimizing tillage on cropland Minimizing farm inputs (herbicide, pesticide, fungicide, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing different plants Increasing the diversity of a crop rotation Managing grazing to promote rangeland diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing long-season crops Planting a cover crop following a short-season crop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planting pollinator habitat Grazing crop residues Following a bale-grazing plan Following a prescribed grazing plan

When can projects happen under NMDA's Healthy Soil Program?

Projects can last nearly 15 months, starting mid-July and ending the following September.

July		August	September	October	November
December	January	February	March	April	
May	June	July	August	September	

Where can projects 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**

Why is **conservation planning with NRCS** part of NMDA's Healthy Soil Program?

- 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

Conservation planning with NRCS-New Mexico

Presented by:
Art Ariaz, NRCS-New Mexico State Resource Conservationist



What is the Natural Resources Conservation Service?

A Brief History of NRCS:

- **1933:** Formed as the Soil Erosion Service in response to the Dust Bowl crisis.
- **1935:** Renamed Soil Conservation Service (SCS) under USDA. Led by Hugh Hammond Bennett, it focused on preventing soil erosion.
- **1940s–1980s:** Expanded to include watershed protection, flood control, and technical support for farmers on conservation practices.
- **1994:** Renamed to Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to reflect a broader mission — not just soil, but water, air, plants, and animals.
- **Today:** NRCS provides technical and financial help to private landowners to improve conservation and sustainability on working lands.



What is **conservation planning**?

- NRCS conservation planning is a **collaborative, step-by-step process** where NRCS planners work with landowners to **develop a plan to manage and protect natural resources** on their land

The 9 Steps of Conservation Planning:

- | | | |
|--|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Identify problems and opportunities | 4. Analyze resource data | 7. Make decisions |
| 2. Determine objectives | 5. Formulate alternatives | 8. Implement the plan |
| 3. Inventory resources | 6. Evaluate alternatives | 9. Evaluate the plan |

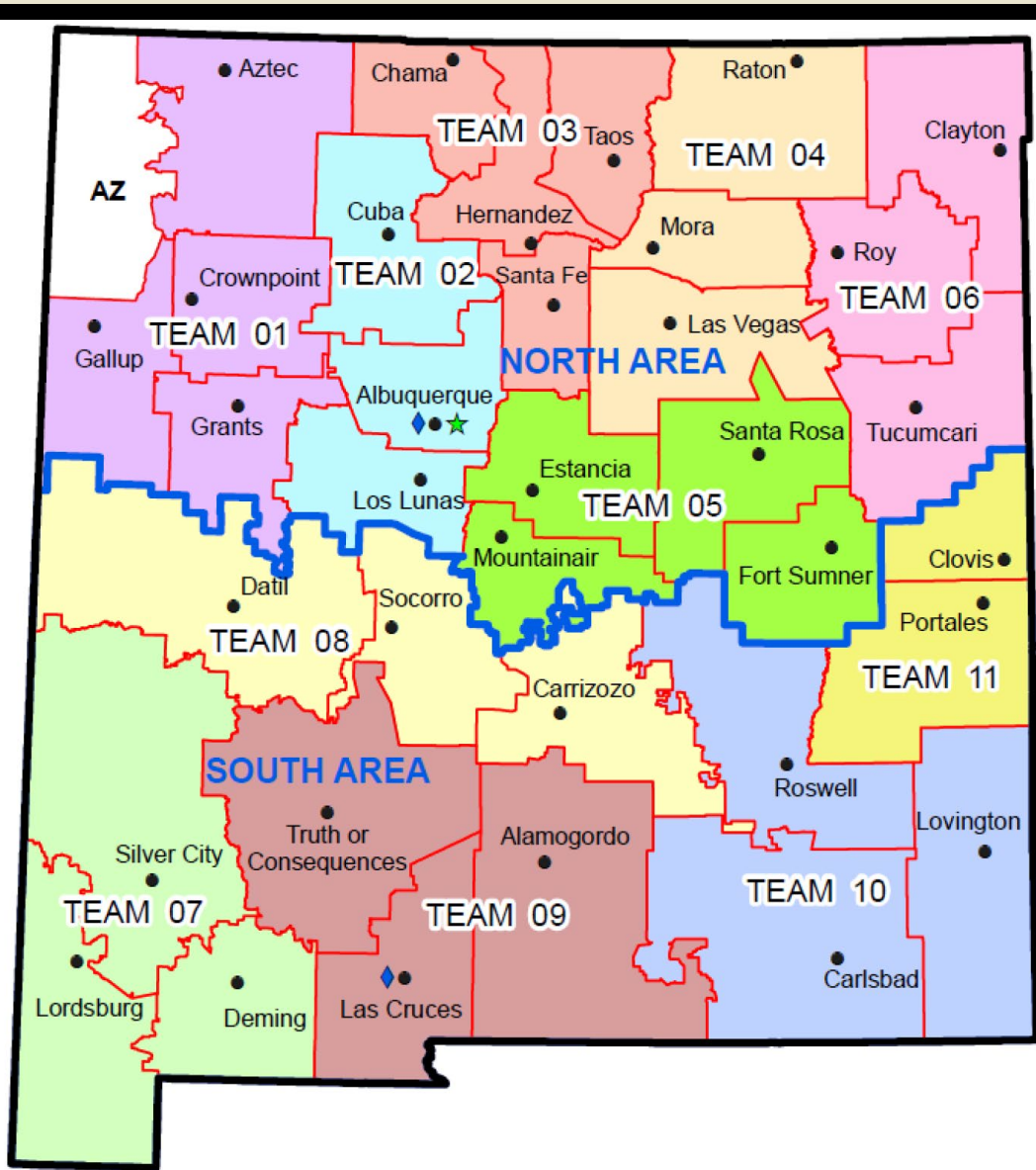
How long does it take to complete conservation planning with NRCS?

- **Contact your local NRCS Field Office as soon as possible** to schedule assistance
- The process shouldn't take longer than 2 weeks once a conservation planner is assigned to you (*depending on Field Office workload and staffing challenges*)



Where do I find NRCS?

- NRCS in New Mexico has **staff across the state** to meet the unique resource needs of our farmers and landowners.
- There are **35 USDA Service centers** located **across the state** which provide customer service at the local level.
- NRCS NM is led by the [State Office](#) in Albuquerque.
- The state is then divided into a [North Area](#) (Teams 1-6) and [South Area](#) (Teams 7-11).



What's the best way to contact NRCS?

Call, email, or stop by
your local service center
after doing a simple Google search
or using this QR code



Questions?

- Learn more about **NMDA's Healthy Soil Program**
 - www.nmdeptag.nmsu.edu/healthy-soil-program.html
 - hsp@nmda.nmsu.edu
 - 575-646-2642
- Learn more about **conservation planning with NRCS-New Mexico**
 - <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/nm-contacts>

