



WHAT IS THE STRATEGIC WATER RESERVE?

New Mexico is one of the driest states in the country. Our water supply is very limited and there is competition for every drop. Therefore, New Mexico must act carefully and creatively when it comes to managing this scarce and vital resource.

A broad coalition of stakeholders including business, agricultural, environmental, wildlife and municipal organizations supported creation of the Strategic Water Reserve (the Reserve) as a means of protecting the waters and the people of New Mexico from threats to our shared water supply.

The Reserve gives the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission a new management tool for the state to use to acquire senior water rights and water from water rights owners who are willing to sell or lease their water.

The Reserve can be used for two purposes:

1. To comply with interstate river compacts; and
2. To assist the state and water users in efforts to benefit threatened and endangered species.

Interstate compacts are agreements between states that govern how much water each state can use from a particular river system. The Endangered Species Act is a powerful Federal law that protects species that are in danger of becoming extinct.

There are currently two endangered species in the Middle Rio Grande (the river stretch between Cochiti Dam to Elephant Butte Reservoir) whose protection requires water: the Rio Grande silvery minnow and the Southwestern willow flycatcher. The New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission hopes to use the Reserve in the Middle Rio Grande to help address endangered species issues and possible future Rio Grande compact issues.