



# EDD

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## OUTDOOR RECREATION DIVISION

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **Special Projects and Outdoor Infrastructure Fund Awards First-Ever Grants**

*Six New Mexico projects receive Outdoor Recreation Division Funds*

**SANTA FE, N.M.** – The Outdoor Recreation Division (ORD) announced this week its first-ever awardees of the Special Projects and Outdoor Infrastructure Fund grant. In all, six organizations were granted funds that will create almost 100 full-time, part-time, and seasonal employment over the next two years. The projects are expected to generate an additional \$304,353 in matching assistance.

A division of the New Mexico Economic Development Department, the Outdoor Recreation Division created this program to help improve access to outdoor recreation within a community, while simultaneously bolstering the outdoor recreation economy in New Mexico. The program focuses on conservation-minded shovel-ready projects that are open to the public and demonstrate a clear benefit to the community, either by attracting and retaining residents and/or attracting visitors. Beneficiaries of the grant will enhance and rebuild our recovering economy.

"Investing in outdoor recreation helps create jobs and develop opportunities closer to where people live," Cabinet Secretary Alicia J. Keyes said. "These grants will boost the outdoor economy all over the state."

The fund was designed to closely align with the priorities of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), a federal program that has invested in thousands of outdoor New Mexico projects since the 1960s. Thanks to the Great American Outdoors Act, which passed this summer, the LWCF will be fully and permanently funded to the tune of \$900 million a year across the United States.

"The groups who applied to this program requested 10-times the amount we had to invest this grant cycle," ORD Director Axie Navas said. "That made it a highly competitive application process. These six stood out for their creative approaches to developing outdoor recreation access in their communities, attracting jobs, talent, and visitors, and overall increasing their residents' well-being."

"Funding from the Outdoor Recreation Division will make a tremendous impact for expanding access to the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail in the Lordsburg region," Lauren Murray, Development Program Manager Continental Divide Trail Coalition, said. "The Continental Divide Trail Coalition is grateful and excited to have the opportunity to invest in much-needed infrastructure along this section of the trail and hope it stimulates responsible outdoor recreation and increased trail access in the area."

"This is an opportunity to continue to move forward with the implementation of long desired hopes for our community and its historic buildings, to better connect with our wilderness and National Forest, its trails and natural resources, through restoration and renewal, outdoor education, and experience," Lee Gruber, Director Southwest New Mexico ACT, added.

Tribes and Pueblos, municipalities, counties, and nonprofits were eligible to apply, and there was a requirement of a 50/50 matching component from other funding sources (including in-kind). Funding was split between tribal, rural, acequia/land grant, and urban communities.

Six projects received funding during this first grant cycle:

**Southwest New Mexico Arts, Culture and Tourism (SWNMACT):** The primary focus of the project is a 35'-diameter outdoor Pavilion and less than one mile of formal trail creation from the Waterworks to Penny Park in Silver City.

Two jobs have been created for this project with four or five additional jobs in the future to manage the satellite recreational businesses located on-site. There is also the potential for 50 to 100 part-time and seasonal youth jobs. SWNMACT is also implementing plans for incubating at least three to five new local businesses by 2022, creating five to ten jobs located at the Waterworks facility.

**Santa Clara Pueblo (SCP):** SCP plans to build three new ADA compliant picnic sites complete with permanent overhead shelters, table, bench, and barbeque stands at Santa Clara Canyon. The Pueblo will hire one part-time person to oversee the area. The project will be completed by summer 2021.

**Santa Fe Conservation Trust:** The La Tierra Chili Line Trail project is a rail-to-trail conversion that will combine outdoor recreation with historic preservation. The Chili Line was a narrow-gauge railroad that ran through northern New Mexico from 1880-1941. It passed through three New Mexico counties and three pueblos on its way from Santa Fe, up the Rio Grande, and into southwestern Colorado. It provides a significant opportunity for public access and interpretation, and a unique opportunity for the public to combine exercise, fresh air, a natural setting, and an educational experience enhanced by interpretation about the land and its past.

**Continental Divide Trail Coalition:** Funding will be provided for trail enhancements, infrastructure, and outreach in the Lordsburg region, including installation of a new trail kiosk to enhance educational opportunities. Signs and banners will be created and distributed to increase local awareness and six new fence gates will be installed for access control. This project will hire 15 youth corps members.

**Village of Taos Ski Valley:** Funding will cover construction for a bathroom in the parking lot that serves as the gateway to both the highest peak in New Mexico, Wheeler Peak, and perhaps the most traveled day hike trail to William's Lake. The facility will have ELOO® waterless, passive solar, evaporative toilet systems.

**Adventure Gallup and Beyond:** The purpose of this project is to replace the worn and damaged signage that adorns the Pyramid Hiking Trail and Zuni Mountain Trail (ZMTP) system. This signage serves the original 25 miles of the ZMTP and 5 miles of the Pyramid Rock Trail.

The local Youth Conservation Corp (YCC) program is responsible for all the trail maintenance of the Pyramid Rock Trail and Zuni Mountain Trails. The YCC is funded through the City of Gallup and McKinley County and it employs twelve people and functions approximately six to eight months out of the year.

The Special Projects and Outdoor Infrastructure Fund will hopefully be renewed during the next Legislative Session. Of the 50 projects submitted for consideration, the ORD's external review team determined that these six scored the highest on the criteria set forth, and brought the most outdoor-recreation value to their communities.

The ORD's mission is to ensure that all New Mexicans gain from the public health, environmental, and economic benefits of sustainable outdoor recreation. Toward that end, the ORD also administers the Outdoor Equity Fund (OEF), a grant to support programs that get kids 18 and younger outside.

To stay informed on these and other ORD programs, visit [NMOutside.com](http://NMOutside.com) and [sign up for the ORD newsletter](#).

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*Journey Montessori School students enjoying a hike on the Chili Line Trail.  
Courtesy of Santa Fe Conservation Trust.*



*Courtesy of Adventure Gallup*

*The New Mexico Economic Development Department's mission is to improve the lives of New Mexico families by increasing economic opportunities and providing a place for businesses to thrive.*

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