

Ciudad Soil & Water Conservation District

2023-2024 ANNUAL REPORT

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 ciudadswcd.org

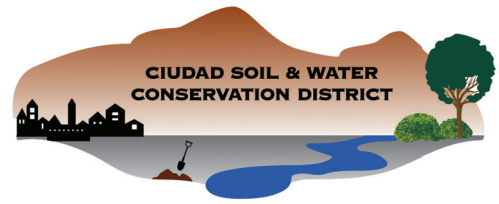


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INTRODUCTION



CIUDAD SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Organization: A governmental Special District of the state of New Mexico organized under the New Mexico Soil and Water Conservation District Act (Chapter 73, Article 20 et. seq. NMSA).

Function: To acquire available technical, financial, and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate those resources so that they meet the needs of local land and water users.

Serve: The citizens, land, water, natural resources, and wildlife of the Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District.

Why: To promote stewardship, protection, and conservation of natural resources, for current and future generations within the Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District.

Mission Statement: The Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District promotes the conservation, improvement, and responsible use of the natural resources on the rural and urban lands within its boundaries

The Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District (Ciudad SWCD) has been fortunate to have the opportunity to carry out various projects, presentations, and activities throughout FY 2024, from July 2023 through June 2024. Together in June 2023, the Ciudad SWCD Board of Supervisors and Staff developed a District Action Plan for use throughout the fiscal year as a reference of goals. The Action Plan reflects the District's Long Range Plan, which was revised in January 2018, and is divided into eight goal categories: 1) Urban Expansion and the Urban/Rural Interface, 2) Public Awareness and Education, 3) Watersheds, Erosion Control and Drainage, 4) Water Quality, 5) Water Availability, 6) Liquid and Solid Waste, 7) Agriculture, and 8) Wetlands/Wildlife/Recreation. Within each goal category, specific tasks were defined in the District's FY 2024 Action Plan and adopted by Board Supervisors for implementation.

Ciudad SWCD's total annual budget during FY 2024 was \$2,235,191.63. Majority of this funding was directly from Federal Grants, State Grants, and Local Cooperative Agreements. Each year the New Mexico legislature provides appropriations for SWCD operations. The appropriation Ciudad SWCD received in FY 2024 was \$18,372.42 and this did fund all operational cost. All other expenditures and revenue was directly related to grants and cooperative agreements, as Ciudad SWCD does not received property tax revenue from it's constituents. What Ciudad SWCD is able to accomplish as a District is largely restricted to the availability and guidelines of grant funding that are awarded.

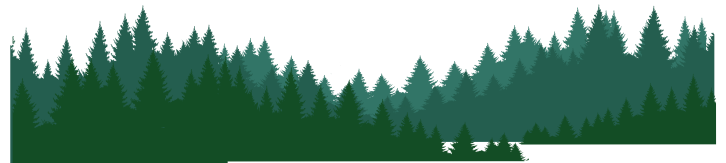
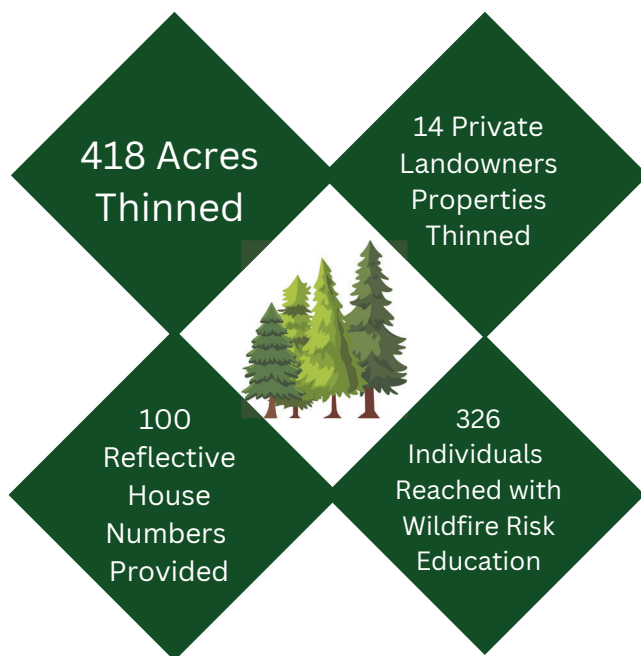
URBAN EXPANSION AND THE URBAN/RURAL INTERFACE

EAST MOUNTAIN FOREST HEALTH PROGRAM AND HAZARDOUS FUEL REDUCTION

In support of the East Mountain Forest Health Program and wildfire risk reduction, **with funding from New Mexico Counties Wildfire Risk Reduction grants, Non-Federal Lands grant, and FEMA Hazardous Fuel Mitigation Grant**, Ciudad SWCD served 14 private landowners and thinned 68.51 acres of private forest lands with individualized prescriptions. Ciudad SWCD thinned 349.3 acres on public lands, totaling 417.81 acres treated.

Ciudad SWCD provided community meetings and workshops related to wildlife prevention and preparedness, in addition to ongoing neighborhood chipper events. Ciudad SWCD continued to provide fabricated emergency response grade reflective house numbers free of charge to East Mountain landowners; 100 reflective house numbers were provided during FY 2024. This is possible thanks to the continued partnership between Ciudad SWCD, Bernalillo County Public Works Division, the Bernalillo County Fire Department, and funding for sign fabrication provided by New Mexico Counties.

Ciudad SWCD continued to provide wildfire risk reduction education between July 2023 and June 2024. Ciudad SWCD participated in the East Mountain Celebration and reached over 90 individuals with information on wildfire prevention and preparedness. Presentations were also delivered to several neighborhood associations, Tree NM Tree Stewards participants, and East Mountains Wildfire Protection Association meeting attendees during FY 2024.



GRANT APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED IN SUPPORT OF FOREST HEALTH

- 2024-2025 New Mexico Counties Wildfire Risk Reduction, Fuel Reduction grant, awarded.
- 2024-2024 New Mexico Counties Wildfire Risk Reduction, Aware and Prepare grant, awarded.
- Communities and Coalitions Community Catalyst Fund, awarded.
- 2025 Non-federal Lands grant, awaiting notice of award.

PUBLIC AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

This fiscal year, entirely through grant funding, Ciudad SWCD reached a total of 7,319 individuals across conservation education programs that taught about various watershed health topics from stormwater pollution and water waste concerns, local wildlife and ecology, to rainwater harvesting benefits and creating backyard habitats. Ciudad SWCD couldn't do this without its extensive partnerships across our region and dedicated funders to support these programs.

RIVERXCHANGE®

RiverXchange® is funded by the Middle Rio Grande Stormwater Quality Team and Southern Sandoval County Arroyo Flood Control Authority. During the 2023-2024 school year, 897 5th grade students and 42 teachers from local public schools engaged with presentations and a conservation field trip to learn about how to take action to conserve the watershed and the Rio Grande. In partnership with City of Albuquerque Open Space, students, along with 112 adults, helped to restore the Bosque riparian ecosystem by planting 303 trees, 41 shrubs of native species such as Cottonwood, Coyote Willow, Four Wing Saltbush, New Mexico Olive and seeded native grasses. RiverXchange classes also take action on their campus, and reported reaching 4,471 individuals through their projects, mostly from school-wide efforts to educate others and change community practices such as littering and water waste. Each year, we celebrate classes that provide their action project parties with pizza parties, but the real reward is the work they've done to be stewards of our watershed!



Students visit the Bosque along the Rio Grande to learn about its history and take part in its future through restoration projects in RiverXchange.

ARROYO CLASSROOM

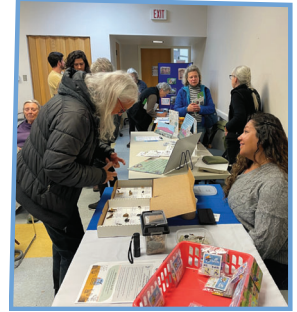
Arroyo classroom is funded by Southern Sandoval County Arroyo Flood Control Authority. During the 2023-2024 school year, Arroyo Classroom served 715 3rd grade students and 36 teachers across 7 schools in Rio Rancho, 5 of which were Title I schools. The program objectives are to help students make connections between their actions and impacts on local wildlife and their habitats (arroyos) through visits with live educational birds, reptiles, arthropods and lessons about arroyos and a walking field trip into a nearby arroyo (never when it's raining!) to track wildlife and learn about arroyo safety.



PUBLIC AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

WATERSHED STEWARDS

Watershed Stewards is funded by Southern Sandoval County Arroyo Flood Control Authority. During the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the Watershed Stewards program engaged 267 adult participants in conservation education and outreach opportunities across 19 presentations, field trips and events and helped certify 12 residences as ABQ Backyard Refuges. The program's events were primarily held in the Rio Rancho area and Corrales, at public libraries and outdoor spaces such as the WaterWise Garden in Rio Rancho and Harvey Jones Project in Corrales.



SPONGE CITY STEWARDSHIP

The Sponge City Middle and High School Stewardship Program was funded by the New Mexico Soil and Water Conservation Commission's Water Quality and Conservation grant. This project worked with middle and high school students to promote an understanding of watershed function, indicators of health and the use of passive rainwater harvesting in an urban environment as a design approach to improve the watershed. Middle and High School students took part in a "natural watershed" field trip the Tijeras Bio-Zone Education Center, an urban walking field trip and a rainwater harvesting installation. The participating high school class also created a design for an outdoor garden classroom that incorporated rainwater harvesting

APS GARDEN CONFERENCE

Ciudad SWCD was able to support the APS School Garden this year thanks to a sub-award from BEMP's Environmental Education EPA grant. Ciudad SWCD helped to coordinate the conference and provided a Rainwater Harvesting presentation to 20 teachers, focused on the passive rainwater harvesting opportunities on school campuses to both teach about, and improve, watershed health in our city. Across the conference, 54 teachers engaged with outdoor learning practices, science curriculum, and local traditional ecological knowledge. Teachers also received garden materials and resources, and Ciudad SWCD was able to provide presenters with honorariums for their attendance with the sub- award.



PUBLIC AWARENESS AND EDUCATION



ROLLING RIVER

The Rolling River is a mobile watershed education trailer that provides a hands-on opportunity for the public to observe and manipulate how human impacts, like urban development and pollution, can create impaired waters in the Rio Grande. This year Ciudad SWCD reached 880 visitors at the Rolling River, supported across various grants and intergovernmental agreements.



THE LAND AND WATER SUMMIT



The Land and Water Summit is an annual conference that provides education and a forum for collaboration to advance nature-based solutions (NBS) for land and water management in arid climates. Ciudad SWCD has been the host and fiscal sponsor since 2021. The Land and Water Summit 2024 hosted a pre-conference field trip with 55 attendees that visited Albuquerque area projects that demonstrate nature-based solutions, green stormwater infrastructure and related research efforts. The 2-day conference was held at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center with 223 registered attendees, 170 in-person and 55 remote viewers, and 26 sponsors.

BERNALILLO COUNTY MASTER NATURALISTS

In collaboration with Bernalillo County, and through an intergovernmental funding agreement, Ciudad SWCD helped to deliver the 2024 Master Naturalist Summer Training Program. 30 participants completed the summer training and are slated to complete a 40 hour service project before May 2025. The 2023 summer cohort contributed over 600 hours of service on public lands or with local conservation organizations and were certified Master Naturalists in May.



WATERSHEDS, EROSION CONTROL AND DRAINAGE



In order to improve watershed health, Ciudad SWCD sought to implement erosion control and reduce drainage by improving stormwater management and sediment reduction through increased education and better planning.



To implement the objectives highlighted above, as well as goals outlined in the Upper Tijeras Creek Watershed Based Plan that was approved by the EPA in 2020, **with funding from the New Mexico Environment Department, River Stewardship grant program**, Ciudad SWCD partnered with Bernalillo County Natural Resource Services and Bernalillo County Open Space to plan and implement improvements to the Tijeras Creek on a 16 acre Bernalillo County parcel. During FY 2024, Ciudad SWCD and Bernalillo County initiated the first phase of the Tijeras Creek Watershed Restoration Project, by removing invasive species and their root balls, in addition to installing native vegetation, with assistance from Rio Grande Return. Ciudad SWCD and the County also oversaw the development of a grading and drainage plan that will ensure the Tijeras Creek is restored to its original floodplain. Construction will begin in late fall early winter to begin restoring the floodplain.



Additionally, **with funding from the Soil & Water Conservation Commission**, Ciudad SWCD worked with private landowners who were directly adjacent to the Tijeras Creek Watershed Restoration Project in order to further watershed improvements and reduce erosion. Ciudad SWCD developed work plans alongside private landowners and is on target to begin this work in early FY 2025. In addition, Ciudad SWCD sought and obtained **GRGWA funding** to address a private landowner project along the Tijeras Creek in which a landowner had brought to attention erosion concerns.



Watersheds

Focus on management of the entire watershed

Improve watershed health by educating public and collaborating with like minded agencies

Erosion Control

Reduce erosion and sedimentation in new roadways and subdivisions

Implement erosion control practices, like native seeding and mulching

Drainage

Increase involvement in stormwater and floodplain management

Implement green stormwater infrastructure practices

To improve watershed health, Ciudad SWCD continued to collaborate with various partnership groups. Ciudad SWCD's Board Chair lead quarterly meetings for the Tijeras Creek Watershed Collaborative and participated in the Sandia Collaborative. Ciudad SWCD's Education Manager participated in the Arid LID Coalition Steering Committee, while other Ciudad SWCD members attended Coalition meetings.

WATER QUALITY AND WATER AVAILABILITY



In order to restore and protect the quality of surface and ground water within the District, Ciudad SWCD maintained membership and participation in the collaborative partnerships that work towards protection of groundwater quality and surface water quality. Ciudad SWCD continued participating in the Middle Rio Grande Stormwater Quality Team and the Middle Rio Grande Urban Waters Federal Partnership.

MIDDLE RIO GRANDE URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

The Ciudad SWCD Board of Supervisors and staff members participated in the Middle Rio Grande Urban Waters Federal Partnership (MRG UWP) by participating on the Steering Committee, developing a new Work Plan for the next 5 years, built capacity for the Partnership, and hosted quarterly meetings. Quarterly meetings allow partners to network and served as a venue for partners to report out about the status of their various projects and become familiar with each other's work. Quarterly meetings highlighted projects including the Albuquerque Metro Flood Control Authority's North Diversion Channel, the Tijeras Creek Watershed Remediation Project, and USGS's New Mexico Water Science Center projects on Water-Quality and Stormwater Inflow/ Outflow during Habitat Restoration at the McEwen Storm Drainage Pond and Water Quality Changes following Storm Drain Outfall Modifications in the Albuquerque Urbanized Reach of the Rio Grande.



In order to address water availability, Ciudad SWCD promoted the conservation, development, beneficial use, and proper disposal of water within the District. Ciudad SWCD's Board Chair and Ciudad SWCD's Water Resources Coordinator participated in regional water planning and the development of a One Water Plan, in collaboration with the Mid-Region Council of Government Water Resources Board. During FY 2024, with the planning support of the Ciudad SWCD' Water Resources Coordinator, facilitated a panel discussion titled, "Building Bridges to Secure Our Water Future." The panel featured Senator Liz Stafanics of NM State District 39, Interstate Stream Commission Water Planning Program Manager Andrew Erdmann, and Casey Caldwell of the US Water Alliance's One Water Council.

In addition to working towards a One Water Plan for New Mexico, Ciudad SWCD has focused it's efforts on water issues as they pertain to agriculture and urban irrigation. In collaboration with Bernalillo County Open Space and Bernalillo County Natural Services Department, Ciudad SWCD developed an annual water plan for the Gutierrez- Hubble House farm. In addition, Ciudad SWCD is a partner member of the New Mexico Tree Alliance. Partners of the Tree Alliance, Groundwork Studio and Bernalillo County Natural Resource Services, developed a Tree Irrigation Guide to building an efficient tree irrigation system.



LIQUID AND SOLID WASTE



Fall and Spring Green Waste Days with Bernalillo County

Spring 2024

GREEN WASTE Days

April 13 through April 28
8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

All loads must be covered

East Mountain Transfer Station
711 Highway 333
Tijeras, NM

Free Drop Off

Call (505) 281-9110

BERN
Bernalillo County

Reduce overall density of surrounding forest.

Sweep roof and clean out gutters.

Dispose of all resulting slash and debris.

Reduce 'ladder-fuels' leaves, dead branches, brush, etc.

Brought to you by Bernalillo County, County Commissioner Eric C. Olivas, Ciudad Soil & Water Conservation District, and the NM Association of Counties.

Ciudad SWCD implemented two Green Waste Days (GWD) events, one in fall of 2023 and another in spring of 2024 with funding from New Mexico Association of Counties and support from County Commissioner Eric C. Olivas. Green Waste Days were held in the East Mountains and aimed to help landowners protect property and forest health by providing a free green waste drop off. Additionally this program helps to:

- Reduce overall density of surrounding forest on private lands.
- Encourage gutter clean outs and removal of roof debris.
- Proper disposal of resulting slash and debris from clearing.
- Reduce ladder-fuels, such as dead branches, brush and leaves.

Promotional advertisements were issued through The Independent, a local East Mountain publication as well as through the networks of local groups such as the East Mountain Wildfire Preparedness Association. Material from both events this year cumulatively totaled 6372 yd3 compared to 5466 yd3 in the previous year. The program remains very popular with East Mountain communities. Due to the overall popularity and benefit of removing hazardous green material, Ciudad SWCD and Bernalillo County are working together to address the need and will continue to hold the event.

A total of **7,410** cubic yards of green waste was collected during the fiscal year



Neighborhood Chipper Events

Ciudad SWCD completed the third annual iteration of its neighborhood chipper event program through funding from the New Mexico Counties Wildfire Risk Reduction Grant. To deliver this program, Ciudad SWCD works with a neighborhood champion from the community and that seems to be a key for success in planning these events. A 1 hour training presentation was provided for the section of the neighborhood that was selected for the chipper event. Lessons were learned about how much a chipper crew can achieve in one day as the initial event ran several days over. However, approximately 1038 cubic yards of hazardous fuel and green waste was cut and stacked by residents and then chipped by the contractor. In order to meet the objective of hosting 3 chipper events for the year but working with limited budget after the initial project, a cost share model was developed for the chipper events. Several events with Paa-Ko Neighborhood Association were a success. Overall this program is growing in interest and is a great way to raise awareness, build community, and reduce wildfire risk.



Neighborhood Chipper Event
1038 cubic yards of green waste collected

AGRIGULTURE

GROW THE GROWERS PROGRAM

In collaboration with Bernalillo County Open Space, Agri-Cultura Network Cooperative, and NMSU Bernalillo County Extension, Ciudad SWCD continued to support the seventh and eight iteration of the Bernalillo County Grow the Growers program. Ciudad SWCD provided programmatic assistance and fiscal management for the program. Throughout the year, Ciudad SWCD assisted with selecting applicants, provided guidance on the curriculum, and presented three presentations to program participants. Additionally, Ciudad SWCD issued bi-weekly stipends to Grow the Grower interns **with funding from the Bernalillo County Open Space.**



NMDA HEALTHY SOIL PROGRAM

During FY 2024, Ciudad SWCD acted as the intermediary, also known as Eligible Entity, for two different individual applicants, Lyla Meadows and Dorothy Duff, while they implemented **New Mexico Department of Agriculture's Healthy Soil Program grant** on their private farms. Between August 2023 through May 2024, Ciudad SWCD provided technical assistance and administrative support to these individual applicants. Additionally, Ciudad SWCD assisted more than fifteen individuals interested in applying for the FY2025 Healthy Soil Program, supporting fourteen projects, nine of which were awarded funding with project to begin in August of 2025.



COMPOSTING PROJECTS

During FY 2024, Ciudad SWCD continued to participate in the NM Healthy Soil Working Group and NM Compost Coalition. Furthermore, Ciudad SWCD worked diligently to secure grant funding from two federal agencies, including the **USDA Compost Food Waste Reduction Grant and the EPA Recycling Education and Outreach Grant.** Ciudad SWCD was successfully awarded these grants and kicked off the projects in June of 2024 by hiring an Agriculture Manager to oversee the implementation of the composting projects. Over the next few years, Ciudad SWCD will collaborate with various organizations to develop a community composting co-op site and a farm compost hub site, then write up freely shared case studies based on these and other regional community composting efforts. Furthermore, Ciudad SWCD will provide lessons and hands-on education, in collaboration with APS and POLK Middle School, to teachers, students and the community on Composting and Food Waste Reduction.



WETLANDS/ WILDLIFE/ RECREATION

Ciudad SWCD aims to ensure that the ideal of good land stewardship is incorporated into management of wetlands, wildlife, and recreational activities. Ciudad SWCD has the opportunity to work closely with the City of Albuquerque Open Space Division and Bernalillo County Open Space Department, and hopes to work closely with other private and public land managers into the future, in order to: promote preservation of wetlands and riparian zones as important local ecosystems within our semi-arid environment; provide assistance to individual landowners and entities seeking to improve their land management methods; and make sure that the District's wild plant and animal resources are taken into account in resource decision making.

CANDELARIA NATURE PRESERVE

Ciudad SWCD, in partnership with the City of Albuquerque Open Space Division and Rio Grande Return, manage the Candelaria Nature Preserve, 79 acre property, and implement the City of Albuquerque's Resource Management Plan. Ciudad SWCD has continued to oversee restoration efforts at Candelaria Nature Preserve and has **secured additional grant funding to support restoration efforts at the preserve, including NMDA's Healthy Soil Grant funding, NMDA Land of Enchantment funding, and also applied for the Land and Water Conservation Fund.**

During FY 2024, active restoration has been initiated on 17 acres, and wildlife cover crops are being managed on 43 acres. Native perennials and seeds have been planted in fields and hedgerows, with no-till drill methods employed across the Preserve. Site management is geared toward incorporating diverse seed mixes for wildlife and ecological resilience. Management strategies have included: wildlife cover cropping, fallowing fields, and mulching. Ciudad SWCD has and will continue to assess restoration efforts using the SER 5-Star Recovery Wheel.



GEM INCLUSIVE SENSORY TRAIL

Ciudad SWCD, in partnership with the City of Albuquerque Open Space Division, Hero's Path to Palliative Care, and Nature Matters Academy **secured funding from the NM EDD Outdoor Recreation Division Trail+ grant and the Soil & Water Conservation Commission to construct the GEM Inclusive Sensory Trail, in addition restoring the stream along the Tijeras Creek at the Tijeras Bio-Zone Education Center.** During FY 2024, Ciudad SWCD worked closely with partners and Pland Collaborative to design the ADA trail, that aims to go above and beyond typical ADA standards. Furthermore, Nature Matters Academy and Ciudad SWCD worked on finalizing interpretive signage that would be placed at each of the five sensory stations. Ciudad SWCD Staff completed a Beta Streamflow Duration Assessment Method for the portion of the Tijeras Creek in preparation for submitting a 404 permit request for the trail and stream restoration. Ciudad SWCD anticipates the trail will be completed in June 2025, along with additional stream restoration efforts.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ciudad SWCD appreciates the opportunity the District has had this fiscal year to increase public awareness, work to restore our watershed, as well as offer programs to the public and private landowners within our boundaries. Ciudad SWCD looks forward to continuing work towards promoting the conservation, improvement, and responsible use of the natural resources on the rural and urban lands with collaboration from partners and cooperators.

Ciudad SWCD acknowledges the important contributions of the following grantors, organizations, municipalities and partners who supported the work that Ciudad SWCD was able to accomplish this year. Without these partnerships and funding, the District could not do what needs to be done effectively. Ciudad SWCD is endlessly grateful for our communities' support so that Ciudad SWCD can achieve its goals and mission.

FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL FUNDERS



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