



DIRECTOR AND SECRETARY  
TO THE COMMISSION  
Michael B. Sloane

# STATE OF NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF GAME & FISH

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31 August 2023

**Mike Langston, Ph.D.**  
**Deputy Director, South Central CASC**  
201 Stephenson Pkwy, Suite 2100  
Norman, OK 73019

Dear Dr. Langston and other members of the review panel:

The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (Department) wishes to wholeheartedly endorse the proposed project, entitled “Climate Change-Informed Conservation Opportunity Areas for Sensitive Species: Phase II”, being led by Dr. Esteban Muldavin and his team at Natural Heritage New Mexico. The proposed, Phase II development of a portfolio of climate change-informed Conservation Opportunity Areas (COAs) that emphasize riparian-associated species is important to the Department. These COAs would provide valuable information on species associated with a priority habitat (riparian habitat) and impacted by a key threat (climate change) identified in the State Wildlife Action Plan (Plan) for New Mexico and are a crucial addition to New Mexico’s anticipated 2025 revised Plan.

Management actions that will enhance the ability of Species of Greatest Conservation Need (Species) to adapt to climate change are needed across the landscape. The COAs that were previously created for New Mexico’s Plan highlight those locations where there is a great diversity of Species, including several along major rivers in New Mexico. The proposed project will greatly enhance the ability of the Department, and our many partners and stakeholders in wildlife conservation, to better direct our management and conservation actions to locations that are likely to: 1) be climate refugia for Species in a changing climate within COAs, and 2) become increasingly important for Species in future that are not currently within the COAs. The proposed project will also provide insight into climate change-related shifts in ecosystem types, which will be useful in refining the locations of COAs for upland and riparian Species.

The proposed project would fill a gap in the existing Plan that will better position the Department and partners to implement climate-informed conservation actions. Such actions are increasingly important and need to be based on the best available science. The Department would incorporate project products in the 2025 Plan as a case study in the climate change chapter and climate-related information in relevant COA descriptions.

The Department’s Ecological and Environmental Planning Division will directly support this project through Dr. Virginia Seamster’s participation as a co-PI. She will contribute expertise on the proposed species distribution modeling and guide how the project can best integrate with Department tools and inform the ongoing 2025 Plan revision process. Dr. Seamster’s time is

currently matched with federal funds, so the approximately 8 hours per month (up to 200 hours over the life of the project) she expects to contribute could not be considered as non-federal match. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jack Marchetti, Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Specialist  
Ecological and Environmental Planning Division