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## PROJECT INFORMATION

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**Project Title:** NH Line  
**Project Type:** FOREST VEGETATION MANAGEMENT/RESTORATION  
**Latitude/Longitude (DMS):** 35.797172 / -106.108607  
**County(s):** SANTA FE  
**Project Description:** Vegetation Management of the NH transmission line. Removal of large trees for safety and reliability

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## REQUESTOR INFORMATION

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**Project Organization:**  
**Contact Name:** Mikaela Buscher  
**Email Address:** mikaela.lee16@gmail.com  
**Organization:** PNM Resources  
**Address:** 2401 Aztec Rd NE, Albuquerque NM 87107  
**Phone:** 651-231-8000

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## OVERALL STATUS

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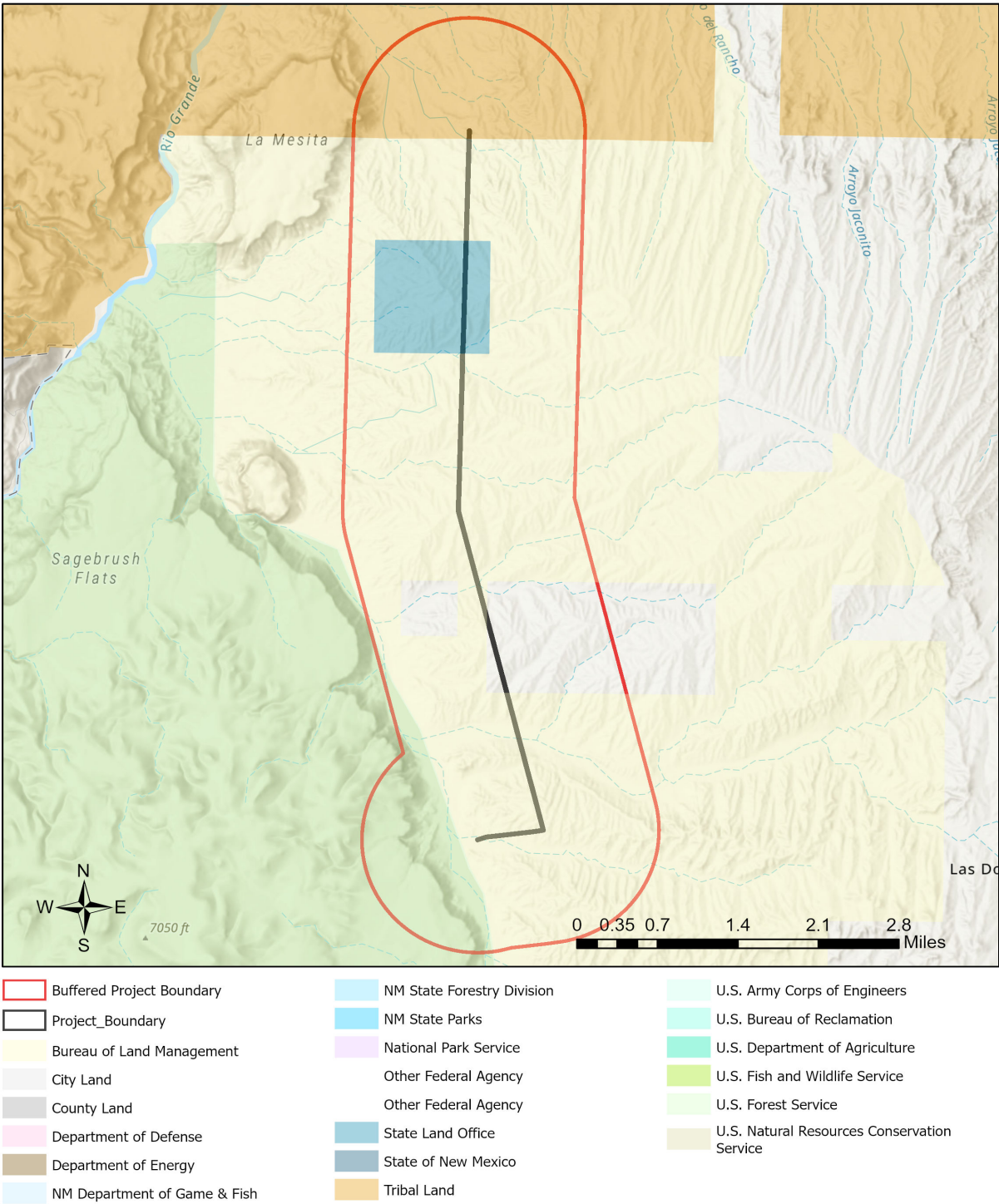
This report contains an initial list of recommendations regarding potential impacts to wildlife or wildlife habitats from the proposed project; see the Project Recommendations section below for further details. Your project proposal is being forwarded to a New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (Department) biologist for review to determine whether there are any additional recommendations regarding the proposed actions. A Department biologist will be in touch within 30 days if there are further recommendations regarding this project proposal.

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**About this report:**

- This environmental review is based on the project description and location that was entered. The report must be updated if the project type, area, or operational components are modified.
- This is a preliminary environmental screening assessment and report. It is not a substitute for the potential wildlife knowledge gained by having a biologist conduct a field survey of the project area. Federal status and plant data are provided as a courtesy to users. The review is also not intended to replace consultation required under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), including impact analyses for federal resources from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) using their [Information for Planning and Consultation tool](#).
- This report contains information on wildlife species protected under the ESA and the [Wildlife Conservation Act \(WCA\)](#), [Species of Greatest Conservation Need \(SGCN\)](#), and Species of Economic and Recreational Importance (SERI). Species listed under the ESA are protected from take at the federal level and under the WCA are protected from take at the state level. SGCN are identified in the [State Wildlife Action Plan \(SWAP\) for New Mexico](#); all of these species are considered to be of conservation concern but not all of them are protected from take at the state or federal level. The harvest of all SERI is regulated at the state level. The Department has no authority to designate critical habitat for species listed under the WCA; only the USFWS can designate critical habitat for species listed under the ESA.
- The New Mexico Environmental Review Tool (ERT) utilizes species observation locations and species habitat suitability models, both of which are subject to ongoing change and refinement. Inclusion or omission of a species within a report cannot guarantee species presence or absence within your project area. To determine occurrence of any species listed in this report, or other wildlife that may be present within your project area, onsite surveys conducted by a qualified biologist during appropriate, species-specific survey timelines may be necessary.
- The Department encourages use of the ERT to modify proposed projects for avoidance, minimization, or mitigation of wildlife impacts. However, the ERT is not intended to be used in a repeatedly iterative fashion to adjust project attributes until a previously determined recommendation is generated. The ERT serves to assess impacts once project details are developed. The [New Mexico Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool](#), the data layers from which are included in the ERT, is the appropriate system for advising early-stage project planning and design to avoid areas of anticipated wildlife concerns and associated regulatory requirements.

NH Line



NHNM, USGS, USFS, US Census Bureau, NMDGF  
Texas Parks & Wildlife, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS, Bureau of Land Management, EPA, NPS, USDA, USFWS  
Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS

**Special Status Animal Species Potentially within 1 Miles of Project Area**

Common Name	Scientific Name	USFWS (ESA)	NMDGF (WCA)	NMDGF SGCN/SERI	USFS	USFS SCC	BLM
<a href="#">Boreal Chorus Frog</a>	<a href="#">Pseudacris maculata</a>			SGCN			
<a href="#">Plains Leopard Frog</a>	<a href="#">Lithobates blairi</a>			SGCN			BLM WATCH
<a href="#">Aplomado Falcon</a>	<a href="#">Falco femoralis</a>		E	SGCN			
<a href="#">Peregrine Falcon</a>	<a href="#">Falco peregrinus</a>		T	SGCN			BLM WATCH
<a href="#">Mountain Plover</a>	<a href="#">Charadrius montanus</a>			SGCN	Sensitive Species		BLM WATCH
<a href="#">Flammulated Owl</a>	<a href="#">Otus flammeolus</a>			SGCN			BLM WATCH
<a href="#">Western Burrowing Owl</a>	<a href="#">Athene cunicularia hypugaea</a>			SGCN	Sensitive Species	USFS R3 SCC	BLM SENSITIVE
<a href="#">Mexican Spotted Owl</a>	<a href="#">Strix occidentalis lucida</a>	LT		SGCN			
<a href="#">Common Nighthawk</a>	<a href="#">Chordeiles minor</a>			SGCN			
<a href="#">Black Swift</a>	<a href="#">Cypseloides niger</a>			SGCN		USFS R3 SCC	
<a href="#">Lewis's Woodpecker</a>	<a href="#">Melanerpes lewis</a>			SGCN		USFS R3 SCC	BLM WATCH
<a href="#">Red-Headed Woodpecker</a>	<a href="#">Melanerpes erythrocephalus</a>			SGCN			
<a href="#">Williamson's Sapsucker</a>	<a href="#">Sphyrapicus thyroideus</a>			SGCN			
<a href="#">Olive-Sided Flycatcher</a>	<a href="#">Contopus cooperi</a>			SGCN			
<a href="#">Bank Swallow</a>	<a href="#">Riparia riparia</a>			SGCN			
<a href="#">Pinyon Jay</a>	<a href="#">Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus</a>			SGCN		USFS R3 SCC	BLM SENSITIVE
<a href="#">Clark's Nutcracker</a>	<a href="#">Nucifraga columbiana</a>			SGCN			
<a href="#">Juniper Titmouse</a>	<a href="#">Baeolophus ridgwayi</a>			SGCN		USFS R3 SCC	BLM WATCH
<a href="#">Pygmy Nuthatch</a>	<a href="#">Sitta pygmaea</a>			SGCN			
<a href="#">Western Bluebird</a>	<a href="#">Sialia mexicana</a>			SGCN			
<a href="#">Mountain Bluebird</a>	<a href="#">Sialia currucoides</a>			SGCN			
<a href="#">Bendire's Thrasher</a>	<a href="#">Toxostoma bendirei</a>			SGCN		USFS R3 SCC	BLM SENSITIVE
<a href="#">Loggerhead Shrike</a>	<a href="#">Lanius ludovicianus</a>			SGCN		USFS R3 SCC	BLM WATCH

**Special Status Animal Species Potentially within 1 Miles of Project Area**

Common Name	Scientific Name	USFWS (ESA)	NMDGF (WCA)	NMDGF SGCN/SERI	USFS	USFS SCC	BLM
<a href="#">Gray Vireo</a>	<a href="#">Vireo vicinior</a>		T	SGCN	Sensitive Species	USFS R3 SCC	BLM WATCH
<a href="#">Virginia's Warbler</a>	<a href="#">Leiothlypis virginiae</a>			SGCN			BLM SENSITIVE
<a href="#">Black-Throated Gray Warbler</a>	<a href="#">Setophaga nigrescens</a>			SGCN			BLM WATCH
<a href="#">Grace's Warbler</a>	<a href="#">Setophaga graciae</a>			SGCN		USFS R3 SCC	BLM WATCH
<a href="#">Chestnut-Collared Longspur</a>	<a href="#">Calcarius ornatus</a>			SGCN			BLM SENSITIVE
<a href="#">Cassin's Finch</a>	<a href="#">Haemorhous cassinii</a>			SGCN			BLM WATCH
<a href="#">Evening Grosbeak</a>	<a href="#">Coccothraustes vespertinus</a>			SGCN			
<a href="#">Spotted Bat</a>	<a href="#">Euderma maculatum</a>		T	SGCN	Sensitive Species	USFS R3 SCC	BLM SENSITIVE
<a href="#">Pale Townsend's Big-Eared Bat</a>	<a href="#">Corynorhinus townsendii pallescens</a>			SGCN	Sensitive Species	USFS R3 SCC	BLM SENSITIVE
<a href="#">American Pika</a>	<a href="#">Ochotona princeps</a>			SGCN			
<a href="#">Black-Tailed Prairie Dog</a>	<a href="#">Cynomys ludovicianus</a>			SGCN	Sensitive Species		BLM SENSITIVE
<a href="#">Gunnison's Prairie Dog</a>	<a href="#">Cynomys gunnisoni</a>			SGCN	Sensitive Species		BLM SENSITIVE
<a href="#">New Mexican Meadow Jumping Mouse</a>	<a href="#">Zapus hudsonius luteus</a>	LE	E	SGCN	Sensitive Species		BLM SENSITIVE
<a href="#">Black Bear</a>	<a href="#">Ursus americanus</a>			SGCN			
<a href="#">Mountain Lion</a>	<a href="#">Puma concolor</a>			SGCN			
<a href="#">Elk</a>	<a href="#">Cervus canadensis</a>			SGCN			
<a href="#">Mule Deer</a>	<a href="#">Odocoileus hemionus</a>			SGCN			
<a href="#">Desert Massasauga</a>	<a href="#">Sistrurus catenatus edwardsii</a>			SGCN			

Common Name hyperlink takes you to species account in [bison-m.org](https://www.bison-m.org/); Scientific Name hyperlink takes you to information in [NatureServe Explorer](https://www.natureserve.org/explorer/); ESA = Endangered Species Act, C = Candidate, LE = Listed Endangered, LT = Listed Threatened, XN = Non-essential Experimental Population, for other ESA codes see this [website](#); WCA = Wildlife Conservation Act, E = Endangered, T = Threatened; SERI = Species of Economic and Recreational Importance; SGCN = Species of Greatest Conservation Need; USFS = U.S. Forest Service, Sensitive Species = A species likely to occur on USFS lands that is of concern for a potential reduction in population viability; SCC = Species of Conservation Concern; BLM = Bureau of Land Management, BLM SENSITIVE = A species that occurs on BLM lands and whose viability is at risk, BLM WATCH = Species that may be added to the sensitive species list in future pending new information regarding species status.

## Project Recommendations

Your proposed project activities may require a custom review for assessment of potential effects to wildlife. See the "OVERALL STATUS" section above to determine the likelihood that your project will be reviewed further based on its location. A Department biologist will confirm whether any additional conservation measures are needed. You should expect to receive any additional project recommendations within 30 days of your project submission. If the "OVERALL STATUS" section indicates that no further consultation with the Department is required based on its location, then you will only receive additional project feedback from the Department if a biologist deems it necessary.

All migratory birds are protected against direct take under the federal [Migratory Bird Treaty Act](#) (16 U.S.C. Sections 703-712), and hawks, falcons, vultures, owls, songbirds, and other insect-eating birds are protected under New Mexico State Statutes (17-2-13 and 17-2-14 NMSA), unless permitted by the applicable regulatory agency. To minimize the likelihood of adverse impacts to migratory birds, nests, eggs, or nestlings, the Department recommends that ground disturbance and vegetation removal activities be conducted outside of the primary migratory bird breeding season of April 15-September 1. Breeding season may begin earlier for raptors or when working in low-elevation habitats such as deserts. If ground disturbing and clearing activities must be conducted during the breeding season, the area should be surveyed for active nest sites (with birds or eggs present in the nesting territory) and avoid disturbing active nests until young have fledged. For active nests, establish adequate buffer zones to minimize disturbance to nesting birds. Buffer distances should be at least 100 feet from songbird and raven nests; 0.25 miles from most raptor nests; and 0.5 miles for ferruginous hawk (*Buteo regalis*), golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos canadensis*), peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), and prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*) nests. Active nest sites in trees or shrubs that must be removed should be mitigated by qualified biologists or wildlife rehabilitators. Department biologists are available to consult on nest site mitigation and can facilitate contact with qualified personnel.

The list of [New Mexico SGCN](#) (see link, page 14, table 5) and the federal list of [Birds of Conservation Concern](#) should be reviewed to fully evaluate potential effects to migratory birds from your proposed project. Federal agencies are also required under Executive Order 13186 to implement standards and practices that lessen the amount of unintentional take attributable to agency actions. These conservation measures are strongly recommended to ensure persistence of migratory bird species whose populations are small and/or declining within New Mexico.

For forestry and forest restoration projects, including fire management activities, occurring in ponderosa pine forests, the Department recommends following the [Ponderosa Pine Restoration Guidelines to Benefit Wildlife](#).

For projects involving the use of herbicide application, the Department has the following recommendations to mitigate impacts to wildlife:

- To mitigate the potential for herbicide drift into sensitive aquatic and native riparian habitats, the Department recommends applying a minimum buffer of 20 ft (for spot applications), 100ft (if using ground application), 350 ft (if using low-altitude aerial spraying), or 1,320 ft (if using high-altitude aerial spraying; [USFWS 2007](#)) around all aquatic habitats and native riparian vegetation in the proposed treatment area.
- To mitigate the potential for herbicide drift into sensitive habitats for federally or state-listed species, the Department recommends applying a minimum buffer of 10 ft (for spot applications), 90 ft (if using ground application), 300 ft (if using low-altitude aerial spraying), or 1,320 ft (if using high-altitude aerial spraying) around all known terrestrial habitats for federally or state-listed species. Buffer distances are larger for insect pollinators of federally or state-listed plants (2,640 ft for small pollinators, 10,560 ft for large pollinators such as bumble bees) ([USFWS 2007](#)).
- Use mechanical weed removal techniques or individual plant treatments when buffers cannot be implemented and federally or state-listed species habitats are present.
- Apply herbicides directly to target plants, rather than broadly to large areas, whenever possible to avoid harming nearby non-target or native vegetation.
- Avoid herbicide spraying on days when wind speeds are high (> 10 mph) and on days when rain is expected within 48 hours.
- Apply herbicides no later than two months before normal spring runoff and high-water tables are anticipated in the project area and wait until streamflow is back below normal bank full stage to consider applying herbicides in the late summer or fall.
- Use the lowest concentration possible that will still allow for achievement of the desired result.
- Avoid applying herbicides to and removing vegetation that is being used by birds for nesting. When nesting birds may be present in target vegetation in the project area, herbicides should be applied outside of the breeding bird season (April – September).
- In areas dominated by undesired or non-native plants, habitat loss may occur if herbicide is applied to the entire area, resulting in a total loss of vegetation. To avoid this, apply herbicides in a mosaic pattern, alternating treated and non-treated sites between years.
- The Department recommends not using herbicides that contain the following chemicals that have been found to be slightly to highly toxic to wildlife including birds, fish, and pollinators: 2,4-D, dichlobenil, dichlorprop, fluazifop, glyphosate, oxyfluorfen, propyzamide, quizalofop, sulfometuron, and triclopyr ([Michael 2002](#)).



Your project could affect important components of habitat for large mammals, including important and sensitive seasonal areas, stopover sites, or movement corridors for elk, mule deer, or pronghorn. Mitigation measures should be implemented as appropriate in these high use sites and movement areas that were identified based on data gathered and analyzed by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (Department) and partners. Management recommendations within these areas may include the following (as relevant to the proposed project).

- Restrictions on noise-generating activities during wintering and calving/fawning seasons. These seasons are November 15-April 30 for wintering and May 15-June 30 for calving fawning in northern New Mexico; specific timing differs for southern New Mexico. These activities include oil and gas well pad development and operations that expose wildlife to loud noises from drilling, compressors, and pumping stations within 400 feet of the source.
- Avoid new fence construction where possible and modify unavoidable fences along high use areas to make them wildlife friendly and facilitate large animal movement. Where possible, divide larger fenced sites into smaller fenced areas with movement corridors in between.
- Avoid siting facilities within important habitats such as critical seasonal ranges or parturition sites.
- To minimize surface disturbance, implement directional drilling and co-locate drill holes on a single pad in the least suitable areas for wildlife.
- Avoid construction or development activities during important times, like parturition (May 15 – June 30 in northern New Mexico).
- Where feasible, coordinate with the Department on collection of pre- and post-construction observational or GPS collar data to quantify responses of big game herds to project implementation.

Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) may occur within your project area. Burrowing owls are protected from take by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and under New Mexico state statute. Before any ground disturbing activities occur, the Department recommends that a preliminary burrowing owl survey be conducted by a qualified biologist using the Department's [Burrowing Owl Survey Protocol](#). Should burrowing owls be documented in the project area, please contact the Department or USFWS for further recommendations regarding relocation or avoidance of impacts.

Your project area intersects an Important Plant Area (IPA) that contains one or more species of plants listed as threatened or endangered by the New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) under New Mexico Statutes Annotated (NMSA) 75-6-1 or by the USFWS under the federal ESA. Although IPAs have no legal designation, they have been identified as areas that support either a high diversity of sensitive plant species or contain the last remaining locations of New Mexico's most endangered plants. The Department recommends that you consult with EMNRD's [Endangered Plant Program Coordinator](#) regarding any state-listed plants and the USFWS's [Information for Planning and Consultation \(IPAC\)](#) system for any federally-listed plants and reaching out to the appropriate federal species lead(s) with the [New Mexico Ecological Services Office of USFWS](#). The Department does not have any authority to designate or advise on state- or federally-listed plants.



Prairie dog colonies may occur within the vicinity of your project area. Both black-tailed prairie dogs (*Cynomys ludovicianus*) and Gunnison's prairie dogs (*Cynomys gunnisoni*) are designated as New Mexico SGCN, and their colonies provide important habitat for other grassland wildlife. Wherever possible, occupied prairie dog colonies should be left undisturbed, and all project activities should be directed off the colony. Any burrows that are located on the project site should be surveyed by a qualified biologist to determine whether burrows are active or inactive and whether burrowing owls may be utilizing the site. Colonies within the range of the black-tailed prairie dog can be surveyed by a qualified biologist diurnally, year-round using binoculars. Colonies within the range of the Gunnison's prairie dog can be surveyed by a qualified biologist diurnally, using binoculars during the warmer months from April through October and by searching for fairly fresh scat and lack of cobwebs or debris at the mouths of burrows during the cold months (November through March). If ground-disturbing activities cannot be relocated off the prairie dog colony, or if project activities involve control of prairie dogs, the Department recommends live-trapping and relocation of prairie dogs. The Department can provide recommendations regarding suitability of potential translocation areas and procedures.

**Disclaimers regarding recommendations:**

- The Department provides technical guidance to support the persistence of all protected species of native fish and wildlife, including game and nongame wildlife species. Species listed within this report include those that have been documented to occur within the project area, and others that may not have been documented but are projected to occur within the project vicinity.
- Recommendations are provided by the Department under the authority of § 17-1-5.1 New Mexico Statutes Annotated 1978, to provide "communication and consultation with federal and other state agencies, local governments and communities, private organizations and affected interests responsible for habitat, wilderness, recreation, water quality and environmental protection to ensure comprehensive conservation services for hunters, anglers and nonconsumptive wildlife users".
- The Department has no authority for management of plants or Important Plant Areas. The [New Mexico Endangered Plant Program](#), under the Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department's Forestry Division, identifies and develops conservation measures necessary to ensure the survival of plant species within New Mexico. Plant status information is provided within this report as a courtesy to users. Recommendations provided within the ERT may not be sufficient to preclude impacts to rare or sensitive plants, unless conservation measures are identified in coordination with the Endangered Plant Program.
- Additional coordination and/or consultation may also be necessary under the federal ESA or National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Further site-specific mitigation recommendations may be proposed during ESA consultation and/or NEPA analyses or through coordination with affected federal agencies.