

TITLE 19 NATURAL RESOURCES AND WILDLIFE
CHAPTER 25 ADMINISTRATION AND USE OF WATER - GENERAL PROVISIONS
PART 16 REGIONAL WATER SECURITY PLANNING

19.25.16.1 ISSUING AGENCY: New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission, hereinafter the commission.
[19.25.16.1 NMAC - N, 4/9/2026]

19.25.16.2 SCOPE: Subject to available funding, this rule implements the provisions of the Water Security Planning Act, Section 72-14A-1 NMSA 1978, and sets forth the processes and criteria for convening and establishing regional water security planning councils and developing and maintaining regional water security plans.
[19.25.16.2 NMAC - N, 4/9/2026]

19.25.16.3 STATUTORY AUTHORITY: Section 72-14A-1, et seq. NMSA 1978.
[19.25.16.3 NMAC - N, 4/9/2026]

19.25.16.4 DURATION: Permanent.
[19.25.16.4 NMAC - N, 4/9/2026]

19.25.16.5 EFFECTIVE DATE: April 9, 2026, unless a later date is cited at the end of a section.
[19.25.16.5 NMAC - N, 4/9/2026]

19.25.16.6 OBJECTIVE: The objective of this rule is to establish a framework for regional water security planning councils to develop, maintain, and aid in implementation and tracking of regional water security plans. This framework will be grounded in regional values, scientific consensus, and New Mexico water law. The processes outlined in this rule are intended to: ensure that the plans will be based on the best available science, data, and models regarding available water supplies, use, and trends; provide transparency and opportunities for meaningful input and participation by the public, political subdivisions of the state, and Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes within each regional water security planning region; acknowledge the sovereignty, water rights, and water needs of tribal communities; consider public welfare and the needs of future generations of New Mexicans; align with state and federal laws; and identify and prioritize projects, programs, and policies that will help to ensure water security into the future. Nothing in this rule supersedes or violates state water law regarding the role and authority of the state engineer or the doctrine of prior appropriation. Furthermore, nothing in this rule permits the condemnation of water rights, or determines, abridges or affects in any way the water rights of water right owners in the state, including water rights of Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes.

19.25.16.7 DEFINITIONS:

A. “Commission” means the New Mexico interstate stream commission and its nine appointed members, authorized under Section 72-14-1 NMSA 1978.

B. “Initial planning period” means the time period from the establishment of each council to the approval of its first regional water security plan by the commission.

C. “NMISC staff” means the employees of the New Mexico interstate stream commission.

D. “Ongoing planning period” means any time period following the initial planning period for each council. The ongoing planning period begins once an initial regional water security plan is approved by the commission.

E. “Projects, programs, and policies” or “PPPs” or “PPP” means identified strategies and alternatives, including infrastructure projects, conservation programs, watershed or groundwater management policies, and other types of initiatives that will promote regional water security and are identified in the plans and PPP lists.

F. “Regional water security plan” or “plan” means a plan produced by a council, that meets the requirements described herein and is approved by the commission.

G. “Regional water security planning council” or “council” means the members described herein who lead regional water security plan development, and aid in and track implementation of the plan in their respective region.

H. “**Regional water security planning region**” or “**planning region**” or “**region**” means an area of the state described herein that is the planning area for each regional water security planning council.

I. “**Region-specific stakeholder**” means a member of the public who is not a member of a council but has identified themselves to NMISC staff or a council as interested in engaging in the planning process for a specific region.

J. “**Water utility authority**” means a water utility authority established through or under New Mexico law.

[19.25.16.7 NMAC - N, 4/9/2026]

19.25.16.8 WATER SECURITY TRIBAL ADVISORY COUNCIL:

A. NMISC staff shall provide administrative support and facilitation, in coordination with the office of the state engineer and Indian affairs department, for the establishment and operation of a water security tribal advisory council (“WSTAC”) comprising representatives of New Mexico Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes.

B. The purpose of the WSTAC is to provide a forum for input from New Mexico Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes to ensure that their sovereignty, water rights, water needs, and viewpoints are considered and incorporated in regional water security planning and other related activities as determined by the commission.

C. The participating Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes shall determine their own procedures and principles for the operation of WSTAC.

[19.25.16.8 NMAC - N, 4/9/2026]

19.25.16.9 REGIONAL WATER SECURITY PLANNING REGIONS:

A. The nine regional water security planning regions are shown in exhibit A, water security planning regions (map). <https://www.ose.nm.gov/Planning/>.

B. The commission shall adopt guidelines that, at a minimum, describe the process for how regions may form sub-regions, how sub-regions will be integrated into the regional water security plan, and the procedure for appeal to the commission if a council denies a request to form a sub-region. Councils shall not deny a request to create a sub-region based on Indian water rights settlement boundaries.

C. If a council or councils determine that a sub-region may be beneficial for regional water security planning, the council shall request commission approval to establish a sub-region within a planning region or across multiple planning regions. In determining whether to approve a proposed sub-region, the commission shall use the following criteria:

(1) the basis for the sub-region, such as reliance on the same water source(s), existing water planning organizations, or current or future water rights adjudication or Indian water rights settlement boundaries, or otherwise, and the circumstances that make the proposed sub-region distinct from the region;

(2) the population and capacity within the proposed sub-region to engage in a transparent and inclusive planning process for the proposed sub-region;

(3) the impact of the proposed sub-region on the ability of the remainder of the region to engage in a transparent and inclusive planning process;

(4) the support from the associated council(s) for the proposed sub-region;

(5) the process for how the work of the proposed sub-region will be integrated with the regional water security plan(s) of associated region(s), including the prioritization of projects, programs, and policies; and

(6) the potential for the proposed sub-region to enable more effective input into the regional water security program of tribal water concerns and the needs of tribal communities.

[19.25.16.9 NMAC - N, 4/9/2026]

19.25.16.10 INITIAL PLANNING PERIOD: During the initial planning period:

A. Responsibilities of NMISC staff include:

(1) inviting governmental entities identified in Paragraph (1) of Subsection A of 19.25.16.12, NMAC to select their representatives, and convening a meeting of these representative members.

(2) assisting representative members in the invitation of at-large members, identified in Paragraph (2) of Subsection A of 19.25.16.12, NMAC, and non-voting members, identified in Paragraph (3) of Subsection A of 19.25.16.12, NMAC.

(3) acting as the commission’s liaison to the councils for the purpose of ensuring the coordination of commission information, policies, and resources. Subject to adequate funding and resources,

NMISC staff assigned to these tasks shall be located at an office of the state engineer district office within or near the region.

(4) providing administrative support and facilitation for at least four meetings of each council per calendar year.

(5) providing councils with technical support, including assistance with accessing the best available data and science, templates to guide decision making, and compilations of existing plans and additional resources.

(6) developing and maintaining lists of region-specific stakeholders and notifying stakeholders of opportunities to engage in the planning process.

B. Responsibilities of the council include:

(1) once convened by the NMISC staff, the representative members shall invite, with NMISC staff support, and select at-large members as identified in Paragraph (2) of Subsection A of 19.25.16.12 NMAC. NMISC staff shall review membership and confirm compliance with Paragraph (2) of Subsection A of 19.25.16.12 NMAC.

(2) the representative members and the at-large members shall invite, with NMISC staff support, and select non-voting members as identified in Paragraph (3) of Subsection A of 19.25.16.12 NMAC.

(3) once the council has been formed through the convening, inviting, and selection of representative members, at-large members, and non-voting members, the council shall adopt and provide NMISC staff written operating principles that, at a minimum, describe the following:

(a) the roles and responsibilities of the council's voting and non-voting members;

(b) the duration(s) of the term(s) for council members, if any;

(c) the potential roles of committees, including a steering committee, sub-committees or work groups, if relevant;

(d) the grounds and process for removing a member from the council;

(e) the decision-making process to be used by the council to make planning recommendations and prioritize projects, programs, and policies; and

(f) the process for integration and engagement with commission approved sub-regions, if relevant.

C. Councils may choose to self-convene provided the composition set forth in 19.25.16.12 NMAC is adhered to and confirmed by NMISC staff.

[19.25.16.10 NMAC - N, 4/9/2026]

19.25.16.11 ONGOING PLANNING PERIOD: During the ongoing planning period:

A. Responsibilities of NMISC staff include:

(1) reviewing and confirming compliance with Subsection A of 19.25.16.12 NMAC for representation of representative and at-large members, when council vacancies are filled.

(2) providing administrative support and facilitation for at least two meetings of the council per calendar year during periods when the council is not in the process of updating a plan and providing at least four meetings of the council per calendar year when the council is in the process of updating a plan.

(3) providing councils with technical support, including assistance with accessing the best available data and science, decision-making guides, compilations of existing plans, and resources to aid in tracking and reporting on implementation.

(4) publishing all regional water security plans developed by councils and approved by the commission.

B. Responsibilities of the council include:

(1) filling vacancies on the council pursuant to Subsection A of 19.25.16.12 NMAC;

(2) preparing proposed regional water security plans and presenting proposed plans to the commission for approval;

(3) preparing proposed updates to regional water security plans and presenting proposed updates to the commission for approval;

(4) reviewing the operating principles for the council and making changes consistent with Paragraph (3) of Subsection B of 19.25.16.10 NMAC if needed;

(5) aiding in and tracking plan implementation, including outcomes;

(6) developing, reviewing, and updating PPP lists;

(7) developing and maintaining region-specific lists of stakeholders and providing information to stakeholders about opportunities to engage in the planning process. The council may request NMISC staff support to carry out these responsibilities.

C. Councils shall report to the commission by June 30 of each year on the progress of planning activities, status of plan implementation, and outcomes.

D. During the ongoing planning period, councils shall update plans at least once every 10 years. Councils shall review and update PPP lists at least once every five years.

[19.25.16.11 NMAC - N, 4/9/2026]

19.25.16.12 COMPOSITION OF REGIONAL WATER SECURITY PLANNING COUNCILS:

A. Councils shall comprise three categories of members: representative members, at-large members and non-voting members. Representative members and at-large members shall be voting members of a council. If a qualified or willing representative member, as described in Paragraph (1) of Subsection A of 19.25.16.12 NMAC or at-large member, as described in Paragraph (2) of Subsection A of 19.25.16.12 NMAC cannot be identified by the council, the council may propose or NMISC staff may select a replacement non-voting member who is knowledgeable about water resources in the region.

(1) Representative members: Each governmental entity listed below, if present within the region, is entitled to have a representative serve on the council for any planning region within which it is located. A single representative may represent multiple governmental entities. In the event that a governmental entity is located in multiple regional water security planning regions, the governing body may appoint the same or different representatives to each council. Each representative member shall be appointed by official action of each governmental entity's governing body. Representative members will consist of the following:

(a) one representative member identified by the governing body of each municipality;

(b) one representative member identified by the governing body of each county;

(c) one representative member identified by the governing body of each irrigation district, artesian conservancy district, conservancy district, or water commission established by joint powers agreement;

(d) one representative member identified by the governing bodies of each Nation, Pueblo, and Tribe;

(e) one representative member identified by the governing bodies of each soil and water conservation district;

(f) one representative member of each regional acequia and community ditches association in the planning region, or if no regional acequia and community ditch association exists in a planning region, one representative from that region appointed by the New Mexico acequia commission;

(g) one representative member from an active land grant in the planning region appointed by the land grant council;

(h) one representative member identified by the governing body of each flood control authority or agency authorized in Chapter 4, NMSA 1978, or Chapter 72, NMSA 1978; and

(i) one representative member identified by the governing body of each water utility authority.

(2) At-large members: Up to 10 at-large members shall represent each of the following stakeholder groups. There shall be one at-large member position for each stakeholder group, but members may represent multiple stakeholder groups. The stakeholder groups to be represented are:

(a) ranchers in the region;

(b) farmers in the region (these farmers may include 4H, Young Farmers, etc.);

(c) statewide or regional public higher education institutions (such as a student, professor, administrator, etc.);

(d) environmental or conservation organizations located in the region;

(e) water-based sporting or recreational interests located in the region (fishing, rafting, etc.);

(f) mutual domestic water consumer associations or water systems or cooperatives in the region;

(g) commercial, industrial, mining, and power in the region;

(h) special districts established pursuant to Chapter 73, NMSA 1978, with staff whose responsibilities include water management, located in whole or in part within the region, and that do not fall

within the previous membership categories within Paragraph (1) of Subsection A of 19.25.16.12 NMAC. Should there be no representative meeting these criteria for the region, this position becomes a general at-large member;

(i) existing regional water planning steering committees that have been active since the conclusion of the 2014-2016 regional water planning effort. Should there be no regional water planning steering committee in the region, this position becomes a general at-large member; and

(j) one general at-large member in the region.

(3) Non-voting members: Up to six non-voting members representing parties from outside the region with water interests in the region. These six non-voting members shall comprise up to three non-voting members for entities outside the region that own water rights within the region, and up to three non-voting members from other water security planning councils hydrologically linked to the region.

B. Region-specific stakeholders: Lists of region-specific stakeholders shall be developed and maintained by NMISC staff and shared with councils. The identification of region-specific stakeholders shall, at a minimum, include:

(1) an email point of contact; and

(2) documentation including a physical address, residential or professional, within the region;

or

(3) written statement of interest identifying the individual or entity and explaining why the individual or entity is interested in engaging in the region's planning process.

[19.25.16.12 NMAC - N, 4/9/2026]

19.25.16.13 REGIONAL WATER SECURITY PLANNING COUNCIL MEETING AND INPUT REQUIREMENTS:

A. Councils shall hold regularly scheduled meetings as follows:

(1) meetings shall be held at least four times per year during periods when the region's plan is being developed or updated.

(2) meetings shall be held at least two times per year during periods when the plan is not being developed or updated.

(3) councils shall provide at least 14-day notice of meetings or other activities to council members, the public, region-specific stakeholders, Nations, Pueblos and Tribes, and the commission, with NMISC staff support as needed.

(4) councils, with NMISC staff support, shall offer meetings for hybrid participation if practicable.

B. Councils shall develop regional water security plans through broad input. This shall include opportunities for the public, region-specific stakeholders, and Nations, Pueblos, and Tribes to be involved in the development, vetting and prioritization of PPPs. During the plan development or update of any plan, councils shall, with NMISC staff support, at a minimum:

(1) notify the public, region-specific stakeholders, and Nations, Pueblos and Tribes, including by distributing information regionally about the development of the plan, and opportunities for input, at regular intervals.

(2) provide in-person and virtual opportunities for input at council meetings.

(3) provide a minimum of 60 days for the public, region-specific stakeholders, and Nations, Pueblos and Tribes to provide input in person, via email, or through a website on proposed regional water security plans.

(4) make comments publicly available ahead of finalization of a regional water security plan to be presented for commission approval.

C. Councils shall consider a broad range of participation options for input, which may include but are not limited to:

(1) providing materials in languages in common use within the region (e.g., ASL, Spanish, Tewa, Navajo).

(2) hosting additional meetings, focus groups, listening sessions, open houses or other events.

(3) providing engagement resources (e.g., presentations, paper surveys) to local community partners with existing connections in rural areas.

(4) providing multiple in-person opportunities distributed throughout the region and expanded strategies for community engagement.

(5) providing meeting spaces or computer access and connectivity for remote participation.

D. To promote broad awareness and to encourage participation, council outreach efforts, with NMISC staff support as needed, shall include, but are not limited to:

- (1) educational content;
- (2) multimedia advertising of engagement opportunities; and
- (3) additional opportunities as determined by the council.

[19.25.16.13 NMAC - N, 4/9/2026]

19.25.16.14 CONSIDERATIONS FOR COUNCILS DURING PLANNING PROCESSES:

A. Councils shall consider, with resources provided by NMISC staff, the following information for inclusion in regional water security plans:

- (1) existing water plans and water resources planning initiatives;
- (2) compliance with state water law, including recognition of established water rights;
- (3) best available science for considering climate resiliency and increasing aridification;
- (4) recognition and respect of federally recognized or reserved tribal water rights;
- (5) access to water for domestic use;
- (6) compliance with applicable federal water law;
- (7) public welfare values;
- (8) balancing water uses and the needs of future generations of New Mexicans;
- (9) public participation and comments;
- (10) best available science regarding the water needs of native fish, wildlife, and their

habitats;

(11) best available resources or methodologies for considering the needs of rural and urban places and populations within the region;

- (12) groundwater management strategies and needs;
- (13) regional food security and agricultural resilience;
- (14) water needs for healthy upland, wetland, and riparian habitats;
- (15) watershed health and the impacts of wildfire on source water protection; and
- (16) water quality protection or improvement.

B. Councils shall assure, with resources provided by NMISC staff, that their regional water security plan is consistent with the following statewide objectives:

- (1) state obligations under interstate compacts;
- (2) compliance with the Endangered Species Act and the prevention of serious harm to the habitats of species that are threatened or endangered under state or federal law;
- (3) compliance with and implementation of water rights settlements, including locally and federally executed Indian water rights settlements; and
- (4) prior appropriation doctrine, existing water shortage sharing agreements, or the state's administration of water under the active water resources management program.

C. Councils shall develop and update regional water security plans as provided herein using the best available science, data, and models, and may identify data gaps and recommend further studies in their regional water security plans. Councils may not delay the development of or updates to a plan due to data gaps.

[19.25.16.14 NMAC - N, 4/9/2026]

19.25.16.15 CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL OF REGIONAL WATER SECURITY PLANS: In order to be approved by the commission, a regional water security plan must meet the following criteria:

A. Plans shall include documentation of the following items:

- (1) WSTAC engagement, involvement, and recommendations, including documentation of any unresolved issues;
- (2) public notice under 19.25.16.13 NMAC;
- (3) stakeholder engagement in the development, vetting and prioritization of PPPs;
- (4) comments received, considered, and incorporated from stakeholders and the public;
- (5) engagement with and comments received from state, federal, tribal, and local governments;
- (6) council consideration of public welfare values;
- (7) council consideration of balancing water uses and the needs of future generations of New Mexicans in the region;
- (8) council committees, working groups or sub-regions, if applicable, within a region;

(9) consideration of the regional water balance, including any projected reductions in water availability due to the impacts of climate change or other factors;

(10) consistency with statewide objectives identified in Subsection C of 19.25.16.14 NMAC;
and

(11) a letter of support or concerns from any Nation, Pueblo, or Tribe leadership for any PPP that would impact tribal lands or tribal waters within the exterior boundaries of pueblos, trust lands, or reservations, or that would require access to tribal data.

B. Plans may include documentation that the needs of rural and urban populations within the region were considered.

C. Plans shall include a ranked list of PPPs that will identify the region's priorities for promoting regional water security. The list must incorporate proposed PPPs for the entire planning region, including sub-regions, if any. Rankings shall be based on the promotion of regional water security and not on the level of readiness for the PPP.

(1) Each proposed PPP must include an indication of the level of readiness for each PPP (idea stage, scoping stage, or ready to proceed), and the sponsor(s) that intends to lead implementation of the PPP, including obtaining and administering any necessary funding for the PPP.

(2) PPPs that support the implementation of federally approved Indian water rights settlements shall be identified as such, and councils shall ensure that these PPPs are incorporated into the prioritized list.

(3) PPP types include, but are not limited to, projects, programs, and policies that address the following:

- (a) watershed health and the impacts of wildfire on source water protection;
- (b) drinking water;
- (c) storm water;
- (d) wastewater;
- (e) water retention and delivery infrastructure;
- (f) water conservation resulting in a reduction of total water use;
- (g) education;
- (h) efficiency resulting in a reduction of total or per-capita water use;
- (i) water reuse;
- (j) aquifer storage and recovery;
- (k) aquifer recharge and groundwater sustainability;
- (l) agricultural water use resilience;
- (m) development of new water resources;
- (n) river, wetland, and riparian habitat restoration and connectivity;
- (o) livestock water management;
- (p) alternative water administration strategies (under active water resources management, water markets or banks, voluntary shortage sharing, etc.);
- (q) drinking water system regionalization;
- (r) asset management planning;
- (s) scientific water studies;
- (t) water related natural or green infrastructure.

(4) Additional documentation for each PPP may include:

(a) existing or potential funding, including funding to match state or federal resources;

(b) the ability to enhance regional water resilience or have long-lasting and sustainable benefits;

(c) multiple benefits or ability to meet multiple objectives;

(d) substantial support from diverse stakeholders;

(e) identification of interrelated PPPs and potential enhanced benefits of implementing multiple PPPs in conjunction with each other; or

(f) consideration of any positive and negative socioeconomic, environmental, or cultural impacts associated with the PPP.

(5) Councils may elect to repeat PPP list items in subsequent plans and updated PPP lists.

(6) The processes for consolidating and ranking sub-regional priorities into the PPP list for the planning region shall be determined by the council pursuant to its operating principles, as provided for in Paragraph (5) of Subsection B of 19.25.16.9 NMAC and Paragraph (3) of Subsection B of 19.25.16.10 NMAC. [19.25.16.15 NMAC - N, 4/9/2026]

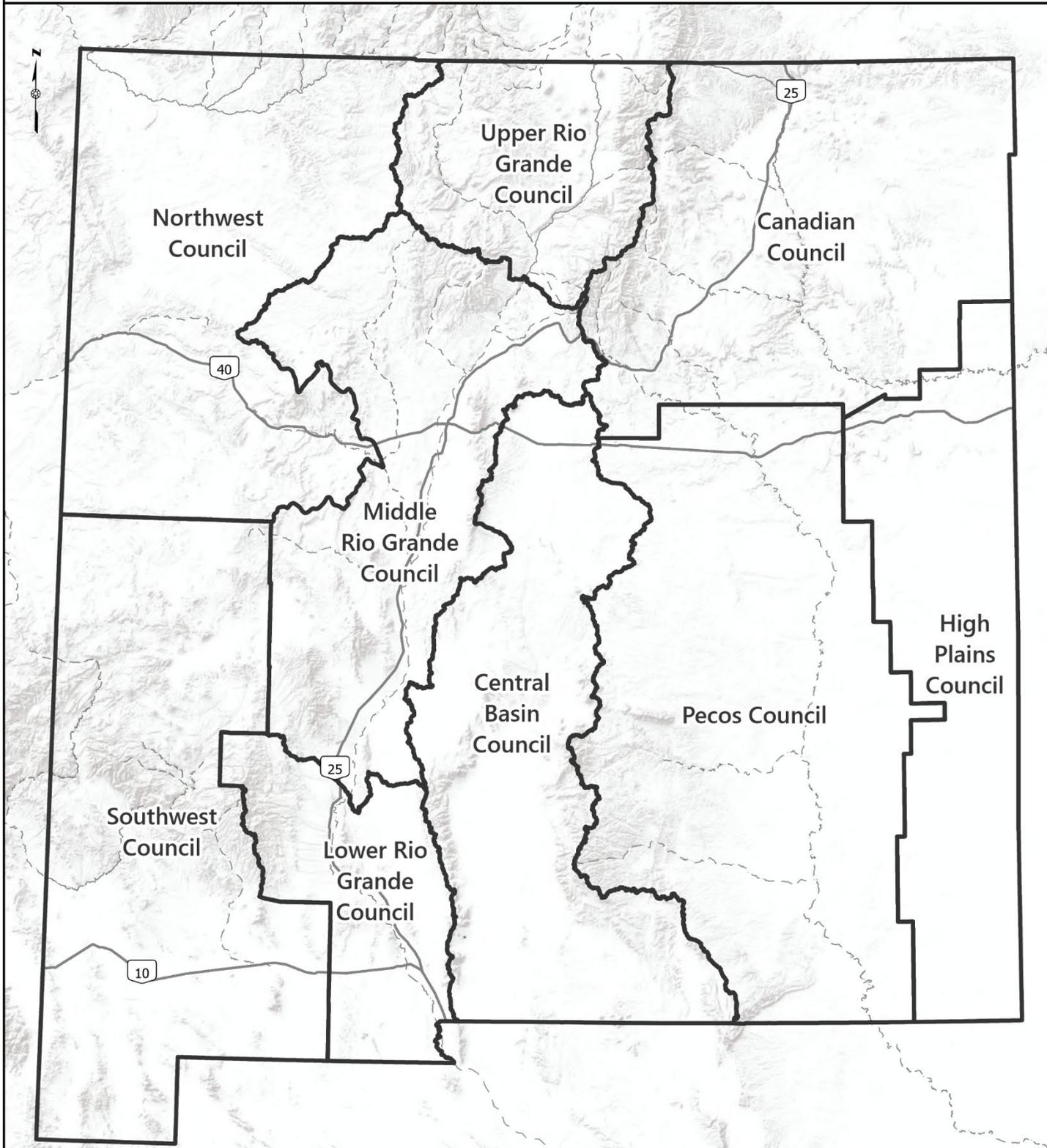
19.25.16.16 PUBLIC WELFARE OF THE REGION AND THE NEEDS OF FUTURE GENERATIONS OF NEW MEXICANS:

A. Councils shall develop a list of public welfare values for the region and the needs of future generations of New Mexicans during the initial planning period based on broad input from their region and shall update the list as needed to maintain its relevancy to the region. Councils shall refer to and consider these values and needs when evaluating potential PPPs.

B. Councils shall provide notice to the commission of issues and concerns relating to the public welfare of the water planning region through presentation to the commission at an open meeting. [19.25.16.16 NMAC - N, 4/9/2026]

HISTORY OF 19.25.16 NMAC: [RESERVED]

Water Security Planning Regional Boundaries



Sources: Brendle Group, State of New Mexico, Esri, USGS, NOAA

Updated June 17, 2025

19.25.16 NMAC
Rivers
Highways

Water Security Planning Regional Boundaries

0 25 50 100 Miles