

# CONNECTING THE DOTS

## NEWSLETTER



The Connecting the Dots Quarterly Newsletter is a product of the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments

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# Trail of the Ancients National Scenic Byway

## National Designation

The Trail of the Ancients Scenic Byway Corridor has been a three-county initiative in Northwest New Mexico for two decades. It began in our three-county region in October 2002 entitled the “Native Heritage Trail.” In 2003 – 2005 a three county Byway Council was formed and began developing and promoting the byway. In 2007 the byway was renamed “Trail of the Ancients” and joined a four-state initiative expanding the corridor through Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado. At that time, the Utah and Colorado corridors were already designated as National Scenic Byways. In 2008 our first corridor management plan was completed, and we submitted our first attempt for national designation which was denied around required national criteria.

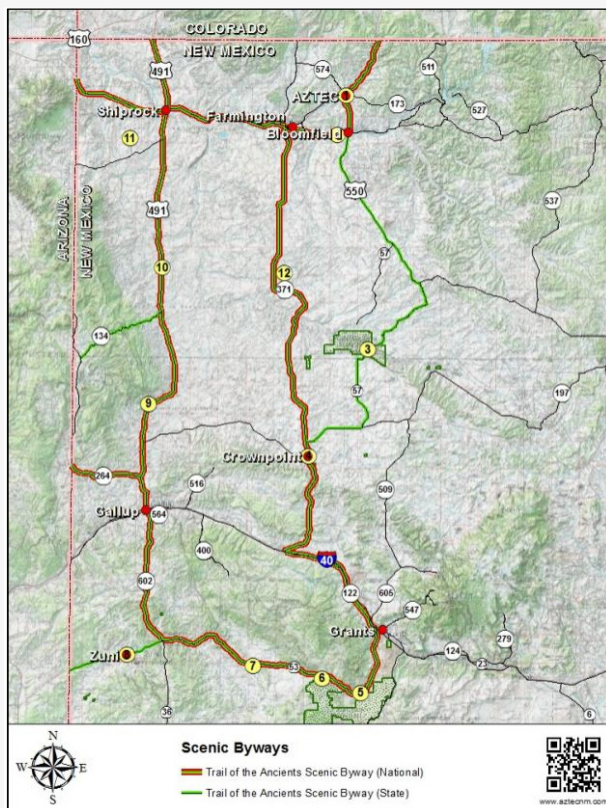
In 2009 – 2012 the Byway Council received grants for signage along our corridors and kiosks at the Manuelito and Grants Visitor Centers along I-40. In 2012 –

2019 the federal government eliminated the byway programs around fiscal constraints. However, we retained our byway corridor, and focused more on our regional tourism board, the Regional Transportation Planning Organization, and the Four Corners Geotourism Stewardship Council, which also has participation from all four-corners states to continue promoting our byway.

In December 2019 President Trump signed a new National Scenic Byway Bill “Reviving America’s Scenic Byway Act of 2019” into law with FHWA program guidance. As a result, the TOA Byway Council was re-formed, and COG staff submitted a new application for national designation for portions of our NWNM corridor. This time our application for portions of our byway was approved for national designation in 2020 and is now a national byway corridor. A map below provides the entire TOA New Mexico Byway corridor, with the nationally designated corridor (which requires pavement to accommodate all vehicles – including freight).

There are six intrinsic qualities the federal government has established for scenic byways nationally, including: Scenic, Natural, Historic, Cultural, Archaeological, and Recreational qualities; the TOA Byway corridor possesses all six qualities in abundance. Related to national designation, the TOA Council selected Archaeological as our primary byway quality, and Cultural as our secondary byway quality, but as stated our byway has all six qualities in abundance along our corridors. Our current TOA Byway Council includes representatives from: Navajo Nation, Ramah Navajo, Pueblo of Zuni, Pueblo of Acoma, Pueblo of Laguna, Grants, Milan, Gallup, Farmington, Aztec / Bloomfield, San Juan County, McKinley County, and Cibola County.

COG staff are now working to reinvigorate the Trail of the Ancients Byway Council, and begin mapping, developing, advertising, and Marketing our national and state corridors, in collaboration with our colleagues from Arizona, Utah and Colorado. This will involve strong participation from our regional tourism agencies, communities, transportation agencies, state, and national parks - forests and monuments, municipal, county, and tribal governments, historic associations, and recreational organizations. We will need to mutually produce marketing products, guiding signs, maps with latitude and longitude citations for our attractions, and participation from potential tour guides around our various attractions, some of which entail sacred cultural and historic sites.



Trail of the Ancients National Scenic Byway Route Alignment



# Zuni Mountain Trails Projects

## ***McKinley and Cibola Trail Construction***

Yolynda Begay, District Ranger of the Mount Taylor Ranger District, shared information of anticipated drought conditions this season and its potential impact on trail construction. Proposed machine construction may result in corollary hand construction. McKinley County in addition, is in adherence to biological and heritage restrictions. These queuing of delays, let alone the Novel Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19) and Mexican Spotted Owl (MSO) Court Injunctions has affected all trail construction decisions and Zuni Mountain Partnerships.

Arnold Wilson, Recreation and Trails/Travel of Mount Taylor Ranger District, Kerry Wood, Trails and Wilderness Manager of Cibola National Forest and Carrie House, Associate Planner of Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments were instrumental in assisting both Cibola and McKinley Counties in preparation of Scopes of Work (SOW) and Request for Proposals (RFP). The COG will provide quality assurance and quality control of USFS Standards and Specifications, per contractor and trail system.

The Quartz Hill Trail system in Cibola County, has undergone full design and is ready for construction. To ensure timely construction of the trail system, Cibola County has opted to high a professional trail building contractor and will employ machinery to construct trail, prep landscape and improve drainage. Additionally, Cibola County has identified its Roads Department as the the team responsible for constructing the Quartz Hill Trailhead.

In McKinley County, the McGaffey and Milk Ranch area trail systems are prepared for construction of approximately 20-miles of new trail. Milk Ranch trailhead is near completion with additional equipment, kiosk, and NM400 road pedestrian and speed signage.

McKenzie Ridge Trail Connector (Twin Springs) 20-mile trail system has been designed by COG Associate Planner, Carrie House.

The COG continues its revision of the Zuni Mountains Trail & Conservation Master Plan and anticipates complete in the summer of 2021. We encourage everyone to participate and provide comments or suggestions to the plan. The current plan is available for public comment at <http://www.nwnmcog.com/current-plan-updates.html>

Overall, the grand vision of non-motorized trail build-out in the Zuni Mountains has made tremendous strides this year. Seeing gaps in local ability to effectively implement trail design and construction activities, the COG felt the needs to increase its role to ensure completion of this long-standing community priority.



*McKenzie Ridge Overlook in the Zuni Mountains*

# 2021 Legislative Session Recap

**Held in a hybrid virtual/in-person setting, the 2021 New Mexico Legislative Session was one for the books!**

The COG's station in Santa Fe was set to receive a fresh face as Planner Brandon Howe was officially appointed as the COG's point person for legislative assistance. Manned by Executive Director Evan Williams for the last 15 years, the COG was able to provide unmatched legislative services to communities across the region. Services ranging from planning and facilitating legislative forums, identifying, and assisting with prioritization of projects, developing financing strategies, submitting capital outlay requests, presenting to interim committees and tracking policy and legislation were provided leading up to and during legislative sessions. Mr. Williams is confident in Mr. Howe's abilities to continue this level of service and will continue to provide guidance and mentorship.

Mr. Howe's transition into this new role was met with hurdles brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. With public access into the roundhouse virtually eliminated, the COG had to alter its usual form of technical and legislative assistance this year. Annual legislative forums and interim committee participation were held virtually along with one-on-one trainings to identify, prioritize, and submit capital outlay requests. Navigating these obstacles, the COG still managed to partner with all member governments and various special districts and tribal entities to ensure capital outlay submissions and provided advocacy for bill and legislation. In total, the COG assisted with the submission of 101 capital outlay requests assisting 9 government entities, 10 special districts, and 12 Navajo Chapters.

The legislative session itself was focused on pandemic relief including public health, education, and economy. Some of the key highlights this year include:

- **Education** – HB6 “Impact Aid” was approved and signed into law. This bill is a result of continuous effort to reformulate the Impact Aid credit program that had negative implications for many school districts in Northwest New Mexico. The bill will allow school districts to fund needed capital infrastructure projects and other activities.
- **Broadband** – SB377 “Junior Bill” was approved and signed into law. This bill provided the framework for legislators to make additional appropriations to State agencies and add funding to programs, pilots, or special initiatives.

The bill provides \$5M from the general fund to local governments, tribes, electric cooperatives, and telephone cooperatives for strategic planning and grant writing support for broadband service in unserved areas. \$25M was also appropriated from the public education reform fund to plan, design, engineer, construct, purchase and equip broadband infrastructure for public schools statewide. Lastly, the bill provided \$10M to the economic development department for projects that support emerging broadband technology pursuant to the Local Economic Development Act.

- **Transportation Investments** – SB20 was approved and signed into law. This bill provided the framework for reintroduction of the Transportation Project Fund formerly known as the “Local Government Transportation Project Fund”. The bill also established recurring funding to this program in the amount of

<i>2021 Capital Outlay Appropriations - Cibola</i>			
Entity	Project Title	Requested Amount	Appropriated Amount
Cibola County	Public Safety Building Renovation	\$500,000	\$37,500
Cibola County	CR 1 Improvements	\$500,000	\$-
Cibola County	Cibola General Hospital Parking Lot Improvements	\$250,000	\$200,000
Cibola County	Regional Drainage Master Plan	\$150,000	\$-
City of Grants	Domestic Violence Shelter Renovation	\$175,000	\$225,000
City of Grants	Golf Course Pump Station Upgrade	\$175,000	\$175,000
City of Grants	Washington Ave Drainage Improvements	\$250,000	\$-
City of Grants	Sakelares Blvd Replace & Improve	\$175,000	\$-
Village of Milan	Water & Wastewater System Construction	\$1,000,000	\$-
Village of Milan	Water & Wastewater System Design	\$200,000	\$-
Village of Milan	Water & Wastewater System Equipment	\$800,000	\$40,000
		<b>Total</b>	<b>\$677,500</b>

\$40M. HB2 was approved and signed into law. This budget bill provided a one-time special appropriation of \$121M into the Transportation Project Fund. Also in this bill was a one-time appropriation to the NMDOT District Office for transportation projects in the Grants and Milan areas and the NM 118 overpass (Allison Road).

- Economic Development - HB2 "Budget Bill" was signed into law. This bill provided the budget for various economic development programs including appropriating \$7,000,000 to the Tourism Department for revitalization strategy to restart the tourism economy. The bill also provided continued funding in the amount of \$7,000,000 for the Job Training Incentive Program (JTIP) and \$17,500,000 for the Local Economic Development Act (LEDA) fund.

<b>2021 Capital Outlay Appropriations - San Juan</b>			
<b>Entity</b>	<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Requested Amount</b>	<b>Appropriated Amount</b>
San Juan County	CR 5500 Improvements	\$175,000	\$175,000
San Juan County	Jackson Lake Wildlife Area Improvements	\$200,000	\$200,000
San Juan County	Bridge Design	\$150,000	\$150,000
San Juan County	Facility Accessibility Improvements	\$200,000	\$200,000
San Juan County	Regional Medical Center Renovation	\$270,000	\$270,000
San Juan County	Regional Medical Center Equipment	\$60,000	\$60,000
City of Farmington	Police Vehicle Purchase	\$550,000	\$450,000
City of Farmington	Farmington Lake Response Equipment	\$200,000	\$200,000
City of Farmington	Lions Pool Renovation	\$150,000	\$250,000
City of Farmington	Broadway Avenue Bridge Repair	\$400,000	\$400,000
City of Farmington	Security Camera System Installation	\$563,333	\$875,000
City of Aztec	Reservoir 1 Repair	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000
City of Aztec	Water System Construction	\$100,000	\$200,000
City of Aztec	Main Avenue Construction	\$100,000	\$100,000
City of Aztec	Public Safety Vehicle Purchase	\$150,000	\$150,000
City of Bloomfield	East Blanco Blvd Bridge	\$2,900,000	\$2,400,000
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$8,080,000</b>

<b>2021 Capital Outlay Appropriations - McKinley</b>			
<b>Entity</b>	<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Requested Amount</b>	<b>Appropriated Amount</b>
McKinley County	Adult Detention Center Construct	\$150,000	\$100,000
McKinley County	Industrial Sites Development	\$2,100,000	\$-
McKinley County	Law Enforcement Building Improvements	\$100,000	\$-
McKinley County	Community Pantry Improvements	\$250,000	\$127,000
McKinley County	Courthouse Security Improvements	\$100,000	\$-
McKinley County	Law Enforcement Vehicles Purchase	\$225,000	\$-
McKinley County	CR43 Superman Canyon Road & Bridge Construction	\$1,000,000	\$-
McKinley County	CR4 Manuelito Canyon Road Construction	\$200,000	\$-
McKinley County	CR1 Construction	\$250,000	\$300,000
McKinley County	Old Churchrock Mine Road & Bridge Construction	\$700,000	\$250,000
City of Gallup	Public Safety Building Construction	\$7,459,000	\$4,014,000
City of Gallup	Coal Ave Commons Phase II Construction	\$500,000	\$-
City of Gallup	Coal Ave Alley Pedestrian Corridor Improvements	\$1,000,000	\$-
City of Gallup	Nizhoni Blvd / College Drive Intersection Improvements	\$515,000	\$-
City of Gallup	Regional Animal Shelter Design	\$300,000	\$-
City of Gallup	2nd & 3rd Street Rail Crossing Improvements	\$100,000	\$-
City of Gallup	Police Department Vehicles	\$200,000	\$80,000
		<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,871,000</b>



# Water Planning & Regionalization

## **Water Commons**

McKinley County is working closely with the COG to develop a water program that will be dedicated to addressing local issues with small water systems as well as offering direct assistance and administrative support. This initiative is geared towards establishing a strong intergovernmental relationship with the county's rural special districts (water systems, solid waste, soil and water, etc.).

This idea has stemmed from decades of on-going planning efforts to become a more self-sustaining program, and meeting these goals will require full participation between local governments, special districts, state agencies and other stakeholders. With an overall goal to gain a deeper insight on a number of key issues impacting these small water systems, the COG hopes to develop an effective and impactful program to serve the residents of McKinley County.

The intended water program will be modeled after our region's Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) program. For decades, the RTPO has provided a regional forum focused on transportation and has provided tremendous values for all member governments and tribal entities in our region. The COG plans to replicate this program but for water and hopes the impacts are similar to that of the RTPO. The program will assist with the identification of small water system needs, help recognize and promote the importance of collaboration, and provide various forms of technical assistance.

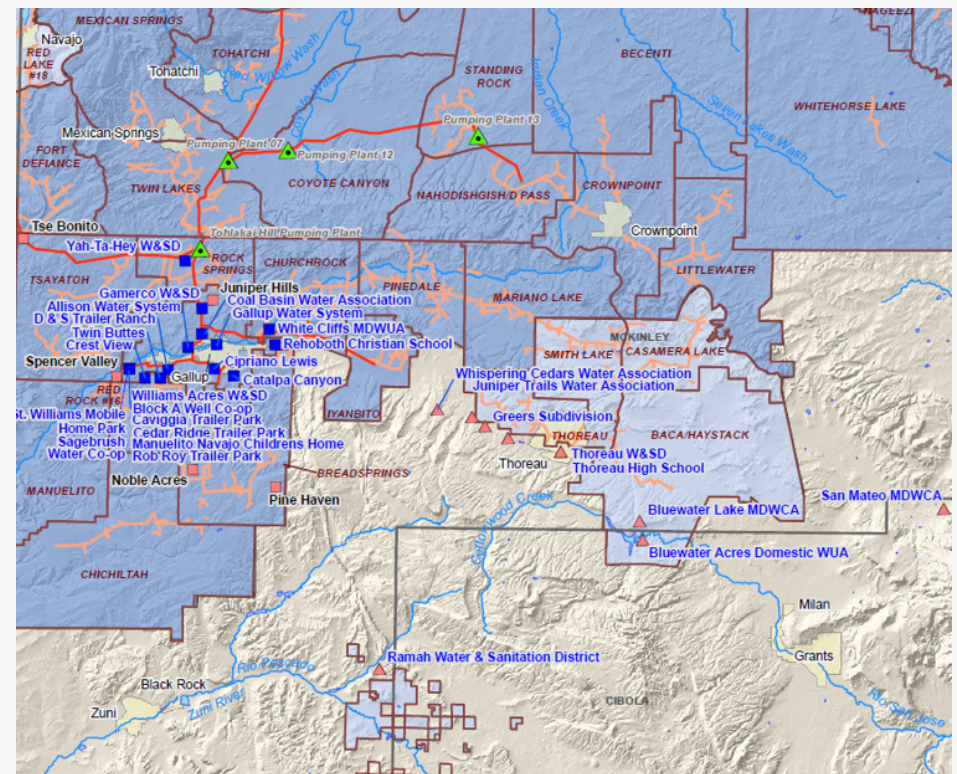
The regional water program will provide the necessary venue for all stakeholders to contribute to effective and responsible management of our shared finite resource.

## **Water Regionalization**

On a separate measure, the COG is working with the County to research the possibility of water regionalization to assist small water systems with the management and maintenance of their water infrastructure and

assets. This model has been employed in other parts of the state with success and have reaped the benefits of a shared management system. Our small water systems in McKinley County and across the region, are stretched thin and are often run by a group of local volunteers. The days of isolated operation and maintenance has passed and the county recognizes the need for this collaborative approach.

The COG encourages all small water systems in McKinley County to participate in this regional collaborative.



Rural Water Systems in McKinley County

# Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

The Council of Governments is happy to announce the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, referred to as 'La Ristra Northwest', has been completed thereby providing the region with a 5-year road map.

Drawing on a Chile Ristra analogy where individual chiles (local communities) are stronger when tied together in a ristra (region), La Ristra Northwest outlines strategies to achieve economic growth and prosperity through coordinated collaboration from multiple stakeholders.

The updated CEDS emphasizes job creation, community development, and personal wealth creation.

Recognizing the on-going transformation of the regional economy brought on by a shifting national and state energy policy and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the region, an update of the CEDS provided an opportunity to acknowledge and recognize the changing paradigm and to provide a road map for how the region will ensure resiliency in the face of a changing landscape.

The updated CEDS presents seven (7) goals for the region; top among them is the creation of new entrepreneurs to create the new economy. Additional goals emphasize the need for investments into communities, as a means to both retain and attract young families, and people to help generate wealth.

Another objective of the CEDS were to integrate vertically and horizontally the number of local and regional planning documents with the goal of providing as much as possible a single overarching guiding document.

Going forward, the COG anticipates launching a regional call for projects to create a portfolio of CEDS projects. It is the intent of COG to evaluate each project based on readiness and other factors to produce a robust portfolio of CEDS projects full of multi-tiered readiness projects.

Additional efforts will be made to convene a CEDS committee comprised of community representatives from throughout the region including local and tribal economic development organizations who will volunteer their time and expertise to help guide implementation and evaluation of the CEDS.

Lastly, the CEDS is anticipated to be a living document and will updated on a yearly basis as goals and objectives are implemented but to also ensure the document is relevant and reflects the needs of the region and its populace. With the upcoming release of 2020 Census Data, the CEDS will be updated to include the latest socio-demographic information.



*La Ristra Northwest - 2020 - 2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Plan*



The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) document contributes to effective economic development in communities and regions through locally based, regionally driven economic development planning processes. A CEDS document is required by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) to maintain Economic Development District (EDD) status and must be updated at least once every five years to qualify for EDA assistance.

Region 1 is the designated Economic Development District for the three-county area of northwest New Mexico (Cibola, McKinley, and San Juan) and is responsible for preparing the CEDS update report.

A CEDS is designed to:

- Bring together the public and private sectors
- Be an economic road map to diversify and strengthen regional economies
- Analyze the regional economy
- Serve as a guide for establishing regional goals and objectives
- Be a regional plan for implementation and action
- Identify investment priorities and funding sources

NWNMCOG staff are in the process of updating the CEDS for 2020-2025. The CEDS will incorporate new EDA requirements such as an increased focus on economic resiliency, timely considering the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, new demographic and socio-economic information will help shed light on the current state of the regional economy. Along with an updated SWOT analysis, the new data will help to define goals and objectives to increase economic growth over the next 5 years. A final report will be posted on the COG website (<http://www.nwnmcog.com/ceds-update-2020.html>).

Considering the COVID-19 pandemic and the impacts on the local and regional economy from the diversification away from fossil fuels (crude, natural gas, and coal), the 2020 CEDS is one of the most important documents for region as we look to combat economic stagnancy and foster economic growth.

# CEcd Certification



INTERNATIONAL  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
COUNCIL

**Evan Williams receives Designation  
of Certified Economic Developer  
from the International Economic  
Development Council**

Gallup, NM - Evan Williams, Executive Director of Northwest NM Council of Governments earned the designation of Certified Economic Developer (CECD), a national recognition that denotes a mastery of skills in economic development, professional attainment and a commitment to personal and professional growth.

The International Economic Development Council (IEDC) administered the CECD Exam on March 6, 2021, and candidates received their results on March 12, 2021. With 15 years of economic development experience, Mr. Williams has led recently on developing and implementing a Regional Economic Recovery Plan and Program including several US Economic Development Administration (EDA) investments throughout the region.

The CECD designation recognizes qualified and dedicated practitioners in the economic development field and sets the standard of excellence within the profession. Candidates must pass a rigorous and comprehensive examination, which has three parts and spans two days. The exam tests a practitioner's knowledge, proficiency and judgment in the following key areas of economic development:

- Business retention and expansion
- Finance & credit analysis
- Marketing and attraction
- Strategic planning
- Entrepreneurial & small business development
- Managing economic development organizations
- Neighborhood development strategies
- Real estate development & reuse
- Technology-led economic development
- Workforce development strategies
- Foreign direct investment & exporting

As highly competent economic development professionals, Certified Economic

Developers work with public officials, business leaders and community members to create leadership to build upon and maximize the economic development sector. Excellence in the economic development profession improves the wellbeing, quality of life and opportunities for individuals, businesses and communities. There are currently over 1,100 active CECds in the United States.

# Developer of the Year!

## Distinguished Award bestowed by NM IDEA.

During the annual luncheon of New Mexico IDEA, the Statewide Association of Economic Developers, Michael Sage was awarded the Developer of the Year award. This award recognizes the outstanding efforts of a person who spearheaded a major project that relocated, consolidated or expanded in NM during the receding twelve (12) months. A person who prepared a community for economic growth in a unique way.



As many are aware, our region was put on economic life support 12 months ago with the announcement of several power plant closures, including the very unexpected closure of the modern Escalante Generating Station in Prewitt, NM. Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association announcement might that the entire cluster of businesses that anchor McKinley and Cibola counties were on the chopping block including mine-mouth coal mines of El Segundo and Lee Ranch and McKinley Paper, a recycled cardboard manufacturer that was powered by the waste stream and a boiler from the power plant. This cluster represents over 600 high-paying jobs and a major portion of the overall tax base of McKinley County. Everyone knew that if this cluster closed, someone would be asked to pull the plug and turn off the lights.

While economic development is a team support and no one does it alone, there was one person that the region turned to and depended on and that was Michael Sage. Michael Sage is the Deputy Director for the Greater Gallup Economic Development Corporation and works as the Regional Economic Development Program Manager for the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments. The following are accomplishments in the last 12 months that have stabilized our regional economy and started to change our situation and the narrative including but not limited to:

- Prior to the public announcement, Michael Sage led a bi-county delegation to meet with the Board of Directors of Tri-State helping to secure a commitment for a \$5M Community Assistance Fund.
- Michael Sage authored the global strategy and presented numerous to local stakeholders, Tri-State, and regional organizations and State agencies including:
  - » Support of the implementation of House Memorial 72 & 41 Committees.
  - » Facilitation and support for the passage of House Bill 8 that sets up a new bi-county redevelopment authority.
  - » Facilitation of weekly ZOOM call of the HB8 Stakeholder group to mobilize actions.
- Creation the investment framework for the use of those funds to maximize impact and effectiveness.
- Lead Business Retention and Expansion efforts with McKinley Paper and the coal mines to find out what the community could do to support their continued operation and avoid shutdown.
- Supported the planning, design, and site control for the Prewitt Industrial Park including a shovel-ready 120,000 spec building to promote expansions and future growth, including negotiations with State Land Office and attracting Brownfields investment.
- Spearheaded one of the State's highest LEDA investments (\$5M) in history to save McKinley Paper, its 100+ jobs, and cement them as an anchor for decades to come.
- Assisted the Council of Governments secure several Assistance to Coal Communities grants including one in September 2020 for \$988,400 to continue this work.
- Assisted in submitting another LEDA grant that is in review by NMEDD for \$750,000 to provide final design of the Prewitt Industrial Park Site #1 as a shovel-ready site for the region and set in motion site certification and foreign-direct investment.

All of this work was done with the double whammy of COVID-19 and bringing together people during a time when physically we were not allowed to – without the visionary leadership and ability to implement of Michael Sage we would not be able to tell this story. He is definitely our region's "Developer of the Year" that overcame incredible odds to transform our region from boom-bust to robust.

As a regional agency, our organizing principle is to bring the region together in the belief that what is good for one is good for all. We believe that we are stronger together and only united can we transform our economy from boom-bust to robust. Mr. Sage is an embodiment of this belief and his work over the past year is proof.

# Return on Investment

This quarter, COG built up its Youtube.com channel and posted several new videos including a new Weekly Regional New Briefing playlist and several training and orientation videos as requested by its membership.

The COG continues its total quality management approach to become a results-oriented work environment. To better track outputs, the COG staff has put together a number of performance metrics and set goals for fiscal year 2021 based on previous year's performance and expectations for the current year. Using Microsoft's Power BI application, the COG can track this and report in real time providing a new level of transparency and accountability to our members, clients, partners, and to the region.

## New attracted investments:

- **\$1,250,000 from US Economic Development Authority to San Juan County for fiber and power redundancy at San Juan Medical Center.**
- **\$990,000 from US Economic Development Authority to the NWNMCOG for the Revolving Loan Fund.**
- **\$15,000 in site assessment reports from our Brownfields Coalition program in Milan.**
- **\$250,000 in private community assistance funding from Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Inc.**

IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS				
<i>Impact Area</i>	<i>Metric</i>	<i>Goal</i>	<i>Progress</i>	<i>Difference</i>
Investment	Grant Funding	\$10,000,000	\$10,188,506	\$188,506
Leverage	Federal	\$647,321	\$2,625,721	\$1,978,400
Leverage	State	\$310,000	\$430,000	\$120,000
Leverage	Private	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$-
Dues	Membership	\$235,000	\$220,000	-\$15,000
Investment	Brownfields	\$220,000	\$30,000	-\$190,000
Leverage	Fee for Service Contracts	\$144,000	\$89,000	-\$55,000
Building Improvements	Roof Repair #2	\$126,000	\$-	-\$126,000
Building Improvements	Gates	\$3,000	\$-	-\$3,000
Building Improvements	Garden Project	\$1,200	\$2000	\$800
Building Improvements	Interior Upgrades	\$-	\$-	\$-
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$11,936,521</b>	<b>\$13,835,227</b>	



# A Message from the Director

## ***Together Let's Fast Forward to Better***

The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined and exacerbated the cracks in our systems, economy, and social fabric. If something was eroding, it was torn down; if something was under the surface, it got exposed; if certain markets or businesses were declining, they closed; and while workers that use technology continued, those in touch industries were sidelined. This crisis reminded us all that we are related and connected – the virus did not discriminate, nor did it abide to jurisdictional boundaries and lines on a map.

As the economic development district for the region, we look to add capacity and value at the macro-level by setting and implementing the global strategy. Last year, the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments (COG) laid out a seven-point strategy in an article entitled, “Plan Today for Recovery Tomorrow”, and we will benchmark our accomplishments against those same goals to showcase our organization’s commitment to not just talking about it but being about it.

Tactics and outcomes that highlight getting things done that make a difference in our region:

1. Working every day on planning, developing, and financing needed infrastructure projects, including transportation and broadband crucial to our economic competitiveness as a region. **This work continues everyday with large projects in the pipeline targeted for new State and Federal funding. Over the last 9 months, COG attracted over \$10M for projects in the region representing an 11-to-1 return on investment for our members and region.**
2. Working with the US Economic Development Administration to target \$988,400 in creating shovel-ready industrial sites in our region through their Assistance to Coal Communities program. **COG and its partners have developed two spec-building designs, one shovel-ready site, and two sites ready for final design. A good example is the Prewitt Industrial Park, which was awarded an Impact Award by the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) in 2020.**
3. Helping Local Government Division setup a Small Business Assistance Program using Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. **COG continues to support the roll-out of recovery programs throughout the State and our region. COG helped the City secure \$1M for West Logan**

**Avenue project through CDBG – the largest award in program history in New Mexico.**

4. Continuation of a regional Brownfields program aimed to invest \$500,000 to restore environmental concerns and flip properties and building from non-productive sties to community catalysts. **90% of program funding has been deployed including investments on two sites in Milan, four sites in McKinley County, and two sites in Bloomfield.**
5. Nomination for National designation of the Trail of the Ancients byway as a tourism tool to drive visitation to and around our region once restrictions are lifted. **The Trail of the Ancients Byway received national designation and we launched the reboot of the Four Corners Geotourism website.**
6. Producing a series of Community Prospectus for each county to drive Opportunity Zone investments into our region. **Opportunity Zone brochures were produced and are actively being used to attract investment and potential deals in our region.**
7. Approving and updating our Revolving Loan Program to help new business start-ups and entrepreneurs after CARES Act funding is exhausted but access to capital remains an issue. **COG attracted another \$990,000 for this program, which is set to relaunch this program to increase access to capital throughout the region in the Summer.**

The COG also completed several planning processes including creation of a Regional Recovery Plan, Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, Regional Transportation Plan, McKinley County Comprehensive Plan, and the Zuni Mountains Trails & Conservation Master Plan. I am most proud of my team as they stepped out and stretched further to meet the challenges and opportunities to assist our communities in making their visions a reality. They did not wait for plans to be completed but planned and produced in real time. We invite you to our YouTube channel where we are putting out weekly pressers on our work and its impact.

We don't want to see our region just return to normal, we want to fast forward to better. We are stronger together and louder when we speak with one voice – let's make sure they can hear us from the Roundhouse to halls of Congress.