



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Annual Luncheon Inspires Regional Leadership COG Delivers Results and Aims for More

Grants, N.M. – The Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments (COG) held its annual meeting and luncheon on Wednesday, July 28, 2021 at Coyote Del Malpais Golf Course in Grants, NM. The luncheon included a Roll Call of Area Leaders, a presentation on the State of the COG, and bestowing their Regional Champion awards that spotlight regional leaders from each county area and a special award to retiring District Engineer Larry Maynard for his legacy of service as an agency partner.

“I watched the crowd and people’ were so happy just networking and getting back together safely”, said Billy Moore, COG Chairman. “The COG luncheon is always a great opportunity and event that pulls the region and its leadership together, but this year felt special, like we needed it because we understand how much we need each other. COVID-19 knew no jurisdictions, stole important lives and freedoms, and it exacerbate our vulnerabilities, but this event showed our resolve to build back better together.”

Executive Director Evan Williams provided an overview of special key initiatives and accomplishments including a three year upward trend of membership return on investment for the region. He mentioned that since taken over in April 2019 the COG has focused on four key areas: financial stability, staffing, special projects, and economic development. His State of the COG report included the following highlights:

Financial Stability: the COG delivered its first clean audit with no findings since 2011 and built a modest reserve for the first time ever.

Staffing: the COG had no staff turnover in last 2 years and has an amazing team of professionals that continue to train, work hard, and deliver for the region.

Special Projects: the COG has delivered some impressive fee-for-service projects like the McKinley County Comprehensive Plan and Zuni Mountains Trail Project design and quality assurance to diversify and deepen its ability to produce quality planning and development products for the region it resides in.

Economic Development: the COG has made this the overarching focus of organization’s mission as it is the number one priority of its membership and region. Key highlights include designing Prewitt and Milan Industrial Parks, establishing a new Revolving Loan Fund, sustaining McKinley Paper, designating a national byway, and attracting a record amount of US Economic Development Administration grants for the region and its projects.

Close to 100 leaders attended the event from San Juan, McKinley, and Cibola counties including a diverse array of backgrounds from New Mexico Legislators to transportation and economic development professionals, heads of local universities, healthcare administrators, private sector moguls, contractors, tribal leaders, State and Federal agency representatives, and many local elected officials and staff.

Over the years, the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments has honored outstanding regional leadership at its Annual Luncheon with its Regional Champion Award. Typically, recipients are selected from each county area and sometimes one at-large or agency partner that has supported our region. Awardees are leaders who have resided with purpose and a mission to serve not only to make their communities better but the region as a whole region. They embody the COG's philosophy of regional leadership that what is good for one community is good for another and that we are stronger together and louder when we speak with one voice. Champions must demonstrate regional leadership, collaboration, and service to Northwest New Mexico by fostering partnerships with the COG and local communities. This year awardees were as follows:

- Nate Duckett, Mayor, City of Farmington.
- Martha Garcia, Commissioner, Cibola County.
- Douglas W. Decker, Attorney, McKinley County.
- Larry Maynard, District Engineer, NM Department of Transportation.

Next year will mark the COG's 50-year serving the region and is planning a large event in Downtown Gallup to capstone this accomplishment.

More on the Regional Champion Award and past recipients: <http://www.nwnmcog.com/regional-champions.html>

Images from the Event: <http://www.nwnmcog.com/annual-luncheon.html>

About Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments

Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments (NWNMCOG) is a 50-year-old regional development organization (RDO) recognized and empowered by the State of New Mexico and the US Economic Development Administration. We serve the entire three-county region of Cibola, McKinley, and San Juan counties and the communities therewithin to improve community and economy for the region and its people. The NWNMCOG is association of nine local governments governed by a Board of Directors unified by the belief that we are stronger together and only united can we advance on regional opportunities and tackle regional challenges from sustainable water supply to behavioral health, to strategic infrastructure, and to regional economic development. For more information about NWNMCOG, visit www.nwnmcog.com.