



GAO

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New Mexico Office of the State Auditor

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Matter of Facts: The Environmental Protection Agency and New Mexico

The President of the United States and some members of the United States Congress have signaled their wish to significantly alter the functioning of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), whose mission is to protect human health and the environment. Although few details have been forthcoming, the Office of the State Auditor has assembled data that may be relevant as state and local elected officials grapple with the potential effects of these policies, and to help New Mexicans understand how our State may be affected.

Historical EPA funding for New Mexico: The Fiscal Year 2016 (FY16) audit of the [New Mexico Environment Department](#) reported a total of **\$21,564,542** in federal expenditures for which the EPA was the federal agency, including:

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| Clean Water State Revolving Funds (CWSRF) Cluster | \$6,910,609 |
| Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (DWSRF) Cluster | \$3,493,471 |
| Water Pollution Control Program Support | \$1,886,516 |
| Superfund Cooperative Agreements | \$1,757,555 |
| Nonpoint Source Implementation Grants | \$1,497,065 |
| Air Pollution Control Program Support | \$1,245,388 |
| State Public Water System Supervision | \$1,036,103 |
| Hazardous Waste Management State Program Support | \$891,228 |
| Regional Wetland Program Development Grants | \$637,641 |
| Leaking Underground Storage Tank Program | \$612,049 |

The Context

January 21, 2017: The President instructs the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to freeze its contracts and grants and not to communicate about EPA processes.

January 27, 2017: The EPA lifts the freeze on grant money and contract operations.

February 3, 2017: Representative Matt Gaetz of Florida introduces House Resolution 861, entitled "To terminate the Environmental Protection Agency."

February 17, 2017: Scott Pruitt, noted EPA critic, is confirmed as head of the EPA.

March 9, 2017: The executive budget proposal presented by the White House proposes to cut the EPA budget by \$2.4 billion and reducing the EPA's staff by 3,200 jobs.

The FY16 audit of the [University of New Mexico](#) reported \$565,596 in federal expenditures for which the EPA was the federal agency.

The FY16 audit of the [Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department](#) reported \$366,764 in federal expenditures for which the EPA was the federal agency.

Recently announced EPA projects in New Mexico: The following New Mexico-related projects were recently announced on the [EPA website](#):



In January 2017, the EPA awarded \$150,000 to five Santa Fe communities to develop long-term stormwater management plans.

In October, 2016, the EPA awarded the Eight Northern Indian Pueblo Council \$46,887 to support pesticide programs.

In October 2016, the EPA awarded \$55,000 to Amigos Bravos to help protect and restore urban waters in Bernalillo County.

In May 2016, the EPA awarded \$1,500,000 to the UNM College of Pharmacy to launch its Center for Native American Health Equity Research.

In May 2016, the EPA awarded \$8.5 million in research funding to 12 universities to protect air quality from the current and future challenges associated with the impacts of climate change, one of which was the University of New Mexico.

In August 2015, the EPA awarded a six-year grant with a potential value of \$4,800,000 to the Southwest Environmental Finance Center (EFC), which is part of the University of New Mexico Center for Water Education, to serve as the sole Environmental Finance Center for the EPA Region 6 states of New Mexico, Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma.



Gold King Mine Spill Payments: On August 5, 2015, the EPA conducted a field investigation of the Gold King Mine near Silverton, Colorado, which inadvertently triggered an estimated release of three million gallons of acidic, mine-impacted waters into the Animas River. The EPA has [taken responsibility](#) for the cleanup of the Gold King Mine release, but [denies liability](#) under the Federal Tort Claims Act. The EPA has committed to paying New Mexico \$1.76 million for spill-related expenses, and to paying the Navajo Nation \$1.07 million. The OSA is not aware of whether these committed payments have been made, or if New Mexico intends to request additional funds.

"Public accountability is based on the belief that the taxpayer has a 'right to know,' a right to receive openly declared facts that may lead to public debate by the citizens and their elected representatives." — GASB Concept Statement No. 1.

Matter of Facts is an initiative from State Auditor Tim Keller to help New Mexicans understand how our State may be affected by Federal policies.