



Supplemental Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment for the Upper Rio Penasco Sites 1, 2, and 3A Dam Rehabilitation Project

Background

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), in cooperation with the Otero Soil and Water Conservation District as local project Sponsor, will be preparing a Supplemental Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Upper Rio Penasco Sites 1, 2, and 3A Dam Rehabilitation Project. The dams are located in the Lincoln National Forest in Otero County, New Mexico, southwest of Mayhill, New Mexico. The combined watershed for all three sites covers an area of approximately 200 square miles, and these dams provide flood protection and reduction in sediment deposition for downstream residents, agricultural lands, and civil infrastructure.

Project Purpose

The dams were constructed between 1959 and 1960 and since then, no modifications or significant repairs have been made to the structures. The existing dams do not meet current dam safety standards, and the purpose of this project is to improve public safety by identifying and evaluating alternatives to bring the dams into compliance with current NRCS and State of New Mexico dam safety standards.

Problems

The dams have the following primary known safety deficiencies:

- Undersized dams would likely overtop in a flood event
- Insufficient dam crest width
- No filters for drainage and seepage management

Alternatives Under Consideration

All reasonable alternatives will be considered, including:

- Future Without Federal Involvement
- Dam Rehabilitation
- Dam Decommissioning
- Other Structural and Non-Structural Alternatives



Additional information can be found on the project website:
<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/watershed-and-flood-prevention-operations-wfpo-program/new-mexico/watershed>

Anticipated Project Schedule

Phases I and II

(September 2024 – April 2025)

- Evaluate existing conditions
- Inventory resources and analyze resource data
- Conduct public scoping

Phase III

(February 2025 – July 2025)

- Identify and develop alternatives
- Evaluate alternatives and select a preferred alternative
- Conduct public participation

Phase IV

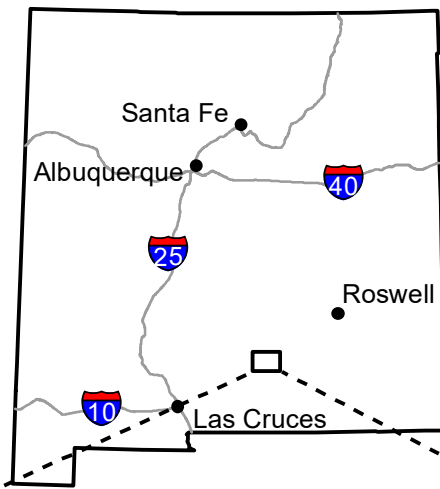
(June 2025 – March 2026)

- Develop the Draft Plan-EA
- Public review of Draft Plan-EA
- Develop Final Plan-EA

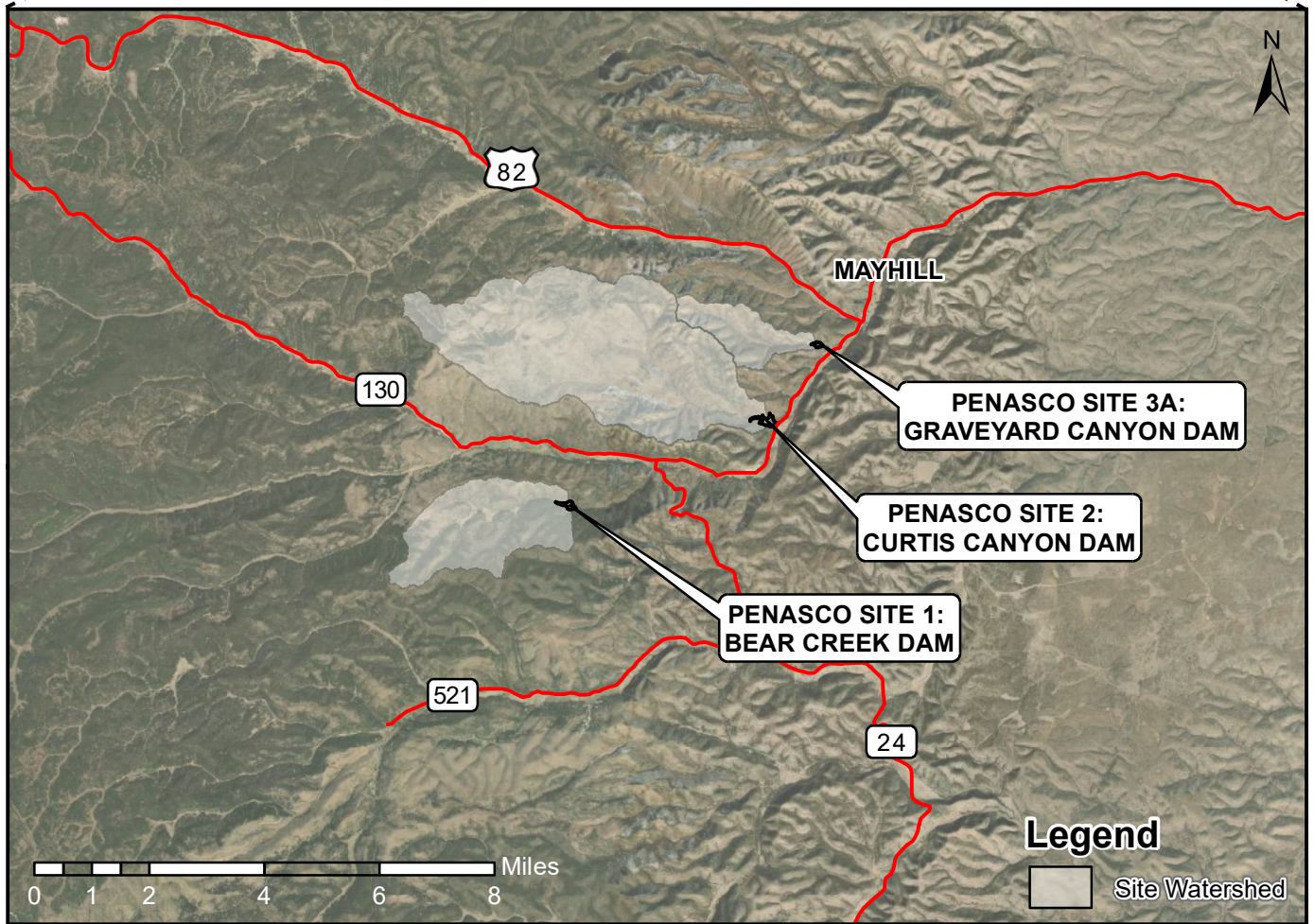
Project Contact

For questions or more information, please contact: Merceidez Fabok with the USDA-NRCS New Mexico State Office at: Merceidez.Fabok@usda.gov or (505) 761-4421.

Project Vicinity Map



PROJECT VICINITY MAP
(NOT TO SCALE)



PROJECT LOCATION MAP



UPPER RIO PENASCO SITES
1, 2, AND 3A SUPPLEMENTAL
WATERSHED PLAN EA

SITE VICINITY MAP

PROJECT NO. 24116

Figure 1