

## Recreational Trails Program

Annual Report

Federal Fiscal Year 2017

Released September 2018



Above: Rocky Mountain Youth Corps members harvest rocks for trail improvements in the Pecos Wilderness, Santa Fe National Forest. (Photo Credit: USFS)

**Contents**

Program and Annual Report Background ..... 1

New Mexico’s RTP in FFY17 ..... 1

    Table 1: New Mexico FFY17 RTP Funding Summary\* ..... 1

FFY17 Baseline STIP and Obligation Performance ..... 2

    Table 2: FFY17 Baseline Program ..... 3

    Table 3: FFY17 Obligated Projects ..... 3

    Table 4. Cancelled Projects ..... 4

    Chart 1: FFY17 Baseline Projects Obligated ..... 4

    Chart 2: FFY17 Baseline Funding Obligated ..... 5

Completed Projects..... 5

Summary ..... 8

## Program and Annual Report Background

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) provides federal funding for recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both non-motorized and motorized trail uses such as hiking, bicycling, and off-highway vehicle (OHV) use. RTP funds come from the Federal Highway Trust Fund and represent a portion of the motor fuel excise tax collected from non-highway recreational fuel use. Projects funded under the RTP must comply with all applicable federal requirements.

The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) is the agency designated by the Governor to administer the RTP. Per federal regulations, New Mexico’s Recreational Trails Advisory Board (RTAB)—an independent advisory committee—meets at least once a year and provides recommendations to NMDOT regarding RTP projects and program administration.

This annual report, representing NMDOT’s program for Federal Fiscal Year 2017 (FFY17), is intended to give the public and other interested parties basic information on:

1. the program’s history and background with NMDOT,
2. the projects that were awarded RTP funds in FFY17,
3. NMDOT’s performance with regard to program management,
4. which projects ultimately were granted federal participation of RTP funding, and
5. descriptions of completed projects from previous funding cycles.

Once construction projects are approved by NMDOT and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for federal participation, projects are usually built within two years. For non-infrastructure projects, project sponsors generally begin their project within a few months.

## New Mexico’s RTP in FFY17

NMDOT received, by federal formula, approximately \$1.4 million in annual RTP apportionment for FFY17. Per Federal requirements, the RTP apportionment must be awarded according to the following distribution: 30% of the funds must be used for non-motorized trails; 30% for motorized trails; and 40% for diverse-use trails, as detailed in **Table 1**.

Administration of the RTP moved from the New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) to NMDOT at the beginning of calendar year 2014. NMDOT’s goal was to bring the RTP into alignment with NMDOT’s existing funding timelines and cycles, and to run calls for projects concurrently with the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). The projects that were initiated under EMNRD’s administration have been completed and closed out by the project’s responsible charge. Descriptions of the completed projects are included in this report.

Total Annual RTP Apportionment	\$1,429,831
Non-Motorized Target	\$428,949
Motorized Target	\$428,949
Diverse-Use Target	\$571,933
*amounts do not include the State’s obligation limitation of 94.9%	

The call for FFY16 and FFY17 funding was open during the first and second quarters of FFY15. Projects were selected for funding through the statewide, competitive process described in the FFY16-17 RTP

Guide. No applications were received for the 30% motorized target during this application cycle, though NMDOT was able to award RTP funding for four motorized projects in FFY17 through a “special” call. The selected projects from this special call, as well as the obligation of FFY17 RTP funds are included in this report.

The Recreational Trails Advisory Board (RTAB) scored and ranked applications in March 2015 and NMDOT used these recommendations to award funding for projects in FFY16 and FFY17. Projects that were awarded funding in FFY17 and programmed in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) are detailed in the following section.

During late winter and spring of 2016, NMDOT developed a new programs manual for use by applicants seeking funding in FFY18 and FFY19 for both TAP and RTP. This manual is called the Active Transportation and Recreational Programs Guide. The call for FFY18 and FFY19 funding was opened in April 2016 with an application deadline of November 30, 2016. FFY18 and FFY19 projects were selected through a statewide, competitive process and announced during the second quarter of FFY17. The programs manual has been updated for the upcoming funding cycle for FFY20 and FFY21 projects, and a call was released in the early summer of 2018.

The RTAB met for the annual meeting on September 7, 2017, in Santa Fe. NMDOT staff briefed the board on the program status and current and upcoming projects. The board offered guidance for the administration of the program. The meeting fulfilled the federal requirements for RTP eligibility.

## FFY17 Baseline STIP and Obligation Performance



The baseline STIP, active at the beginning of a FFY, provides a method for measuring performance in terms of delivering projects programmed in the STIP each FFY. In coordination with FHWA, NMDOT measures program performance by comparing baseline projects to those which are ultimately obligated. Obligation refers to a commitment by the federal government to pay the federal share of a project’s cost. An obligated project is one that has been authorized by FHWA and for which federal funds are committed.

For FFY17, the RTP baseline was set in September/October 2016 with the approval of the baseline 2017-2022 STIP (STIP-0). The four projects in the RTP baseline for FFY17 are shown in **Table 2**. Three additional projects, not in the baseline, were added to FFY17 after the special call for motorized projects. **Table 3** shows the RTP projects that were obligated in FFY17 and reflects the additional motorized projects. Two projects from the FFY17 baseline were cancelled, shown in **Table 4**.

Above: New trail developed in the Manzanita Mountains (Sandia Ranger District) of the Cibola National Forest and Grasslands. USFS crews built new trails and improved existing trails in the multi-use, motorized trail system. (Photo Credit: USFS).

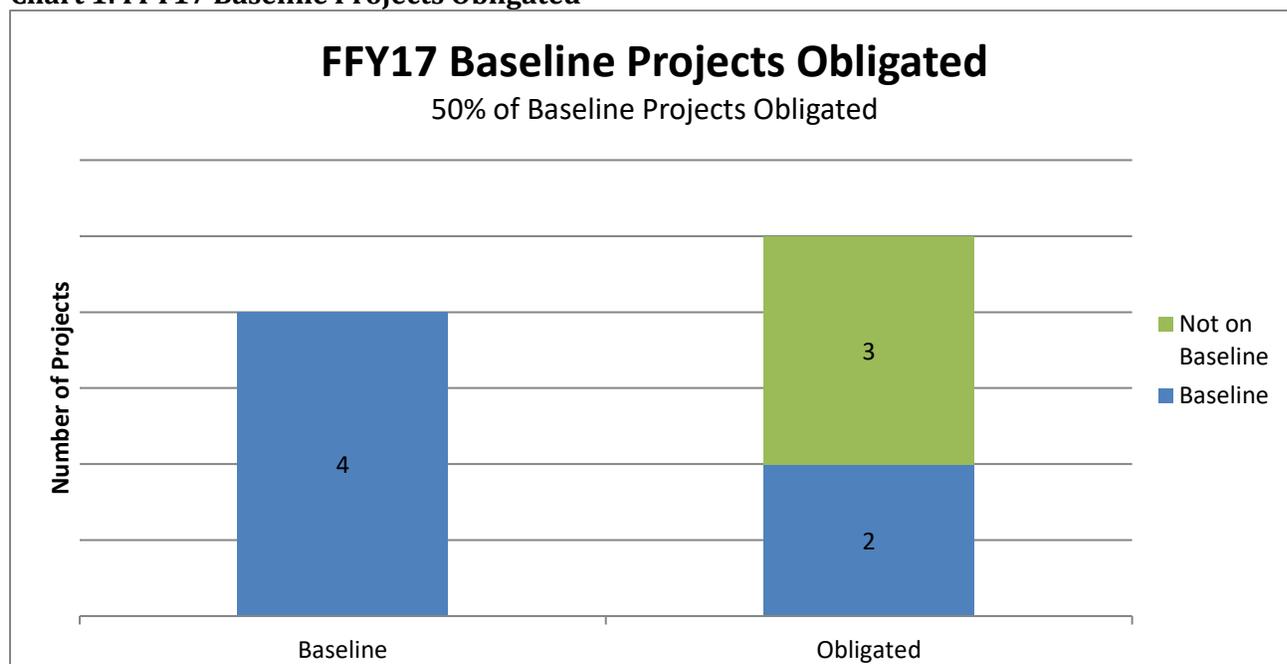
<b>Table 2: FFY17 Baseline Program</b>					
<b>Recipient</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Phase</b>	<b>Total RTP</b>	<b>Total Funds*</b>
Pueblo of Laguna	Cibola	NM Highway 124 Bike and Pedestrian Trail	Construction	\$ 414,233	\$ 969,648
City of Raton	Colfax	Round House Park Trail Maintenance	Construction	\$ 42,720	\$ 50,000
City of Lovington	Lea	Lovington Multi-use Trail	Construction	\$ 327,369	\$ 547,366
Village of Cuba	Sandoval	Saint Francis Park Trail	Construction	\$ 145,360	\$ 170,131
<b>Total</b>				<b>\$ 929,682</b>	<b>\$ 1,786,513</b>
*Total project funds include federal funds, local match, local non-match and other funding sources					

<b>Table 3: FFY17 Obligated Projects</b>					
<b>Recipient</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Phase</b>	<b>Total RTP</b>	<b>Total Funds*</b>
Cibola National Forest**	Bernalillo	Manzanita Mountains Motorized Trail System Improvements	NA	\$ 43,014	\$ 50,344
Pueblo of Laguna	Cibola	NM Highway 124 Bike and Pedestrian Trail	Construction	\$ 414,233	\$ 969,648
Santa Fe National Forest**	Los Alamos	Improvements to Forest Roads and Trails Designated for Recreational Motorized Use	NA	\$ 100,000	\$ 121,000
City of Gallup**	McKinley	Gallup Off-Highway Vehicle Park Trail and Trailhead Improvements	NA	\$ 39,500	\$ 46,231
Village of Cuba	Sandoval	Saint Francis Park Trail	Construction	\$ 145,360	\$ 170,131
<b>Total</b>				<b>\$ 742,107</b>	<b>\$ 1,357,354</b>
*Total project funds include federal funds, local match, local non-match and other funding sources					
**Projects selected in special motorized call					

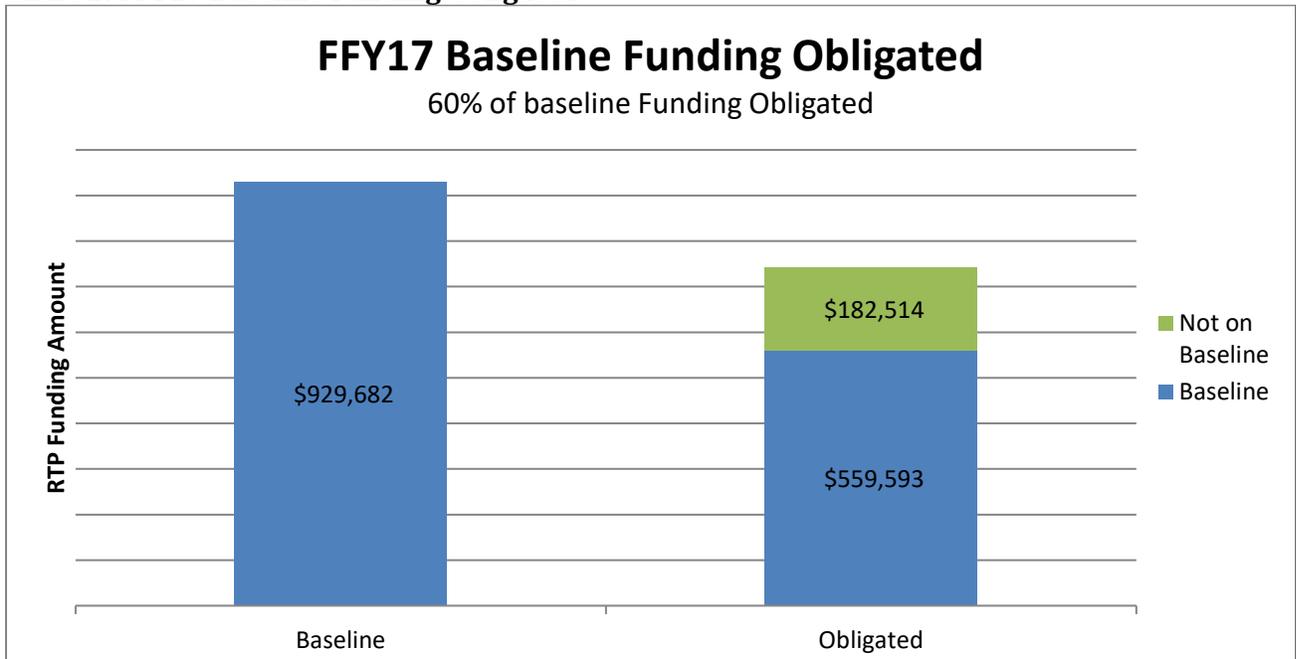
<b>Table 4. Cancelled Projects</b>					
<b>Recipient</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Phase</b>	<b>Total RTP</b>	<b>Total Funds*</b>
City of Raton	Colfax	Round House Park Trail Maintenance	Construction	\$ 42,720	\$ 50,000
City of Lovington	Lea	Lovington Multi-use Trail	Construction	\$ 327,369	\$ 547,366
<b>Total</b>				<b>\$ 370,089</b>	<b>\$ 597,366</b>
*Total project funds include federal funds, local match, local non-match and other funding sources					

**Chart 1** and **Chart 2** below demonstrate the performance of the RTP in FFY17, both in terms of the number of projects successfully obligated, and the amount of RTP funding successfully obligated, respectively.

**Chart 1: FFY17 Baseline Projects Obligated**



**Chart 2: FFY17 Baseline Funding Obligated**



## Completed Projects

In FFY17, EMNRD completed the RTP projects it initiated prior to NMDOT administering the program. EMNRD, State Parks Division (“State Parks”), used RTP funds to develop and maintain trails, provide wayfinding signage at trailheads, and make portions of various state parks more accessible for people with disabilities or other mobility challenges, through improvements to trails, sidewalks, and ramps.

### City of Rocks State Park

For the completed Table Mountain Trail Project, State Parks constructed a new 1.62 mile trail starting from the pre-existing Hydra Trail and leading to a scenic overlook at the top of Table Mountain. The project included the placement of new trailhead signs, bench installation at the overlook, a sustainable trail design approach, and erosion control features.



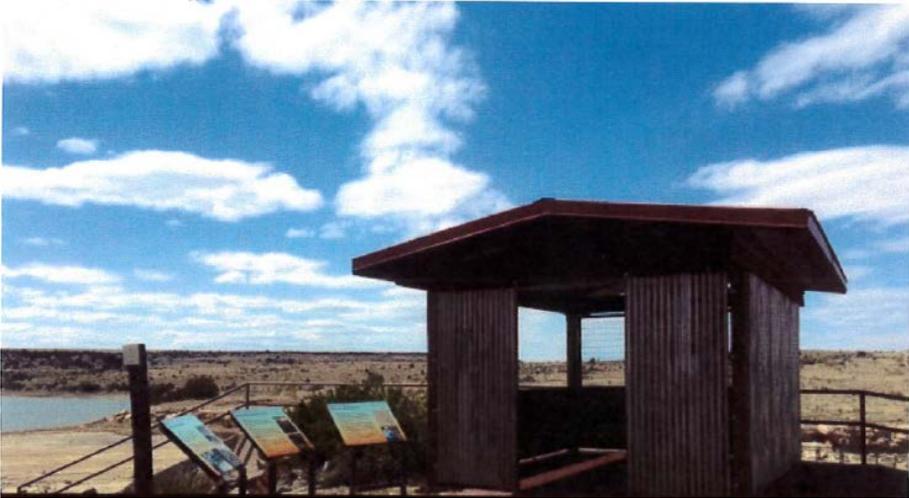
Above Left: New trail segment on Table Mountain Trail (Photo Credit: State Parks). Above Right: New bench installed at overlook on Table Mountain Trail (Photo Credit: State Parks).

Additionally, the newly constructed 2-mile long Faywood Cienega Trail provides hikers and mountain bikers an opportunity to loop around the park’s wetland area. The park installed new trailhead signs at the park entrance and at the new trailhead parking area.

**Clayton Lake State Park**

State Parks replaced 19 deteriorated interpretive signs along the boardwalk of the Dinosaur Tracks Trail and in the pavilion/viewing area overlooking the trail.

Right: Interpretive signs installed at one of many viewing areas in Clayton Lake State Park (Photo Credit: State Parks).



**Rockhound State Park**

Development of hiking trails in Rockhound State Park is a top priority for the park. The Park used its RTP grant in the Spring Canyon area of the Park, including for the Lovers Leap Trail, to develop a trail to the top of the canyon and to add a new 2.8-mile loop.

The Park also made improvements to the existing trails to reduce erosion in steep areas and improve safety on the trail. In addition, it installed trailhead signs, cleared vegetation, restored user created trails, and improved steep trail segments with rock steps.



**Above Left: American Conservation Experience work crew in Rockhound State Park (Photo Credit: State Parks). Above Right: Trail improvements and signage at Rockhound State Park (Photo Credit: State Parks).**

**Statewide Park Signage Project**

State Parks surveyed its parks across New Mexico for trail signage needs. The survey resulted in State Parks installing interpretive signage, trail markers, and trailhead signs in numerous State Parks including: Sugarite Canyon, Elephant Butte Lake, Mesilla Valley Bosque, and Bluewater Lake.

**Cerrillos Hills State Park**

Park staff identified trail segments along the Jane Calvin Sanchez, Escalante, Elkins Cabin, and Mirador trails for redesign because of slope, poor trail layout, and related problems. Segments along the trails were repaired and, in some place, rerouted.

**Living Desert Zoo and Gardens State Park**

The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens State Park project completes the second phase of a RTP funded project to increase the accessibility of the park. The path provides access to the remaining public areas of the park, including exhibits and interpretive programs on native Chihuahuan plants and animals. The new path provides Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant access to the new reptile house, as well as to the hoof stock exhibits on the east end of the Park.

**Right: New path provides ADA access to exhibits and educational opportunities in Living Desert Zoo and Gardens State Park.**



**Sugarite Canyon State Park**

State Parks used RTP funds on two trails in Sugarite Canyon State Park. The project included rerouting sections of the Opportunity Trail to mitigate the effects of a 2011 wildfire. Additionally, the project included construction of the Connector Trail to link the existing trail network in order to provide a loop for hikers. The Opportunity Trail is 4—5 feet wide, with small wooden foot bridges and stepping stones

to cross small wetland areas. Both trails reduce impacts on the area's natural resources and provide hikers with sustainable trails and access to the State Park.

### **Villanueva State Park**

State Parks completed work on the River Trail and El Cerro Trail at Villanueva State Park in April 2015. The project created a safe, sustainable River Trail that will reduce the impact of human activity on the river banks, including decreased erosion and reduction in the amount of sediment entering the river. Work on the El Cerro Trail included improving the trail tread in order to stabilize footing and enhance drainage along the trail.

### **Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Training and Workshop**

The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish sponsored an OHV trail maintenance education workshop in partnership with the Sandia Ranger District of the Cibola National Forest, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, and the National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council. The workshop taught accepted best practices of motorized trail layout, design, construction, and maintenance, and trained participants in those practices.

### **Purchase of Trail Maintenance Equipment \***

San Miguel County purchased trail maintenance equipment including a utility tractor, a loader, mower, rotary cutter, and a rear blade. These tools will help maintain the San Miguel Walking Trail, a non-motorized trail that follows the Gallinas River through the middle of Las Vegas.

### **Purchase of Trail Maintenance Equipment\***

RTP funds helped the Village of Angel Fire purchase trail maintenance equipment including a lawn mower, a spot sprayer for weed abatement, an earth auger, a mini cultivator, a chainsaw, and a backpack-style gas-powered blower. The equipment is being used to maintain the non-motorized trail network in the community.

\*The purchase of equipment is no longer an eligible project expense or activity. However, the leasing of equipment is an eligible project expense and activity.

## **Summary**

During FFY17, NMDOT coordinated closely with RTP grantees and NMDOT Districts and Design Centers around the state to ensure that projects were obligated. The five projects obligated in FFY17 range from designing and constructing paved, multi-use trails in municipal and tribal communities around the state, to improving trails for recreational motorized use, to the maintenance of natural surface trails in wilderness areas managed by the Forest Service, for a total of \$742,107 in RTP funds.

Additionally, NMDOT has updated the program guide for TAP and RTP in preparation for the call for projects in the spring of 2018 for projects in FFY20, FFY21, and beyond.