



TOTAL MAXIMUM DAILY LOADS FOR THE UPPER RIO GRANDE WATERSHED

What is a TMDL?

A Total Maximum Daily Load, or TMDL, is a calculation of the maximum amount of a pollutant that a waterbody can receive and still meet water quality standards.

A TMDL is a planning document that establishes specific goals to meet water quality standards. It includes current pollution loadings, reduction estimates for pollutants, information on probable sources of pollution, and suggestions to restore or protect the health of the waterbody.



The New Mexico Environment Department-Surface Water Quality Bureau (NMED-SWQB) conducted water quality monitoring in the Upper Rio Grande Watershed in 2017-18 and 2025-26 as part of a regular scheduled water quality survey (summary report at <https://www.env.nm.gov/surface-water-quality/water-quality-monitoring/>). Three stream reaches were determined to be impaired due to excess aluminum. Two stream reaches were determined to be impaired due to excess *E. coli* bacteria. One stream reach was determined to be impaired for gross alpha and PCBs. Two stream reaches and two lakes were determined to be impaired due to excess plant nutrients. Eight stream reaches were determined to be impaired due to high water temperature. One stream reach was determined to be impaired due to high turbidity. Therefore, TMDLs were developed.

A 30-day comment period for the draft TMDL document opens on August 14, 2026 and will close on September 14, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. MDT. A virtual public meeting will be held via Webex on August 27, 2026 from 2:00-3:30 pm. All public comments submitted in writing to SWQB staff will be responded to and included as an additional appendix in the Final Draft TMDL report that will be submitted to the Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC) for their approval at their next available meeting and then to EPA Region 6 for final approval.

TMDL NEXT STEPS

Stakeholder public outreach and involvement in the implementation of these TMDLs will be ongoing. A Watershed-based Plan (WBP) is a written plan intended to provide a long-range vision for various activities and management of resources in a watershed. It includes opportunities for private landowners and public agencies in reducing and preventing nonpoint source impacts to water quality. The WBP is the Implementation Plan, or Phase Two of the TMDL process. The completion of the TMDLs and WBP leads directly to the development of on-the-ground projects to address surface water impairments. SWQB can potentially provide Clean Water Act funding to assist in the development of WBPs and on-the-ground projects. For impacts related to point sources in the watershed, SWQB will continue to coordinate with EPA Region 6 on the implementation of the TMDLs through the NPDES program and permits issued in the watershed.

