

WATER IN NEW MEXICO

THIS CHAPTER ADDRESSES:

- How much water we use
- Where it comes from
- How we store and manage it
- How much might we have in the future

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How We Get Our Water

New Mexico uses about 3.8 million acre-feet of water a year.² That averages to 3.4 trillion gallons per day. We have a modestly growing population and economy, but we also see a steady decline in overall water use. Perhaps this surprising shift reflects increased conservation, changes in business practices, or other factors. **Figure 2-1** illustrates our water use and population growth since 1995.³

Regardless how much water we use, New Mexico is a land-locked state. Thus all our water comes from precipitation (some of it hundreds of years old). New Mexico averages about 13.5 inches of rain per year and receives additional river water that flows down from Colorado.⁴ Of that water received each year, an estimated 97 percent evaporates or is transpired by plants.⁵ The remaining three percent is what we use to help meet human, economic, legal, environmental and groundwater recharge needs.

We access our water from two sources:

- Surface water (rivers, streams, lakes)
- Groundwater (deep, underground aquifers)

² Calculated from total 2010 water withdrawals. One acre-foot is the amount of water that would cover an acre of land to a depth of one foot, or 325,851 gallons.

³ Water use by categories is calculated every five years by the OSE. The most recent report includes data through 2010.

⁴ National Ocean and Atmospheric Association. (n.d.). *Climatological Rankings*. Retrieved from www.ncdc.noaa.gov/temp-and-precip/ranks.php

⁵ New Mexico Bureau of Geology & Mineral Resources. (n.d.). *Frequently Asked Questions About Water*. Retrieved from New Mexico Tech: Frequently Asked Questions About Water