

# Status of Rio Santa Cruz Earthen Flood Control Dams Chimayo to La Puebla Rio Arriba and Santa Fe Counties

Presentation to WPAC – Santa Fe County

by

Santa Fe-Pojoaque Soil and Water Conservation District

January 8, 2026

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## WATER POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

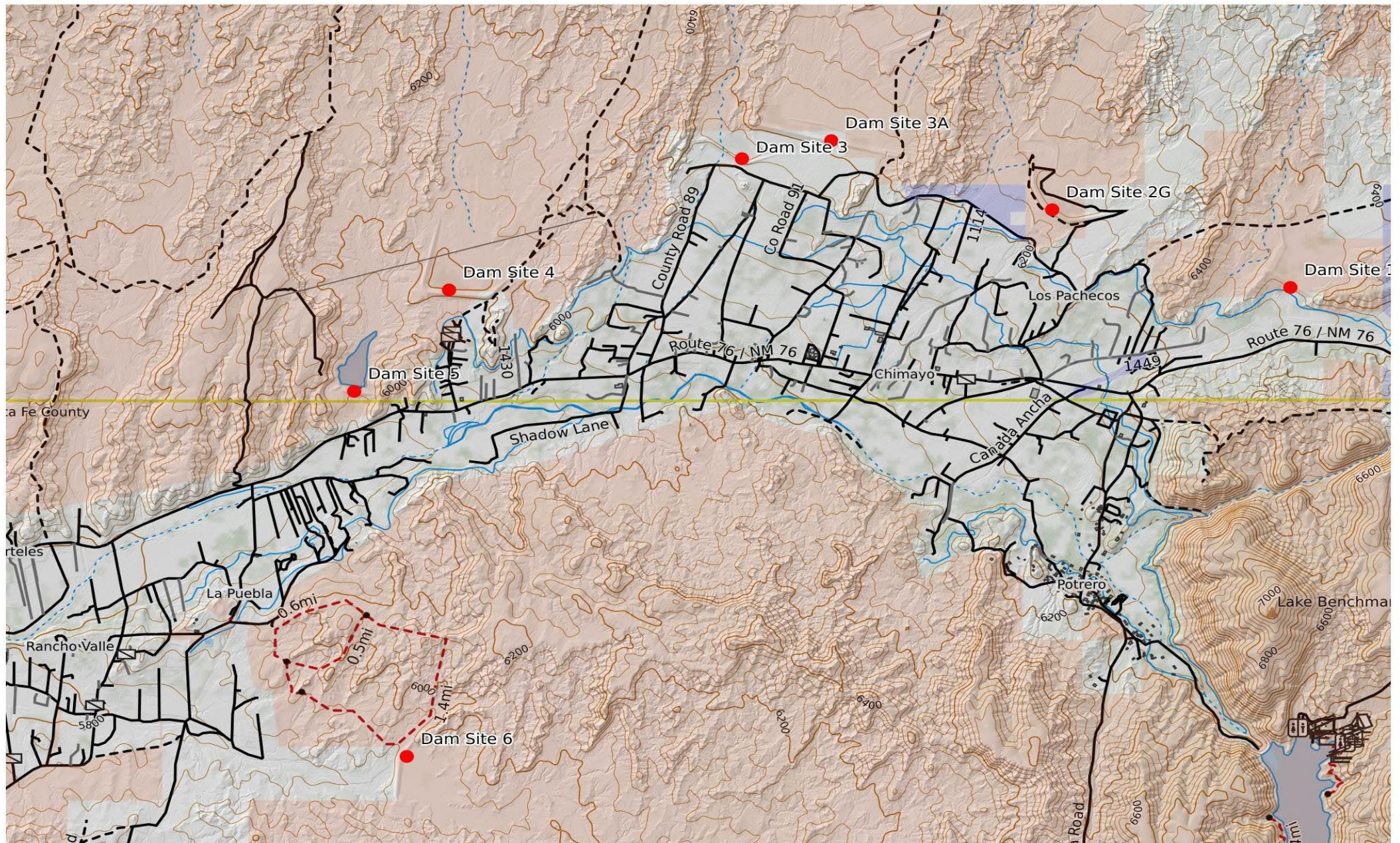
### **Resolution 2024-038, A Resolution Updating the Purpose and Activities of the Water Policy Advisory Committee and Repealing and Replacing Resolution No. 2019-95**

The Water Policy Advisory Committee (WPAC) is a working committee that augments Santa Fe County staff resources by bringing independent expertise, research, and effort to its assigned work.

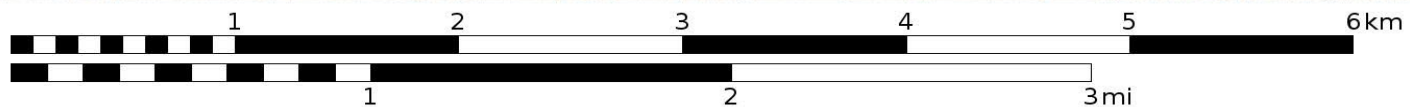
The WPAC's primary responsibility is to provide recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) concerning sustainable utility services, domestic water supply and conservation, wastewater management and reclamation, irrigation, drought management, flood prevention and control, and water reuse in the County and region.

**View** [Resolution No. 2025-014 WPAC Work Plan and Meeting Schedule](#)





Mercator Projection  
WGS84  
UTM Zone 13S



Scale 1:36681 1 inch = 3057 feet





# Santa Cruz Dam Sites

Legend

Site





10 - 28 - 62

DXF-3CC-206



## CONTEXT

- 7 Earthen Flood Control Dams Built 1961 - 1972 by USDA Soil Conservation Service and Sponsored by SF-P SWCD. All were Low Hazard when built.
- All are now High Hazard, meaning a dam where failure or mis-operation would probably cause loss of human life and significant property destruction.
- All are 5-15 years beyond design life.
- All dams reside on BLM or private land; however, SF-P SWCD has perpetual easements for the footprints of all the dams and is the sole owner & operator of all dams.

## **Further Context**

- All have 96-hr. floodwater storage limit, per Rio Grande Compact.
- Slightly over 2,000 properties in inundation zones of these dams, including Espanola WWTP.
- All 7 dams have Emergency Action Plans as Required by NM OSE Dam Safety Bureau for High Hazard Dams.
- Santa Fe County contributes \$8K per year for O&M.

## Concerns

Sites 1 and 4 have particular vulnerability for breaching or failing: Site 1 for full-capacity of sediment pool, and Site 4 for longitudinal cracks on embankment.

Site 1 is nearly at 90% Design for Rehabilitation by USDA NRCS Watershed Rehabilitation Program (WRP); Site 4 is also in the que for repair funding under WRP. Repairs may be years out due to lack of funding.

Santa Fe County Office of Emergency Management has redacted Section 5 of it's Hazard Mitigation Plan. Yet, SF Co. hosts an inundation mapping website for the Santa Cruz Dam Sites should a breach or failure occur. These are not federal dams, and there should be transparency in the HMP regarding the danger they present.

Should there be early warning sirens in the Rio Santa Cruz Corridor?



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## OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

[Emergency & Preparedness](#)[Evacuation Planning Guide](#)[Floods](#)[Protecting Your Home from...](#)[More...](#)

The Santa Fe County Office of Emergency Management is responsible for preparing our community for All-Hazard Preparedness and Response, which encompasses Natural, Technological, Human Caused Risks and Threats. We maintain partnerships with over 108 Agencies in the Santa Fe Area that include County Departments, private sector, faith based

### Quick Info

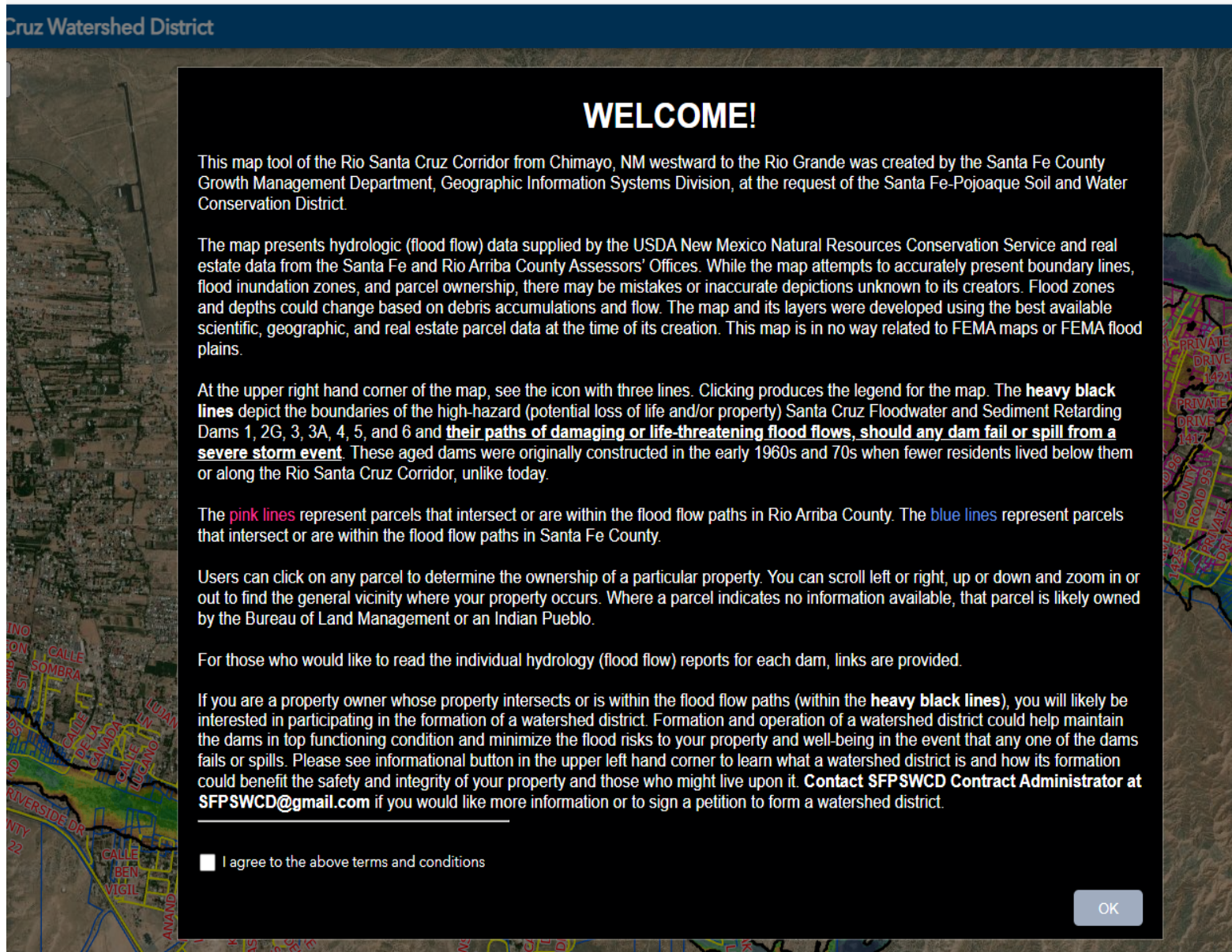
[Santa Fe County Hazard Mitigation Plan](#)[Upcoming Events](#)[Subscribe To Our Newsletter!](#)[Latest Newsletter](#)[Local Emergency Planning Committee \(L.E.P.C\)](#)[Community Emergency Response Team \(C.E.R.T\)](#)[Public Safety Power Shutoff \(P.S.P.S\)](#)[Smart 911 / Alert Santa Fe](#)

## SECTION 5 DAM FAILURE

### SECTION 5: DAM FAILURE

Portions of the Santa Fe County Hazard Mitigation Plan are considered confidential and not for release to the public. The information in this section is covered under Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. Section 552a).

## SF-P SWCD Dam Sites in the Santa Cruz Corridor with inundation mapping



Cruz Watershed District

### WELCOME!

This map tool of the Rio Santa Cruz Corridor from Chimayo, NM westward to the Rio Grande was created by the Santa Fe County Growth Management Department, Geographic Information Systems Division, at the request of the Santa Fe-Pojoaque Soil and Water Conservation District.

The map presents hydrologic (flood flow) data supplied by the USDA New Mexico Natural Resources Conservation Service and real estate data from the Santa Fe and Rio Arriba County Assessors' Offices. While the map attempts to accurately present boundary lines, flood inundation zones, and parcel ownership, there may be mistakes or inaccurate depictions unknown to its creators. Flood zones and depths could change based on debris accumulations and flow. The map and its layers were developed using the best available scientific, geographic, and real estate parcel data at the time of its creation. This map is in no way related to FEMA maps or FEMA flood plains.

At the upper right hand corner of the map, see the icon with three lines. Clicking produces the legend for the map. The **heavy black lines** depict the boundaries of the high-hazard (potential loss of life and/or property) Santa Cruz Floodwater and Sediment Retarding Dams 1, 2G, 3, 3A, 4, 5, and 6 and **their paths of damaging or life-threatening flood flows, should any dam fail or spill from a severe storm event**. These aged dams were originally constructed in the early 1960s and 70s when fewer residents lived below them or along the Rio Santa Cruz Corridor, unlike today.

The **pink lines** represent parcels that intersect or are within the flood flow paths in Rio Arriba County. The **blue lines** represent parcels that intersect or are within the flood flow paths in Santa Fe County.

Users can click on any parcel to determine the ownership of a particular property. You can scroll left or right, up or down and zoom in or out to find the general vicinity where your property occurs. Where a parcel indicates no information available, that parcel is likely owned by the Bureau of Land Management or an Indian Pueblo.

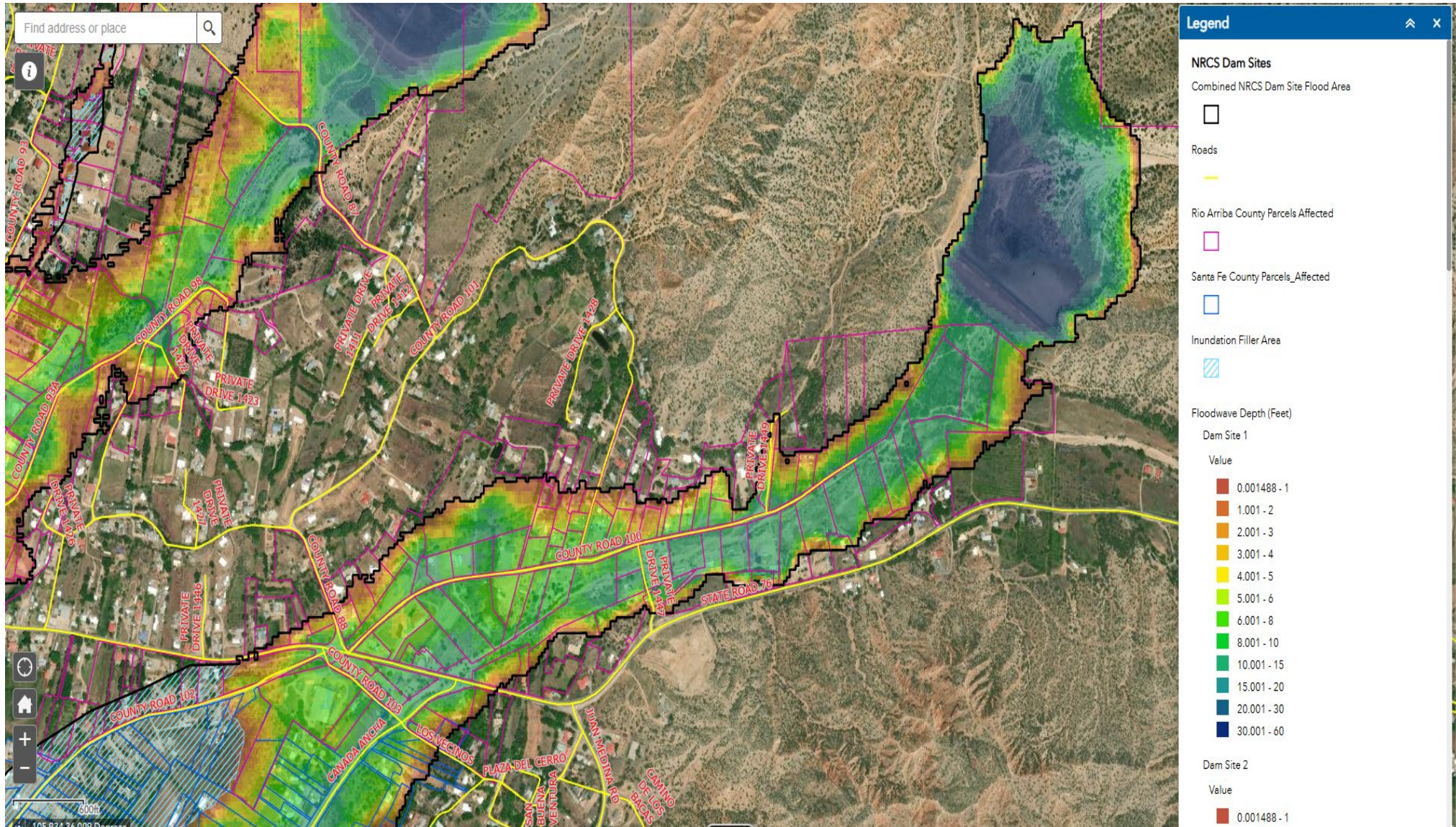
For those who would like to read the individual hydrology (flood flow) reports for each dam, links are provided.

If you are a property owner whose property intersects or is within the flood flow paths (within the **heavy black lines**), you will likely be interested in participating in the formation of a watershed district. Formation and operation of a watershed district could help maintain the dams in top functioning condition and minimize the flood risks to your property and well-being in the event that any one of the dams fails or spills. Please see informational button in the upper left hand corner to learn what a watershed district is and how its formation could benefit the safety and integrity of your property and those who might live upon it. **Contact SFPSCD Contract Administrator at [SFPSCD@gmail.com](mailto:SFPSCD@gmail.com)** if you would like more information or to sign a petition to form a watershed district.

☐ I agree to the above terms and conditions

OK





Discussion?

Sirens or Audible Warnings?

Reference:

A GUIDE TO PUBLIC ALERTS AND WARNINGS FOR DAM AND LEVEE EMERGENCIES

U. S. Army Corps of Engineers