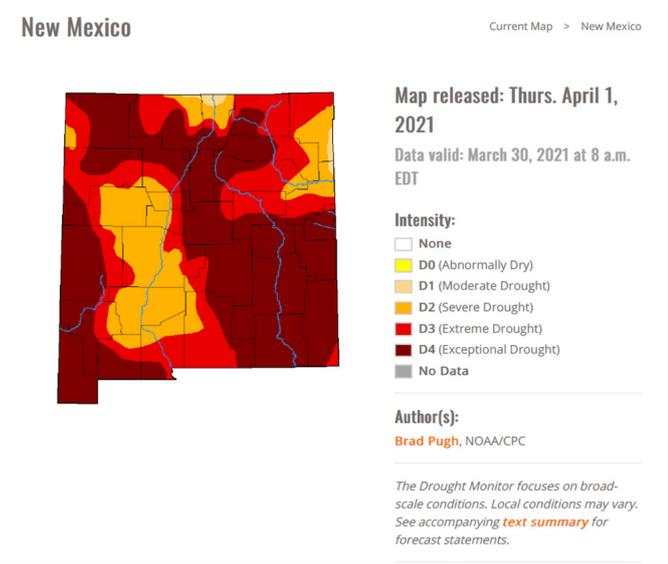


Commissioners vote to ban big fireworks on Cinco de Mayo this year

Written by By: Molly Adamson Sun Correspondent
Friday, 16 April 2021 04:06



There won't be any big fireworks shows in McKinley County for Cinco de Mayo this year.

During the April 6 commissioners meeting, McKinley County Fire Chief Brian Archuleta told the commissioners about the severe drought situation in the county. The U.S. Drought Monitor is put out by the National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. As of April 1, it showed McKinley County in the D3 and D4 intensity zones.

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These intensity zones show areas where fire damage is extreme, irrigation allotments are decreased, vegetation and native trees are dying, federal lands are closed for fire precautions, burn bans are increased, and large rivers like the Rio Grande are dry.

Because of this, Archuleta asked the commissioners to pass a resolution declaring extreme drought conditions in McKinley County and to ban the sale of certain fireworks.

Commissioner Genevieve Jackson asked Archuleta what specific fireworks would be a part of this ban. County attorney Doug Decker answered.

“The ones we can ban are those that go up in the air and those that make a louder bang,” he explained. “The common fireworks that are like your sparklers and your fountain cones and the smaller fireworks that don’t go very high and don’t make as loud a bang as others, the state won’t allow us to ban those.”

But in this proclamation, we do say they can only use them where there is a source of water and [it’s] barren of vegetation and things like that,” he said.

This is the first time in 20 years that the county has seen data showing this much drought this early in the spring, Decker said.

Fireworks sales for Cinco De Mayo start on May 4 and end on May 6.

The commissioners will decide what to do about the Fourth of July fireworks later in May. Fireworks sales will start June 20 and continue until July 6. For now, the commissioners voted unanimously to approve the resolution.

Rep. Patricia Lundstrom, D-Gallup, gave the commissioners an update on the 2021 legislation session and the special session on March 30.

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Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham called the special meeting to discuss the recreational use of marijuana for adults. Lundstrom said she did not vote for House Bill 2, but it did pass in the House.

Lundstrom was excited when she told commissioners that the governor signed House Bill 6 on April 5. She sponsored that bill to eliminate the State Equalization Guarantee. She previously told the *Sun* that the guarantee was put in place over 50 years ago. She explained the guarantee was a funding formula that gave funding to the state's 81 public school districts. But it hurt Gallup, because it gave funding intended for the Gallup-McKinley County Schools District to other districts.

Katelyn Constantin, a senior audit manager with the Hinkle and Landers accounting firm, presented the FY20 Annual Financial Audit report to the commissioners.

She said there were no problems with the audit this year.

Over \$14.6 million was spent on public safety last year, which is a decrease from the over \$16 million that was spent in 2019.

Constantin explained that a lot of the CARES Act money the county received last year went toward Health and Welfare, which saw an over \$6 million increase compared to 2019's \$5.5 million. She said that the increase was because of COVID-19 and that the pandemic was also the reason for the decrease in money spent on public safety.

The general government expenses came out to \$11.7 million. Public works spent \$5.4 million.

There was not a lot of money spent on culture and recreation this year because of the pandemic, with the total coming out to just under \$300,000.

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