



NCEL Outdoor Engagement Spotlight New Mexico Representative Angelica Rubio

Representative Angelica Rubio sponsored New Mexico [SB462](#) to create the Division of Outdoor Recreation and establish the Outdoor Equity Grant Program. The grant program provides funding to encourage outdoor programs for low-income and disadvantaged youth.

How do you engage with the outdoors and why is outdoor engagement important to you?

I engage in the outdoors through cycling, both on gravel and mountain--and the road that gets me to those places of healing, that many of us are searching for these days. Outdoor engagement is important to me because it has done so much for my own mental and physical health. But more importantly, the outdoors and cycling have given me the privilege and opportunity to connect to the borderlands, a place where generations of family have called the US/Mexico border home--and the epicenter of so much of the racial and ecological injustices taking place through the militarization of our federal government.



What led you to choose outdoor engagement legislation and what was the impact of your policy?

Having been born and raised in the borderlands of New Mexico and Mexico, I have so much love and appreciation for the most unique international boundary in the world. This is a place where generations have interconnected for so long. But over the course of the last 30 years, this region has seen an incredible increase in the militarization of our border, where BIPOC no longer feels safe--least of all in the outdoors. For me, the outdoors, and riding my bike along the ditch banks and desert single tracks, is not just reconnecting, but reclaiming the spirit of what was once this land.

How did the NCEL network and other state models help you in this process?

NCEL has helped me to cultivate relationships that have allowed me to think through and reflect ideas rooted in my spaces, and seeing how they can also transform the rest of the nation--for the better.

How can outdoor engagement make communities safer and more resilient in response to racial injustice and the COVID-19 pandemic?

Much in which I work towards reclaiming the land for all here on the borderlands, the same needs to be done in the rest of the country. There are still far too many BIPOC who do not or cannot resonate with the outdoors, because it has been a place for privilege--and mostly only accessible to white communities. That must change, and this is the moment in which we must be bold and make the outdoors accessible for all.