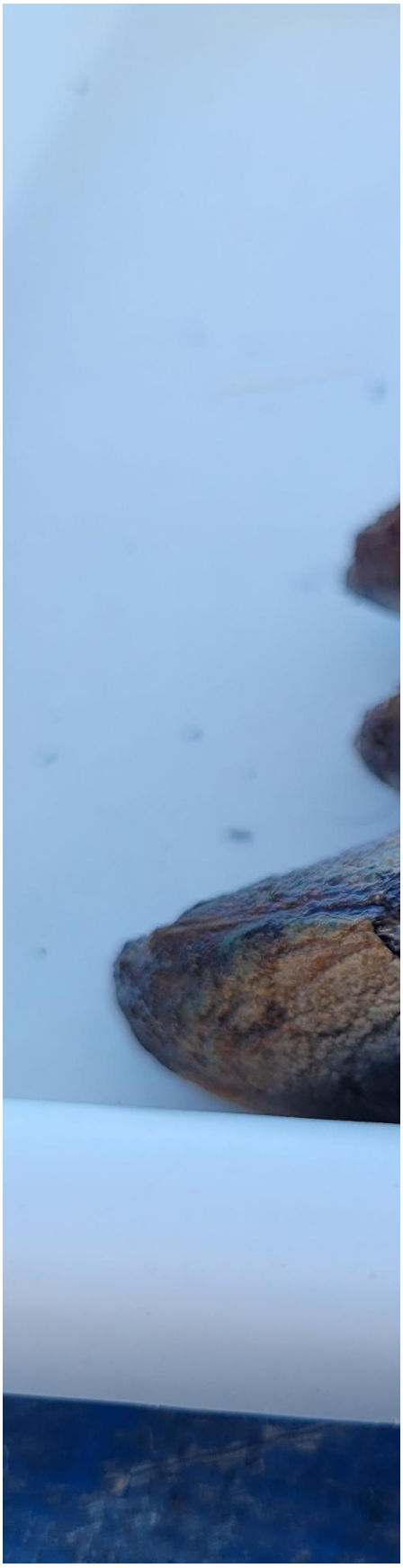
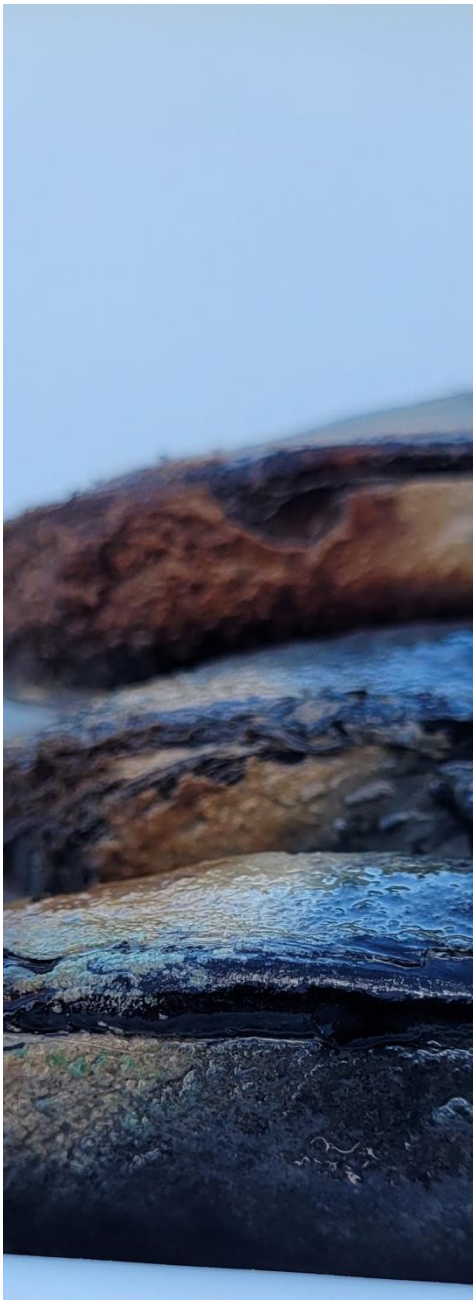
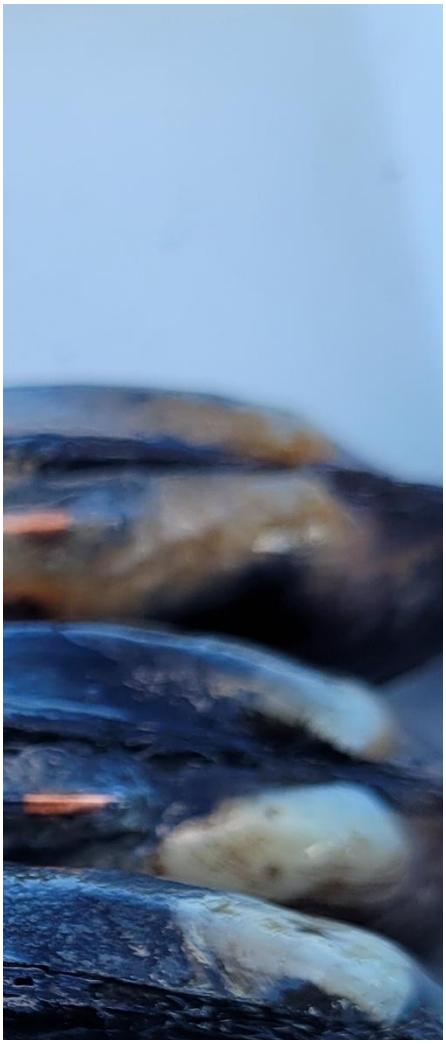
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CEHMM
Conservation & Environmental Services

2026 Quarter Three Report

July 1, 2026 – September 30, 2026

Candidate Conservation Agreements

Texas Hornshell (*Popenaias popeii*)

and other Covered Species

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Prepared for: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service & Program Stakeholders

Prepared by: CEHMM

Date Published: 10/16/2026

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INTRODUCTION

TEXAS HORNSHELL CCA/A PROGRAMS

Collaborate • Protect • Monitor • Restore

Collaborative conservation across federal, private, and state trust lands
to protect the Texas hornshell mussel and other covered species habitats.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The Center for Environmental Health, Monitoring, and Management (CEHMM) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation engaged in research, conservation, and environmental management in southeastern New Mexico. CEHMM utilizes collaborative conservation frameworks, scientific research, and conservation funding to support the Texas hornshell mussel (THM; *Popenaias popeii*) and other at-risk aquatic species. These efforts include habitat protection, long-term monitoring, research, restoration, conservation planning, and coordination with federal and state agencies, landowners, and industry partners.

The THM is a freshwater mussel native to the Rio Grande drainage basin of New Mexico and Texas. Historically more widespread, its current distribution is limited primarily to portions of the Black and Delaware rivers in New Mexico, the lower Pecos River in Texas, and isolated segments of the Rio Grande (S. M. Carman, 2007). The species depends on persistent streamflow, suitable water quality, stable substrates, and connected aquatic habitat and is sensitive to dewatering, altered hydrology, elevated temperatures, reduced dissolved oxygen, sedimentation, and habitat fragmentation. The THM was federally listed as endangered in 2018 under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).



Conservation efforts are coordinated through three Candidate Conservation Agreements, collectively referred to as the CCA/As. CEHMM administers the federal Candidate Conservation Agreement (CCA) and private-land Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA), while the New Mexico State Land Office (NMSLO) administers the state trust land CCAA. Together, CEHMM, the NMSLO, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), and other partners use these agreements to implement conservation measures, avoid and minimize impacts, support research and monitoring, and direct conservation funding toward actions benefiting the THM and other covered species.

2018
THM LISTED AS FEDERALLY ENDANGERED

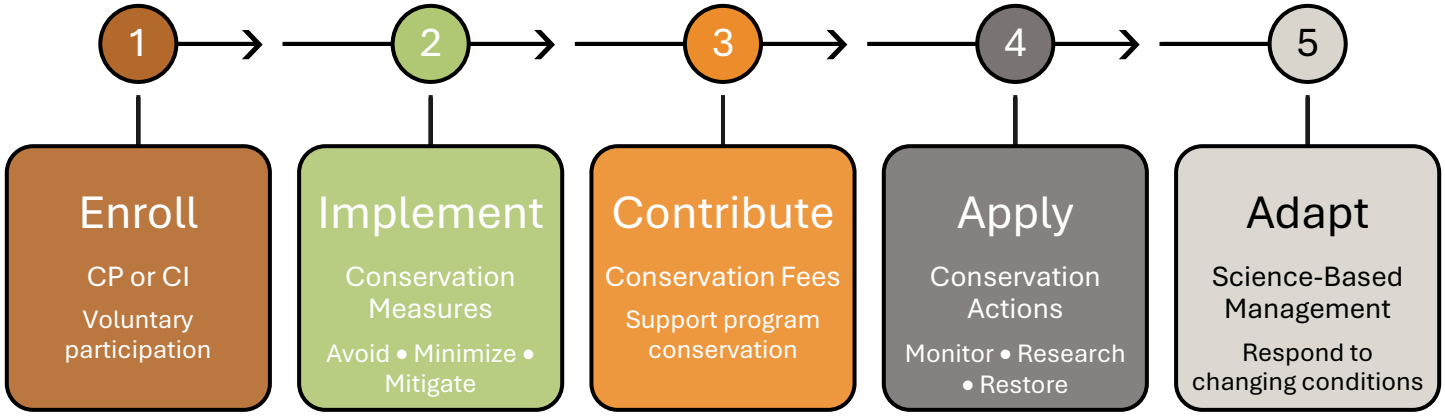
2
CCA/A PROGAMS ADMINSTERED BY CEHMM

1
CCAA PROGAM ADMINSTERED BY NMSLO

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CANDIDATE CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS AND AGREEMENTS W/ ASSURANCES

HOW THE PROGRAMS WORK



The THM CCA/As are voluntary, landscape-scale conservation agreements that allow participating stakeholders, including oil and gas operators, ranchers, utility providers, mining operators, and other land and water users, to contribute to species conservation while maintaining lawful operations. Through the agreements, CEHMM, the BLM, the NMSLO, the Service, private landowners, and industry partners work cooperatively to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts to occupied and suitable THM habitat.

Participating Cooperators enroll through a Certificate of Participation (CP) under the federal CCA or a Certificate of Inclusion (CI) under the private- or state-land CCAAs. Enrollment is voluntary, and participating entities implement conservation measures applicable to their activities while receiving the program benefits and assurances associated with their respective agreement.

Conservation measures may include flow coordination, erosion and sediment controls, infrastructure siting considerations, and operational practices intended to reduce impacts to the THM and its habitat. Participating Cooperators also contribute conservation fees that support species and habitat monitoring, research, restoration, and other conservation actions benefiting the THM and covered species.

CEHMM administers program enrollments, tracks conservation commitments, manages conservation funds, coordinates with agency partners, and reports program outcomes to the Service. Conservation funding and program priorities are coordinated through the Implementation Committee, with representation from CEHMM, the Service, BLM, NMSLO, and the New Mexico Department of Wildlife (NMDOW). This collaborative structure allows conservation actions to respond to changing habitat conditions, emerging threats, and new scientific information.

WHO PARTICIPATES?

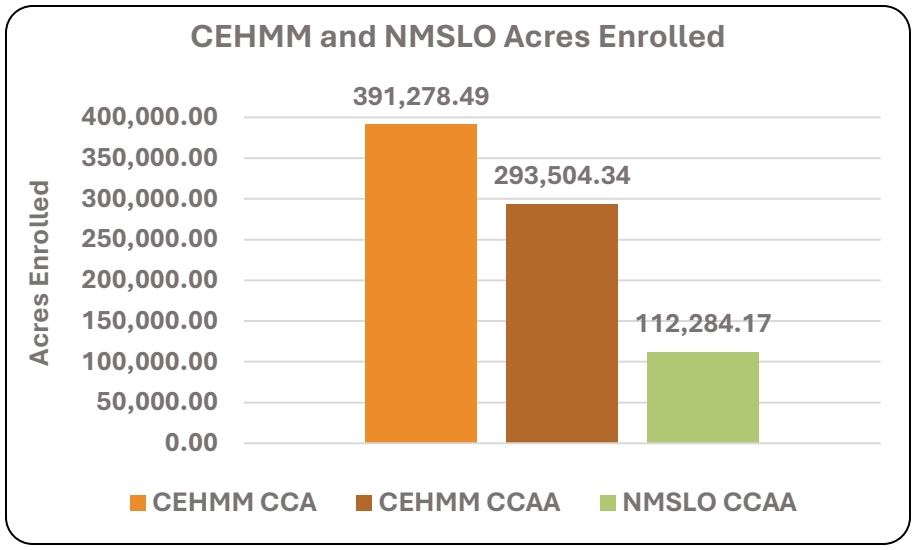
Oil and Gas	Ranching	Mining	Water Users
Energy development and associated infrastructure	Livestock operations and land management	Mineral extraction and associated development	Surface and groundwater withdrawals

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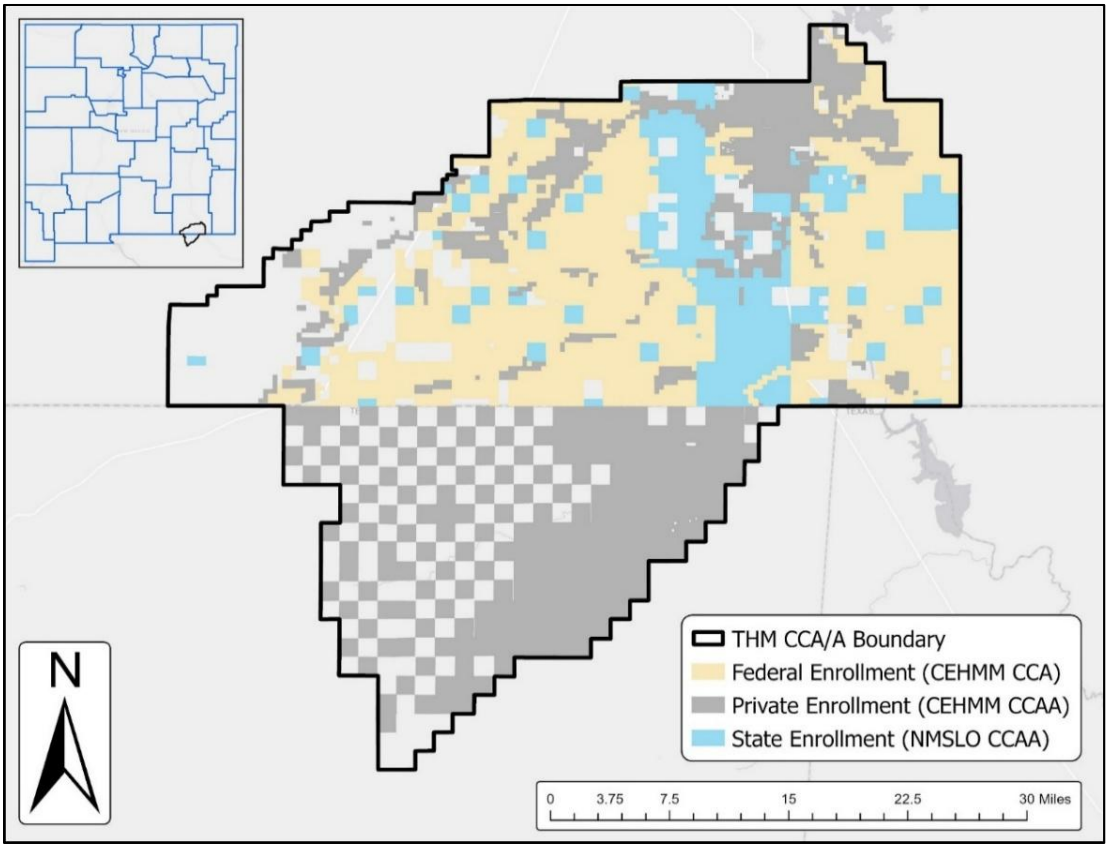
CURRENT ENROLLMENT SNAPSHOT

43	797,067	4
Total Enrollees	Total Acres Enrolled	Participant transfers in Q3 2026

Due to the THM's federal listing in 2018, the program remains closed to new enrollment. The program currently includes 43 enrollees across the three programs. During the third quarter, four participant transfers were completed because of changes in ownership or operations. These transfers resulted in changes to program participation records but did not change the total acreage enrolled in the CCA/As.



No changes to enrolled acreage were reported to CEHMM during the third quarter. The program currently encompasses 797,067 acres across federal, private, and state trust lands. Because the same acreage may be enrolled by multiple participants for different activities, acreage totals represent program enrollment and may include overlapping parcels.



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CONSERVATION MEASURES

PROTECTING HABITAT THROUGH TARGETED MANAGEMENT



Conservation measures implemented under the THM CCA/As are designed to avoid and minimize impacts to the Texas hornshell and its habitat while addressing threats associated with development, water use, land management, and other covered activities. Measures emphasize habitat protection, instream flow protection, erosion and sediment control, spill prevention, hydrologic connectivity, and restoration.

Conservation requirements are applied through a zone-based management framework that reflects habitat sensitivity and connectivity to occupied habitat. Measures become more protective as activities occur closer to occupied habitat and areas capable of directly affecting the Black and Delaware rivers.

Management Zone	Habitat Context	Conservation Measures (Examples)
Zone A	Occupied Habitat within the Black River and Delaware River.	No new surface disturbance is allowed. Participants must cease pumping when minimum flow is reached and avoid low-water crossings when alternatives exist.
Zone B	The Black and Delaware rivers (excluding Zone A in each), Blue Springs, and their associated USGS 100-year floodplain.	Participants should avoid disturbance where possible. If disturbance is unavoidable, they must minimize impacts and document justification. Erosion control measures and Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure (SPCC) compliance are required.
Zone C	Ephemeral drainages with direct connectivity to the Black and Delaware rivers, including Owl Draw.	Participants must maintain natural hydrologic connectivity and avoid obstruction of drainages where feasible. If impacts occur, erosion controls must be implemented.
Zone D	The area within the CCA Boundary, not otherwise described in management zones A, B, or C.	Participants must provide project documentation to CEHMM, maintain compliance with SPCC and grazing or vegetation plans, and allow access for monitoring and restoration work.

CONSERVATION MEASURE IMPLEMENTATION

CEHMM works with Participating Cooperators to review proposed activities, identify applicable conservation measures, and minimize potential impacts to THM habitat. Ongoing compliance monitoring and coordination with agency partners help ensure these measures are implemented effectively and support long-term conservation objectives.

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COMPLIANCE MONITORING AND CONSERVATION MEASURE VIOLATIONS

As administrators, CEHMM and the NMSLO are responsible for performing compliance monitoring with the CCA/A and notifying Participating Cooperators if any conservation measures outlined in their CIs or CPs are not implemented.

Compliance monitoring during the third quarter of 2026 included monthly well updates, field inspections, review of new surface disturbance notifications, verification of SPCC and Reasonable and Prudent Practices for Stabilization (RAPPS) compliance where applicable, and review of relevant data from the New Mexico Oil Conservation Division (NMOCD) and BLM right-of-way records.

A Conservation Measure Violation (CMV) formally documents a failure to implement conservation commitments. When a CMV is issued, CEHMM or the NMSLO work with the Participating Cooperator to develop and implement corrective actions specific to the conservation measures in question. If three CMVs are issued within a 12-month period, the Participating Cooperator risks termination of their CI or CP and forfeiture of any associated CCA/A benefits.

0
Instances of non-compliance during Q3

0
CMVs issued during Q3

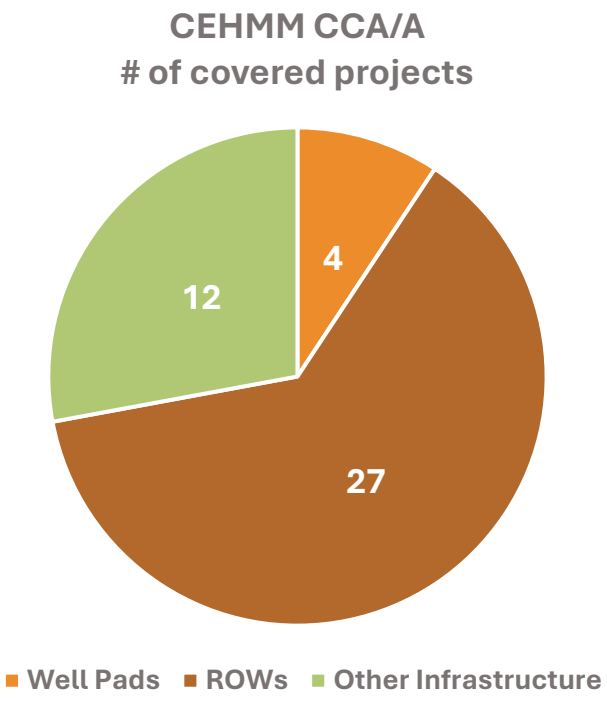
INDUSTRY ACTIVITIES COVERED IN Q3 2026

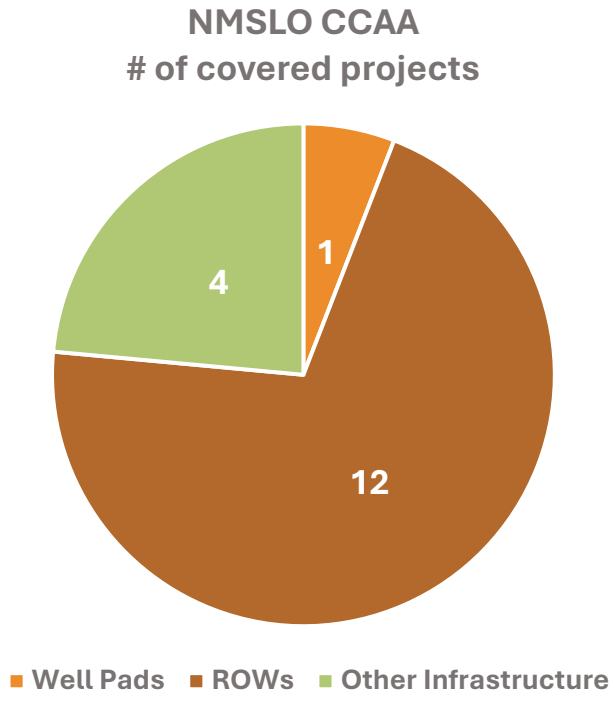
43
Notices of New Surface Disturbance Received By CEHMM

199.64
CEHMM Documented Acres of New Surface Disturbance

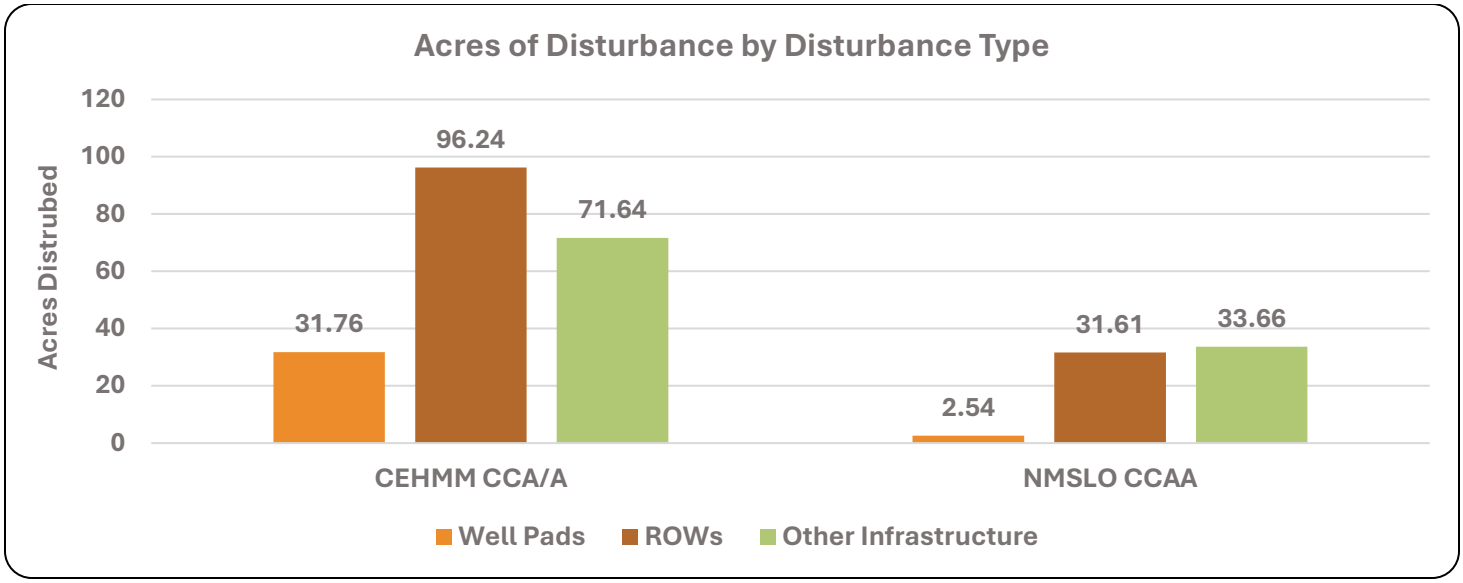
17
Notices of New Surface Disturbance Received By NMSLO

67.81
NMSLO Documented Acres of New Surface Disturbance





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FUNDING

Habitat Conservation Fund

CEHMM and the NMSLO establish a Habitat Conservation Fund (HCF) for each enrollee with an executed CI or CP agreement. Participants make an initial enrollment contribution, with additional conservation fees assessed for new surface disturbances based on the acreage disturbed and applicable management zone. CEHMM tracks individual HCF balances and applies debits following review of submitted activities.

Approximately 29% of industry contributions are allocated to overhead costs, while the remaining 71% supports CCA/A implementation, habitat improvement, research, monitoring, education and outreach, and other conservation-related activities.

71%

CCA/A Program Support

Conservation, research monitoring, and implementation

29%

Overhead

Program administration and operational costs

Grants

CEHMM actively pursues funding from federal, state, and private sources to expand conservation efforts for the Texas hornshell and other covered species. Grant funding supports research, habitat assessments, restoration planning, and collaborative conservation projects while strengthening partnerships and diversifying funding sources. These efforts supplement industry contributions and support the long-term sustainability of the program.



Habitat Improvements



Research



Monitoring



Education and Outreach



Program Implementation

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PROJECTS IN PROGRESS

2024 USFWS Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund Grant: Texas Hornshell Conservation Plan

Background

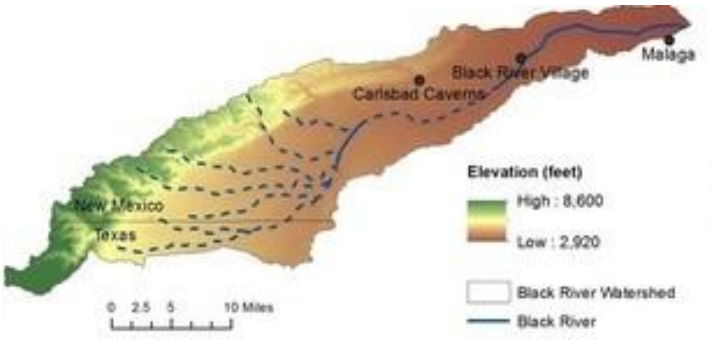
In 2023, CEHMM received funding through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund to support development of a new Texas hornshell conservation plan. Following execution of a Memorandum of Agreement in June 2024, CEHMM began developing the plan using the existing CCA/A framework and guidance from the Service. In 2026, the THM plan development was combined with the Lesser Prairie-Chicken and Dunes Sagebrush Lizard plan development to establish a unified, multi-species conservation framework.



Progress in Q3:

During Q3, CEHMM continued coordinating with the Service to advance the combined plan, focusing on stakeholder engagement, partner involvement, and gathering input to support plan development and long-term species conservation.

2025 NFWF Pecos River Watershed Conservation Initiative: Comprehensive Hydrologic Modeling (BRW)



Progress in Q3:

CEHMM accepted an amended proposal from a subcontractor and executed a contract to conduct the assessment. A kickoff meeting is planned for early Q4 to finalize project objectives and deliverables.

Background

In 2025, CEHMM received funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to evaluate hydrologic conditions throughout the Black River Watershed to inform restoration, flow management, and conservation strategies for Texas hornshell and other aquatic species. The assessment will examine groundwater and surface water resources, watershed connectivity, sedimentation and erosion risks, and water quality. Findings will help identify conservation priorities and guide future management decisions.

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2026 NFWF Pecos Watershed Conservation Initiative: Assessing Habitat Needs to Inform Conservation of the Texas Hornshell Mussel (NM)

Background

In 2026, CEHMM received funding from the NFWF to evaluate habitat conditions influencing THM distributions in the Black River. The project will assess approximately 120 locations across the Black River's occupied and unoccupied reach, collecting data on water quality, hydrology, substrate, and mussel presence. Findings will support habitat suitability modeling to identify conservation priorities, potential restoration sites, and opportunities for future translocation and emergency salvage.



Progress in Q3:

CEHMM received the fully executed contract during Q3. Fieldwork remains scheduled to begin in summer 2027, following project startup and equipment acquisition.

RIVER MONITORING

Black River Monitoring

3
USGS Gages Utilized to Remotely Monitor the Black River

7
Field Monitoring Visits and Spot Checks

14
Curtailment/Cease Pumping Requests Sent

≥28.2° C
Identified Critical Thermal Threshold for THM Glochidia

≤1.5 mg/L
Identified Critical Dissolved Oxygen Threshold for THM

≤3.0 cfs
Identified Critical Low Flow Threshold for THM

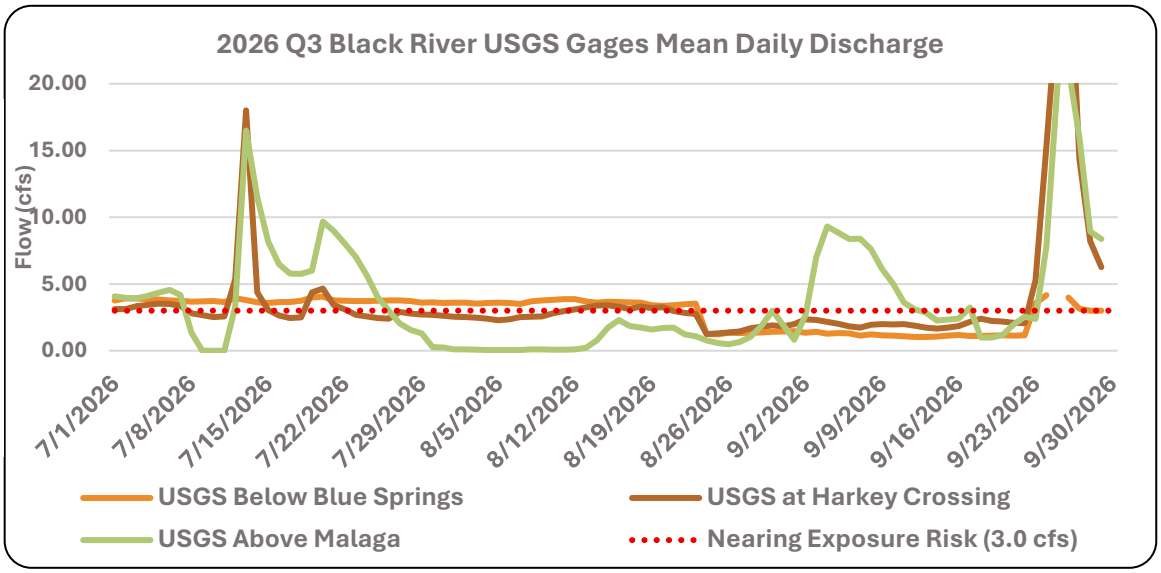
Temperature (28.2°C) and dissolved oxygen (1.5 mg/L) thresholds were identified through previously funded CEHMM research and have not been formally incorporated into program management requirements. They are included for informational and monitoring purposes.

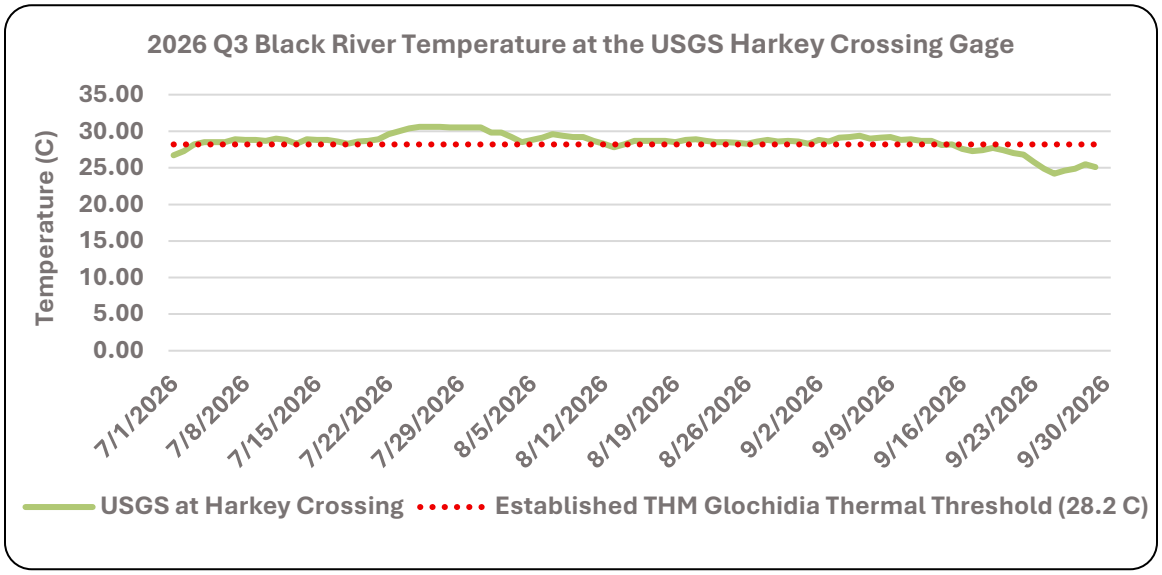
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Black River Monitoring continued...

63

Days ≤3.0 cfs Critical Flow Threshold and Exposure Risk for THM



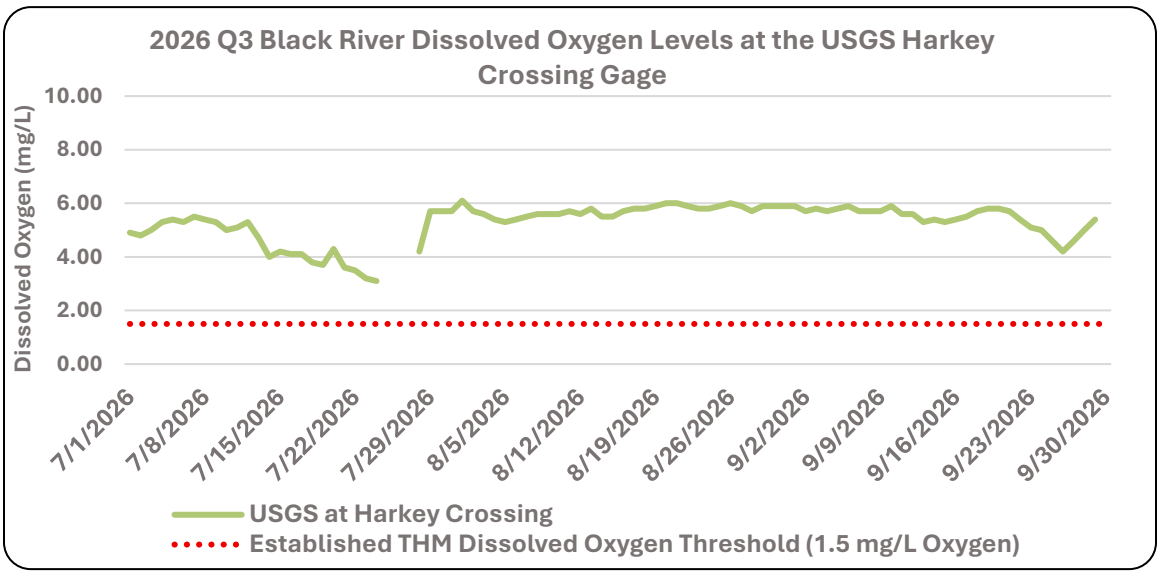


73

Days ≥28.2˚C Critical Thermal Threshold for THM Glochidia

0

Days ≤1.5 mg/L Critical Dissolved Oxygen Threshold for THM



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Delaware River Monitoring

6/11/2026
Last Day with Measurable Flow at Monitoring Site

111
Consecutive Days with Zero Flow at Monitoring Site

7
Field Monitoring Visits and Spot Checks

Field Collected Water Quality Measurements at the Delaware River During Q3			
Parameter	**7/07/2026**	**8/10/2026**	**9/21/2026**
Air Temperature (°C)	32.7	34.2	34.6
Observed Flow	No flow	No flow	No Flow
Water Temperature (°C)	27.0	24.2	26.6
Dissolved Oxygen (mg/L)	5.01	N/A	3.02
Conductivity (µS/cm)	3400	3410	4790
Salinity (ppt)	1.61	1.79	2.47







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SPECIES MONITORING

Texas Hornshell Life History Surveys

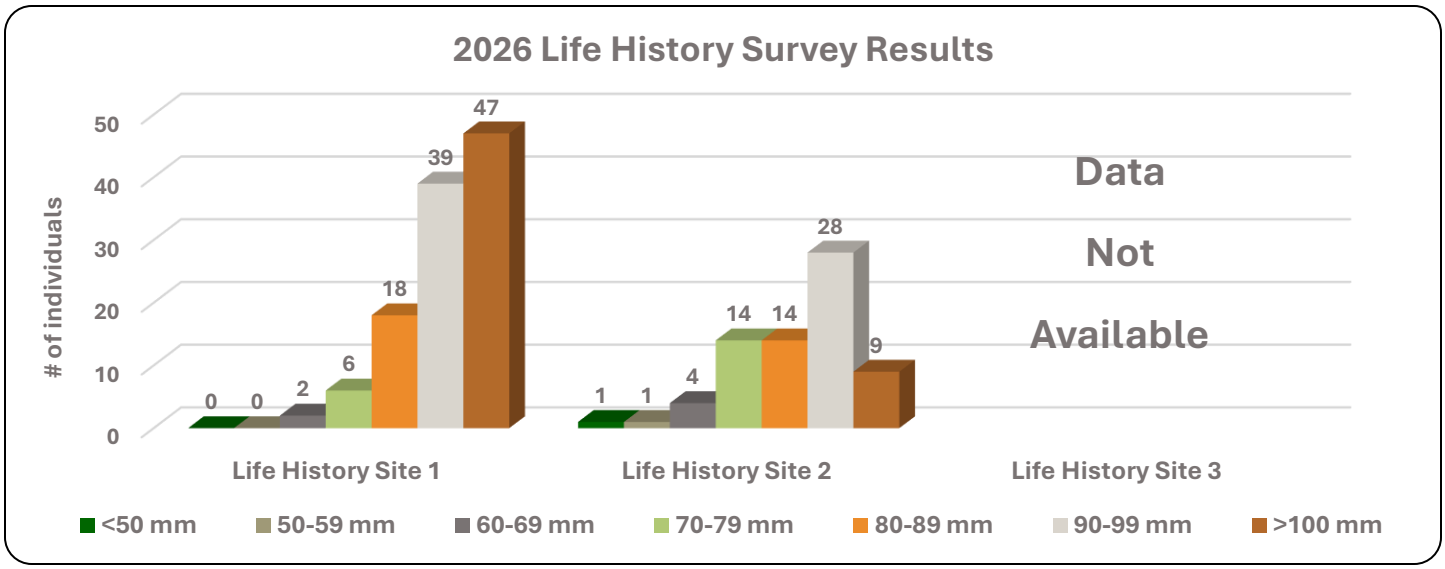
Background

In 1997, the NMDOW established annual mark-recapture surveys to track survival, growth, population trends, and relative recruitment.



Methods

Surveys were conducted at two established long-term monitoring sites within the occupied reach of the Black River. The third site was rescheduled due to inclement weather. Divers and snorkelers performed tactile searches to locate individuals along the bank and in the midchannel. Newly discovered mussels, or those that had lost their tags (n = 10), were fitted with Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tags for future identification. Mussels < 75 mm, which are expected to be ~5 years old or younger based on known length-at-age relationships, were counted.



183	140	33	15
Total Mussels Documented	Recaptured Mussels	New Mussels Pit Tagged	≤5-Year-Old Mussels (≤75 mm)

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OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

New Mexico State Land Office Black River Tour

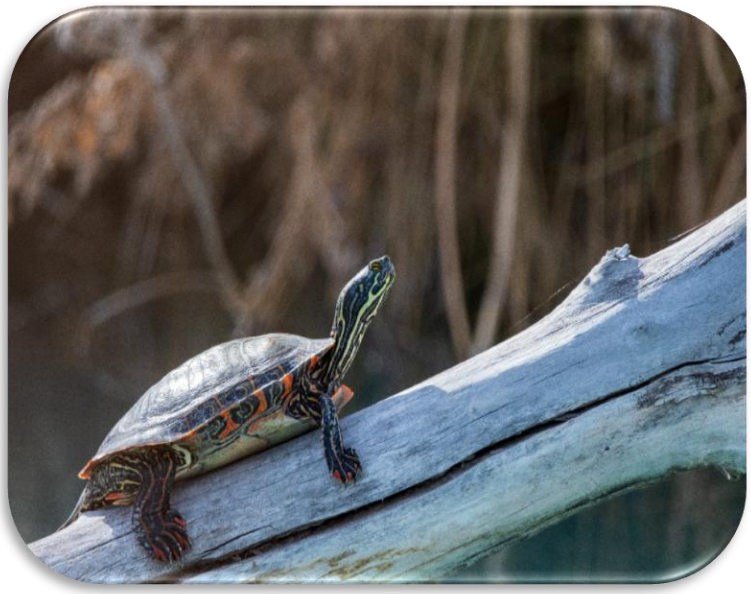
In August 2026, CEHMM hosted representatives from the NMSLO for an educational tour of the Black River watershed. The tour highlighted Texas hornshell habitat, ongoing conservation efforts, previous projects, and challenges facing the river. Site visits provided opportunities to share information, discuss conservation priorities, and strengthen partnerships supporting the long-term protection of the species.



Chevron and Albuquerque BioPark Rio Grande Cooter Release

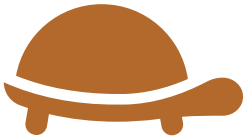
In September 2026, the Albuquerque BioPark and Chevron released three captive-raised Rio Grande cooters (*Pseudemys gorzugi*) into the Black River, bringing together conservation partners to highlight ongoing research and collaboration.

Following the release, CEHMM hosted a networking lunch featuring research presentations and discussions on conservation priorities, strengthening partnerships and exploring opportunities to support research, monitoring, and habitat restoration through the CCA/A.









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2026 Q3 IN REVIEW

Throughout much of the third quarter of 2026, the Black River exhibited extreme low flows and elevated stream temperatures that exceeded the thresholds established to prevent adverse physiological impacts to the Texas hornshell mussel across all life stages. This reduction in habitat quality made it necessary for CEHMM to send numerous curtailment requests to the water withdrawers enrolled in the CCA/A. River monitoring efforts were also substantially increased. In addition to monthly site visits, personnel expanded the number of sites visited to include historical mussel beds, and they increased the frequency of spot checks to ensure drought conditions did not result in the stranding of individual mussels. Although no displaced mussels were observed, CEHMM, in coordination with the Service and NMDOW, began work on an Emergency Contingency and Response Plan. This cooperative plan will establish early warning protocols and provide a decision-making framework to allow for rapid implementation of protective measures if necessary.

Progress was made on the forthcoming hydrologic modeling project aimed at improving our understanding of the hydrological dynamics of the Black River Watershed and informing landscape-level conservation planning for the Texas hornshell. Recently, CEHMM executed a contract with a subcontractor to conduct the assessment and water-balance evaluation, with a kick-off meeting planned for early Q4.

Additionally, personnel supported NMDOW's annual THM life history surveys, which use mark-recapture methods to evaluate the species' temporal population trends. Surveys were conducted at two sites, but unpredictable weather characteristic of New Mexico's monsoon season has delayed the final survey at the third site until early Q4.

CEHMM also hosted two outreach events this quarter that emphasized the collaborative nature of the CCA/A agreements. The first was an educational tour of the Black River for NMSLO representatives, and the second was a networking luncheon held following Chevron's and the Albuquerque BioPark's Rio Grande cooter release. Both events brought management partners together to discuss conservation priorities and opportunities for research and restoration, strengthening partnerships that support long-term protection of aquatic species covered by the CCA/A.

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SIGNATURE

If you have any questions, please call Austyn Chester at CEHMM at (575) 885-3700.

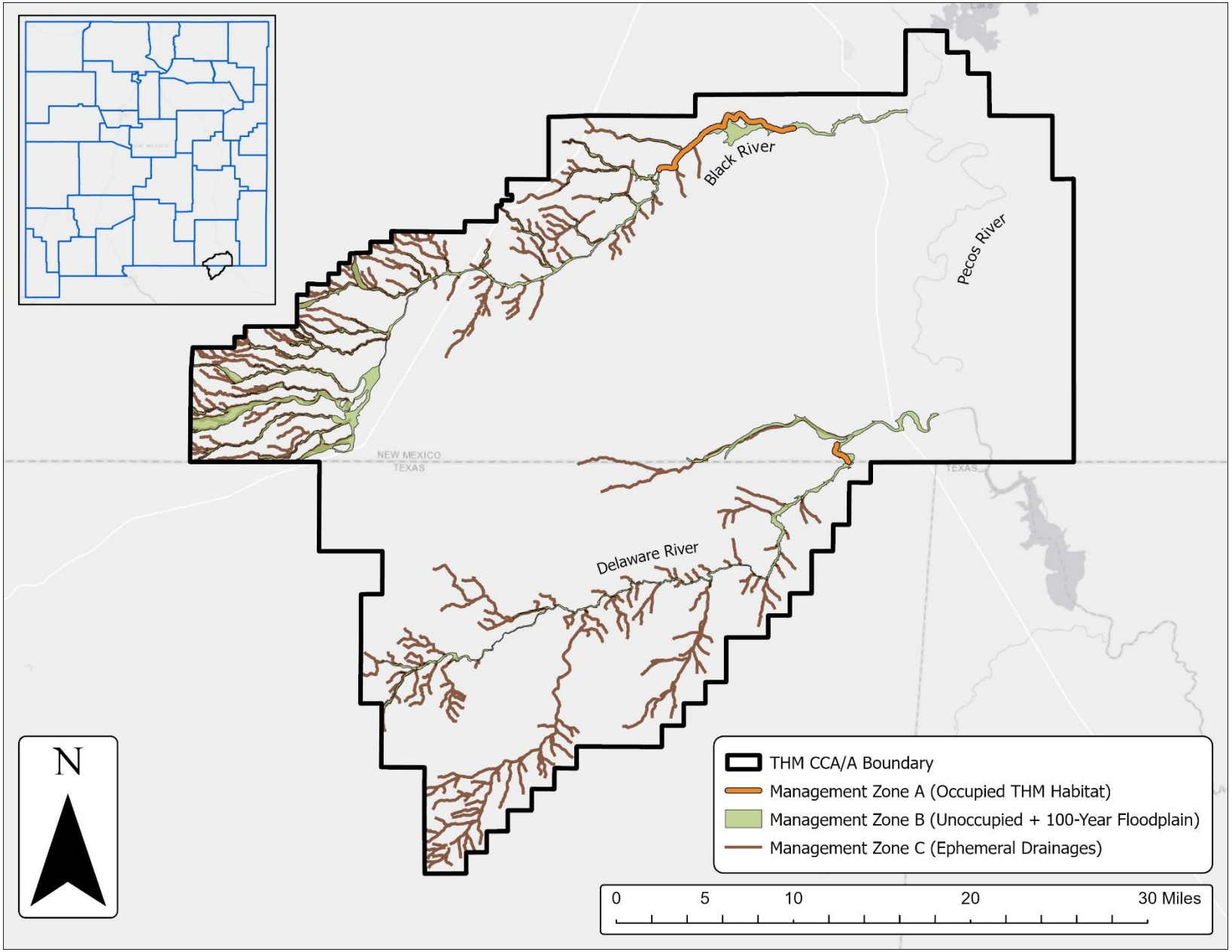
Signed by:
Emily K. Wirth
C3CAB72B951746E...

Signed: _____ Date: 10/16/2026

Emily K. Wirth, Executive Director
CEHMM

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APPENDIX A – TEXAS HORNSHELL CCA/A MANAGEMENT ZONES MAP



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APPENDIX B – USGS GAGES UTILIZED BY CEHMM FOR REMOTE BLACK RIVER MONITORING

