

Anjali Bean

Senior Policy Advisor, Healthy Rivers



Anjali Bean is a senior policy advisory for Western Resource Advocates (WRA). She is based in New Mexico and works to develop and advocate for state-level policies that protect rivers and improve water resiliency amid the impacts of climate change and dwindling water supplies in the state.

Growing up in a semi-rural area near Albuquerque, Bean has long been deeply connected to water. She remembers fishing for crawdads in the irrigation ditches behind her home. The annual return of these waters taught her about scarcity and the importance of water to connect people to the land on which they live through practices such as agriculture.

Because of this upbringing, and as river health and water supplies became increasingly threatened due to climate change, Bean was driven to help figure out how to keep rivers in New Mexico wet while ensuring communities can thrive.

As the Healthy Rivers team's first staff member based in New Mexico, Bean brings deep technical and policy expertise around protecting rivers and bolstering water security and is further building WRA's water presence in the state. She collaborates with partners, the legislature, regulatory bodies, and agencies including the Office of State Engineer, the Interstate Stream Commission, and the New Mexico Environment Department on state-level policy development and advocacy. Using tools such as environmental flow protections and Outstanding Natural Resource Waters designations, Bean is focused on keeping water in rivers and ensuring waterways and aquatic habitats in the Colorado River and Rio Grande basins are healthy now and into the future.

While water policy is complicated and the issues very difficult to solve, Bean isn't deterred by the challenge. She is driven by a desire to demonstrate that safeguarding rivers, having vibrant ecosystems, and meeting New Mexicans' basic water needs are not mutually exclusive, and she gladly dives into the details when it comes to solving New Mexico's toughest water problems. Perhaps what Bean enjoys most about her role with WRA is translating wonky water policy for partners and decision makers to find solutions-oriented ways forward.

Prior to joining WRA in January 2022, Bean was the water resources manager for Santa Fe County where she worked on tribal water rights settlements, water resources planning, and other water issues. In this role she represented the county in successfully renegotiating the terms of a water rights settlement between four Pueblo nations in New Mexico, the county, state, and federal government, to address significant project cost increases. Before that, she had a roughly decade-long career in Washington, D.C., in the international development field focused on urban development, housing, and access to clean water and basic sanitation in the developing world. Through roles with Habitat for Humanity International and IHC Global, her policy and research were used to influence policy and decision-making at the U.S. Department of State, USAID, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

Bean received a Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Studies from the American University in Washington, D.C., and a Master of Water Resources from the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque.

Bean lives in Albuquerque with her partner and two cats. She loves to bake and always looks forward to Christmas cookie season and cross-country skiing. She makes most of the bread for her household and has a sourdough starter that's more than five years old!

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