
Modern Elder Academy

Modern Elder Academy Water Planning & Engineering

Lamy, New Mexico



More than 40 residents from the Village of Galisteo attend a Water Meeting with MEA founder, Chip Conley, and the Biohabitats team.

Innovative, sustainable water infrastructure helps a community dedicated to cultivating midlife purpose and wisdom steward local water resources in an arid region near thousands of acres of protected grasslands and arroyos.

SERVICES

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Water

The Modern Elder Academy (MEA) aims to shift the primary aspiration in aging from leisure to cultivating purpose and connection by building vibrant communities centered around a campus for midlife wisdom retreats and sabbaticals. After proving the concept of a “midlife wisdom school” in Baja California Sur, Mexico, the organization is developing its first U.S. Academy outside of Santa Fe, NM. The community will champion the regenerative principle of ‘good soil’ to cultivate resilient people, place, and planet, and will include an MEA campus and regenerative farm that reflect the organization’s commitment to intergenerational connection and environmental stewardship.

The organization turned to Biohabitats for help in developing innovative, sustainable water infrastructure for the new community that would align with MEA principles, the site’s arid climate, and its proximity to Galisteo Basin Preserve, a large conservation-based community development with thousands of acres of protected grasslands and arroyos and miles of public trails.

After preparing an estimate of wastewater generation and recycled water demand and analyzing the feasibility of a variety of strategies, Biohabitats developed a natural systems-based approach to treat and reuse wastewater to support the primarily native landscape and replenish the groundwater supply. A constructed wetland system will be employed at each of the site’s two retreat centers. Together, the systems are designed to treat water to levels beyond code requirements, returning clean water to the groundwater aquifer and recycling it to offset the seasonal irrigation demand for the site’s landscapes. The site’s landscapes, while designed to be low-water and xeric in nature, will benefit from the use of recycled water instead of groundwater to provide shade, windbreaks, wildlife forage, and control of erosion from bare soils.