

Background

This addendum is to the April 27th, COVID-19 in Southeast New Mexico Perspective and Pathway, the First Addendum dated May 4th, and the Second Addendum dated May 11th. Refer to the original documents for background. This is an update of data through Saturday, May 16, 2020.

Changes in New Mexico

COVID-19 infections continue to grow in New Mexico with the overwhelming majority of new cases in just a few counties. Between Saturday, May 9, and Saturday, May 16, the State count for positive tests went from 4,778 to 5,847 or an increase of 22.4%. The largest increases were in McKinley, 356 new cases; San Juan, 301 new cases; Bernalillo, 144 new cases; Dona Ana, 81 new cases; Sandoval, 36 new cases; Cibola, 15 new cases; Roosevelt, 15 new cases; Santa Fe, 12 new cases and Curry, 11 new cases. All other counties had only single digit increases or no increase. When compared with population, the “hot spots” continue to stand out. McKinley County had 33.3% of the new cases but has only 3.5% of the State’s population. Similarly, San Juan County had 28.2% of the new cases with just 6.1% of the State’s population. Bernalillo County had the third highest number with 13.5%, but as the most populous county, it has 32.4% of the State’s population. The rest of the top counties have percentages of increases smaller than their portion of the state population except for Cibola and Roosevelt Counties. Cibola had 1.4% of the increase with 1.3% of the State population.

Roosevelt County suddenly increased by 1.4% of the overall number with 0.9% of the State’s population. 12 of the 15 increases were reported on Saturday, May 16. Seven of the 12 came through a COVID test site five days earlier and are reported to have had “known exposure”, not further described. None of the 12 were hospitalized. Prior to that date Roosevelt County had 5 additional cases between May 1 and May 15. The reason for the sudden increase was not known as of Monday, May 18.

It should be noted that over the past week 61.5% of the increases have occurred in just two counties with less than 10% of the State’s population.

Beginning on Saturday May 9th the State began reporting cases in detention facilities associated with federal law enforcement separate from County totals. These cases are included in the state total. The press release on May 9th stated:

The Department of Health currently reports 19 COVID-19 cases among individuals being held at the federal Otero County Processing Center run by ICE in Otero County. Due to a reporting error, these cases were previously accounted for within the total case counts for Otero and Doña Ana counties – moving forward they will be reported separately for clarity.

Since then the State has added the Cibola County Correctional Center, the Otero County Prison Facility, and the Torrance County Detention Facility. On May 16 these four detention facilities had 80 positive cases or 1.4% of the State total. For the sake of this analysis, County percentages of cases reflect the percentage of the state total which includes these facilities although their numbers are not reflected in any county's number.

The situation in West Texas

As reported in the Second Addendum, effective Friday, May 1, 2020, the Governor of Texas authorized significant relaxation of restrictions throughout Texas. As of May 17 this lessening in restriction has been in effect for over two weeks.

Comments have been made about increases in cases in states that have relaxed restrictions. In the general literature assertions have been made that these are due to increases in testing. That issue is outside the scope of this effort.

As noted in the original document, there is significant economic, cultural, and personal interaction between Southeast New Mexico and West Texas. There is very limited interaction between Southeast New Mexico and El Paso with the exception of Lincoln County. The Permian Oil basin, while centered in the Midland-Odessa area, extends into SE New Mexico. Even Curry and Roosevelt Counties have had some oil and gas operations. Geography, economy and culture intensely connect Southeast New Mexico with West Texas. The interaction between Eddy and Lea counties and the Midland/Odessa is particularly strong.

Concern has been expressed that the relaxation of restrictions in Texas could adversely impact SE New Mexico.

The Texas counties bordering SE New Mexico are Yoakum (Plains), Terry (Brownfield), Lubbock (Lubbock), Seminole (Gaines), Andrew (Andrews), Winkler (Kermit), Ector (Odessa), and Midland (Midland). The total population of Texas is approximately 700,000.

West Texas Permian Counties								
County	County Seat	Pop	Cases 4/30	Death 4/30	Cases 5/10	Death 5/10	Cases 5/17	Death 5/17
Yoakum	Plains	8,568	1	0	2	0	2	0
Terry	Brownfield	12,715	10	0	2	0	12	0
Lubbock	Lubbock	305,225	507	43	583	49	616	0
Gaines	Seminole	20,638	2	0	3	0	5	0
Andrews	Andrews	17,722	19	0	21	0	22	0
Winkler	Kermit	7,574	3	0	3	0	3	0



Ector	Odessa	157,087	78	4	95	4	109	4
Midland	Midland	165,049	75	6	101	11	120	12
Total		649,578	695	53	820	64	889	66
					125		69	
					18.0%		8.4%	

As reported on the Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University (JHU) website, the above cases were listed at 3 PM, MDT on April 30, 2020, at 3 PM MDT on May 10, 2020 and at 3 PM MDT on May 17, 2020.

By way of comparison, Bernalillo County with a population of about 678,000 had 812 cases on April 30. On May 9 there were 1,050 cases for an increase of 238 cases or 29.3%. On May 16 there were 1,194 cases with an increase of 144 or 12.1%.

Sandoval, San Juan, Cibola and McKinley counties have a combined population of about 368,000 or close to half of the West Texas counties. On April 30 they had 2,089 cases. By May 9th that had increased to 3,061, an increase of 972 or 46.5%. On May 16 these counties had 3,769 cases which is an increase of 708 or 23.1%.

Increases in New Mexico have slowed, but the growth of cases West Texas is half of that in the Albuquerque area and 1/10th of the increase in Northwest New Mexico, which has half the population. This data continues to show that Central and Northwest New Mexico still pose a greater threat to Southeast New Mexico than the West Texas Permian counties which have had fewer restrictions on activity than New Mexico. It may be more appropriate to require a two week quarantine for individuals coming to Southeast New Mexico from Central and Northwest New Mexico instead of West Texas.

Hospitalization numbers (Better benchmark)

As stated previously, the initial concern was that the virus would overwhelm the local hospitals capacity to treat individuals. In fact this was the rationale for restricting citizens. Statewide the number in hospitals seems to have stabilized around 200. On Saturday, April 25, the number hospitalized was 161 and two weeks later, Saturday, May 16th, it was 203. During that time the low was 148 on April 26 and the high was 223 on May 15th.

To date Roswell has had five individuals in the hospital with COVID-19 since restrictions began. As of Friday, May 8th , only one was in the hospital. On Friday May 15th a single COVID patient existed in Chaves County. On that date there was one other COVID-19 patient in the other Southeast New Mexico counties for a total of two out of the state total of 223 that day or 0.9%

In addition, the Southeast New Mexico Counties are intimately connected to the health care facilities in Lubbock and Amarillo. In Lubbock is the Texas Tech University Medical Center system and the Covenant Health organization. Trauma and other serious matters are much more

likely to be transferred from Southeast New Mexico to Lubbock hospitals than Albuquerque hospitals.

Active Cases

Another more appropriate measure would be the number of “active cases”. This is the number of total cases minus deaths and recovered patients. As shared in the Second Addendum, on Friday, April 24th, there were 2,521 total cases reported with 84 deaths and 614 recovered which yields 1,823 active cases. On Friday May 1st the numbers were 3,513 cases, 131 deaths and 785 recovered for 2,597 active cases or an increase of 774 active cases. Friday May 8th revealed 4,673 cases, 181 deaths and 1,189 recovered for 3,303 active cases. This is an increase of 706 cases.

Due to the lack of a number for “recovered”, data from Friday, April 17th , was not used. However, if the “recovered” number from Saturday, April 18 is used (a more optimistic number) then an additional data point is established. In this case we had 1,711 cases on April 17 with 51 deaths and 465 reported recoveries the next day for a total of 1,195 active cases on April 17.

Adding the data for Friday, May 15th, shows 5,662 total cases minus 253 deaths and minus 1,671 recovered for a total of 3,738 active cases. Now with five data points we see the following:

Date	Active Cases	Increase
Apr 17	1,195	
Apr 24	1,823	628
May 1	2,597	774
May 8	3,303	706
May 15	3,738	435

The data clearly points toward a slowing in active cases after reaching a peak in late April. Furthermore, this slowing has occurred while the number of tests has significantly increased from a daily number of the upper two thousands (late April) to the upper four thousands (mid May). At the same time case growth continues rapidly in McKinley County. Three hundred twenty-seven new cases were identified between May 8th and May 15th. There continues to be a need for the DOH to release current and historical data on recoveries by county.

Conclusion

It has been asserted in these documents that a correct definition of Southeast New Mexico looks



3rd Addendum, 05/18/20, COVID-19 in SE NM
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at the five counties that have ties to the Permian Basin. However even if one uses the Department of Health grouping that adds Quay, Guadalupe, De Baca, and Lincoln, there have only been a total of four deaths associated with COVID-19 or 1.5% of the state total in an area that is 14.1% of the State population. Looking at the impact of West Texas after over 16 days of relaxed restrictions the threat is from Central and Northwest New Mexico.

The data clearly shows that there is not a public health crisis in Southeast New Mexico. This region has experienced minimal impact. Continued restrictions are not justified by the data or the science.

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