

NMT Aquatics – Frequently Asked Questions

(March 6, 2026)

Why is the current New Mexico Tech pool closing?

The NMT Swim Center has experienced significant structural deterioration over the past several years. Recent contractor assessments identified major infrastructure concerns, including failing deck structures, aging mechanical systems, and leaking pipes beneath the facility. These issues have compromised the structural integrity of the pool area and limited our ability to install a bubble/dome for the pool that allows year-round access. Based on these findings, the university determined that continuing to operate the facility without major reconstruction would pose safety risks and limited access to users.

Is the closure related to budget cuts?

No. The closure is primarily driven by **safety and infrastructure concerns**. While funding is always a consideration in large capital projects, and its operations, the immediate issue is that the existing pool and its bubble structure has reached the end of its useful life and requires significant reconstruction.

Why not just repair the existing pool?

Contractors advised that repairs would likely be extensive and costly, and in some cases could require demolition and rebuilding portions of the facility. Estimates for repair or replacement range from **\$3 - \$5 million**, for the pool and its cover. Knowing repair work would be extensive, even if funding were available, the facility would be closed for 12-24 months. Because of these limitations, the university began exploring alternative solutions that could maintain aquatic access while planning for a long-term facility.

What is the proposed partnership with the City of Socorro?

New Mexico Tech is working with the City of Socorro to explore a **joint-use partnership** at the municipal pool. Under the proposed arrangement, NMT would assume operational management and help enhance the facility so it can serve both the university and the community year-round.

What improvements are planned for the City pool?

The proposal includes constructing a **permanent hard-shell enclosure** over the City pool to allow year-round use. This structure would replace the temporary “bubble” model and provide a more durable, energy-efficient facility. The details regarding structure (e.g., lighting layout, access points, concession stand locations, connection to the lightning detection system at NMT) are still TBD.

How will this benefit NMT students?

Maintaining access to aquatic facilities supports:

- NMT student recreation and wellness
- Swim training and instruction (including lifeguard training)
- Academic and recreational programming

The partnership allows NMT students to continue accessing a swimming facility that is within an approximate 10 to 20 minute walk from most areas of campus while the university plans its long-term wellness center.

Will the community still have access to aquatic programs?

Yes. The partnership is designed to **preserve community programming**, including youth swim lessons, recreational swimming, SHS and Stingray (community team) practice sessions, and senior water exercise programs.

When will the current NMT pool close?

Typically, the NMT pool is closed during/near spring break to allow personnel to remove the bubble and drain/refill the pool. At this time, we do not know when this will occur. Once the date is identified, it will be communicated to users, the campus community, and the Socorro community.

When will the new regional aquatic center open?

If the partnership proceeds as planned and is approved by the NMT Regents, the goal is to begin operating the **Socorro Regional Aquatic Center no later than late May 2026**.

Will this replace the possibility of a future campus pool?

No. The university is planning a **Student & Community Wellness Center** that may include a new campus aquatic facility in a later phase. However, based on funding availability and construction timelines, that project could take many years to complete.

How will this affect campus recreation programs?

Campus Recreation staff are working to ensure aquatic programming can continue through the regional facility partnership. Additional details about scheduling and access will be shared as the transition plan is finalized.

Why not keep NMT Swim Center Open Until After the Summer?

Once the pool is drained for its seasonal transition, NMT would have to certify that it is safe to operate and any identified concerns would delay reopening the NMT pool. Additionally, the local labor market for certified lifeguards is limited. Keeping both the NMT Swim Center and the City pool operational simultaneously would force NMT and the City to compete for the same small group of qualified staff. By closing the NMT facility prior to summer, we can consolidate all staffing resources—including the City's Teen Summer Worker Program—into a single, high-quality team for the Regional Aquatic Center's grand opening. Finally, the partnership with the City is built on a shared-resource model. Running two facilities through the summer would double the operational overhead (utilities, chemicals, and payroll). This would exhaust the City's FY27 budget before the Regional Aquatic Center even fully opens its doors. To ensure the joint management model is financially sustainable, it is more efficient to leverage both budgets to focus on the new regional site shortly following NMT's pool closure.

If there is a transition to the Socorro Regional Aquatic Center, how long will the City pool have to be closed to install the enclosure structure? If the installation is for an extended period of time, could the NMT pool remain open during that period to serve users?

At this time, we are still evaluating the specific timeline required for the enclosure structure at the City facility. This duration would be a key factor during our review process when selecting both the structure and the installation firm. Our priority is to ensure these phases are managed with the least possible impact to service delivery. If the installation requires a brief period to complete (e.g. a week or two), the NMT pool will not be reopened for that short window. Should the installation require several months, then we would actively explore opening the NMT pool during this period (and its financial impact). Any decision to operate both facilities simultaneously presents budgetary challenges and we must ensure the transition remains fiscally responsible for both organizations.

How is this project being funded?

NMT and the City plan to continue using their existing budgets to support the Regional Aquatic Center. Additionally, internal funds have already been identified to support (or partially support) the bubble's replacement which will be redirected to the City's pool. NMT will continue to seek **capital outlay and grant funding** for the enclosure project in collaboration with our local partners. Finally, NMT is evaluating the projected cost for operating this facility year-round that may affect user rates at the Regional Aquatic Center. Any proposed changes in the cost structure for users will be presented to the community in advance of implementation.

What contributes to the NMT pool's \$3 - \$5 million cost estimate?

This project has several unknown conditions that significantly impact the potential cost. Due to suspected leaks and saturated subsurface soils, the full extent of soil damage is currently unknown. The amount of compromised soil cannot be determined until demolition begins, and any saturated soils may require excavation and replacement. If contaminants are present, such as asbestos material, abatement procedures would also be required, which further increases the cost.

The estimates also assume a complete removal and replacement of the existing pool, including the pool shell, pool deck, and all associated mechanical systems. This includes new pool equipment, replacement of pool system piping, electrical work for the pool systems, and potential electrical infrastructure upgrades to support modern equipment. Other factors contributing to this estimate include the increases in construction and labor costs (based in part on prevailing wage requirements).

Because of these unknown site conditions, regulatory requirements, and the scope of full system replacement, the projected \$3–5 million range reflects a realistic planning estimate until demolition and site conditions can be fully verified. The estimates were based on feedback NMT received from licensed contractors along with a review of the project by NMT staff.

Fast Facts: NMT Aquatics

- The goal of the partnership is to create a **shared regional facility** that supports students, local schools, and community aquatic programs.
- The university is working to ensure **continued aquatic access** by partnering with the City of Socorro to operate a regional aquatic facility that will serve both the campus and the community.

- The closure is due to **serious infrastructure and safety concerns**. The university is actively working to maintain aquatic access through a partnership with the City of Socorro and long-term planning as part of a future wellness center.
- The primary issue is **structural deterioration of the facility**. Engineering and contractor assessments found major problems with the deck, pipes, and supporting infrastructure. Continuing to operate the facility without major reconstruction would pose safety risks.
- Contractors advised that the facility has **extensive structural issues** and that repairs could require demolition and rebuilding major portions of the pool.
- The facility's deterioration has been **documented over the past two years**, including issues with the bubble enclosure, deck failures, and underground pipe leaks. Multiple assessments and discussions led to the current transition plan.
- Aquatic facilities remain part of the **long-term vision for the Student & Community Wellness Center**. However, that project will likely be developed in phases over multiple years as funding becomes available.