



State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet New Mexico 2024



Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2023 Estimate
Community Forestry and Open Space	\$0
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management	\$443,500
Forest Legacy	\$100,000
Forest Stewardship	\$228,879
Landscape Scale Restoration	\$577,076
State Fire Assistance	\$1,604,815
Urban and Community Forestry	\$430,000
Volunteer Fire Assistance	\$800,100
Total	\$4,184,370

NOTE: This funding is for all entities within the state, not just the State Forester's office.

The New Mexico Forestry Division (Division) provides statewide leadership to sustain healthy and productive forests on approximately 8.7 million acres of the state's private forests and woodlands. The Division is the lead state agency for forest and watershed health and convenes diverse partners to interconnect forest land management activities across other agencies, local communities, landowners, and Tribes. The Division's work is collaborative, interdisciplinary, and focused on long-term sustainability. The Division empowers New Mexico communities to protect, enhance, and utilize their forest resources and is responsible for leading wildland fire suppression on approximately 43 million acres of non-federal, non-municipal, and non-tribal lands. Cooperative forestry programs are administered and implemented through a partnership between the State of New Mexico, the USDA Forest Service and many other private, non-profit, tribal, and governmental entities.

Program Goals

- Provide for protection and safety of the public and firefighters.
- Develop qualified and properly equipped fire fighters to safely suppress wildland fire.
- Increase the pace of planning efforts and restoration projects at a watershed and landscape scale through multiple agency partner agreements and collaborative strategies.
- Assist communities to reduce their vulnerability to damage from wildland fires, insects, & invasive species.
- Enhance the economic viability of NM communities while protecting their natural resources.
- Provide technical assistance and promote current forest, watershed and urban and community forest management science.

Key Issues

- Forest and watershed health.
- Threat of climate change and destructive wildfires in critical watersheds and the wildland-urban interface.
- Increased occurrence and extent of insect and disease outbreaks.
- Forest resiliency and adaptability.
- Urban forest canopy loss.
- Fragmentation of forest landscapes.
- Reforestation supply chains and post-fire recovery

Forest Facts and Accomplishments

Selected Facts	Value	FY 2023 Accomplishments	Value
Population	2,117,522	Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	3,186
Acres of Forest Land	24,591,240	Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	6,199
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	10,986,759	Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans	5,463
Number of NIPF Landowners	52,453	Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	87
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	5,202,479	State Fire Communities Assisted	6
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	34,157,000	Coop Forest Health Acres Protected	1,300
Number of Rural Fire Departments	368	Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	0
Cities and Towns	105	Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	46
Forest Based Employment	2,350	Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	1,311,837
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	0	Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	3,465
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	20,502,000		

Program Highlights

Community Wildfire Defense Grants in New Mexico

Community Wildfire Defense Grants (CWDG) have become a critical component in delivering wildland-urban-interface technical support and financial resources to communities at risk across New Mexico. The Division is using CWDG Base Funding to support a full-time coordinator who is working with Communities At-Risk to develop community wildfire protection planning and hazardous fuel implementation projects across the state. Since the beginning of the program, 17 planning and 34 implementation proposals have been submitted for funding, with 5 projects funded in the first cycle.

Conservation Education

The Division has a long legacy of providing a wealth of conservation education knowledge to residents and visitors to New Mexico. The Division continues its tradition of more than three decades of helping lead the state's Project Learning Tree program. Project Learning Tree trains dozens of education professionals statewide in how to use forest and watershed health issues as part of their daily curriculum. The Division plays an active in the Philmont Scout Ranch Visiting Forester Program, placing foresters within an 86-acre demonstration forest to help interpret forestry for 20,000 scouts who visit the Ranch each summer. The Division reaches out to New Mexicans with conservation education at large annual events such as the New Mexico State Fair, distributing conservation tree seedlings and talking with residents and visitors about the role forests and fire play in our daily lives. The Division manages Smokey Bear Historic Park in Capitan, NM, established in 1976 to honor Capitan's favorite son, Smokey Bear. At the Visitors Center guests interact with fascinating exhibits about forest health, wildfires, the science of fire ecology, and a historical look at wildfire prevention.

Cooperative Fire Protection

The Cooperative Fire Five Year Plan, plus the Forest Action Plan, prioritizes the Division's objectives and needs in cooperative fire funding to sustain the Division's ability to achieve its mission of preventing and suppressing unwanted fires within 43 million acres of protected state and private land. This also includes the treatment of fuels to protect communities and improve forest health. In FY23, we have 65 CWPP's identifying 913 communities at risk from wildland fire. Of these communities, 450 are listed as high risk, 305 are listed as moderate risk, and 158 are listed as low risk.

Economic Action

The Division provides access to technology transfer and specialized business and marketing technical assistance with the intent to advance the science of healthy forest and woodland ecosystems and

acceptable practices for reducing hazardous fuels. The Division provides technical assistance and administers forest harvest practice standards on commercial timber sales on private forest lands in New Mexico. In New Mexico, there remains a steady harvest of wood for lumber, poles and posts, vigas/latillas, firewood, shavings, and pellets.

The Division is partnering with Luna Community College to provide training on equipment operation and other workforce development opportunities for the timber industry, and supports the Source Verified Good Wood Collaborative Forest Restoration Project.

In early 2023 the Division co-chaired the Timber Task Force for the Hermits Peak-Calf Canyon Wildfire Recovery Line of Effort, leading to the expedited removal of 553 acres of hazard trees along roads in the Santa Fe National Forest. Funded with state dollars, this project employed five local contractors and downed trees were available to impacted communities for free-use firewood collection.

Forest Health Protection

The Division's Forest Health Program delivers technical and monetary assistance to landowners and managers of forested lands throughout New Mexico. Technical assistance is provided by direct response to phone/email requests, education programs, training, and site visits.

The Division's Forest Health Program Coordinator assists land management agencies, partners, and private landowners with forest health diagnoses and technical assistance, including identification of insect samples. Monetary assistance for forest health improvement is provided to private landowners through the Forest Health Initiative (FHI) cost-share program. The goal of FHI is to administer federal dollars for thinning projects to reduce the risk of bark beetle and pathogen infestations on private land. The Division approved 23 new FHI projects in 2023, totaling 2,314 acres of stewardship planning and 599 acres of thinning treatments.

The Division collaborates with the US Forest Service to conduct annual insect and pathogen surveys of New Mexico's forests and woodlands. With rising costs, we've managed to create efficiencies within the program to maintain full coverage and keep costs down, while maintaining our focus on safety. During the 2023 aerial survey season 237,000 acres of statewide forest and woodlands had experienced defoliation, including 33,000 acres with bark beetle-killed trees. These represent significant decreases compared with 2022. However, bark-beetle activity in burn scars from the historic 2022 fire season is being observed and may increase significantly in the coming years.

Forest Legacy

Phase I of the Forest Legacy Brazos Cliffs project was funded for \$3,480,000.00 through the USDA Forest Service. It will protect 3,620 acres in Rio Arriba Country from development. Phase II was funded in FY2019 for \$2,055,000.00 and will protect an additional 2,740 acres. In 2022 an extension was granted for the project. The conservation easement for both phases should be completed by 09/30/2024.

Forest Stewardship

In 2024 the Division is reimagining its Stewardship Program with support for BIL Underserved Landowner Assistance funding. Two landscape stewardship pilot projects will be completed in San Miguel and Mora Counties will inform the development of a Landscape Stewardship Strategy document, which will define the administration of the Stewardship Program moving forward. As a result, the Division will prioritize planning at the community scale (with an emphasis on underserved landowners) as opposed to developing stewardship plans primarily for individual property owners. This effort is tying in with the Community Navigator Program and to inform the strategy and develop best practices for planning in at-risk rural communities.

Hazard Tree Mitigation for Private Landowners Impacted by the Hermits Peak-Calf Canyon Wildfire

The Division and the USFS are addressing hazardous trees that threatened roads, powerlines, and structures on private land impacted by the Hermits Peak-Calf Canyon wildfire disaster with a \$6M Cooperative Forestry grant. The participation of private landowners is essential because rights-of-way along roads and powerlines are often too narrow for management in these areas to fully mitigate posed by burned trees. This project is being coordinated closely with other public assistance funds through the New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

Landowner Assistance

The Division provides technical and financial assistance to NM landowners through six district offices, one satellite office, the Stewardship Program, the Forest Health Program, and the Conservation Seedling Program. In FY23 the Division continued to provide leadership in support of the Back-Yard Tree Farm Program. This is an interagency effort targeting the high-risk, urban/wildland interface areas. During this reporting period 83,753 seedlings were distributed through the seedling program and 40,203 acres of recovery plans were completed for HPCC landowners in San Miguel and Mora Counties.

Landscape Scale Restoration

Reintroducing Fire to the Turkey Mountains Landscape: The Turkey Mountains rise from New Mexico's rolling high plains in a distinct sky island at the western edge of the great prairie grasslands, adjacent to the Rio Mora National Wildlife Refuge. Ponderosa pine and mixed conifer forests comprise the 65,000-acre biodiversity-rich landscape that also houses major transmission lines and five emergency communications towers. Risk of uncharacteristic wildfire threatens these values. Since the beginning of the project, the Division has completed 3,000 out of 4,500 priority [treatments?] that have prepared the landscape to act as a model and training ground for the safe reintroduction of beneficial fire.

New Mexico Hotshot Crews

The Division has begun hiring for two new hotshot crews, located in Socorro and Las Vegas, NM. Each crew will consist of 20-22 members and begin as Type-2 wildland fire hand crews. Crews will respond to fires on state and private land in New Mexico but will also be available to assist on federal and out-of-state fires.

New Mexico Reforestation Center

The Division is partnering with the University of New Mexico, Highlands University, US Forest Service and New Mexico State University to build the New Mexico Reforestation Center at the site of the John T. Harrington Forestry Research Center in Mora, NM. Once completed, the new facility will be capable of producing 5 million seedlings annually, play a critical role in wildfire recovery activities across the southwest, and become an important economic driver for communities impacted by the Hermits Peak-Calf Canyon wildfire disaster.

USFS Awarded \$10,160,000 of disaster supplemental funds to match the \$8,500,000 investment made by New Mexico. With these funds, the New Mexico Reforestation Center is on track to break ground on a new facility by the end of FY 2024, which will be able to provide the USFS with 2 million seedlings a year by 2026 to achieve restoration goals.

USFS Granted the New Mexico Reforestation Center a Cone Collection Permit that enabled the NMRC to collect 7.5 million seeds to produce ecologically and regionally viable tree seedlings for reforestation. R3 National Forests collected over 40 million seeds, with the help of partners such as the New Mexico Reforestation Center. These cones need to be collected within a 2-week period out of the year and tree species cone crop only happens every 10 years – so this accomplishment is critical for achieving our reforestation targets for the next decade.

R3 Special Project: NM and USFS Shared Stewardship Initiative

Prioritized the USFS Shared Stewardship Initiative and Wildfire Crisis Strategy goals of working with partners across jurisdictions to develop and implement projects and support planning and investments in fire-adapted communities.

- i. Conducted monthly shared stewardship meetings with New Mexico Forestry Division to identify cross-boundary goals.
- ii. Established Cross-boundary leadership teams of Federal, State, County, and Tribal Partners in the Enchanted Circle and Southern Sacramentos landscapes and provided \$200,000 to support key partners and future collaborative efforts.
- iii. Shifted priorities for Western Bark funding to priority landscapes for Forest Health prevention treatments. \$350,000 equaling approximately 560 acres of prevention treatments in FY23.
- iv. Significant increase in cone collection to bolster seed bank resources.
- v. Updated Community Wildfire Protection Plans across the region.
- vi. R3 was allocated \$1,900,000 (25% of total funding available nationally) in FY23 for BIL invasive species funding and awarded an additional \$460,000 (from FY22 and FY23 BIL invasive funds) for invasive plant treatment and program execution on non-NFS lands.
- vii. Partnered to create an Emerald Ash Borer Task Force to address the need for Statewide Response

Plans for this invasive forest pest. The task force includes state agencies in Arizona and New Mexico, University researchers, Forest Service, and APHIS.

R3 Special Project: Santa Fe Community Foundation

Forest Service provided \$200,000 to the Santa Fe Community Foundation to support their efforts to distribute approximately 1000 cords of firewood salvaged from the Hermit's Peak Calf Canyon burn to distribute to underserved homeowners in Mora, San Miguel Co. and other at-risk communities through the Neighbors Helping Neighbors program and the NM Forestry Division..

R3 Special Project: SWERI-Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes

Supported the ambitious expansion and increased collaboration of the three Southwestern Ecological Restoration Institutes, which included awarding \$6.6 Million (now distributed evenly across three institutes). This is a significant expansion for two of the three institutes (e.g. the New Mexico Forest And Watershed Restoration Institute adding twelve positions in the past twelve months).

R3 Special Project: Tribal LSR Isleta East Mountains Fuels Reduction

The 150-acre project area is located on the Pueblo of Isleta, in the Manzano Mountains, southeast of Albuquerque, New Mexico. It lies on the east boundary of the Pueblo of Isleta, which borders the Cibola National Forest, Chilili Land Grant, and New Mexico State Lands. The project area is also part of the Tijeras Watershed and provides clean water to the surrounding communities as well as clean air for the Pueblo and surrounding communities. Since the project area houses important habitat to sustain endemic flora and fauna, it also promotes ecological diversity within the project area that will benefit from the forest thinning. The Pueblo of Isleta will use the project area to begin planning and implementing a Landscape Scale Management plan (LSMP), with the goals being: 1.) Reduce the risk of uncharacteristic wildfires. 2.) Maintain or improve water quality and watershed function. 3.) Protect cultural resources.

Urban and Community Forestry

The New Mexico Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) Program empowers communities to develop and sustain healthy community forests for the benefit of our citizens and the environment. Currently 70% of the state's population lives in a community either fully managing an urban/community forest program or developing one. In 2023, ten communities were recognized for the Tree City USA program with several others working to achieve this status, and three universities achieved Tree Campus designation. NM Forestry Division successfully competed for \$1.8M of IRA UCF funds to greatly expand program capacity and scope. The Division has hired two half time urban program staff to support regional programs in southern and northern communities. New Mexico State Forestry continues to maintain an on-going Services Agreement with the 501(c)(3) organization Tree New Mexico to conduct UCF-related volunteer management and coordination statewide. The actions from the 2020 FAP that are identified as top priorities for 2024 and forward:

The Division is working to expand Albuquerque neighborhood tree planting models statewide and/or programs with financial incentives for residential tree planting.

The Division has modernized the application process for the Community Forestry Assistance Cost-Share Program to fund projects that develop sustainable local urban forests and increase the frequency that applications are accepted.

The Division is continuing to expand the statewide New Mexico Tree Stewards program by developing remote instruction methods (e.g., video programs with instructors) and implement program in multiple communities.

Contact Information



New Mexico EM NRD - Forestry Division

Laura McCarthy
State Forester
1220 S St Francis Drive
Santa Fe, NM 87504
505-476-3331
laura.mccarthy@state.nm.us

US Forest Service Southwestern Region

Alicia San Gil
*Director - Forest Management, Forest Health,
Cooperative Forestry*
USDA Forest Service
333 Broadway Blvd. SE
Albuquerque, NM 87102
505-842-3242
alicia.sangil@usda.gov
