



## State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet New Mexico 2025



### Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

| Program                                      | FY 2024 Final      |
|--|--------------------|
| Community Forests and Open Space             | \$0                |
| Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management | \$376,000          |
| Forest Legacy                                | \$0                |
| Forest Stewardship                           | \$253,321          |
| Landscape Scale Restoration                  | \$614,153          |
| State Fire Assistance                        | \$1,861,957        |
| Urban and Community Forestry                 | \$360,000          |
| Volunteer Fire Assistance                    | \$798,195          |
| <b>Total</b>                                 | <b>\$4,263,626</b> |

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 2024 Accomplishments  | Value   |
|---|------------|--|---------|
| Population  | 2,117,522  | Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance                             | 9,209   |
| Acres of Forest Land                              | 24,591,240 | Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans                             | 15,428  |
| Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land        | 10,986,759 | Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans | 9,168   |
| Number of NIPF Landowners                         | 52,453     | Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted  | 136     |
| Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection | 5,202,479  | State Fire Communities Assisted  | 305     |
| Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection | 34,157,000 | Coop Forest Health Acres Protected   | 0       |
| Number of Rural Fire Departments                  | 368        | Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions   | 6,780   |
| Cities and Towns                                  | 105        | Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance                               | 12      |
| Forest Based Employment                           | 2,350      | Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance          | 900,006 |
| Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)             | 0          | Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance  | 53,221  |
| State Forestry Budget (All Sources)               | 63,005,400 |  |         |

## Program Highlights

### Botany & Endangered Plants

- This program maintains and updates the New Mexico Endangered Plant Species List, gathers information on the status and distribution of rare plants, and develops conservation measures necessary for the survival of rare and endangered plants. As of 2024, 46 plants are listed as state endangered and 15 plants are federally listed as endangered or threatened.

### 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. In 2024, New Mexico had 11 applications selected with \$28 million funded for project work and CWPP updates; a 154% increase over 2023 awarded funds due to successful public outreach about the program. Outreach continues for the next grant cycle with offers of technical assistance extended to tribal communities and rural electric co-ops within the state.

### 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 site 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. The Park had over 20,000 visitors in FY24. 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.

### Conserved Lands

- The Division oversees the Natural Heritage Conservation Act program, which funds acquisition of conservation and agricultural easements and land restoration projects. In 2024, this program started

receiving \$1.4 million annually, after being unfunded and dormant for over a decade.

The Division also oversees the Land Conservation Investment program which provides state tax credits for charitable donations of land or an interest in land for conservation purposes to a public or private conservation agency. From 2004-2024, 584,628 acres of forest and rangeland have been conserved with state tax credits; 15,661 acres in 2024 alone.

### ***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 FY24, we had 392 wildfires, of which 250 were human-caused starts, totaling 8,170 acres burned on state and private land. We have 65 Community Wildfire Protection Plans identifying 905 communities at risk from wildland fire. Of these communities, 446 are listed as high risk, 303 are listed as moderate risk, and 156 are listed as low risk. We exceeded our goal of training 1,500 wildland firefighters by training 2,434 people at over 60 classes held statewide. We also provided grants to 35 volunteer fire departments to supply critical personal protection and firefighting equipment.

### ***Economic Action***

- The Division provides access to technology transfer, specialized business and marketing technical assistance with the intent of advancing the science of healthy forest and woodland ecosystems and acceptable practices for reducing hazardous fuels. The Division provides technical assistance and forest harvest practice standards on commercial timber sales for private forest lands. 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. The Division hired a new position, Forest Markets Coordinator, to provide support with evaluation and coordination of forest markets and wood product utilization potential throughout the state. This position is working local tech schools to develop an industry database that can help us plan and coordinate opportunities.

### ***Forest & Watershed Restoration Act***

- In 2024, the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund (LOE), the state's first-ever recurring annual investment in land and water conservation, started allocating funding to the Division for specific programs. The Forest & Watershed Restoration Act program (FAWRA) is one of the programs, now receiving \$3.4 million annually. FAWRA prioritizes projects that enhance the adaptability and resilience of NM forests and watersheds to climate change and wildfires, improve water quality and support economic activity associated with wood harvest. 13,506 acres have been completed with FAWRA funding since the inception of the Act in 2019. Currently project development exceeds the FAWRA budget resulting in projects being supplemented with other funding sources. The needs for this program are vast and these additional funds will accelerate our ability to meet long term restoration funding needs.

### ***Forest Health Protection***

- The Division's Forest Health Program delivers technical and monetary assistance to landowners of forested lands throughout New Mexico. Technical assistance is provided by direct response to requests, through education programs, training, and site visits. Our Forest Health Program Coordinator assists land management agencies, partners, and private landowners with forest health diagnoses, 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 15 new FHI projects in FY24, totaling 7,833 acres of stewardship planning and 512 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. In 2024, extensive bark beetle mortality of ponderosa pine and Douglas fir was observed near burns scars throughout the state, from ground and aerial surveys. Severe pinon defoliation caused by pinyon needle scale was observed in the areas east of Cloudcroft and in the Gila region, and douglas-fir tussock moth outbreaks were significant in Northern New Mexico including Taos, Santa Fe, Sandia and Jemez mountains. The 2024 annual conditions report will be posted on the NM Forestry Division Forest Health web page in Spring

2025. Western spruce budworm continues to be the primary defoliating pest of Douglas-fir, true firs and spruce. Tamarisk leaf beetle continues to cause widespread defoliation of salt cedar in riparian areas throughout New Mexico, severely so along the middle Rio Grande and Rio Puerco corridors.

### **Forest Legacy**

- The Forest Legacy Brazos Cliffs project, was completed in July 2024, protecting 6,780 acres in Rio Arriba County from development. The Brazos Cliff are a spectacular feature of Northern New Mexico and now protected for the public to enjoy while hunting or hiking. The conservation easements were funded for \$7,060,383.00, with approximately \$5.3 million through the USDA Forest Service. In 2024 the Forestry Division also received a \$50M award for a new conservation project on the Dawson Elk Valley Ranch in Colfax County, NM. The project is a partnership with The Nature Conservancy, the Flower Hill Institute, and a coalition of Tribes. Through the purchase of the Ranch, the partners are working on a plan for conservation and Tribal co-management that will expand a mosaic of conserved lands that extend from New Mexico through the Southern High Plains of Colorado, Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas.

### **Forest Stewardship**

- The Division is reimagining its Stewardship Program. Two landscape stewardship pilot projects will be completed in San Miguel and Mora Counties and will inform the development of a Landscape Stewardship Strategy. 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 ties in with the Community Navigator Program and will inform best practices for planning and building resilience in at-risk rural communities. In FY24, the Division developed or updated 6 Forest Stewardship plans, impacting 15,428 acres.

### **Landowner Assistance**

The Division provides landowner assistance via the Forest Health and Stewardship programs, detailed above. The Division's Invasive Plant Program (IPP) also provides landowner assistance for invasive plant management where noxious weeds threaten forest and grassland health and threaten species on the New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) Noxious Weed List. The program accepts grant applications for projects year-round. In 2024, we continued to modernize our grant application process and collaborated with NMDA on an emerging Noxious Weed program they host. NMDA has new recurring state funds for relevant projects and is providing match assistance, by application, to help meet our IPP 1:1 match requirement. The Division has 8 active projects with municipalities and Soil & Water Conservation Districts throughout the state.

### **Landscape Scale Restoration**

- FY23 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. As of October 2024, the Division had completed 2,972 acres out of the goal towards 4,500 acres completed by 2030. A prescribed fire plan is in the works and slated to be complete by Summer 2025. An aim of this project is to serve as a model and training ground for the safe reintroduction of beneficial fire. Division staff continue to secure additional funds for the project and promote Landscape Scale Restoration funding opportunities statewide.

### **New Mexico Hotshot Crews**

- The Division's new wildfire crews, the Mimbres Crew based in Socorro and the Pecos River Crew based in Las Vegas, started this summer and have made great progress increasing their skills and qualifications. 26 crew members have been hired and have already bolstered the Division's capacity to respond to wildfires on state and private land, support federal and tribal partners in fire suppression efforts and increase mobilization opportunities in fire response out of state. Over the next 3 years, these crews will learn to function as independent wildland fire suppression units, with an aim to be certified as Interagency Hotshot crews.

### **Post Fire Recovery**

- The Division developed and filled a new position, Burned Area Coordinator, to improve post-fire

coordination efforts. In 2024, we also launched our first private property hazardous tree removal program, hiring two contractors to plan and conduct treatments prioritizing removal of trees that threaten public or private roads, utility lines and other infrastructure in the burn scar of the 2022 Hermit Peak-Calf Canyon (HPCC) Fire. The Salt and South Fork fires in June 2024 burned at least 1,400 structures and are now known as the most destructive in New Mexico history. The Division has launched another hazard tree program with an additional focus of watershed stabilization for landowners. Practices can include seedling and mulching and other slope stabilization measures to reduce downstream impacts to communities. These projects are being coordinated closely with other public assistance funds through the New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

### **Reforestation**

- The Division is partnering with the University of New Mexico, New Mexico Highlands University (NMHU), 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. Our partnership is focused on creating conditions for planting the right tree in the right place for the anticipated 2100 climate, as well as restoring burned lands to a healthy function for people and environment. 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. NMHU hired a Seed Collection Coordinator to help increase seed supply and is developing a seed processing facility and is offering frequent tree seed climber training and collection events. To improve efficiency and participation in cone crop scouting, NMHU also released a public app people can use to upload cone crop observations and locations. A 100-acre pilot project in the HPCC burn scar in progress to demonstrate emerging science-based reforestation techniques from all university partners. Workshops and trainings are on-going to ensure our reforestation pipeline builds and maintains capacity in the areas of seed collection, planting and workforce development.

### **Tribal Partnerships**

- The Division actively engages tribes in collaboration and has a designated Tribal Liaison who serves as a focal point for Division wide initiatives and communication with tribes. In 2024, we filled a new position, Tribal Resource and Reforestation Coordinator, to support in outreach and project planning with tribes as well as building our teams competency in tribal engagement. This position coordinates the growing Tribal Forestry and Fire working group, 9 pueblos, tribes and nations are consistently represented. The group shares knowledge and funding opportunities relevant to state-wide forest and watershed health concerns, planning and implementation of prescribed and cultural burns and improves coordination amongst tribal nations.

### **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 2024, Arbor Day Foundation recognized 9 communities for Tree City USA with several others working to achieve this status, and 2 universities as Tree Campuses. New Mexico has 116 communities with ordinances or policies protecting urban trees and 86 communities with tree advocacy groups. Volunteers logged 6,000 hours in support of urban forestry efforts.

The Division is expanding UCF focus in southern and northern regions of the state by maintaining support for 2 half-time staff and building our internal UCF team. The Division continues to work with key partners to promote and coordinate volunteer participation and the NM Tree Stewards program statewide, including the neighborhood tree planting model and by supporting programs with financial incentives for residential tree planting.

---

## 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](mailto: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](mailto:alicia.sangil@usda.gov)

---