

State of New Mexico
Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department

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State Forestry Awarded \$598,856 by Topping Western Landscape Scale Restoration Grant Program Funding List

Santa Fe, NM – New Mexico State Forestry has been awarded \$598,856 for two projects under the highly competitive Western Landscape Scale Restoration program (WLSR). Funded by the U.S. Forest Service, grants will be given to projects that address the national priorities of forest protection, working forest landscape conservation, and enhancing the public benefit from trees. New Mexico's projects were ranked first and fourth out of 16 selected winners and more than 40 applications from 17 western states and Pacific Island territories competing for shares of the program's \$4.5 million total project funds.

The top-ranked project among the grant recipients is the Ortiz Canyon Watershed Restoration Project which will treat a vital area of the Luera Mountains, located west of Socorro. The watershed is constricted by dense, unhealthy forest that is vulnerable to insect and disease outbreaks, as well as catastrophic wildfire. With the awarded funds, the project will restore 2,000 acres by improving watershed function; enhancing wildlife habitat for one of the state's prime hunting regions; and restoring grasslands, savannahs, and woodlands for fire adaptation. Ortiz Canyon is located in the largest contiguous tract of state-owned forest land in New Mexico.

Funding for the Ortiz Canyon Project complements Governor Martinez's Watershed Restoration Initiative which funded approximately \$10 million for restorative work in critical watersheds throughout New Mexico within the last two years.

The "Building Resiliency in New Mexico's Historic District Community Forests Project," ranked number four, will improve the condition of community forests in historic areas throughout the state. These culturally valuable places include plazas, parks, and courtyards, and are marked by a population of declining Siberian elm trees. Loss of the trees will significantly impact the historic areas' environmental, aesthetic, and economic contributions. The project will provide analysis of the affected areas, and develop management plans for a transition to the next generation of community forests.

New Mexico State Forestry and its partners must provide dollar-for-dollar match for the funds received, bringing the total value of the projects to \$1.2 million. The state's contribution will stem from a variety of funds, including local governments, the State Land Office, the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, and Governor Martinez's Watershed Restoration Initiative.

The funding will primarily be directed to local forest industry contractors, supporting this important segment of New Mexico's economy. Both projects will last three years beginning in July of 2016.

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The Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department provides resource protection and renewable energy resource development services to the public and other state agencies.