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## **New Mexico State Forestry Division Announces Achievements in Watershed Restoration Initiative**

*Significant progress in \$6.2 Million Watershed Restoration Initiative made in 2015*

**Santa Fe, NM** - The New Mexico State Forestry Division has achieved accelerated progress in Governor Susana Martinez's Watershed Restoration Initiative. The \$6.2 million appropriation was signed into law in 2014, issuing severance tax dollars to treat priority watersheds on public land. By the end of this year, nearly half of the targeted 7,700 acres will have been completed and seven (7) of the projects will be finished.

"Water is our most precious natural resource, and we must take an active role in preserving it," said Governor Martinez when she announced the initiative. "By taking action now, we will not only help restore these vital areas for future generations, but we will also help improve the quality and availability of water, and support economic growth."

To date, four (4) of the watershed projects are completed: Socorro Bosque Ribbon Project (Socorro County), San Pedro Project (Santa Fe County), Sandia Ranger District's Hondo North (Bernalillo County), and Mescalero Apache Tribe Watershed Restoration Project (Otero County). Three (3) more will conclude by the end of 2015: Dos Rios Restoration Project (San Juan County), Black Deer/Six Shooter Watershed Restoration Project (Catron County), and Canjilon/Cebolla Watershed Improvement (Rio Arriba County). All remaining projects are slated for completion in 2016.

The Watershed Restoration Initiative has treated 2,800 acres and created approximately seventy (70) jobs, figures that will grow in the months ahead. Management of these projects has been a collaborative effort between the New Mexico State Forestry Division and partnering organizations. These include other state and federal agencies as well as private sector organizations.

One example, the Mescalero Apache Tribe Watershed Restoration Project, was completed ahead of schedule due to the collaborative effort between the State and the tribe. The resulting reduction in tree density benefits forest health and lowers the threat of catastrophic wildfire. This not only protects the watersheds on Mescalero tribal land, but extends protection to resources located downstream and the surrounding communities within the Tularosa Basin.

In June 2015, Governor Martinez directed an additional \$3.5 million to enhance eight (8) more vulnerable watersheds and communities at risk. With the program's ongoing success and the far-reaching impact of watershed health, continued investment is crucial. The New Mexico State Forestry Division plans to further the momentum of these critical efforts and to conduct more forest management projects throughout the state.

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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.*