

CONSERVATION Showcase

Making the FOREST a Better Place

for Girl Scouts who will make the WORLD a better place

The Girl Scouts of America strives to nurture and develop young girls to become leaders who will eventually make the world a better place. In order to accomplish this lofty goal, one camp needs a “better place” to develop Girl Scouts.

The 1,000-acre Rancho Del Chaparral Girl Scout Camp is located in a Ponderosa pine and oak dominated forest interspersed with small open meadows. The forest is overgrown, reducing plant diversity and ground cover in the understory. This has created areas of heavy erosion and compromises the quality of wildlife habitat. In its current condition, the overstocked forest could also present a wildfire hazard, threatening facilities and natural resources in the area as well as the safety of the campers. Given the high-mountain location, conditions at the camp also have the potential to influence water quality and other conditions downstream.

To address these issues, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is providing financial and technical assistance through the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP). NRCS assistance will help camp operators conduct Forest Stand Improvement, Forest Slash Treatment, and Brush Management on the site.

First and foremost, these measures will reduce fire danger and protect evacuation routes for the camp and visitors to the area. Better road conditions will provide safer access and egress in the event of a wildfire.

These measures will also improve plant health and diversity, benefitting wildlife by increasing the variety and availability



of food, cover and shelter. Through the project, the operators will also be able to prevent gully erosion by installing Grade Stabilization along roadways to provide non-erosive drainageways for runoff. Finally, the project will also establish increased ground cover to further control erosion, reduce dust and improve air quality.

The New Mexico State Forestry Division is providing additional technical assistance to update the forest management plan, further protect natural resources, and provide options for additional recreational uses of the land.

This project focuses on the “top of the watershed,” which means that work to address fire hazards, reduce erosion, improve forest health and protect water quality will benefit the entire drainage area, including downstream rangeland and cropland.

In addition to natural resource protection, the project will improve the safety and aesthetics of the area and provide a source of pride for the camp. In the long term, the project will contribute to the sustainability of the property and the Girl Scout Camp for future generations.

