



United States Department of Agriculture

JOINT CHIEFS' LANDSCAPE RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP

All It Takes Is a Spark

ISLETA COLLABORATIVE PROJECT



Fire in Cibola National Forest

Tall ponderosa pine and mixed conifer forests filter and clean water as it flows through public, private and tribal lands around the scenic Manzano and Manzanita mountains of central New Mexico. These forests are fire adapted—meaning they can endure inevitable natural fire. As communities have grown and more land is used for agriculture and other purposes, fire has been suppressed. While intended to protect people and property, this allows fuel to build up so that when a fire does occur, it rages with a heat and intensity that is difficult to contain. Maintaining the health of Native American lands and the Cibola National Forest—a popular recreational destination for residents of nearby Albuquerque—was the focus of the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership's (JCLRP) Isleta Project. The project area is also within the boundary of the stressed Rio Grande River watershed.

PROJECT IMPACT

\$844,000
ADDITIONAL FUNDING

Total awarded through the JCLRP from 2014-2016: \$2 million

The Cibola National Forest secured an additional \$844,000 in funding from private and local sources to carry on the work of the Joint Chiefs' project, including fuel reduction.



NEW MEXICO

Isleta Collaborative Project

GOALS



Crew in forest



Reduce wildfire threats:

Wildfire threats were reduced on the Pueblo of Isleta and Chilili Land Grant by funding the training and employment of a 16-member crew from the pueblo to thin timber and remove fuel material. Their work helps lower wildfire risks for the surrounding area.

Improve water quality and wildlife habitat:



Ash from wildfires can choke aquatic species, such as trout and catfish. Reducing wildfire threats on thousands of acres improves water quality for wildlife and the one million people who live in local cities. The project was specifically designed to improve habitat for an array of species, such as the Mexican spotted owl, northern goshawk, wild turkey and migratory songbirds, all of which rely on the ponderosa pine and dry, mixed conifer forests to survive.

USDA's Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service are working together to improve the health of forests where public forests and grasslands connect to privately owned lands. Through the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership, the two USDA agencies are restoring landscapes by reducing wildfire threats to communities and landowners, protecting water quality and enhancing wildlife habitat.

The USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

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Associate State Director Laura McCarthy, The Nature Conservancy in New Mexico © Alan W. Eckert, Alan Eckert Photography

Sometimes, we have to be willing to think beyond the immediate to tackle complex problems. A host of dedicated partners are bringing this kind of vision to the Rio Grande River basin in New Mexico. The river and its tributaries provide water to more than half of New Mexico's population—people and industries in small towns, Native American communities and the state's largest cities. Since the surrounding forests keep the water clean, loss of forest cover to wildfire threatens their water supply.

In 2014, The Nature Conservancy initiated the Rio Grande Water Fund. This effort prioritized 600,000 acres of land to protect and restore, over 20 years. "We recently broke records for the largest fire in the state—three years in a row," said Laura McCarthy, associate state director for the Conservancy in New Mexico. The Conservancy, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the U.S. Forest Service collaborated to plan for a healthier, more resilient future. When the Joint Chiefs' funding became available, "we had the catcher's glove on," according to McCarthy. She attributes that statement to Ian Fox with the U.S. Forest Service. "These areas are culturally significant," Fox said. "To protect the watershed and the benefits it provides, we have to look across jurisdictions to ensure long-term resiliency.

The effects of vital wildfires impact not only the scenery and forest products, but also the community, and emotional and spiritual ties to the landscape." The Rio Grande Water Fund contributed \$100,000 to the Isleta Project, leveraging the Joint Chiefs' funding for greater results.

"Funding small projects in the face of fires that can grow tens of thousands of acres in a day will not make a difference," McCarthy said. "This Isleta Project is the first example of a set of partners restoring forests at a scale that matters."



Northern Goshawk © Bruce D. Taubert

Key Partners

Bureau of Indian Affairs
Chilili Land Grant
Edgewood Soil & Water Conservation District
Estancia Basin Watershed Monitoring Group
New Mexico State Forestry
Pueblo of Isleta
The Nature Conservancy



The Nature Conservancy supports the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership through technical expertise and coordination in support of our mission to protect the lands and waters on which all life depends.

For more information, please visit nrca.usda.gov/JointChiefsReports