



FACT SHEET



United States Department of Agriculture
Web: <http://www.usda.gov>

United States Department of Interior
Web: <http://www.doi.gov>

Making a Difference Cibola National Forest – New Mexico

The Thunderbird Ecosystem Management Project is a 10,000-acre watershed project located approximately 10 miles northwest of Mountainair, New Mexico on the Mountainair Ranger District, Cibola National Forest. The NEPA process was completed in just eight months using the new procedures under the Healthy Forests Initiative.

This project takes advantage of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) authority for hazardous fuels projects and Council on Environmental Quality guidance for Environmental Assessments. Once the decision was signed and upheld in January 2002, implementation began using various tools and partners including the Collaborative Forestry Restoration Program and contracts in which local workforce preference criteria, identified under hazardous fuels National Fire Plan authority, was used.

The Mountainair Ranger District identified this watershed for treatment because of the high risk of catastrophic fire; the water resources at risk (Ox and Red are two important drainages in the area), and the importance of this watershed to the nearby Estancia basin area where growth from Albuquerque is occurring; and the need to find a forest-based, sustainable employment solution for nearby communities where unemployment and poverty are among the highest in the country. The project area is also included in the state's top 20 communities at risk, due to number of communities near forest land, high density of trees in the forest, and high incidence of lightning strikes that are known to occur in the area.

There are numerous Hispanic communities, including land grant communities, within nine miles of the forest boundary and numerous private inholdings that contain primary residence within the 10,000-acre project boundary, and northern goshawk habitat.

This project is located near the Manzano Land Grant and associated communities. Also within and adjacent to the land grant is the Las Humanas Cooperative composed of members of the Abo, Manzano, Torreon, Tajique and Punta de Agua communities. Currently, the Las Humanas group is involved in two stewardship projects totaling over 135 acres, involving thinning and watershed rehabilitation activities.

This project has numerous partners including, Las Humanas Cooperative (local multiple Hispanic communities involved), P&M Signs, Wild Turkey Federation, Albuquerque Wildlife Federation, Claunch-Pinto Conservation District, NM Department of Game & Fish, Natural Resource Conservation District and Manzano State Park.

Much work has already been completed. Fuel breaks have been put in the area (thinning, burning, piling and chipping), wildlife openings have been created, personal fuel wood areas have been identified, developed and thinned, and some meadow restoration projects have been completed. Monitoring using local youth and the YCC program has occurred for two years. Additional thinning and riparian work is planned for this year and will occur when the snow clears. Removal of material for use as biomass for local business is also planned for this same time. Activities are proposed through 2008.

For more information on the Healthy Forests Restoration Act and the Healthy Forests Initiative, visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/projects/hfi/> or <http://www.doi.gov/hfi/newhfi/>