



State of New Mexico

Bill Richardson
Governor

For immediate release

March 28, 2005

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Governor Richardson Signs Forest and Watershed Health Plan

Plan will pave the way for more effective forest and watershed restoration

SANTA FE, NM - New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson today signed the New Mexico Forest and Watershed Health Plan, putting into motion recommendations that will streamline forest and watershed restoration in New Mexico.

Governor Richardson signed the document following his opening remarks at the Western Counties Partnership on Restoration (CPR) Summit currently being held in Ruidoso, New Mexico.

The New Mexico Forest and Watershed Health Plan was created by a planning committee made up of local, state, federal and tribal governments, as well as private land and business owners and environmental interest groups, under the direction of New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Secretary Joanna Prukop and State Forester Arthur "Butch" Blazer. Over the course of 2004, the planning committee created the plan and held town hall meetings around the state seeking public input.

"This comprehensive Plan lays the foundation for more efficient cooperation among local, state, federal and tribal governments, landowners and communities," said Governor Richardson. "The Plan also outlines a new leadership role for the State that will establish an integrated ecological restoration strategy to guide all of New Mexico to our goal of healthy landscapes. New Mexico's

Plan is a direct and proactive response to the state-level action items called for by the Western Governors' Association.”

The Plan sets forth 20 action items that will transform the way ecological restoration is accomplished, strengthening on-the-ground efforts and creating greater impact for each dollar invested. The 20 action items focus on state-level support of project efforts, planning, coordination, management and administration. It also calls for the establishment of a state office dedicated to forest and watershed management. This office will coordinate inter-agency collaborative efforts and serve to assist in the development and implementation of forest and watershed restoration projects.

The New Mexico Forest and Watershed Health Plan was created to address the increasingly unhealthy condition of the state's ecosystems. As a result of prolonged drought and overly dense forests, New Mexico lands face greater chances of catastrophic wildfire, decreased water supplies and biodiversity accelerated erosion and desertification. The planning committee's challenge was to address these issues in a way that involves all land ownerships so that the full ecological benefits can be realized with maximum efficiency.

“This is one of the first state plans to broaden collaboration by linking fire reduction, improvement of watersheds, biomass development and environmental protection in addressing forest and watershed health issues,” said Secretary Prukop. “It is my hope that it will serve as a useful model for other states engaged in ecological restoration planning and implementation, and that it will help to foster new and more effective state-to-state collaboration on these issues that are so vital to the West.”

A copy of the plan is available at www.nmforestry.com.

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