

Project Name: “1,096 acres of ponderosa pine harvest and removal in the Isleta Landscape-scale Restoration Project (Phase 3) in the Manzanita Manzano Restoration Partnership.”

Contact: Ian Fox, Forest Timber Management Officer (505) 346- 3814

Project Location: The proposed project is located within the Manzanita Manzano Restoration Partnership Area (see map), and would occur on the Cibola National Forest (Cibola) within the 90,549 acre Manzanita Manzano Ecosystem Management Area (EMA). The National Forest System lands are bordered by the Pueblo of Isleta (Pueblo), Chilili, Tajique, Torreon, and Manzano Land Grants, and Kirtland Air Force Base.

The entire EMA is within designated wildland urban interface consisting primarily of ponderosa pine and pinion-juniper vegetation types. The proposed project would occur on approximately 1,096 acres of ponderosa pine located within the Arroyo de Chilili, Milbourn Draw, and Arroyo de Tajique watersheds (6th Code HUC), that provide downstream drinking water to rural Hispanic and Native American communities residing in the Chilili and Tajique Land Grants, and the Pueblo.

Project Eligibility Criteria:

Criteria 1 (10 Point Scale)

1. Is this project part of a larger landscape-scale (50,000 plus acres) effort? Please briefly describe the strategy goals, the acres, location, and planning status. Please explain how your project fits into the overall strategy for the larger landscape.

Yes this project is part of a larger landscape-scale project, referred to as the Manzanita Manzano Restoration Partnership Area (Partnership Area). The Cibola designated the 90,549 acre Manzanita Manzano Ecosystem Management Area (EMA) within this landscape to provide connectivity to ongoing and accomplished watershed and forest restoration treatments on adjacent jurisdictions within the larger Partnership Area, see EMA map. The Isleta Landscape Scale Restoration (Isleta) Project area is located within the EMA. The Cibola is requesting funds to complete the final phase of restoration within the Isleta project. An approved line officer decision and Finding of No Significant Impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), were completed for the Isleta project on September 18, 2012. The restoration work as approved in the decision is to implement thinning of ponderosa pine and pinion juniper woodlands to restore fire adapted ecosystems while creating a multi-storied, uneven aged forest condition that provides for diverse wildlife habitat, watershed health and resilience to uncharacteristic disturbances and climate change.

2. What can you contribute as cash or in-kind match or leverage through other sources of funding (how much, from whom)?

In Federal fiscal year (FY) 2014, The Nature Conservancy endorsed the Cibola's Joint Chief Initiative (Joint Chief) proposal, which requested funds for phase 1 of the project. This was one of the first projects under the Rio Grande Water Fund concept. The Joint Chief's FY2014 proposal was approved by the Secretary of Agriculture, awarding the Cibola \$800,000 and the Pueblo \$598,882. With this funding the Cibola and the Pueblo initiated a participating agreement (agreement) to implement phase 1 of the approved Tribal Forest Protection Act project and utilize the Pueblo's wildland fire crew to conduct treatments on the Cibola. The work awarded under

the agreement was 793 acres of hand thinning and 803 acres of mastication. The \$598,882 awarded to the Pueblo is administered by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and is accomplishing thinning/mastication on 820 acres. In FY 2015, the Cibola received an additional \$750,000 from the Joint Chief's and will contribute \$600,000 of cash to the project area via the Pueblo and Cibola's agreement, which would cover the cost of implementing phase 2 of the project, for 94 acres of hand thinning, 205 acres of mastication, and 748 acres of cut, skid and decking of material for personal use fuelwood. The remaining \$150,000 of in-kind match would cover project preparation, materials and supplies, and administration of the implementation activities by Forest Service Personnel.

The requested funds for phase 3 for harvest and removal of 1,096 acres at \$700/acre would complement these ongoing restoration efforts by accelerating the pace of treatment and increasing workforce capacity by involving the New Mexico Forest Industry Association (NMFIA).

Requested Funds from RGWF \$767,200: These funds would be awarded as third party contribution to the New Mexico Forest Industry Association (NMFIA) to accomplish harvest and removal of overstocked ponderosa pine stands in the Isleta Project. This is currently the only activity requesting RGWF for this project. The Cibola has an active Stewardship Agreement with NMFIA that is designed to allow third party funding to go towards the project without the Cibola needing to handle the funds. In short the RGWF could be directly invoiced by NMFIA and the Cibola would provide a Forest Service inspector to administer the specifications for the thinning operation and approve completed work. Partial funding would be accepted and would assist in meeting the overall restoration objectives of the project. NMFIA has provided a letter of commitment stating that they endorse using the Stewardship Agreement to accomplish this work.

Match-dollars the Cibola will expend while spending RGWF monies:

- a. **Personnel \$121,742:** These funds will pay Cibola Staff to prepare and administer work being conducted under the existing Participating Agreement (PA) with the Pueblo of Isleta (Pueblo) and any work awarded to NMFIA via their Stewardship Agreement. The Cibola entered into a PA with the Pueblo in Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 and the work will continue into FY2015. The Cibola has already committed funds and Cibola personnel to continue to prep and administer this ongoing work. In addition to the FY2014 awarded work the Cibola and the Pueblo are in the process of awarding an additional \$600,000 via the PA for new work in FY2015. In addition to the prep and admin of acres being thinned under the PA, the Cibola fire personnel and beginning the early stages of preparing and planning prescribed fires in the project. If RGWF funds are awarded to this project then Cibola personnel would also be committed to administering that work in FY2015 and beyond until project completion. All Cibola personnel expenditures would be counted as match.
- b. **Supplies \$28,258:** These funds would be used to purchase tree marking paint for the project to leave tree mark initial areas for the NMFIA Stewardship Agreement and out year units for the PA with the Pueblo.
- c. **Contractual \$600,000:** These funds have been committed by the Secretary of Agriculture and Chief of the Forest Service to be awarded in FY2015 to the Pueblo under the PA for an additional 1,047 acres, or Phase 2 of the Joint Chief's Initiative. Also described in the Personnel section above as the area that Cibola personnel will contribute salary match in.

Leverage- dollars already expended in the landscape within the last 5 years:

a. Contractual \$2,209,210: 2014 – NM State Forestry and Cuidad SWCD: \$227,328 to fund 247 acres of thinning on the Sedillo Project on Bernalillo County Open Space in the Manzanitas, 2014 – Pueblo of Isleta and the NRCS enter into Environment Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) contracts - 820 Acres; \$598,882 Funding, 2014 - Cibola National Forest and NMFIA enter into a Stewardship Agreement that awarded 1,222 acres for a total of \$483,00 Forest Service funds and \$100,000 from Kirtland Air Force Base, 2014 – Pueblo of Isleta and Cibola National Forest entered into a participating agreement in April, 2014 – to utilize the Isleta Wildland Fire Crew to thin 793 acres and masticate 803 acres for a total cost of \$800,000

CFRPs \$1,800,000: 2014 – Edgewood SWCD CFRP: \$360,000 CFRP and \$90,000 partner match - 414 acres on Cibola and 441 acres on Pueblo, 2014 – Romero Wood, LLC CFRP: \$360,000 CFRP and \$90,000 partner match 750 acres of harvest and removal of ponderosa pine, 2013 – David Canyon CFRP: \$360,000 CFRP and \$90,000 partner match awarded to Arid Land Innovation, LLC.– 600 acres of thinning with product removal, 2011 Talking Talons CFRP-Partner Talking Talons Youth Org. \$360,000 CFRP and \$90,000 partner match to thin 430 acres, conduct monitoring, public meetings and youth activities

3. Please describe the scientific rationale for your proposed activity or prescription.

The New Mexico Forest Restoration Principles were fully addressed in the NEPA analysis, which is on record at the Cibola National Forest Supervisor's Office. All treatment prescriptions will follow the best available science for ponderosa pine as set forth in the document Restoring composition and structure in Southwestern frequent-fire forests: A science-based framework for improving ecosystem resiliency (RMRS GTR-310). Treatments will maintain or improve soil conditions as defined in the Terrestrial Ecosystem Unit survey for the Cibola National Forest.

Criteria 2 (5 Point Scale)

1. Describe the engagement of local communities and agency cooperators (documentation in letters of commitment of a project plan). Provide specific examples of engagement.

The following are the partners that have contributed to the development and success of the Manzanita Manzano Restoration Partnership: The Pueblo of Isleta (Pueblo), Chilibi Land Grant, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), US Forest Service, Edgewood Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), Claunch-Pinto SWCD, East Torrance SWCD, EMNRD, New Mexico (NM) Forestry Division, NM Environment Department, NM State Land Office, US Fish and Wildlife Service, NM Highlands University, NM Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute, Manzano Land Grant, Tajique Land Grant, Quivira Coalition, SWCA Environmental Consultants, Estrada Environmental Consulting, SAKAK Consulting, NM Forest Industries Association and private businesses, grazing permittees, landowners and other Land Grant representatives.

To date the partners have accomplished or are actively treating 21,241 acres with an investment of \$13,595,497. These acres and funding are as follows:

- 10,035 acres on the Cibola for \$2,785,600 funded by USDA, Forest Service funds,
- 2,649 acres on the Cibola for \$966,750 funded by partners,
- 1,661 acres on the Pueblo for \$1,033,882 funded by BIA, NRCS and Edgewood SWCD, and

- 7,143 acres on private lands, Land Grants and NM State Lands for \$9,036,593 funded by the Water Trust Board, NRCS, and NM State Forestry.

These accomplishments and successes were the result of the following partnership efforts and contributions which led to the development and approval of the Isleta Joint Chiefs' Project:

- 1998 – Pueblo of Isleta began treatment
- 1999 – Estancia Closed Basin Regional Water Plan – Accepted by ISC
- 2001 to 2014- Cibola Prescribed fires total acres 5,324 and total cost approx. cost \$931,700
- 2002 – Formed the Estancia Basin Watershed Health, Restoration and Monitoring “CORE” Committee
- 2003 to Present Water Trust Board Fund- \$7,484,200 funded to present; 5,326/acres completed
- 2004 – Thunderbird (T-bird) Ecosystem Management EA signed (approx. 10,000 acres, approx. cost \$400,000)
- 2004 to 2008 Cibola sold small firewood blocks in T-bird EA: 1-20 acres in size for approx. 200 acres total
- 2005- New Wildfire: 25 acres, suppression cost \$500,000
- 2006- Anderson Wildfire: 135 acres, suppression cost \$752,420
- 2006 - Estancia Basin Watershed Monitoring – SWCA Environmental Consultants
- 2006 – Pueblo of Isleta established their Natural Resource Program apart from Bureau of Indian Affairs
- 2007- Agua Wildfire: 115 acres, suppression cost \$800,000
- 2007 – Ojo Peak Wildfire: 6,969 acres, suppression cost \$956,680 and BAER cost of \$63,000
- 2008 – Trigo Fire Wildfire: 13,709 acres, suppression cost \$11,120,245 and BAER cost of \$1,631,055
- 2008 - Big Springs Wildfire: 5,478 acres, suppression cost \$3,425,022 and BAER cost of \$688,699
- 2008 – Due to inactivity of implementation in the Thunderbird EA and wildfire impacts Cibola NF changed treatment philosophy through partnership collaboration that would accelerate landscape restoration
- 2008 – Chilili Land Grant NEPA CFRP on 290 acres of Common Land \$120,000 CFRP and \$30,000 partner match
- 2008 – Ojo Peak Planning CFRP: complete NEPA to conduct post fire rehab in Ox Creek: \$120,000 CFRP and \$30,000 partner match
- 2008 – Pueblo of Isleta began aggressive thinning treatment adjacent to Cibola National Forest lands – 400 acres
- 2009 to 2013 – U.S. Forest Service awarded a NM Statewide Vegetation Mgmt. IDIQ Contract, Cibola awarded – 2,915 acres for a total cost of \$1,053,900 - the material from these areas provided firewood to the communities; private contractor provided two years of chips to the Santa Fe Community College boiler system and certified playground material
- 2009 – Pueblo of Isleta Planning CFRP- \$360,000 CFRP funding, \$90,000 partner match and \$200,000 Cibola funds that completed NEPA on 2,000 acres of Pueblo, 620 acres of Chilili land Grant and 5,800 acres on the Cibola
- 2009 – Chilili Land Grant CFRP- thinned 290 acres from 2008 NEPA CFRP: \$360,000 CFRP and \$90,000 partner match
- 2009 – Red Canyon CFRP- \$448,618 Funded via CFRP and partner match that accomplished NEPA on 360 acres, thinned 330 acres in T-bird project and provided all wood to the community members of Manzano land Grant

- 2009 – Ojo Peak CFRP \$267,347 CFRP and partner match; Ox Creek post fire restoration and 125 acres thinned
- 2009 – Present – Wildland Urban Interface and Non-Federal Land Funding through EMNRD – NM Forestry- \$875,065 funded that accomplished 1,280 acres
- 2009 Talking Talons NEPA approved– Cibola funded \$40,000 to complete NEPA on 710 acres of thinning and Rx burning
- 2010 – Rio Grande Watershed Monitoring – NM Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute
- 2011 – Cibola NF approved the Espinosa and Barranco NEPA: 1,200 acres thin and 2,400 acres Rx Burn
- 2011 Talking Talons CFRP-Partner Talking Talons Youth Org. \$360,000 CFRP and \$90,000 partner match to thin 430 acres, conduct monitoring, public meetings and youth activities
- 2012- Tablazon NEPA approved to thin and prescribed burn 230 acres
- 2013 –Pueblo of Isleta submitted their Tribal Forest Protection Act proposal – March 7, 2013; Approved by the Regional Forester – May, 2013
- 2013 – David Canyon CFRP: \$360,000 CFRP and \$90,000 partner match awarded to Arid Land Innovation, LLC.– 600 acres of thinning with product removal
- 2014 – Joint Chiefs’ Landscape Restoration Partnership Award to Isleta Project. One of thirteen in the Nation
- 2014 – Pueblo of Isleta and Cibola National Forest entered into a participating agreement in April, 2014 – to utilize the Isleta Wildland Fire Crew to thin 793 acres and masticate 803 acres for a total cost of \$800,000
- 2014 - Cibola National Forest and NMFIA enter into a Stewardship Agreement that awarded 1,222 acres for a total of \$483,00 Forest Service funds and \$100,000 from Kirtland Air Force Base
- 2014 – Pueblo of Isleta and the NRCS enter into Environment Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) contracts - 820 Acres; \$598,882 Funding
- 2014 – Edgewood SWCD CFRP: \$360,000 CFRP and \$90,000 partner match - 414 acres on Cibola and 441 acres on Pueblo
- 2014 – Romero Wood, LLC CFRP: \$360,000 CFRP and \$90,000 partner match 750 acres of harvest and removal of ponderosa pine
- 2014 – NM State Forestry and Ciudad SWCD: \$227,328 to fund 247 acres of thinning on the Sedillo Project on Bernalillo County Open Space in the Manzanitas
- 2014 – Pueblo of Isleta and NuStar Energy – Developing a new working relationship for pipeline easement maintenance on and off pueblo lands
- 2014 – Claunch-Pinto SWCD submitted a Regional Conservation Partnership Program proposal known as “North Central New Mexico Watershed Restoration Project” with thirty partners. This has been tentatively approved.
- 2015 - Cedro Restoration Project NEPA (14,000 acres to burn; 8,000 Mechanical treatment); EA is going out for comment; will begin implementation in 2015

2. How does your project contribute to reducing wildfire risk in a large landscape? Show the strategic placement of your project and your assumptions about why it will be effective.

This project fully adheres to the National Cohesive Wildland Management Strategy (Cohesive Strategy) by investing in areas across multiple landscapes and jurisdictions through strategic partnerships. Hazardous fuels will be treated by a combination of activities including; manual, mechanical, and prescribed fire. These areas were selected by the collaborative efforts due to their proximity to previous, ongoing or planned restoration activities in all jurisdictions. These

mechanized and thinning treatments would be strategically located to facilitate large landscape scale prescribed burn projects.

Vegetation manipulation prescriptions on all jurisdictions are designed to improve overall habitat for an array of species. These prescriptions are reducing densities to pre-European settlement conditions that provide a food web based approach and create diverse stand conditions to allow old growth development and natural regeneration.

3. Will there be access for removal of forest products (yes, no, how, how much) Do you have the ability and authority to remove products? If you have identified a market for the products, please describe how they will be utilized.

Yes, this project would provide for removal of commercial forest products on approximately 1,096 acres via the approved Stewardship Agreement between the Cibola and NMFIA. The ability and authority to remove forest products was authorized under the Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact for the Isleta Project. This project would supply wood products to existing wood processing businesses and create new opportunities for emerging business to be awarded work through NMFIA.

One of the primary purposes that the Cibola entered into the Stewardship Agreement with NMFIA was to have vehicle in place that would transfer woody material and provide a commitment from the Cibola to industry for a long term wood supply. Presently there are very few businesses that can process woody material into a viable product therefore it is important that the Cibola design projects that could assist in the development of wood utilization businesses. Having NMFIA as an active partner will provide the opportunity for the Cibola to assist fledgling businesses to get established and stabilized for the long term since landscape restoration will take many years to accomplish.

However there are currently a handful of wood processing businesses within the State that are also members of NMFIA that would have access to the wood from this project. Two examples are: 1) Alamo Navajo School Board, Inc. has several firewood markets that are growing and they recently purchased a small portable sawmill to process rough cut lumber for markets such as Old Wood Flooring in Las Vegas, NM and 2) Romero Firewood, LLC. has two facilities, one in the village of Manzano and the other in the South Valley of Albuquerque. Romero has large retail firewood markets and has a small saw mill that produces rough cut lumber and cants, Romero also produces latillas and vigas for sale at the Albuquerque location.

1. Are there community, municipal or agricultural water sources or water infrastructure investments at risk?

These treatments would directly protect water quality and supply in primary water source areas for Isleta, Chilili, and the Tajiue Land Grant as well as private homeowners living adjacent to the area. In addition it would protect upland forest areas that have direct impacts on water quality and supply for a larger area within the Rio Grande Basin Watershed (as delineated by the Army Corps of Engineers) and the Estancia Basin and the cattle and agricultural producers within the Basin.

2. Are there communities or concentrations of homes at risk from wildfire, post-fire flooding or disruptions to water supplies?

The Manzanita Manzano EMA is a wildland urban interface of ponderosa pine and pinon juniper forests. The 2013 CoreLogic Wildfire Hazard Risk Report found

10,980 high-risk properties in this area. An ignition could threaten Albuquerque, and other downstream communities, where fire on the steep mountain slopes would create conditions for debris flow, and could jeopardize water supply for about 1 million residents. There are numerous small communities rated as high risk in the 2007 New Mexico Communities at Risk Assessment Plan (2007) that will benefit from the fuels reduction treatments.

4. What are the risks to and opportunities for economic development? Describe how your project will address them. Please provide details on the following elements:

1. Are there recreation, tourism and/or cultural heritage areas with significant economic value at risk? Please describe.

Large scale wildfires adjacent to tribal reservation boundaries during the 2008 fire season, initiated efforts by the Pueblo of Isleta Tribal Council, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Forest Service and Chilili Land Grant and other adjacent land owners to collaboratively develop mutually beneficial, cross-jurisdictional fuels treatments. Additional large scale wildfires would threaten the remaining forest and potentially eliminate future opportunities for economic development.

The entire Manzanita Manzano EMA is cultural significant to the Pueblo of Isleta and surrounding land grant communities. Furthermore, there is high recreational use given the project's proximity to Albuquerque. Cultural, recreational, and economic development opportunities are all at risk of uncharacteristic wildfire behavior.

The existing participating agreement with the Pueblo has already created new job opportunities and this project would create additional opportunities for workforce development in other neighboring communities.

2. Will your project supply wood to existing wood processing businesses OR is there potential for new wood-using industry?

Yes, this project would supply wood products to existing wood processing businesses and create new opportunities for emerging business to be awarded work through NMFIA.

5. Is there a workforce available? Please describe the nature of the workforce, including existing skill level and numbers.

An important aspect of this project is to employ and train local crews under the Tribal Forest Protection Act and the NMFIA SPA. The Pueblo and Chilili Land Grant are implementing restoration activities on their lands by developing and training local thinning crews comprised of a diverse mix of ethnic backgrounds including Native Americans and Hispanic community members.

The Cibola has developed agreements to utilize these crews on National Forest System lands through Stewardship Authorities and workforce development programs. Using the

NMFIA Stewardship Agreement, implementation of the proposed project would be awarded to New Mexico based businesses, and contribute to increasing the local workforce capacity.

6. Is your project in areas used for traditional and community wood supply? Are you willing/able to provide a portion of the product removed during restoration as free or low-cost firewood to local communities? Please estimate the percent of the volume removed you are willing to offer.

Yes, this project could provide a portion of the product removed during restoration activities. Unutilized material generated by the NMFIA for the proposed project could be made available for traditional and community wood supply. In addition, material generated under the Cibola and Pueblo agreement has and will continue to provide free or low-cost firewood to local communities.

In fact based on past projects and annually reoccurring demand for firewood from the public the Cibola is able to sale via personal use permits 4,000 to 5,000 cords/year. The demand for this amount of firewood from the Cibola is due to the fact that many rural communities on the east side of the Manzano's use wood as their primary source of heat during the winter. In addition there is a high demand for firewood from the greater Albuquerque area. In fact the Cibola has to ensure that there are designated fuelwood areas in the East Mountains to meet the demand from these various communities. On average the 4,000 – 5,000 cords/year demand will assist the Cibola in having wood removed from approximately 1,000/year. Therefore meeting the public demand for firewood is a strategic method of accomplishing restoration objectives.