



Cibola National Forest and Grasslands



Updated: April 15, 2011

Key Message: The Cibola National Forest submitted a FY11 CFLRP proposal that was selected as one of the top two proposals by Corbin Newman, Regional Forester and was submitted to the National CFLRP Panel for review. This landscape restoration strategy is essential to accelerating the Cibola's restoration efforts while stabilizing local wood manufacturing industries and creating jobs. Planning at the multiple watershed level, the Zuni Mountains landscape strategy approaches forest restoration and economic development at a scale that achieves meaningful ecological, social, and economic results across jurisdictional boundaries. The project plan identifies a land base anchored by prioritized national forest system land in need of restoration and adjacent high priority tribal, state, and private land holdings.

Benefits of the Landscape Restoration Strategy:

- Reduce high fire risk and improve forest health on 56,000 acres
- Achieve over \$30 million in wildfire suppression cost savings
- grow local forest-based businesses and create and sustain over 90 jobs
- Protect wildlife habitat and threatened and endangered species populations

Background: The Zuni Mountain landscape strategy stems from over five years of collaboration between educators, non-profits, agencies, Tribes, and businesses through the Wood Industries Network (WIN). Established in 2005, WIN has been the forum for establishing restoration business partnerships, pursuing grants, contracts, and agreements across multiple land jurisdictions, and evaluating monitoring data and making management recommendations. Building on the collaborative formed by the WIN, the Cibola National Forest and the Zuni Mountain Forest Restoration Team invited stakeholders from all sectors operating at the local and state level to partner and form the broader Zuni Mountains restoration partners.

The dominant forest type(s) are ponderosa pine and piñon-juniper ecosystems. Total acreage of the landscape is 210,000 acres; Total acreage to receive treatment: 56,000 acres. Total number of NEPA ready implementable acres: 24,000; Total number of acres in NEPA process: 74,000. Ninety percent of the proposed landscape is classified as fire regime condition class III. The high fire risk also affects the state-endangered Zuni Bluehead Sucker which is endemic to the landscape.

Current Situation: The restoration partners propose to restore forest structure and processes via an ecological restoration strategy across thousands of acres of unnaturally dense ponderosa pine, and piñon-juniper forests. Through mechanical thinning and the reintroduction of fire into these ecosystems, the restoration partners also aim to increase ecosystem resiliency to climate change, drought, and forest pathogens. The collaborators will pursue implementation and effectiveness

monitoring through a multiparty process in order to accomplish these goals, determine restoration effectiveness, and determine the ecological, social, and economic effects. Since 2003, the Cibola National Forest and other land managers have focused forest and riparian restoration efforts in the Bluewater watershed, and through CFLRP funding, will be able to realize landscape scale multijurisdictional restoration across watersheds paired with sustainable restoration treatment and utilization businesses.

Next Steps: A key component of the restoration strategy is to address the highest risk to the health, resilience, and function of the landscape by large high intensity crown fire events. Such events put a variety of key ecosystem components in jeopardy. Given that 90 percent of the landscape is classified in fire regime condition class (FRCC) III, or highly departed from its historic range of variability, the primary goal of the landscape strategy is to move the landscape towards FRCC I, or a low departure. Analysis and projections completed for this proposal estimates between \$37 and \$42 million in wildfire suppression cost savings for the \$8 million investment proposed.

The project will also stabilize an incubating forest restoration-based economy in the region. Cibola and McKinley counties have unemployment rates higher than the state and nation. Sustaining or creating restoration related jobs will significantly improve the socioeconomic conditions of the landscape. Through projections completed for the proposal an estimated 93 direct and indirect local jobs will be created and sustained. Paired with the jobs, the 10-year landscape restoration effort will provide stabilized supply of materials and investment to grow local businesses. Upon the completion of the project, the shared vision of a healthy functioning forest system that supports biodiversity and rural social and economic goals will be achieved.

Contact: Matthew Reidy, Mt Taylor District Ranger 505-287-8833

**CFLRP Proposal: Zuni Mountains
Cibola National Forest, Mount Taylor Ranger District**

Vicinity Map, Jurisdictions, Project Boundary, Proposed Treatment, Area Roads

