

June 24th, 2025

LFC Natural Resources Subcommittee Tour and Information

Prepared By: Austin Davidson, LFC Analyst

Itinerary

- Leave UNM-Taos for D.H. Lawrence Ranch Gate at 1 p.m., arrive at 1:45 p.m.
 - View treated and untreated ponderosa pine forest
 - Discuss thinning and treatment effects on reducing wildfire risk and improving ecosystem function and watershed health
- Drive to D.H. Lawrence Ranch Historic Site, arrive at 2:25 p.m.
 - Hear the history of Taos Valley Watershed Coalition
 - Presentation on “landscape scale” efforts and partnership and opportunities for state and federal partnership for accomplishing work at larger scale
- Drive to Leñero Project Area, arrive at 3:45 p.m.
 - Presentation on “forest mayordomo” model of community forestry and results in Carson National Forest
 - Discuss how county, state and federal government entities are collaborating with land grants and acequias on treatments and prioritizing local needs
- Drive back to UNM-Taos, arrive 5:00 p.m.

Investments and Legislation related to forest management and protection

- The state’s main responder to wildfires, the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department’s State Forestry Division, received \$30 million during the 2025 legislative session for wildfire mitigation and thinning, and received a \$2.6 million recurring increase, with \$1.2 million specifically for hot shot crew operation costs and right sizing.
- Additionally, multiple wildfire and disaster related bills were passed by the Legislature, specifically SB31, SB33, HB178, and HB553.
 - SB31-Zero Interest Natural Disaster Loans- The bill establishes the natural disaster revolving fund to provide zero-interest loans to political subdivisions of the state and electric cooperatives that have been approved for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) public assistance funding following a federally declared natural disaster.
 - SB33-the Wildfire Prepared Act- The bill allows EMNRD greater flexibility in working with communities, individuals and qualifying political subdivisions (such as conservancy districts, incorporated municipalities, and counties) to better protect them from wildfires.

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- HB178-Forest and Watershed Buffer Projects- The bill enables State Forestry to add buffer zones to the list of eligible projects for Forest Land Protection Revolving Fund funding, which it previously was not. In many ways, this is paired with Senate Bill 33, the Wildfire Prepared Act, further enhancing Forestry's ability to work with qualified entities to create buffer zones and treat areas to prevent wildfires.
 - HB553-Timber Grading Bill- The bill creates the Timber Grading Act, empowering the Forestry Division of Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) to create and administer a certification program for the grading of structural timbers used in construction.

Vetoed Legislation

- HB 191-Wildfire Suppression & Preparedness Funds- Passed unanimously by both the House and the Senate, the bill would have created the wildfire suppression and post wildfire funds. These funds would have acted as clearing houses for funds and reimbursements State Forestry receives for wildfire related work, in addition to providing accountability and clarity for tracking spending of executive orders and federal reimbursements. \$12 million was appropriated in House Bill 2 for the post wildfire fund, contingent on passage of the bill. The bill was vetoed by the governor.