

Wildfire Mitigation, Suppression and Recovery: Updates and Issues

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Water and Natural Resource Committee
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Mitigating Wildfire Risk with Forest Treatments

Treating overgrown forests through thinning and prescribed fire - paired with defensible space around communities - is the state's most effective strategy for reducing wildfire risk.

Updates:

- Forestry Division contractors treated 19,931 acres in FY25; and 22,101 acres in FY26
- Landscape Stewardship Planning
- Community Wildfire Mitigation Buffers
- Shared Stewardship Agreement with National Forests
- Timber Grading Certification Program

Issues and Opportunities:

- More trees die than are removed at a pace of 13:1
- Current pace of treatment is insufficient
- Forest treatment ROI is 9:1 on jobs and economics alone
- Every dollar spent on wildfire risk-reduction saves about \$3 in suppression costs and up to \$39 when post-fire damages are included



References:

USDA Forest Service. 2026. Forests of New Mexico, 2022: FIA Annual Snapshot. FS-821; NM EMNRD Forestry Division. 2025. Senate Joint Memorial 1 (SJM1) Report to the Legislature.
NM EMNRD. 2025. New Mexico Climate Action Plan; Beagles, J., et al. 2024. New Mexico 2021 Wood Products Industry Highlights; Barker, J., et al. 2024. Costs and Benefits of Pile Burning. Frontiers in Forests and Global Change.
Troy, A., et al. 2022. The True Cost of Wildfire in the Western U.S. WFLC; Strabo, F., Bryan, C., and Reimer, M.N. 2025. Wildfire Damages and the Cost-Effective Role of Forest Fuel Treatments. SSRN 5337929.

SJM1 Report - New Mexico's Forest & Wildfire Challenges

Scale of the Problem

- 16.8M acres of non-federal forested land; most are overstocked and fire-prone.
- Current treatment pace (~125,000 acres/year statewide) would take 136 years to restore priority acres.
- To reach healthy conditions within a generation, NM must treat 1.7M acres/year (a 14x increase).

Key Barriers

1

Capital constraints for landowners (“land rich, cash poor”) and contractors.

2

Insufficient workforce for thinning, burning, and forest operations.

3

High transportation costs and lack of regional woodyard infrastructure.

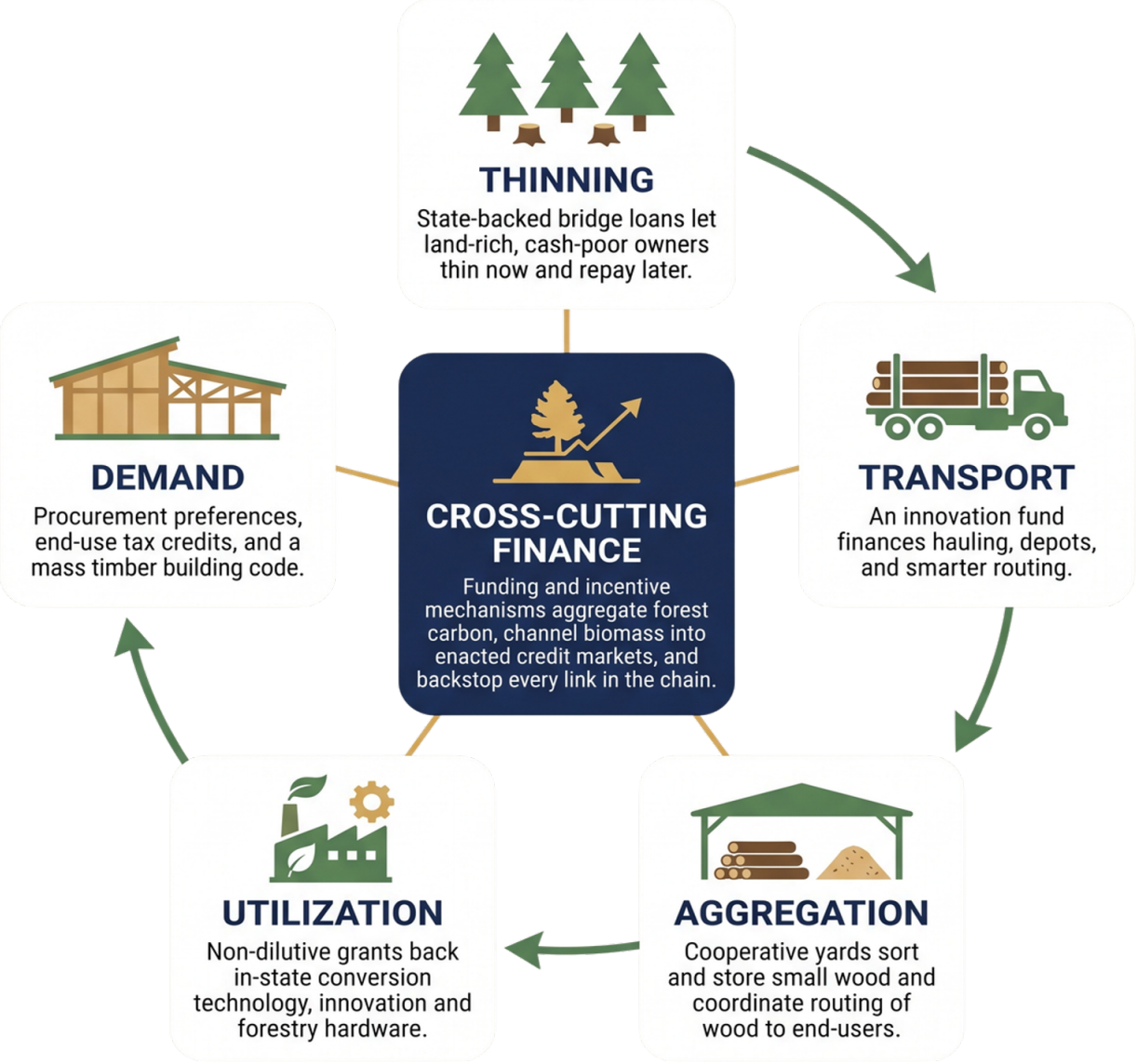
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Underdeveloped wood-products economy compared to AZ, CO, OR.

5

Rising wildfire risk demonstrated by HPCC (341,000 acres; >\$5B claims fund for damages).

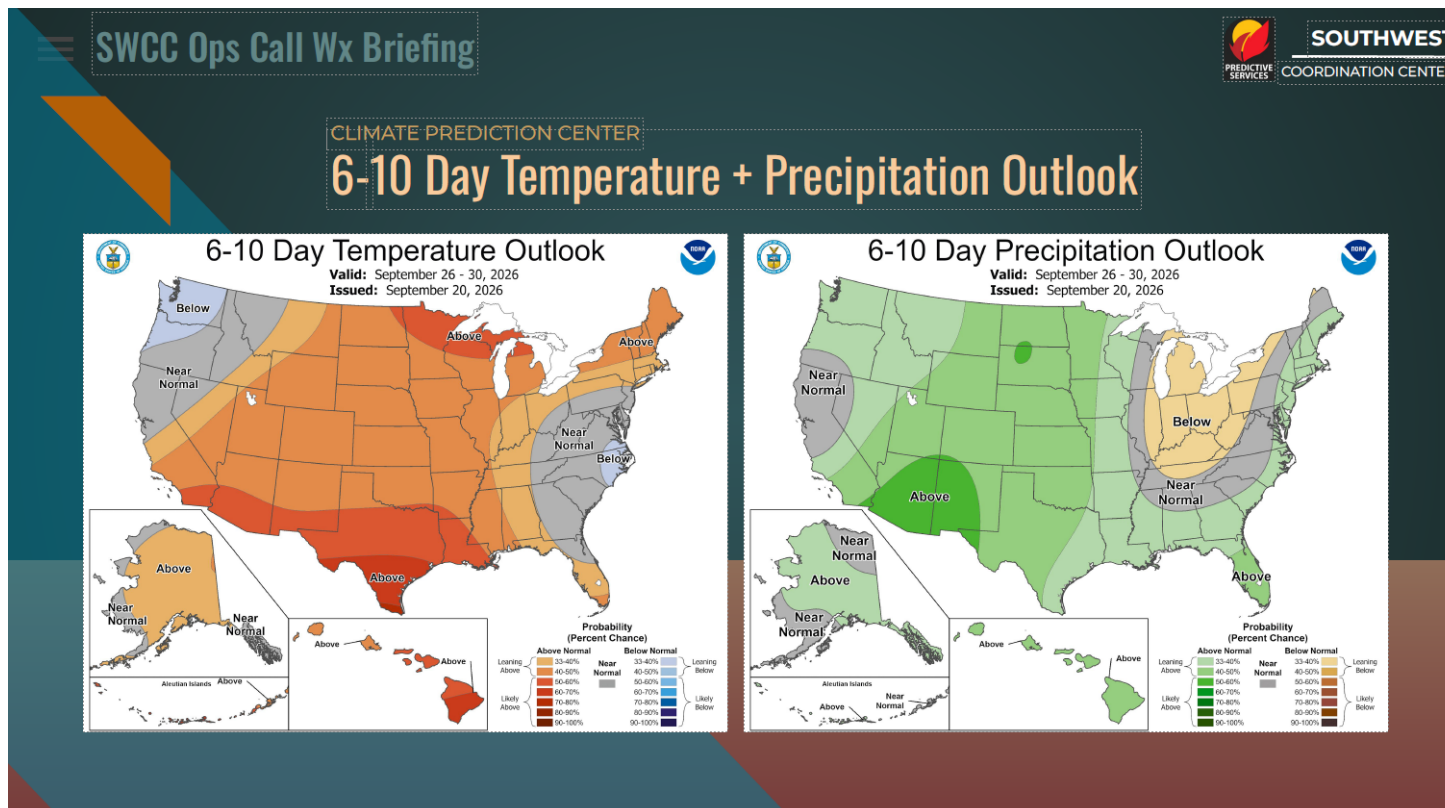
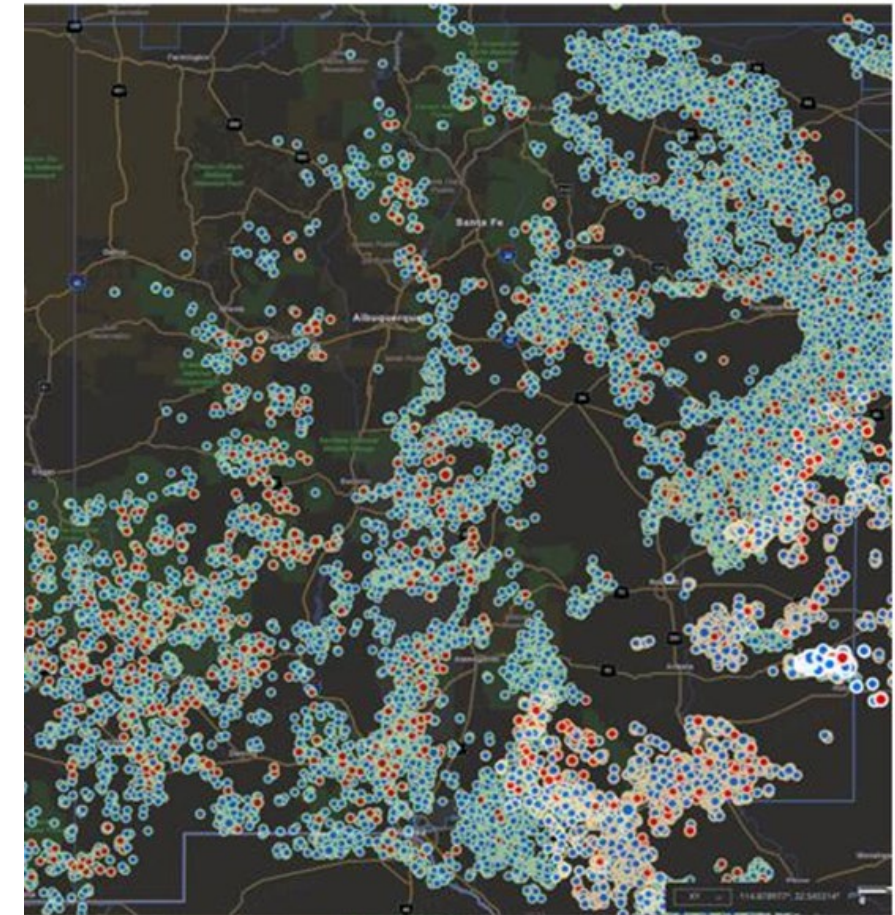
Value-Chain to Convert Wildfire Risk to Economic Opportunity and Scale Outcomes



Wildfire Suppression

- Above normal 2026 Wildland Fire Potential
- 30,000 lightning strikes in one day is common
- Since January 1, over 1,700 wildfires and 189,000 acres burned

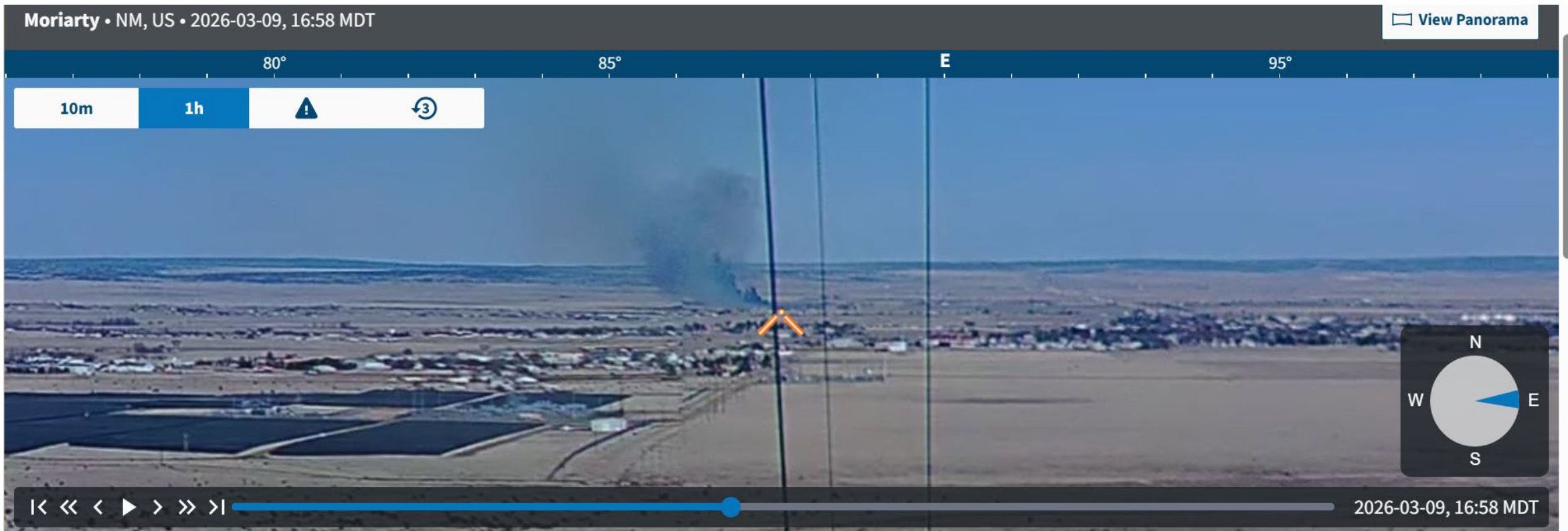
One day of lightning strikes in June 2026



Wildfire Early Detection Cameras

- 11 cameras in FY26 and 21 in FY27 with special appropriations as a pilot program
- Average 40 minutes saved in response time

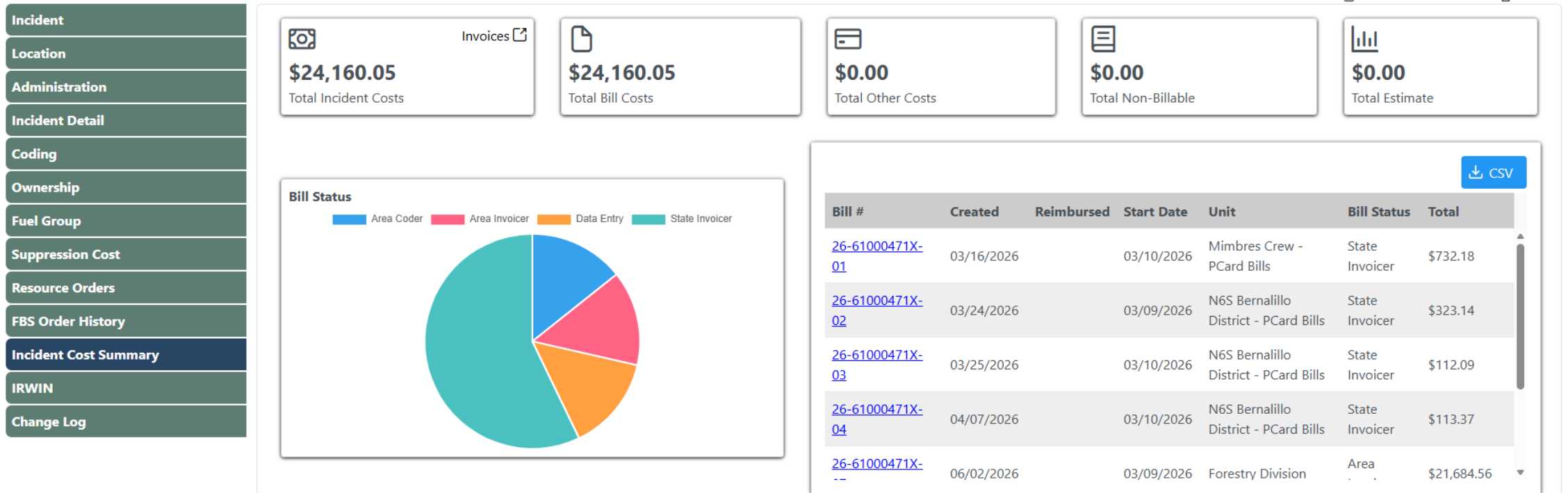
Photo: View of a new smoke detected by Pano AI camera and seen by Forestry Division staff; this was named the Cummings fire.



Faster Response = Money Saved

How Wildfire Early Detection Cameras Save the State Money

- Delay would have required additional apparatus, overhead to manage the resources, and possibly aviation.
- Cummings fire suppressed in 2 days at 94 acres.
- Given fuels and wind that day, the fire could have doubled or tripled in size, costing 10 times as much.





Overview of Wildfire Response Resources

- **Mimbres Crew** available for assignments to qualify for Hotshot Type 1, targeting certification in November
- **Pecos River Crew** hired Superintendent, crew leaders and firefighters
- **Wildfire Response Program:** 1 fully staffed Type-2 Initial Attack crew; 10-person module; multiple engines
- **State Type-6 Fire Engines:** 8 FTE engine bosses and 18 Type-6 engines
- **Over 200 Administratively Determined (AD)** emergency-hire firefighter applications: highest # for recruitment
- **2,293 firefighters trained** for FY26: increased capacity statewide, compared to slightly more than 2,000 firefighters trained in FY25.



Local Government RMP

The Forestry Division works with Counties and Municipalities to develop Resource Mobilization Plans (RMP) that allow their wildland fire resources to participate in firefighting statewide and nationally.

- 10 Counties
- 19 Municipalities

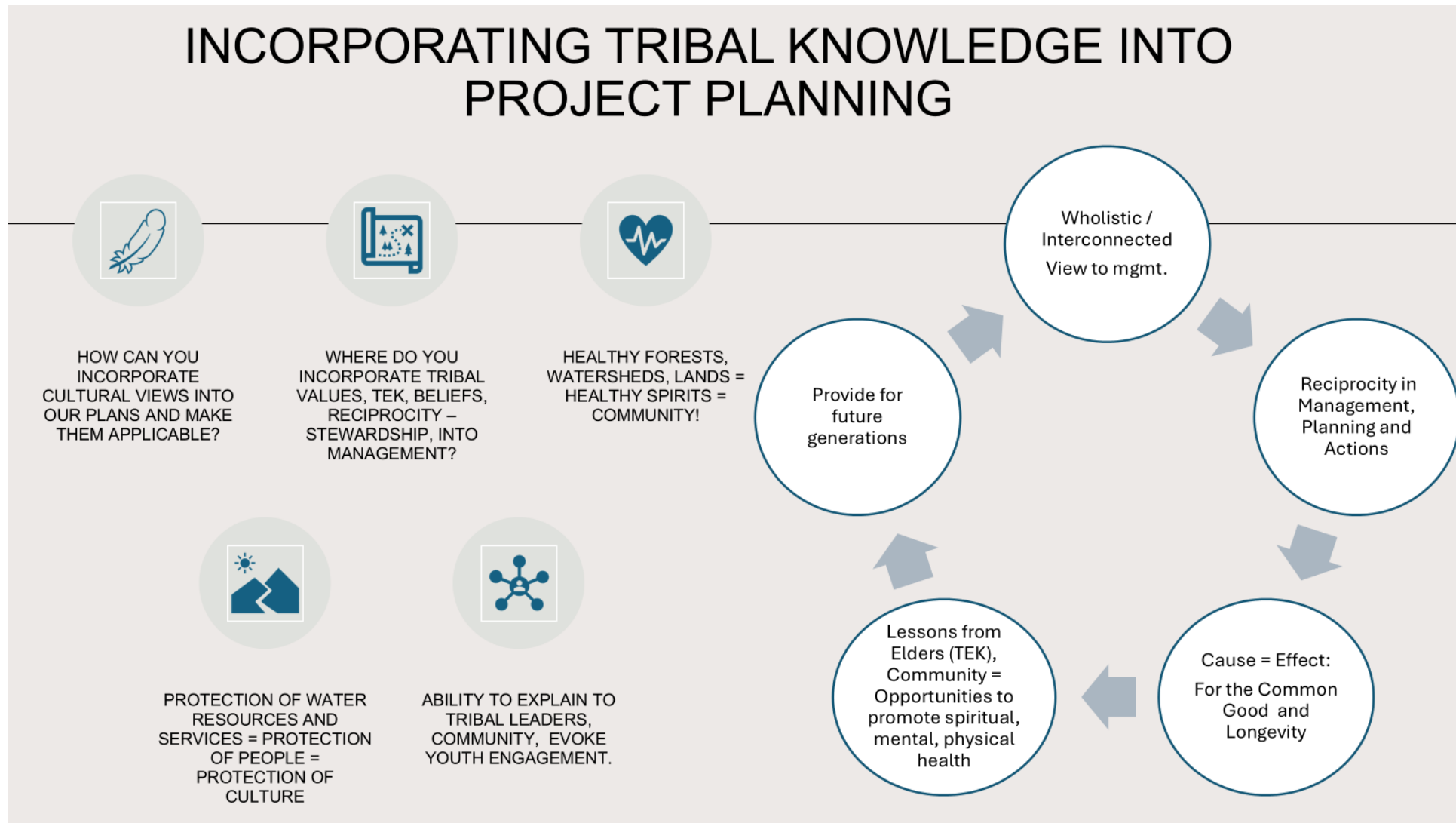
Capacity in 2026 includes:

- Emergency Medical Units
- Type 6 Wildland Engines
- Type 3 Wildland Engines
- Water Tenders
- Overhead Positions
- 20 Person Hand Crew
- Wildland Response Module



Photos: Bottom, Rio Communities Fire Dept filling a water tank for helicopter bucket dips. Top, Valencia County Wildland Captain providing leadership for initial attack.

Tribal Forestry and Wildfire Management





LOCAL Picuris Pueblo Charcoal

