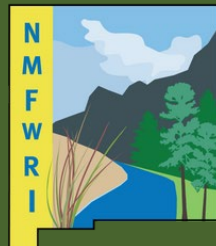


New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute: Federal Funding Cuts Impact on 20 Years of Supporting Healthy Forests and Informed Land Management

Presentation to the Water and Natural Resources Committee
November 18, 2025. State Capitol
Edward Martinez, Deputy Director



New Mexico
Forest and Watershed
Restoration Institute

New Mexico Highlands University



Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes

WHO ARE WE?
A COLLABORATION BETWEEN
3 UNIVERSITY-BASED
RESTORATION INSTITUTES



OCTOBER 2004

Established by Congress via the Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act (SWERI Act)



Research, develop, and monitor treatments to accelerate forest restoration and reduce wildfire risks



Translate and adapt conventional research findings for practical, real-world applications



Transfer knowledge about restoration-based hazardous fuel reduction treatments to key audiences



Assist with the design and implementation of monitoring and adaptive management

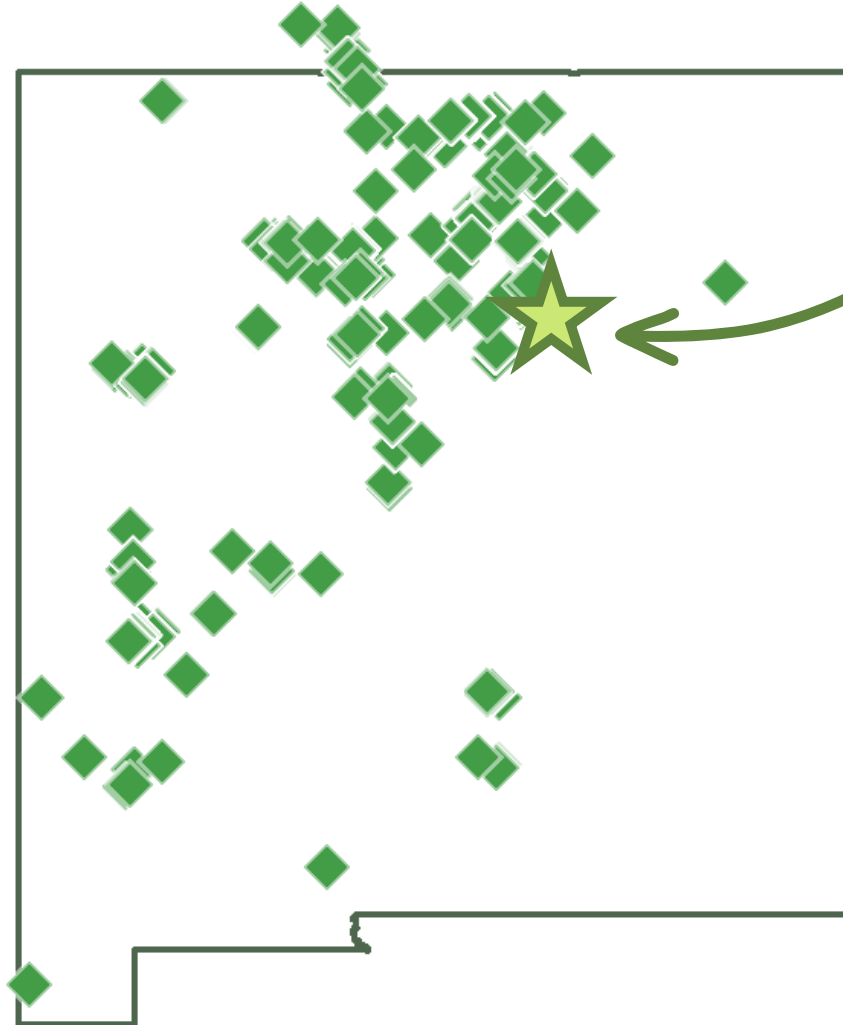
Where NMFWRI Works

Collaborative
Groups &
Meetings

GIS Mapping
and Drone
Projects

K-16 / STEM Pathways

Postfire Restoration
& Workshops



*Based at New Mexico
Highlands University in
Las Vegas, NM*

Ecological Monitoring
Plots and Projects

Research Projects and
Professional Groups

NMFWRI Funding

Typical Funding (Annual) – FY24

- Federal Appropriation: \$2.2M
- State (RPSP): \$334k
- Other Sources: \$1.61M

Total: ~\$4.1M/year

FY25 Funding (Annual)

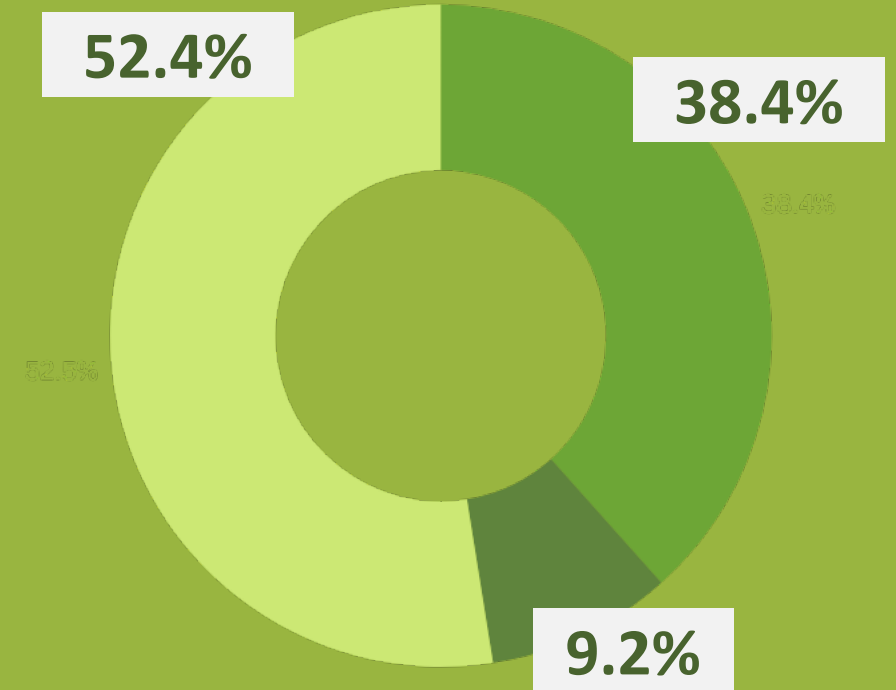
- Federal Appropriation: \$1.0M (55% cut)
- State (RPSP): \$343,602k
- Other Sources: \$1.61M

Total: ~\$2.9M/year

Support Requested from State: \$1.2M

Annual federal appropriations

Other sponsored contracts



Annual state appropriations

NMFWRI Functional Area: Civic & Community Action

Conservation & Restoration Education

Community Engagement with the purposes of increasing awareness and understanding of ecological processes within forested ecosystems and watersheds, and the related impacts of wildfire.

- K-16 programming
- Building STEM workforce pathways
- NMHU STEM student retention
- Curriculum development



Budget Cut Impacts (~\$74,000)

- Froze 1 FTE position dedicated for K-12 outreach
- Reduced scope of Fire Ecology Learning Lab (FELL) curriculum for youth
- Scaled down core STEM education programming

NMFWRI Functional Areas: Civic and Community Action

Collaboration

Serves place- and project-based collaborative groups and watershed associations as a resource to build and expand collaborative and organizational capacity.

- Coordinate Partnerships
- Support rural collaborative volunteer groups



Budget Cut Impacts (~\$41,640)

- Reduced capacity for partnership coordination
- Reduced capacity for community research project development
- Reduced scale of network facilitation

NMFWRI Functional Areas: Technical & Applied Science

GIS

NMFWRI serves as a hub for restoration-focused GIS, remote sensing, and GPS expertise across New Mexico.



**GEOSPATIAL
INFORMATION
SYSTEMS (GIS)**

Budget Cut Impacts (~100,430)

- Eliminated post-fire GIS application training for communities
- Postponed satellite vegetation assessments.
- Canceled purchase of drone equipment
- Suspended updates to the NMFWRI website

NMFWRI Functional Areas: Technical & Applied Science

Ecological Monitoring

Maintains a professionally-managed field crew to collect data on short- and long-term ecosystem response to restoration treatments and disturbances.

These data provide the scientific basis for restoration treatments and is critical for adaptive management.



Budget Cut Impacts (~\$318,660)

- Suspended hiring of staff and students, limiting personnel capacity for field work.
- Reduced ecological monitoring at historically long-term sites
- Cuts to on-the-ground applied research, hindering data requests
- Reduced community engagement

NMFWRI Functional Areas: Technical & Applied Science and Community Action

FIRENM

Increases access to fire-adapted restoration knowledge, practices and experiences to promote resiliency in firesheds across NM.

Serves restoration practitioners, subcontractor, NGOs, NRM managers, field crews, volunteer firefighters, traditional students, landowners, youth, and reskill populations.

FIRENM: FIRE-INFORMED RESTORATION EDUCATION FOR NEW MEXICO

Budget Cut Impacts (~\$225,750)

- Decreased capacity for workforce development restoration workshops at desired frequency
- Decreased capacity to serve public and agency staff
- Decreased capacity to develop and imbed 'Culture of Fire' in training, curriculum and educational materials.

NMFWRI Functional Areas: Technical & Applied Science and Community Action

Communications

NMFWRI's Public Information program creates and coordinates strategic communications products to promote the institute's work through digital and traditional media, at in-person workshops and events, and in response to specific requests.

Budget Cut Impacts (~\$98,455)

- Decreased capacity to participate in communication events/public meetings and public relations.
- Decreased capacity to hire, manage and mentor HU Media Arts interns and work study students and produce interactive, multimedia projects for education and outreach.

NMFWRI Functional Areas: Technical & Applied Science and Community Action

Research

Synthesize and shares NMFWRI data and information. Primary and secondary research to facilitate understanding of fire-vulnerable human and ecological systems of the Southwest.

Develops collaborative relationships with land managers, NGOs, and academic communities.



RESEARCH

Budget Cut Impacts (~\$127,000)

- Reduced capacity to develop new research projects
- Reduced capacity to collect data for synthesis
- Reduced capacity to share and contribute towards knowledge exchanges
- Reduced capacity to develop partnerships

NMFWRI Moving Forward

Federal Advocacy

NMFWRI is actively working with the other two (ERI and CFRI) SWERIs to advocate for federal funding to be restored to FY24 level of \$6.6M .

Funding is highly dependent on the CR or passing of a Budget by Congress.

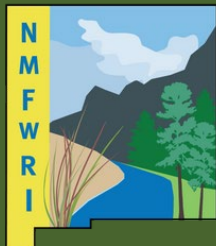
Federal, State, Foundation Grants and Contracts

NMFWRI is actively applying for federal, state, foundation, grants and contracts. To date NMFWRI has applied to:

NMFWRI Proposal and Contract Log					
Funding Agency	Program/Type	Submission Date	Request	Duration (Yr)	Status
EPA	Environmental and Climate Justice Community Change Grants Program	Nov-24	\$13,851,847.00	2	Pulled
US Forest Service	CWDG	Mar-25	\$9,847,184.00	5	Declined
SFCF	Education	Aug-25	\$25,000.00	1	Declined
NMDGF	Contract	Aug-25	\$25,000.00	1	Awarded
LCC	EDA - Subaward	Sep-25	\$168,385.00	2	Pending
LCC	USDA -Subaward	Sep-25	\$444,615.00	3	Pending
Claunch Pinto SWCD	Contract	Sep-25	\$10,000.00	1	Awarded
Claunch Pinto SWCD	Contract	Sep-25	\$166,911.00	2	Awarded
NMDGF	Contract	Sep-25	\$97,000.00	1	Pending
USFWS	Partners	Winter 2025	\$75,000.00	3	In Progress
RDC	Grant	Winter 2025	\$30,000.00	1	In Progress
PLVRD	Contract	Spring 2026	\$500,000.00	2	In Progress
PLVRD	Contract	Spring 2026	\$5,015,613.00	5	In Progress

Your support is crucial to help us continue our mission of reducing wildfire risk and restoring New Mexico's forests and watersheds. We are ready to provide any additional information you may need.

THANK YOU!



**New Mexico
Forest and Watershed
Restoration Institute**

New Mexico Highlands University



- Alan Barton, Director awbarton@nmhu.edu 505.426.2081
- Edward Martinez, Deputy Director, Operations & Development
eamartinez@nmhu.edu 505.454.3360
- Gilbert “Buddy” Rivera, Deputy Director, Chief of Staff
gdrivera@nmhu.edu 505.454.3289

NM Forest & Watershed Restoration Institute

NM Highlands University

Las Vegas, NM 87701

nmfwri.org