Santo Domingo de Cundiyo Land Grant-Merced
Frijoles Fire Impacts, Response, and Recovery Needs
August 2026

Thank you for giving the Santo Domingo de Cundiyo Land Grant-Merced the opportunity to speak about what our community is facing as a result of the Frijoles Fire.
Our concerns are not limited to the acres burned. They include the health of our residents, protection of our water and acequias, impacts to grazing and traditional land uses, damage associated with fire suppression, and what will happen to our land when the fire is over.

What We Are Facing

One of our immediate concerns is smoke and public health. Cundiyo is a small rural community with children, elderly residents, and families who have experienced prolonged periods of wildfire smoke. Many homes use swamp coolers, fans, and open windows during the summer, which can draw smoke directly into the home.

We are concerned about what this exposure means today and what it could mean for our residents in the future. We would like assistance obtaining air purifiers for homes, particularly those with children and elderly residents, and information about whether medical screening or other health assistance can be made available.Residents are also dealing with smoke and ash affecting homes, vehicles, and personal property. We need help identifying what assistance may be available for those impacts.

Our second major concern is water.

Our community, livestock, agricultural lands, acequias, and wildlife all depend upon this watershed. Even after the fire is contained, ash, sediment, erosion, flooding, and debris flows could continue affecting our water for years.
Acequia infrastructure is particularly vulnerable. Flooding and runoff can damage entrances and intakes and fill ditches with sediment and debris. We need assistance with water-quality monitoring, ditch cleaning, intake repairs, erosion control, and protection of infrastructure before future storms create additional damage.

The Land Grant itself has also been directly affected by fire suppression activities.

Bulldozer containment lines, hand lines, and access routes have been constructed on Land Grant property. These were necessary emergency actions, but afterward we will have to deal with erosion, drainage, rehabilitation, reseeding, road closures, and restoration of the landscape.

Where appropriate, we would like resources for reforestation and tree planting in addition to reseeding disturbed areas.

We also want to make sure temporary roads created or improved for fire suppression do not unintentionally become permanent public access routes across Land Grant property.

Our Experience With Disaster Response Agencies

To date, our experience with the U.S. Forest Service and the other agencies supporting fire suppression has generally been positive.

The Forest Service has been informative and respectful regarding suppression activities occurring on Land Grant property. We have had discussions concerning the rehabilitation of bulldozer lines and other disturbed areas, including erosion control and reseeding.

We appreciate the firefighters, equipment operators, incident management personnel, law enforcement officers, county employees, and others who have worked to protect Cundiyo.

As of August 19, we have also had an opportunity to discuss our concerns with Congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernández and Santa Fe County Commissioner Justin Greene.

The challenge we see now is making sure that this coordination continues after suppression ends.

The emergency response cannot end when the last fire crew leaves. For our community, that is when another phase begins.

What We Need From the State of New Mexico

We are asking the State to help Cundiyo and the Santo Domingo de Cundiyo Land Grant-Merced bridge the gap between fire suppression and long-term community recovery.

Specifically, we need help with:

1. Water and watershed protection - Water-quality testing and long-term monitoring for impacts from ash, sediment, fire retardant where applicable, erosion, and post-fire runoff affecting people, livestock, agriculture, and wildlife.
2. Acequia infrastructure - Funding and technical assistance for flooded or damaged intakes and entrances, ditch cleaning, sediment and debris removal, erosion control, and protection against future post-fire flooding.
3. Community health - Assistance obtaining air purifiers for Cundiyo homes, particularly households with children and elderly residents, and identifying medical screening or assistance available for residents affected by prolonged smoke exposure.
4. Smoke and ash damage - Assistance identifying programs available to residents whose homes, vehicles, swamp coolers, HVAC systems, or other property have been affected by smoke and ash.
5. Land restoration - Funding and technical assistance for repairing dozer lines, temporary roads and other suppression impacts; controlling erosion; restoring drainage; reseeding disturbed areas; and, where appropriate, replanting trees.
6. Land Grant participation - We want the Santo Domingo de Cundiyo Land Grant-Merced directly involved in decisions concerning cleanup, rehabilitation, road closures, and restoration occurring on our property.
7. Local recovery work - Whenever possible, we would like state and federal recovery funding to create opportunities for the Land Grant, acequias, local contractors, equipment operators, and community members to perform restoration and cleanup work rather than bringing all of those resources in from outside the community.
8. Long-term coordination - We need a clear point of contact or coordinated process that allows the Land Grant and community to continue working with state, county, and federal agencies as problems emerge over the coming months and years.

Closing

The Santo Domingo de Cundiyo Land Grant-Merced recognizes and appreciates the

tremendous effort that has gone into protecting our community.

But containment is not the end of this disaster for Cundiyo.

The next heavy rain may expose problems we cannot see today. Water-quality impacts may take time to develop. Erosion may continue for years. Vegetation and trees will take decades to recover. And our residents will continue living with the effects of this event long after the fire crews have gone home.

We are not simply asking the State to come in and fix everything for us.

We are asking the State to be our partner in recovery.

Give our Land Grant, our acequias, and our community the technical assistance, resources, and funding necessary to participate in restoring our own land and protecting our own community.

Our goal is to make sure Cundiyo comes out of this event safer, more resilient, and with our land, water, and traditional uses protected for the next generation.