



**AGREEMENT FOR SHARED STEWARDSHIP**  
**Between The**  
**STATE OF NEW MEXICO,**  
**ENERGY, MINERALS AND NATURAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT,**  
**FORESTRY DIVISION**  
**And The**  
**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,**  
**FOREST SERVICE**

This Agreement for Shared Stewardship (Agreement) is hereby made and entered into by and between the State of New Mexico, Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, Forestry Division (Forestry Division) and the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (Forest Service).

**BACKGROUND**

Managers and owners of forests across the nation face urgent challenges including wildfires, invasive species, drought, and epidemics of forest insects and disease. Longer fire seasons and the rising size and severity of wildfires are of special concern, along with increasing risk to communities, firefighters, and natural resources – especially water supplies.

Management of fire risk and protection of water are of utmost importance in New Mexico. The livelihoods and well-being of New Mexico residents depend more on scarce, and precious, surface and ground water supplies than on almost anything else. Many of New Mexico's water sources originate in high elevation forests on private, tribal, and public lands that are vulnerably to uncharacteristically large and catastrophic wildfire.

For more than a decade, key natural resource management agencies in New Mexico have been rethinking and retooling the approach to forest and watershed management. The approach recognizes the inseparability of ecological, social, and economic sustainability. The agencies strive to be collaborative, make science-based decisions, and coordinate plans and actions at the landscape scale. This approach requires inter-agency trust and up-front investment of time and energy and incorporates broad experience and knowledge. Through this Agreement, the Forestry Division and the

Forest Service commit to continue this path to improve outcomes and increase efficiencies through Shared Stewardship.

The Forestry Division and the Forest Service have worked together to coordinate forest management efforts since 1957 when the Department of State Forestry, the Forestry Division's predecessor, was established. The importance of this collaborative relationship was explicitly recognized by the leadership of both agencies in 2004 with the adoption of the New Mexico Forest and Watershed Health Plan (Plan) coordinated by the Forestry Division. The Forest Service is a co-author and signatory to that document, which lays out an integrated collaborative landscape approach to ecological restoration. The Plan outlines a framework for achieving a vision of forest and watershed health that incorporates ecological, social, and economic considerations. It requires working across agency jurisdictions, ownership boundaries, cultural divides, and ecosystem types; applying science-based ecological restoration methods; and using collaboration, teamwork, persistence, and continual learning. The Plan also expanded the partnership of New Mexico forest stewards to include other key federal, tribal, and state governmental entities and non-governmental organizations as signatories.

In 2006 the New Mexico Forest Restoration Principles were collaboratively developed by the Forestry Division, the Forest Service, and a team representing industry, conservation organizations, land management agencies, and independent scientists. These principles for restoration were created as guidelines for project development, and they represent the "zone of agreement" where controversy, delays, appeals, and litigation are significantly reduced. The principles were developed to promote projects driven primarily by ecological objectives while promoting economic and social benefits.

This vision and approach were incorporated into the Forestry Division's 2010 Statewide Natural Resources Assessment and Strategy and Action Plan, now collectively known as the New Mexico Forest Action Plan (FAP). The FAP is based on a complex analysis of over 80 datasets that informed natural resource issues on all jurisdictions. The FAP contains a set of objectives and strategies developed using information on programs and priorities of partner organizations gathered in a series of stakeholder workshops. In 2015, the Forestry Division added new material to the FAP in four addenda, including an updated strategies table. Two key objectives of the original FAP were to help natural resource agencies use their resources efficiently by identifying priority landscapes, and to identify resource programs where collaborative projects will benefit multiple partners. The New Mexico Forest and Watershed Management Coordinating Group, the Forestry Division's representative advisory group comprised of federal and state agencies and other essential stakeholders, recently confirmed that these objectives are still valid and will continue to guide the strategies moving forward.

## **SHARED STEWARDSHIP APPROACH**

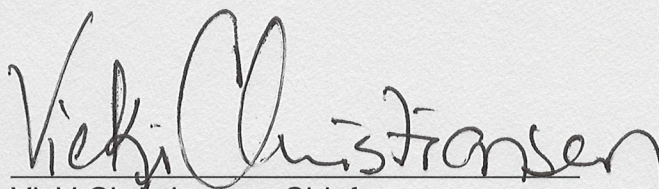
The Forest Service document "Toward Shared Stewardship Across Landscapes: An Outcome-Based Investment Strategy", released in August 2018, calls for the Forest

Service to work closely with states to set landscape-scale priorities for targeted treatments that manage risks and increase benefits in areas where they will have the greatest impact across broad landscapes. The Forest Service recognizes that, although this work has been going on for years, the objectives of Shared Stewardship elevate and formalize this work. The Forest Service and the Forestry Division are employing new tools, science, and authorities to make strategic investments aimed at mitigating risk, improving forest health, and increasing resilience in New Mexico's ecosystems, and are committed to an outcome-based investment strategy.

The Forestry Division and the Forest Service commit to the following actions as the basis of this agreement for Shared Stewardship in New Mexico:

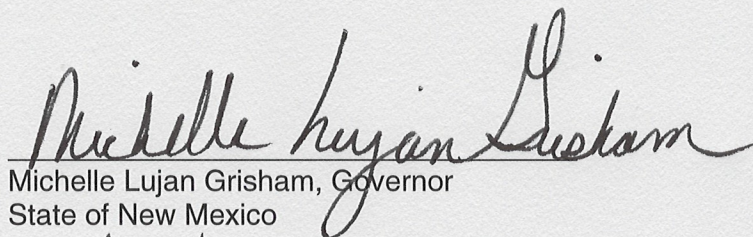
1. The Forestry Division will take a leading role in convening collaborative groups and stakeholders to establish shared goals for forest and watershed management on all New Mexico lands, public and private.
2. The Forestry Division and the Forest Service recognize the interdependence of the three goals of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy and jointly commit to implement the strategy.
3. The Forestry Division and the Forest Service will jointly establish landscape-scale restoration priorities for targeted treatments.
  - The Forestry Division's State Forester and District Foresters and the Forest Service Regional Forester and Forest Supervisors will meet on a regular basis to review Forest Action Plan and National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan priorities and programs of work and develop shared goals and decisions for forest and watershed management on all lands, public and private.
  - Key issues to consider will be priorities for National Environmental Policy Act planning, appropriate uses of categorical exclusions, budgets, staffing, capacity, and implementation.
4. The Forestry Division and the Forest Service acknowledge that tribes and pueblos, as sovereign nations with continuing connections for spiritual and cultural uses to ancestral lands now managed by the Forest Service, are essential participants in implementing Shared Stewardship landscape and watershed restoration strategies in order to protect their cultural resources and access to such resources, and for the often interrelated benefits to their own lands and watersheds that are adjacent to Forest Service lands. The parties further acknowledge the Forest Service's trust responsibility to tribes and pueblos and Forestry Division's obligation to interact with tribes and pueblos on a government-to-government basis. The Forestry Division and the Forest Service will collectively use their respective authorities to conduct government-to-government consultation directly with the tribes and pueblos on implementing Shared Stewardship strategies and will seek to collaborate and partner with the tribes and pueblos when feasible.

5. The Forestry Division and the Forest Service recognize traditional Hispanic communities, land grants, and acequias as essential participants in Shared Stewardship in order to protect, preserve, and enhance their spiritual and cultural heritage and access to resources and land.
6. The Forestry Division and the Forest Service will focus available resources to implement projects in priority landscapes.
7. The Forestry Division and the Forest Service will track measurable outcomes across all lands.
8. The Forestry Division and the Forest Service will jointly communicate the benefits of landscape-scale forest and watershed restoration and the outcomes of Shared Stewardship to New Mexico citizens.
9. The parties agree this Agreement does not serve as an authorizing tool. The Forestry Division and the Forest Service will rely on all available authorities to implement priority projects, including, but not limited to Good Neighbor Authority, Farm Bill Authorities, Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act, and the New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Act. Specific authorities for actions will be identified prior to project implementation and development.



Vicki Christiansen, Chief  
United States Department of Agriculture,  
Forest Service

Nov. 14, 2019  
Date



Michelle Lujan Grisham, Governor  
State of New Mexico

11/14/19  
Date