

NEW MEXICO REFORESTATION CENTER

FACTS:

- New Mexico continues to experience hot, dry summers making our state's forests more susceptible to wildfires year-round.
- Over the past 20 years, wildland fires in New Mexico have burned over 5.45 million acres.
- The two largest fires in our state's history (Calf Canyon – Hermit's Peak and Black Fires) are currently still burning as of June 2022.
- New Mexico currently needs to plant between 1 to 2.6 million acres, which would require 150 to 390 million seedlings.
- Current seedling production capacity in New Mexico is approximately 300,000 seedlings per year, well below the needs for the state.

Source: National Interagency Fire Center and New Mexico EMNRD, Forestry Division



The mission of the New Mexico Reforestation Center will be to meet current and future reforestation needs in New Mexico through its comprehensive seed bank, nursery, and planting operations combined with research, education and outreach activities.

New Mexico's Forests are Central to Sustaining Our Way of Life

- Forests supply 50% to 75% of all water used by municipalities and agriculture in the state.
- They provide recreational opportunities, wildlife habitat, timber, and other valuable resources.

New Mexico's Forests are Threatened by Wildfire

- Our forests are at risk of catastrophic wildfire, and the area burned by wildfires is increasing.
- Natural tree regeneration is rare after catastrophic wildfires and tree planting is necessary.
- The NM Forestry Division, NMHU, NMSU, and UNM are collaborating to reforest these burned landscapes through the creation of the ***New Mexico Reforestation Center***.



The New Mexico Reforestation Center is Essential to Restoring Forests

- The *Center* would produce up to 5 million seedlings per year and make progress in addressing the massive planting needs.
- The *Center* would support forest-based economic growth throughout New Mexico.
- The *Center* would use science-based approaches to meet New Mexico's reforestation goals.

Investing in Reforestation

- A grant proposal was submitted to USDA's "Partnerships in Climate-Smart Commodities" for \$79.9 million in May 2022.
- If awarded, funds will be used for the construction and initial 5-year operation of the *New Mexico Reforestation Center*.
- Additional recurring funds are required for full-time faculty and staff positions to support the mission of the *New Mexico Reforestation Center*.

BACKGROUND



New Mexico's forests supply many valuable resources to its citizens, including 50% to 75% of all water used by municipalities and agriculture. However, forest health in New Mexico and the southwestern US is declining due to a combination of factors that include historic fire suppression, increased fuel densities, increased drought, and a lack of proper forest management. As a result of these factors, these dense forests of the southwest are experiencing some of the most destructive wildfires in history. This trend will likely continue into the near future.

Many of the forests that have succumbed to high-severity fires are not growing back naturally resulting in a loss of forests in New Mexico. Therefore, it is critical to invest in a reforestation program for the state that will help to benefit forest health, water quality and quantity, carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat, recreation, and many other valuable resources. Reforestation needs in New Mexico are currently estimated to be between 1 to 2.6 million acres, which would require 150 to 390 million seedlings. Current seedling production capacity in the state of New Mexico is approximately 300,000 seedlings per year.

The ***New Mexico Reforestation Center*** will:

- Help to meet reforestation needs by producing 5 million seedlings per year.
- Establish programs to support the reforestation pipeline, from seed collection to planting.
- Support climate-smart tree planting projects in urban environments to assist with carbon sequestration, air quality, and providing shade to cool urban surfaces.
- Support education, research, and outreach activities in relation to reforestation.
- Create hundreds of new jobs and add millions of dollars of new economic output to the state.

The ***New Mexico Reforestation Center*** is a partnership between EMNRD – Forestry Division, NMHU – Department of Forestry, NMSU – John T. Harrington Forestry Research Center, and UNM – Department of Biology. The Center will use research, education, and training to help develop a reforestation economy that restores New Mexico's forests and all of the ecosystem services they provide.



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