



# IMPACT OF WILDFIRES ON COUNTY LIFE AND GOVERNMENT

## LINCOLN COUNTY EXPERIENCE & PERSPECTIVE

[www.lincolncountynm.net](http://www.lincolncountynm.net)

### 1. WHEN THE WILDFIRE COMES

- ✦ **During the last 10 years, Lincoln County has been faced with five wildfires of 500 acres or greater, burning approximately 225,000 acres of land:**

• 2004	Peppin Fire	67,359
• 2009	Number 5 Fire	931
• 2011	White Fire	10,334
• 2011	Donaldson Fire	101,563
• 2012	Little Bear Fire	44,351

- ✦ **Immediate Steps to Take**

- Work side-by-side with Fire-fighting response team;
- Identify homes / structures in danger (eventually lost): Little Bear fire destroyed 254 structures; 242 of which were homes;
- Establish messaging and implement Code Red Reverse E911 Emergency Notification System;
- Identify and take full advantage of Partners:
  - Establish shelter locations and assignment/monitoring processes (churches, schools, disaster support organizations ) in the case of evacuations;
  - Identify and act on potential health impacts – State Agencies; local Emergency Medical Teams;
  - Set up call centers; prepare script;

### 2. AFTER THE WILDFIRE

- ✦ **Assess impact on local economy;** develop steps and media plan to inform the public of county and municipal health to ensure continued recreational opportunities to residents and tourists;
- ✦ **Assess watershed and water source damage and potential for flooding:** Little Bear Fire resulted in high severity burn conditions across White Mountain Wilderness, including headwaters of Bonito Creek, Blue front and South Fork Bonito Creek;
  - These watersheds drain into the Rio Bonito watershed and Bonito Lake, which drains into the communities of Alto and Angus and provides 60% of municipal water for the City of Alamogordo and Holloman Air Force Base;
  - All of these population centers are situated in the floodplain;
  - Changes in runoff response compounded by sediment bulking are issues of serious concern for downstream values of human life and property.
- ✦ **Establish Local Incident Command Team to Identify and Initiate Clean-up and Recovery Steps:**
  - Assess Funding Availability for Clean-up and Recovery: County's good financial health enabled the immediate commencement of work;
  - Accessed FEMA Disaster Recovery Funding
  - Accessed Governor's Executive Order
  - Received State Board of Finance Emergency Grant
  - Received NRCS funding for specific projects

### 3. WHAT COUNTIES NEED

- ✦ Proactive forest management that will minimize/prevent wildfires
  - Development and maintenance of strong, positive relationships among local and federal governmental agencies with establishment of consistent goals;
- ✦ Maintenance / growth of local economy and values.
  - Agriculture
  - Hunting & fishing
  - Tourism
  - Wildlife
  - Scenery
  - Economic development
- ✦ Economic-based activity created by proactive forest management
  - New Mexico businesses and jobs performing forest treatments;
  - New Mexico businesses and jobs related to making products from the wood available from forest treatment;
- ✦ Functioning watersheds which provide clean, reliable water supplies to municipal and agricultural water users in the forested areas, as well as downstream.

### 4. HOW TO GET THERE

- ✦ Coordination and collaboration among local, state and federal governments; legislative partnerships; special interest groups (Little Bear Forest Reform Coalition) and citizens;
- ✦ Everybody pitching in to achieve a common goal;
- ✦ Recognition of the unique needs and circumstances of each area in the state in the development of ongoing processes;
- ✦ Obtain NMAC support of Water Fund Comprehensive Plan which includes Wildfire and Water Source Protection effort;