

# SW Jemez Mountains Restoration

Status Report - October/November 2009

## Welcome! Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Planning is Beginning

This is our first status report as we initiate the Southwest Jemez Mountains Restoration Strategy! The Forest Service, Valles Caldera Trust, Pueblo of Jemez, The Nature Conservancy, and New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute are initiating a strategic-level forest restoration planning effort. We invite you to collaborate with us to help restore sustainable and resilient ecological conditions over a large landscape in the southwestern Jemez Mountains. We're currently focused on a landscape over 200,000 acres mostly within the Jemez River watershed. It encompasses lands managed by the Santa Fe National Forest land (110,000 acres), nearly all the Valles Caldera National Preserve (89,000-acres), and portions of Pueblo of Jemez and small communities including the Village of Jemez Springs. Adjacent landowner-partners involved in collaboratively restoring forest ecosystems in this area include Bandelier National Monument, Pueblo of Santa Clara, and Los Alamos National Lab. Other collaborators include Bureau of Indian Affairs, State Forestry, Sandoval County, natural resource and wildlife conservation groups, wildland-urban interface groups, research scientists, and other diverse groups interested in restoring these lands.

## Why is this area a top priority for restoration?

The majority of the lands in the Jemez Watershed are fire-adapted ecosystems that are currently departed from their historic condition. Much of this forested landscape is at a high risk of uncharacteristically large and severe fires that could seriously damage water quality and watershed functions, wildlife habitat, archaeological and recreational resources, and several communities in the area. The State's watershed assessment ranks the Jemez Watershed as category 1: a watershed in most urgent need of restoration. The Sandoval County Community Wildfire Protection Plan identifies the area as a top priority for forest restoration and fire-risk abatement. Santa Fe National Forest watershed assessments also identify this area as a top priority, and a key congressional objective in establishing the Valles Caldera National Preserve was to protect and preserve its natural and cultural resources for future generations. Uncharacteristic wildfires can result in long-term resource damage and economic impacts. The Cerro Grande Fire near Los Alamos is an example of the type of uncharacteristic fire we are trying to avoid. Part of our restoration strategy will be to create conditions where fire can play its historic ecological role in sustaining forest ecosystems. The Jemez Mountains is a premier outdoor recreation destination, with its striking scenery, diverse plant and animal species, unique volcanic formations and hot springs, and the highest density of archaeological sites in the U.S. Let's restore and maintain this important area!

## What are the objectives of this current planning effort?

The main goal is to collaboratively create a landscape-scale, cross-jurisdictional forest restoration strategy, based on criteria in Title IV-Forest Landscape Restoration of the Omnibus Public Lands Mgt. Act (see SFNF website for a description of Title IV-FLR). Per Title IV-FLR, the strategy will identify and prioritize restoration activities over a 10-year period to: reduce the risk of uncharacteristic fire, improve water quality and watershed function, improve wildlife and fish habitat, maintain or restore old growth stands and maximize retention of large trees to the extent it promotes fire-resilient stands, and decommission and rehabilitate roads and trails. Title IV excludes building permanent roads. The strategy must be developed collaboratively and use the best available science.

Santa Fe NF web links to SW Jemez Mtns Restoration:  
[www.fs.fed.us/r3/sfe/](http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/sfe/)

Valles Caldera National Preserve web with related info.:  
[www.vallescaldera.gov](http://www.vallescaldera.gov)

Other lead partner websites with related links:  
[www.nmfwri.org](http://www.nmfwri.org)  
[www.nature.org](http://www.nature.org)  
[www.jemezpuablo.org](http://www.jemezpuablo.org)

Comments/Questions to:  
[jemezrestoration@fs.fed.us](mailto:jemezrestoration@fs.fed.us)

## Where can I get more information?

Visit the Santa Fe National Forest & Valles Caldera Trust websites, and stay on our email list to receive news and web-updates. We plan to maintain an open & transparent process. The web will include draft and final planning documents, maps, & other info. Use the online comment forms to provide feedback, and participation-interest forms to let us know

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## How can I participate in the collaboration?

There will be multiple opportunities and levels of collaboration available to develop the strategy, and other related phases to help restore this area. Determine your own degree of participation in any phase, from simply staying informed to participating on a technical collaborative working group. The Santa Fe National Forest and Valles Caldera Trust are leading additional planning, implementation and monitoring processes in conjunction with this Title IV-FLR strategic planning, providing additional opportunities for stakeholder participation, as described below.

- **Assessments:** There will be opportunities for stakeholder input as the Forest Service and Valles Caldera Trust develop reports and maps that describe existing ecological conditions and compare them with reference conditions. Understanding the current departures from the historic range of variability will be useful in collaboratively determining ecosystem objectives during strategy development.
- **Strategy:** To collaboratively develop the restoration strategy, a neutral facilitator will lead a highly interactive process with interested representatives from various agencies, organizations and tribes. This collaboration working group will establish their own guidelines and work together and in smaller task groups to develop the strategy, using Title IV-FLR criteria.
- **Project Planning (NEPA):** Based on restoration priorities identified in the strategy, each land management agency will work with interested parties to design site-specific project proposals and complete the NEPA analysis and decision-making process. Different projects may be planned simultaneously each year on different jurisdictions. There are opportunities to be involved in defining issues, alternatives, treatment methods, mitigation measures, and monitoring protocols.
- **Implementation & Monitoring:** After completing NEPA decisions, there are opportunities to be involved in implementing projects on the ground, or with monitoring and evaluation activities.