

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Intermountain Region
12795 West Alameda Parkway
Lakewood, CO 80228



IN REPLY REFER TO:
N1627 (BAND-NR)

April 30, 2010

Corbin Newman
Regional Forester
U.S. Forest Service-Southwest Regional Office
333 Broadway SE
Albuquerque, NM 87102

Dear Mr. Newman:

Bandelier National Monument would like to express its support and enthusiasm for the Southwest (SW) Jemez Mountains Restoration Project. We support the project both for the improved fire management conditions it will create, for its potential to benefit ecosystem health, and for the interagency cooperation that will be a signature of the project.

The park has invested in collaborative fire and ecosystem management efforts in the Jemez Mountains since the 1977 La Mesa Fire that began on the Santa Fe National Forest and crossed over to Bandelier NM, eventually burning some 15,444 acres. This fire initiated study of the effects of fire on ecosystem patterns in the Jemez Mountains among area scientists, including NPS and USGS scientists stationed at Bandelier NM. Subsequent fire events affecting both the park and forest include the Dome Fire of 1996 (16,000 acres) and the Cerro Grande Fire of 2000 (nearly 45,000 acres). Cumulatively, the recent history of unnatural stand-replacing wildland fire in the Jemez Mountains reflects heavy fuel loads that are uncharacteristic of historic conditions. The SW Jemez Mountains Restoration Project will greatly enhance efforts to return this landscape to a more natural fuel load and fire regime, and will improve ecosystem resilience in the face of disturbances such as warmer, drier weather patterns.

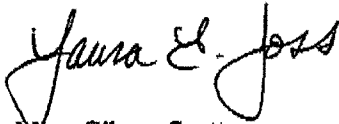
Bandelier NM and our affiliated USGS Jemez Mountains Field Station have participated in the collaborative process to develop the proposed restoration strategy, which includes implementing and monitoring restoration treatments on Bandelier NM land as part of the SW Jemez Mountains restoration project. We are especially encouraged that the restoration strategy will fully consider the contrasting historic vegetation conditions of north-facing and south-facing slopes in developing restoration implementation measures. Through the Jemez Mountains Interagency Fire Planning Unit, a partnership of Bandelier National Monument (NPS), the Santa Fe National Forest (FS) and Los Alamos National Laboratory (DOE), we will implement fire management and ecosystem treatments at our Upper Frijoles and Cerro Grande fire management project areas that lie adjacent to the project area. We will align our treatments for consistency and support of the SW Jemez Mountains Restoration Project, including establishing cross-jurisdictional treatment unit boundaries as appropriate for most effective treatment, sharing scientific data and best practices for management of Threatened and Endangered species such as the endemic Jemez Mountain salamander, and cooperating on vegetation monitoring for fire effects and ecosystem conditions. We will fund the project work from NPS FirePro funds for specific fuel treatment projects, and NPS operational funds for ecosystem and fire effects monitoring support. The NPS further plans to monitor changes in forest

and fuel conditions associated with proposed restoration treatments across both Bandelier NM and National Forest System lands, under a joint funding agreement with the Forest Service.

We strongly encourage your support of this project to the USDA national office. The Santa Fe National Forest is the largest federal land managing agency in the Jemez Mountains, and if successful in their project proposal the forest will be positioned to provide leadership and exemplify best management practices in ecosystem and fuels management for the entire Jemez Mountains.

If you have any questions please contact Jason Lott, Superintendent, Bandelier National Monument at 505-672-3861 x502.

Sincerely,



for Mary Gibson Scott
Acting Regional Director

cc:

Jason Lott, Superintendent, BAND
Erin Connelly, Acting Forest Supervisor
Susan Bruin, US Forest Service