

Forest Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

**AGREEMENT FOR SHARED STEWARDSHIP**  
**Between The**  
**STATE OF NEW MEXICO**  
**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), Department of Wildlife and the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (Forest Service).

**Introduction**

Managers and owners of forests across the nation face urgent challenges including dense and overstocked forests, wildfires, invasive species, drought, and epidemics of forest insects and disease. Longer fire seasons and the increasing size and severity of wildfires are of special concern, as are increasing risks to communities, infrastructure, firefighters, and natural resources.

The forests in the State of New Mexico are of critical importance because of the wood they provide, wildlife habitat they support, water for agriculture and downstream communities, livestock grazing, and economic and recreational opportunities including hunting, fishing and nature-based tourism. Many of the State's rural residents are reliant on firewood for home heating and derive their livelihoods from traditional uses and/or commercial wood utilization for diverse products including Southwest-style construction. However, forests in New Mexico are increasingly threatened by a convergence of challenges: overstocked trees, increased ladder fuels and insufficient grass and forage, more frequent and severe wildfires, and widespread insect and disease outbreaks, much of which may be attributable to a lack of consistent active management.

The well-being of all New Mexico residents also depends on the availability of surface and ground water. The five national forests are considered the "water towers" for the State and these high elevation forests are extremely vulnerable to uncharacteristically large and catastrophic wildfire. According to New Mexico's Forest Action Plan, watersheds in the National Forest System have a higher risk of catastrophic wildfire than any other watersheds in the State. The near-term effects of wildfire are acutely felt in New Mexico as post-fire flooding from recent burn scars on national and other forests in New Mexico has decimated transportation, utility and water infrastructure and damaged rural community economies; destroyed homes

and businesses, impacted insurance rates, stalled tourism and recreational opportunities; and stressed housing supplies and real estate markets.

The State of New Mexico has made unprecedented financial commitments to bolster management and wildfire preparedness on all 28.4 million acres of forest and timberland in the state, demonstrating a strong state and federal partnership and shared commitment to active management. From 2019 through 2025 the New Mexico legislature has appropriated a total of \$100 million, between \$10 million and \$33 million per year, for forest and watershed restoration including fuels reduction, tree thinning and forest management projects on federal, state, tribal and private lands. This sustained investment has allowed the New Mexico Forestry Division to steadily increase the pace and scale of forest management, exceeding annual treatment goals in the most recent fiscal year, and positioned New Mexico as a leader in proactive, wildfire risk reduction and mitigation.

Despite recent progress, many hurdles continue to hinder active management. Full utilization of available federal and state authorities to expand active management of forest resources has not been achieved, and progress to address the backlog of untreated, high-risk acres has been slow. Family and tribal sawmills, firewood businesses and other wood product manufacturers are struggling with end markets, inconsistent access to wood supply, forest conditions dominated by small-diameter biomass and prohibitive costs of transportation. The availability of forest materials creates an opportunity for commercial development of emerging products like biochar, bioenergy, cellulose and other wood-based bio-products.

Recognizing an urgent need for action, the President issued *Executive Order 14225, Immediate Expansion of American Timber Production*, prioritizing activities to restore timber production for crucial human activities like construction and energy production, with recognition of the need for job creation, sound forest management, and wildfire risk reduction projects. USDA Secretary Rollins issued *Secretary's Memorandum 1078-006* designating over 112.6 million acres of National Forests under an Emergency Situation Determination (ESD). The memo directs the Forest Service to increase operations that reduce hazardous fuels and increase timber production, and to proactively update and expand Shared Stewardship Agreements to bring the full power of States, Tribes and partners to help address this emergency.

*Executive Order 14308, Empowering Commonsense Wildfire Prevention*, addresses the nationwide wildfire threat and directs federal agencies to streamline wildfire capabilities while expanding and strengthening partnerships with state, local, tribal and community-based land managers to reduce wildfire risk and improve wildfire response, including on public lands. This Shared Stewardship Agreement effectuates some of the goals included in Executive Orders 14225 and 14308 and USDA Secretary's Memorandum 1078-006.

The Forest Service and Forestry Division have a strong tradition of partnership. Current scale and urgency of threats demand even closer collaboration and continued work on all lands. Federal authorities such as the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) provide powerful tools to accelerate active forest management and wildfire risk reduction at the landscape scale.

Successful cross-boundary projects, such as the Signal Peak to Bear Creek and Kiowa-San Cristobal Joint Chiefs Projects, demonstrate the effectiveness of innovative partnerships in achieving shared stewardship goals. Building on these successes, and guided by the New Mexico Forest Action Plan, it is imperative to significantly increase the pace and scale of active forest management and wildfire mitigation to protect New Mexico's forests, communities, water sources, and economy for generations to come.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this Agreement is to formalize a shared stewardship framework between the undersigned agencies (agencies). This framework is designed to accelerate landscape-scale restoration, increase the pace and scale of forest health treatments, and expand sustainable wood utilization from national forests and adjacent lands in New Mexico. The framework emphasizes supporting increased access to economic opportunity for industry with a focus on small-diameter trees, slash, biomass generated by forest treatments, and forest restoration. This agreement prioritizes wildfire risk reduction, forest health improvement, water source protection, sustainable wood products, and economically viable utilization with benefits to communities. By aligning planning, funding, and implementation strategies, the agencies aim to maximize the effectiveness of available authorities and resources.

## **Statement of Mutual Benefit and Interests**

Both the Forest Service and Forestry Division share a commitment to protect communities in New Mexico from catastrophic wildfire; work toward sustainable wood production and markets; enhance wood utilization with new technologies; reduce hazardous fuels; and improve overall forest health. The agencies recognize the mutual benefits of a coordinated, landscape-scale approach to forest restoration and active management. The agencies are jointly committed to supporting some of the goals included in Executive Orders 14225 and 14308, Secretarial Memo 1078-006, and the Forest Service Associate Chief's letter on implementation of Secretarial Memo 1078-006. By working together, the agencies can:

- **Increase the pace and scale of restoration:** Through joint planning and strategic investment, the Forest Service and State will work collaboratively to overcome barriers, including limited project funding, fluctuating market conditions, constrained wood processing capacity, and extended project timelines to comply with federal and state regulatory requirements. The anticipated outcomes are more effective projects that cross jurisdictional boundaries and address wildfire risk, forest health, watershed protection, and increased grazing opportunities at the pace and scale required by current challenges.
- **Expand sustainable wood production and utilization:** Jointly establishing and meeting fuels reduction targets (acres treated and volume sold) in green forest and burned areas will support New Mexico's traditional forest products businesses and rural communities. Long-term and sustainable efforts create incentives for public-private

partnerships to invest in innovative technologies focused on utilization of small diameter timber and biomass. By setting and meeting aggressive fuels reduction (in acres) and timber harvest targets (in millions of board feet or MMBF), the agencies will support job creation in New Mexico's rural communities and promote forest resilience.

- **Streamline project delivery:** The agencies will work to make the environmental compliance process more efficient. Newly revised USDA NEPA regulations make new categorical exclusions available to the Forest Service and include opportunities to accelerate environmental reviews and eliminate unnecessary permitting delays to ensure rapid deployment of active forest management projects. The Forest Service will use all existing and future tools and authorities to the extent possible and also prioritize adoption of new tools that expedite and amplify active forest management, including current and future emergency authorities.
- **Leverage state-federal partnerships and funding:** Using the Good Neighbor Authority and available appropriations by the New Mexico legislature to the Economic Development Department, Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, and Department of Wildlife, the agencies will coordinate staff capacity, access to capital, and opportunities for capacity enhancement, enabling New Mexico to play a leading role in the management of forests with a preponderance of small-diameter material.

**The Forest Service and EMNRD Forestry Division agree to:**

1. **Jointly identify projects in the fireshed areas/priority landscapes in which the State of New Mexico can enter into agreements for state implementation of authorized restoration and active management projects during a 20-year mutual commitment to planning and implementation.**
  - The State Forest Action plan<sup>1</sup> sets a clear priority to work in priority landscapes of 100,000 acres or more identified in the National Fireshed Registry<sup>2</sup> in the top 10% of areas nationally with exposure to fire ignition and spread.
  - The State and the Forest Service, utilizing Good Neighbor Authority (GNA), will consider new projects for implementation in State Fiscal Year (FY) 2027, which begins on July 1, 2026, with activities that focus on timber and biomass and support some of the goals of *Executive Order 14225*.
  - **Subject to available appropriations, the agencies agree to develop and sign forest-wide GNA agreements for each National Forest in New Mexico no later than January 31, 2027.**

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<sup>1</sup> State Forest Action Plan: <https://www.emnrd.nm.gov/sfd/forest-action-plan/>

<sup>2</sup> Firesheds and the Fireshed Registry | US Forest Service Research and Development: <https://research.fs.usda.gov/rmrs/projects/firesheds>

2. **Plan for future landscape-scale firework annually.** The statewide Forest and Watershed Health Coordinating Group, established in 2004, will continue to meet quarterly to engage key partners and stakeholders to facilitate progress outlined in this agreement.
3. **Participate in bi-annual meetings with leadership from each National Forest in New Mexico, New Mexico Forestry Division, and Department of Wildlife.** The biannual meeting's<sup>3</sup> purpose is to coordinate projects, including ongoing work with industry, to identify wood availability and utilization opportunities. Amendments to the forest-wide GNA agreements shall be executed annually based on each fiscal year funding and program of work. The Forest Service and State commit to assigning one staff person to co-lead and convene by the execution date of this Agreement.
4. **Develop County-Forest Service GNA agreements, Tribal-Forest Service GNA agreements, and County-Forestry Division GNA agreements** to expand each organization's capacity to implement active management and fuel-reduction treatments on national forests, adjacent private lands, and state and local government lands.
5. **Mobilize other federal and state efforts, in collaboration with industry, to advance forest product markets** to help address policy barriers identified in New Mexico to forest products market development, workforce capacity and the forestry supply chain. Further, the parties commit to facilitating a wood products and biomass consortium and harnessing federal and state economic development incentives for expansion of markets and manufacturing of wood and biomass products.

**Commencement, expiration and termination.** This Agreement is executed as of the date of the last signature and shall remain in effect for up to 20 years. Any of the parties may, in writing, terminate this Agreement as a whole or in part at any time before the expiration date.

**Tribal rights and interests.** The Parties understand Tribes may have treaty or reserved rights, consider certain areas or objects sacred, or have other interests in National Forest System lands and waters covered under this agreement. The Forest Service may consult Tribes if it determines that policy formulation or implementation under this agreement, or related contracts/agreements, have Tribal implications. Nothing in this agreement or related contracts/agreements alters the federal government's government-to-government and trust relationship with Tribes or limits the Forest Service's authority under or compliance with federal law.

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<sup>3</sup> Normally held in November and July

**Participation in similar activities.** This Agreement in no way restricts the parties from participating in similar activities with other entities.

**Nonbinding agreement.** This Agreement creates no right, benefit, or trust responsibility, substantive or procedural, enforceable by law or equity. The parties shall manage their respective resources and activities in a separate, coordinated and mutually beneficial manner to meet the purposes of this Agreement. Nothing in this Agreement authorizes any of the parties to obligate or transfer anything of value.

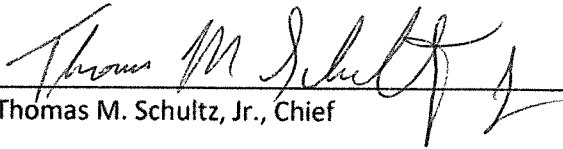
Specific, prospective projects or activities that involve the transfer of funds, services, property, and/or anything of value to a party requires the execution of separate agreements and are contingent upon numerous factors, including, as applicable, but not limited to: agency availability of appropriated funds and other resources; cooperator availability of funds and other resources; agency and cooperator administrative and legal requirements (including agency authorization by statute); etc. This Agreement neither provides, nor meets these criteria. If the parties elect to enter into an obligation agreement that involves the transfer of funds, services, property, and/or anything of value to a party, then the applicable criteria must be met. Additionally, under a prospective agreement, each party operates under its own laws, regulations, and/or policies, and any Forest Service obligation is subject to the availability of appropriated funds and other resources. The negotiation, execution, and administration of these prospective agreements must comply with all applicable authorities. Nothing in this Agreement is intended to alter, limit, or expand the agencies' statutory and regulatory authority.

**Principal contacts.** Individuals listed below are authorized to act in their respective areas for matters related to this agreement and/or designate others to act on their behalf.

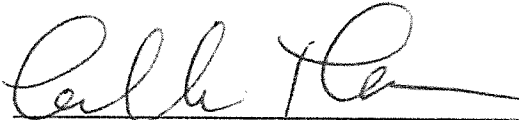
**Authorized Representatives**

By signature below, each party certifies that the individuals listed in this document as representatives of the individual parties are authorized to act in their respective areas for matters related to this agreement for shared stewardship. In witness whereof, the parties hereto have executed this agreement as of the last date written below.

United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service

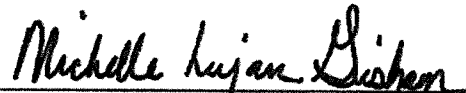
  
Thomas M. Schultz, Jr., Chief

Date July 14, 2026

  
Michiko Martin, Southwestern Regional Forester

Date JULY 13, 2026

State of New Mexico

  
Michelle Lujan Grisham, Governor  
State of New Mexico

Date 07/09/2026

**Erin Taylor** Digitally signed by Erin Taylor  
Date: 2026.07.09 12:10:27  
-06'00'  
Erin Taylor, Acting Cabinet Secretary  
Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department

Date 07/09/2026

**Michael B. Sloane** Digitally signed by Michael B.  
Sloane  
Date: 2026.07.09 14:49:31 -06'00'  
Michael B. Sloane, Director  
Department of Wildlife

Date 07/09/2026

**Laura F. McCarthy** Digitally signed by Laura F.  
McCarthy  
Date: 2026.07.09 09:09:37 -06'00'  
Laura F. McCarthy, State Forester and Director  
Forestry Division

Date 07/09/2026