



Forest Health Initiative

Cost-share Program

The State of New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department's Forestry Division (NMSF) administers a cost-share program that provides reimbursement funding for the improvement of private forest lands to prevent future bark beetle infestations and other insect, pathogen, and disease pressures. The following is a summary of the Forest Health Initiative (FHI) program.

Funded by the USDA Forest Service's Western Bark Beetle Initiative, non-industrial private landowners are reimbursed for up to 70% of costs for treating forested land. Approved practices involve thinning and slash treatments to prevent future losses by increasing tree and forest health. Project locations vary depending on the New Mexico Forest Action Plan and landowner interest throughout the state. Projects are considered on a "first come, first serviced" order, but selection is subject to batching based on NMSF priorities and available funding.

Interested landowners should start by contacting the NMSF District where the property is located. There are six districts: Chama (575-588-7831), Cimarron (575-376-2204), Bernalillo (505-867-2334), Las Vegas (505-425-7472), Socorro (575-835-9359), and Capitan (575-354-2231). The statewide program manager is in Santa Fe (505-476-3351). The development of a stewardship/management plan is the first step. If a stewardship/management plan isn't already in place, then it can be written by district staff or a consulting forester. Only complex management plans for large properties require the hiring of a consulting forester. Up to ten percent of FHI funds can be used to assist landowners to develop long-term forest health management plans where none presently exist. Next, a practice plan is written and an application is submitted. Applications are batched by the program manager and district staff. Incomplete or non-relevant applications (e.g. defensible space around structures) are rejected or sent back to the district and landowner for modification.

Following approval by NMSF, the application is sent to the Forest Stewards Guild, a third party fiscal agent, who is responsible for providing the notice to proceed, documentation, and reimbursement. Projects must be completed within one year of the notice to proceed.

District staff inspects completed practices to ensure compliance with treatment standards. All projects must comply with the forest practices laid out in NMAC 19.20.4 and NMSF best management practices (available in the New Mexico Forest Practice Guidelines). Upon approval, a signed inspection form and supplementary cost documentation is sent to the Forest Stewards Guild for reimbursement. Reimbursement cannot exceed 70% percent of the total amount documented or the maximum practice rates set in the application, whichever is less.

Basic requirements for participation. Landowners must:

- ❖ Have a minimum of ten acres of land in New Mexico.
- ❖ Have an approved stewardship/management plan OR be applying for one via cost-share funding.
- ❖ Accept the rates that are set in the application for cost-share assistance.
- ❖ Accept responsibility to fund the project prior to being reimbursed.
- ❖ Agree to not utilize other federally funded cost-share funding on the same land at the same time (i.e. other cost-share programs cannot be used as match).
- ❖ Agree to not receive any compensation for removed material, nor otherwise profit from the project.

For more information about forest health in New Mexico, visit:

www.emnrd.state.nm.us/SFD/FWHPlan/ForestInsectandDiseaseInformation.html

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