

**STRATEGIC PLANNING:
A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS
TO ACHIEVE WATERSHED RESTORATION
IN THE SOUTHERN SACRAMENTO MOUNTAINS**

OTERO WORKING GROUP

Otero Working Group Mission:

Collaborate with communities, partners, and stakeholders to strategically plan, develop, and leverage resources in order to enhance the resiliency and restoration of Otero County watersheds through sharing of responsibilities, improvement of forest health and sustainability, and promotion of economic development opportunities.

AUGUST 2017



Prepared by:

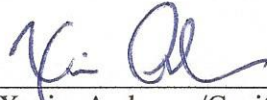
Vicki Estrada

New Mexico Forest & Watershed Restoration Institute

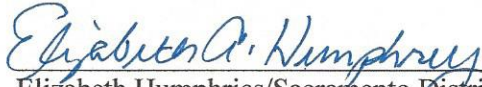
We, the collaborators in the Otero Working Group, agree with the principles in this Strategy Document.



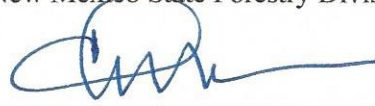
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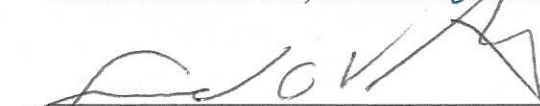
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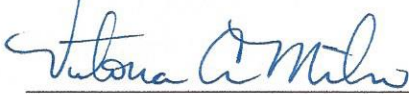
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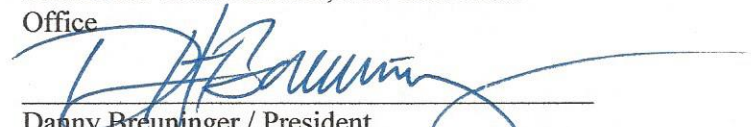
Dave Venable/Mayor
Village of Cloudcroft, NM



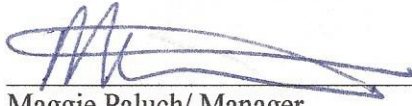
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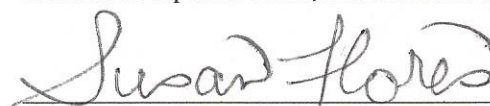
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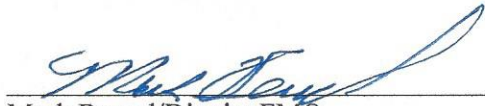
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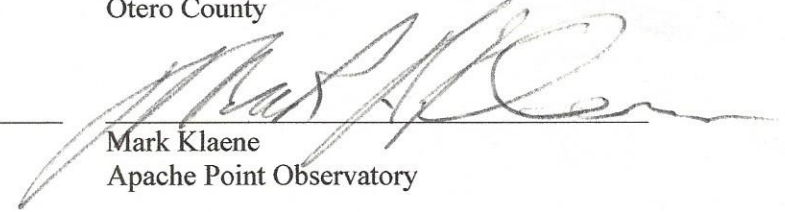
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City of Alamogordo, NM



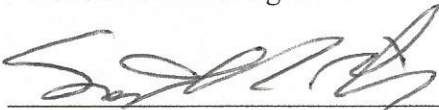
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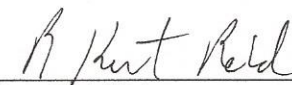
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Strategic Planning: A Collaborative Process to Achieve Watershed Restoration in the Southern Sacramento Mountains

Otero Working Group

I. Introduction

The Otero Working Group (OWG) is a collaborative organization in Otero County, NM. The OWG brings together stakeholders with an interest in restoring watersheds and treating forests in the Southern Sacramento Mountains to reduce the risks associated with catastrophic wildfires. Participants in the OWG include the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Lincoln National Forest–Sacramento Ranger District (LNF-SRD); New Mexico State Forestry–Capitan District (NMSF); the Bureau of Land Management (BLM); the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); the Mescalero Apache Natural Resources Department; the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA); the Otero County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD); the South Central Mountain Resource Conservation & Development Council (SCMRC&D); the Otero County Board of Commissioners; the City of Alamogordo and the Alamogordo Water Department; the City of Cloudcroft and the Cloudcroft Emergency Management Department; the New Mexico State Land Office (SLO); the New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute (NMFWRI); the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF); the Apache Point Observatory; the Otero County Public Land Committee; the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF); the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF); the Department of Defense (DOD); and leaders of local acequias.

This Strategic Plan presents a background on planning activities carried out in the Otero Working Group during the years 2014–2016, facilitated by the SCMRC&D and the NMFWRI, as well as a strategy for the years 2017–2026. The strategy identifies the projects the OWG will undertake during this period.

II. Background and Related Issues

Long-term drought conditions in New Mexico have contributed to increased fire activity throughout the state. Lack of winter snow melt combined with higher than normal temperatures,

has resulted in fires burning hotter, growing faster and burning in areas that historically would not have burned. Therefore, the need to treat vegetation, through thinning and prescribed burning, across the landscape has become increasingly important. Recent fires in Otero County (Mayhill–2011, Acrey–2011, Timberon–2016) and Lincoln County (Donaldson–2011, Little Bear–2012) highlight this need. Treatments are needed in the grassland and shrub-dominated wildland urban interface areas (WUI) as well as the higher elevation densely vegetated areas. Additionally, the drought conditions have affected the water quantity and quality (i.e. post-fire flooding) of many of the communities in the county. The need to treat vegetation beyond the communities themselves, to address these critical water issues, has been recognized. It is clear that activities including thinning, prescribed burning, stream stabilization, and range management practices need to be implemented at a larger scale to benefit these communities.

Planning and implementation of vegetative treatments at the watershed scale, while most effective in addressing these concerns, requires working across landscapes and the involvement and support of multiple landowners. This increase in collaboration adds complexity to any treatment as project objectives, communication capacity, regulations (i.e. federal vs. state vs. private) and resources, vary by landowner. Adding to this complexity is the fact that many of the residents throughout the communities in Otero County are summer-only residents. Greater project complexity augments the time and costs needed to accomplish these projects. Unfortunately, funding to accomplish this work across federal, state, county and municipal agencies continues to decline.

Given the increasing need for treatments across landscapes and the decline in funding available for this work, the importance of coordinating and collaborating among various landowners is even more critical.

III. Collaborative Process

In the beginning of 2014, the Otero Working Group (OWG) was meeting monthly and coordinating among state and federal agencies to identify and implement forestry and fuels reduction projects. However, the group wanted to expand project planning and implementation to a larger scale that encompassed multiple landownerships and to broaden vegetation treatments beyond fire and fuels reduction activities. In order to engage additional collaborators at this

larger scale, the group recognized that it needed to become more strategic in developing its program of work.

The group came up with a specific list of activities that would help them identify and develop a multi-year strategic plan for prioritizing vegetation treatments across multiple landownerships. These included:

- Create a mission statement for the Otero Working Group
- Identify potential collaborators and create a comprehensive email list
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- Prioritize future implementation areas
- Education and Outreach - develop newspaper articles, PowerPoint presentations and work with the South Central Mountains Resource Conservation and Development Council (SCMRC&D) to place information about the group and what they do on a website
- Economic development - develop a list of wood users and/or contractors that would take raw wood or slash off of projects

III. 1. Collaborative Process - One Step at a Time

It was evident that the Otero Working Group was interested in collaborating in order to accomplish watershed-scale restoration. The OWG agreed to meet more frequently in order to capitalize on the availability of New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute (NMFWRI) and its resources, Vicki Estrada and the GIS staff. To reflect this landscape scale approach, the OWG wanted to develop a mission statement that clearly expressed the expansion from fire and fuels reduction to watershed health and restoration. As a group, we reviewed examples of mission statements and highlighted general characteristics of a good mission statement. The group broke up into smaller groups to develop a mission statement. We then reconvened and collectively put into one mission statement the various components from all groups. This draft was sent out to the entire OWG and another meeting was spent on reviewing, revising and finalizing the mission statement.

III. 2. OWG Mission Statement

Collaborate with communities, partners, and stakeholders to strategically plan, develop, and leverage resources in order to enhance the resiliency and restoration of Otero County watersheds through:

- 1) Sharing of Responsibilities
- 2) Improvement of Forest Health and Sustainability
- 3) Promotion of Economic Development Opportunities

III. 3. Development of Priority Area and Focus Areas

In order to prioritize future implementation areas and identify and engage potential collaborators, we first needed to have a common understanding amongst the Otero Working Group members of what geographic areas and types of work they had prioritized in the past and why. Therefore, we first compiled into one data set the locations where previous work had been completed, where current work was on-going, and where future work was already in the planning process.

Each of the landowner representatives sent past, present and future planned data to NMFWRI to display on one map (2004–present) along with 5th and 6th code watershed boundaries. The Focal Area/Fire Risk Analysis Mapping done by the New Mexico State Forestry Division



(NMSF) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) was displayed alongside this map so that the OWG could see what areas within the county had been identified, through this analysis process, as areas of highest fire risk as well as areas of greatest priority taking into account fire risk, water quality and supply, economic opportunity, forest health and fish and wildlife by NMSF and TNC (Appendix A). The OWG also reviewed the recently updated Community Wildfire Projection Plan (CWPP) which identified the communities of highest fire risk. Each agency/organization was asked to review maps and then draw their priority areas following watershed boundaries on

the map the NMFWRI created. For agencies/organizations that had more than one representative present, they were asked to come up with one set of priority areas.

The OWG then looked at various priority areas drawn on the map and discussion followed on size and continuity of priority areas and the importance of having a clear rationale for including areas that were not identified as priority in the focal area/fire risk analysis map. The OWG selected criteria and used them to identify a few priority options ranging from one large priority area to 2–3 smaller ones. At the next meeting we further refined the priority area (Appendix B).

Given the regular number of participants in the OWG, we decided to form a smaller group made up of representatives from this OWG that would meet bi-monthly to prepare for the regular OWG meetings and serve to identify key strategy and steps necessary for the OWG to move forward. This smaller group included representatives from NM State Forestry, SWMRC&D, USFS, Mescalero Tribe and the BIA. This smaller group is known as the Planning Group and meets bi-monthly.

Once the priority area was refined, the group selected various focus areas that were identified as areas of highest priority to accomplish work within the approximately 500,000 acre priority project area. The group reviewed and refined focus areas as more in-depth information was gathered. For example, in the process of expanding participation in the OWG, groundwater data was obtained from New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Minerals Resources at New Mexico Tech and the City of Alamogordo. Upon review of this information, the OWG recognized that drainage patterns actually divided the Two Goats-High Rolls-Maruchi Focus Area into two, with the northern third draining into the basin towards the City of Tularosa and the southern portion draining into the basin towards Alamogordo and Holloman Air Force Base land. Additionally, collaborators varied along this natural divide. As a result, a sixth focus area, called Tularosa Creek, was added to the five initially identified by the OWG. The Six Focus Areas are: (1) Two Goats-High Rolls-Maruchi; (2) Tularosa Creek; (3) Sacramento River; (4) Cloudcroft (includes U.S. Highway 82 and State Road 130); (5) Jim Lewis; and (6) Rio Peñasco (See Appendix C).

III. 4. Identification and Engagement of Potential Collaborators

The potential collaborators in Otero County are as varied and diverse as the county itself, ranging from urban residents to wood-dependent community residents, small business owners,

ranchers and farmers. The group decided to develop potential collaborator lists by focus area. For example, High Rolls community representatives were included in the Two Goats-High-Rolls-Maruchi Focus Area list but not in the Jim Lewis Focus Area list. Review of the potential collaborators list, combined with the vegetation treatments already completed and on-going fire risk and water concerns were the criteria used to determine the focus area where project work would first be planned and implemented by the OWG membership.

III. 5. Otero Working Group Landscape Scale Strategic Planning

While work was already being implemented by various Otero Working Group member organizations and agencies, this was the *first* effort where all members agreed to identify future planning and implementation projects in the same area. The group selected the Two Goats-High Rolls-Maruchi Focus Area as the area to begin strategic planning based on the criteria identified above. Individuals from the potential collaborators list were contacted and invited to attend an OWG meeting to discuss potential opportunities for collaboration. Two field trips occurred, one to the Maruchi area and one to the Two Goats project area. During this latter field trip photos were taken. The field trip pictures, along with information about the OWG, were shared with the USFS Lincoln National Forest to include in one of the future monthly newsletters normally distributed throughout the communities in the area. Based on the participation and interest of new collaborators and participants in the OWG, the Two Goats-High Rolls-Maruchi Focus Area was expanded to include the City of Alamogordo and the Holloman Air Force Base.

Much of the efforts of the second year included reviewing and updating project information for the Two Goats-High Rolls-Maruchi Focus area. Already completed, on-going, and planned projects were mapped. For already completed projects, the group relied on NMFWRI GIS support to determine the acreage and cost of these projects. Because many of projects in the past were not identified and mapped, many OWG members expressed concern that the figures identified under-estimated the actual number of acres actually treated by various agencies. Therefore, the group decided that while the data collected was helpful in identifying, in general, the areas and types of projects completed, it did not present an accurate picture of all the work done and acres treated in the past.

However, this information was very useful for the OWG to strategically plan future projects since all agency and organization projects were compiled on one map (Appendix D).

While individuals were aware of their own agencies/organizations' plans for the future, sharing this with others had not been done in the past until the project was ready to start. *By mapping this information early on, it allowed all collaborators to have a meaningful discussion about priorities, and pro-actively develop a strategy for treatment that became their own agencies' and/or organizations' program of work.* A good example of this is the Westside CFRP Project. The City of Alamogordo submitted this project to complete planning on USFS lands that would benefit the City of Alamogordo watershed. The City of Alamogordo then identified inholdings close to these locations where they would treat lands and monitor water quantity and quality. In turn, New Mexico State Forestry identified private inholdings in this same area where treatments could occur. This same approach is occurring at the planning stage for the Tularosa Creek and Sacramento River focus areas as well. One of the next steps for the OWG is to capture the specific treatments that will occur in the Westside CFRP project area as well as other vegetative treatments in the Two Goats-High Rolls-Maruchi Focus Area, and to identify the costs of treatments.

III. 6. Financial Planning at Landscape Scale

In year two, the Otero Working Group began to identify and plan treatments on a larger scale and inter-agency pooling of resources occurred. However, declining and unpredictable budgets meant the group needed to become more knowledgeable about potential funding sources outside their own agencies and organizations. In the second year the group made great strides in learning about various types of agreements and funding opportunities through presentations made at the OWG meetings by various organization representatives. Relevant potential funding sources that the group has become aware of include: Interstate Steam Commission, Collaborative Forestry Restoration Program (CFRP), Wildfire Risk Reduction Grant, Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP), Joint Chiefs' Initiative, New Mexico Forest Industry Association (NMFIA) Stewardship agreement, National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf), and the Tribal Participating Agreement. A critical next step for the OWG will be to identify how the group will write and submit proposals for these various funding opportunities.

III. 7. Readyng Forest and Wood Products Industry for Landscape Scale Work

A key component for successful implementation of vegetative treatments at a landscape scale is the availability of forest and wood industry contractors to remove and use the wood. Local forest and wood products businesses have struggled as the size and availability of wood has declined and distances to available sources of wood have increased. At the same time, the process for bidding and implementing contracts remains complicated and varies by agency and organization. Once these larger scale projects identify vegetative treatments needed, there will be a demand for multiple contractors for treatment of these areas. The OWG members recognized that they needed to take steps *now* to ensure that the forest and wood product contractors in the area would be ready for this ramp up of work resulting from the landscape scale planning.

Therefore, in year two the Otero Working Group, in partnership with the Greater Ruidoso Working Group, hosted a forest and wood products workshop aimed at identifying the contractors in the area along with their interest, skills and abilities in treating and using material from the landscape scale project areas. A two-day workshop entitled The Sacramento Mountain Wood Industry Summit was held in March of 2016. Approximately 140 people attended, including contractors, vendors, various agency, and organization representatives. Agenda items ranged from how to become a contractor, to the bidding process, wood market and supply trends in New Mexico, forestry thinning equipment and wood product needs. Display and discussion of focus area projects and types of treatments expected, as well as presentations from successful contractors throughout the state, occurred. As a result of this summit, the OWG got a clear picture of the current contractor pool and its capacity.

Various items were identified at the Sacramento Mountain Wood Industry Summit, which will require follow-up by the OWG. These include: (1) Finalizing and distributing the list of contractors by their interest, capacity and training needs; (2) Compiling and distributing a written summary of the bidding process for each of the agencies/organizations located in the Sacramento Mountains; and (3) Creation of a forest and wood industry group to identify needs, issues and share information about upcoming projects in the area.

III. 8. Otero Working Group Strategic Plan Implementation

The Otero Working Group will move ahead to implement the strategic plan developed during the past two years. Watershed restoration, through vegetative treatments, has started in the

Two Goats-High Rolls-Maruchi area. More treatments will be completed next year. While implementation projects are underway in the Two Goats-High Rolls-Maruchi area next year, potential collaborators in the Tularosa Creek Focus Area will be identified. Concurrently, early planning in the Sacramento River Focus Area will be initiated (Appendix E).

By taking the focus area approach, the larger priority project area was divided into manageable land areas for planning and implementation. This has helped all involved, from OWG members to contractors to community members, to understand the general order and schedule of vegetative treatments over multiple years. The universal understanding of land management planning expands the number of collaborators involved, from initial planning to final wood product development. Additionally, it provides continuity as collaborators can plan according to this large scale planning and implementation process and its timeline.

IV. Accomplishments

The following are accomplishments of the Otero Working Group from 2014 to 2016.

IV. 1. Emergency Preparedness and Response

- The Otero Working Group, through a New Mexico Association of Counties (NMAC) contract, completed the update of the Otero County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)
- The CWPP was finalized and approved by lead organization officials
- Efforts at establishing and enhancing Fire Wise programs in various neighborhoods and communities continued and is on-going
- Due to relationships developed through the Otero Working Group and the Sacramento Mountain Wood Industry Summit, an article on how catastrophe was averted at the Moon Mountain Fire near Ruidoso was collaboratively written, reviewed, and distributed throughout New Mexico as well as throughout the country with support from Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities organization

IV. 2. Outreach and Education

- Through the involvement of NMFWR, the Otero Working Group was able to

display priority planning efforts and share this information with the USFS Lincoln National Forest - Forest Leadership Team

- A location for storage of key maps of the OWG was established on the All About Watersheds website, with the NMFWRP serving as administrator of the group site
- Summary minutes of meetings from the OWG were posted on the All About Watersheds website
- Meeting participation expanded beyond the regular participants to include additional agency representatives (e.g., Otero SWCD), municipal representatives (e.g., City of Alamogordo), wood product industry representatives (e.g., Timberon Wood Products) and additional interested citizens
- Otero Working Group representatives actively engaged and provided working group project planning and implementation efforts with the Inter-State Stream Commission group
- A summary article about the OWG, its current activities and its future plans was written and submitted to the Lincoln National Forest for publication in a future newsletter
- Initial contact was made with Rocky Mountain Research Station in order to incorporate scientific methods of water quality and quantity monitoring in the focus area projects
- A meeting with New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Minerals Resources at New Mexico Tech resulted in sharing of publications produced by that group (Sacramento Mountain Watershed Study –The Effects of Tree Thinning on the Local Hydrologic Ecosystem and Sacramento Mountain Hydrogeology Study) as well as GIS data layers on groundwater sources
- The New Mexico Prescribed Burn Workshop was held in Capitan, NM
- A presentation by Lincoln National Forest representatives was made to the OWG during the public involvement period of Forest Plan Revision for the Lincoln National Forest
- Rio Grande Water Trust Fund Project was presented to the OWG by Brent Racher

- The City of Alamogordo provided GIS water source and water monitoring data to combine with New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Minerals Resources information to form a comprehensive groundwater GIS layer
- The OWG reviewed and updated a project list and description for Regional Water Planning efforts
- Information on other watershed scale efforts shared by The Nature Conservancy with the OWG, including the Taos Valley Watershed Coalition Landscape Restoration Strategy white paper
- A community member involved in acequia improvements and maintenance in the community shared the condition of acequia and maintenance needs. The OWG contacted the New Mexico Acequia Association and obtained information on state funding and the grant application process for funding of acequia improvements
- As a result of the Sacramento Mountain Wood Industry Summit, a comprehensive list of contractors working and/or interested in working in the Sacramento Mountains was established

IV. 3. On-the-Ground Practices

- A mission statement was established to aid the group in clearly articulating and focusing the work it wants to accomplish at the watershed scale
- An updated Map of the Vegetative Treatments within Otero County and the Two Goats–High Rolls–Maruchi Focus Area was developed and refined
- Two field trips were held in the Two Goats (to view a project already accomplished) and the Maruchi (to view a project in the planning stage)
- A weather Station, provided by Otero Soil and Water Conservation District, was placed on private land through coordinated efforts of NM State Forestry
- South Sacramento Restoration Project (SSRP) planning was initiated by Lincoln National Forest and NM Game and Fish, which includes the Sacramento River Focus Area identified by the OWG
- West Side Collaborative Forestry Restoration Program Project public scoping and

NEPA completed in the Maruchi Area (part of Two Goats–High Rolls–Maruchi Focus Area)

- Thinning in the Two Goats area (part of Two Goats–High Rolls–Maruchi Focus Area) was completed
- The need and interest in holding a Desired Future Condition Training by NMFWRI was identified as a result of the Sacramento Mountain Wood Industry Summit. It will be held in the fall of 2016 in the Ruidoso and Sacramento areas

IV. 4. Economic Development

- Mapping Information was sent to The Nature Conservancy in order to complete Analysis and Mapping effort to provide Contractor and Wood Product Businesses Locations within the Priority Project Area
- Representatives from New Mexico Forest Industry Association (NMFIA), National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf), and Mescalero Tribe presented information to the OWG about on-going and potential future agreements, grants and opportunities to fund the on-going and future planned work within the focus areas
- The Sacramento Mountain Wood Industry Summit was held in Ruidoso, NM on March 30–31, 2016. The meeting was sponsored jointly by the Otero Working Group and the Greater Ruidoso Group. Participants included forestry and wood product contractors, industry vendors, various agency and organization representatives as well as elected officials.
- Master Agreement for New Mexico Wildland Fire and Joint Powers was signed in September 2016
- As result of wood industry summit, follow-up coordination with New Mexico Forest Industry Association (NMFIA) occurred to schedule a Forest Worker Safety Certification Training in the Sacramento Mountains and establish communication link between Sacramento Mountain contractors and NMFIA
- The Otero Working Group reviewed the Joint Chiefs Grant and its criteria with the aim to apply for this funding in 2018

- The Nature Conservancy, along with NMFIA, develop wood supply analysis information for the state of New Mexico, which was presented at the Sacramento Mountain Wood Industry Summit.
- Summit results of OWG soliciting geographic specific information for Otero County and its contractors

V. Planning for the Future

The following are planned activities for the OWG for the period between 2016–2025.

V. 1. Landscape Scale Planning

- Continue landscape scale watershed-based planning using the focus area concept
- Ensure that OWG establishes mechanisms for tracking focus area project funding and grant writing/submission efforts (i.e. locate applications, help coordinate writing, mapping, funding sources are identified and incorporated into OWG planning efforts)
- Follow-up on Contractor Needs Identified at the wood summit including:
 - expand the contractors list for Sacramento Mountains including contact information and type of work they do
 - develop and distribute project bid information packet
 - identify training and skills needed by contractors and aid in linking with resources (i.e. SBDC, forest products lab, marketing specialist, wood cluster)
- Obtain wood supply information for Otero County that was developed and presented by TNC and NMFIA at the Sacramento Mountain Wood Industry Summit

V. 2. Collaboration

- Continue to involve NMFWRI in mapping and GIS activities for the working

group, particularly the mapping of projects completed and planned by focus areas as well as administration and development of OWG shared mapping tools on the All About Watersheds website

- Expand the number of collaborators involved in focus area project planning and actively engage these collaborators in OWG activities and watershed scale planning and implementation
- Actively foster a relationship between NMFIA and Sacramento Mountain contractors (i.e. support training opportunities in Sacramento Mountains, aid in ensuring representation on NMFIA steering committee and facilitate registration for trainings and membership in NMFIA)

V. 3. Coordination

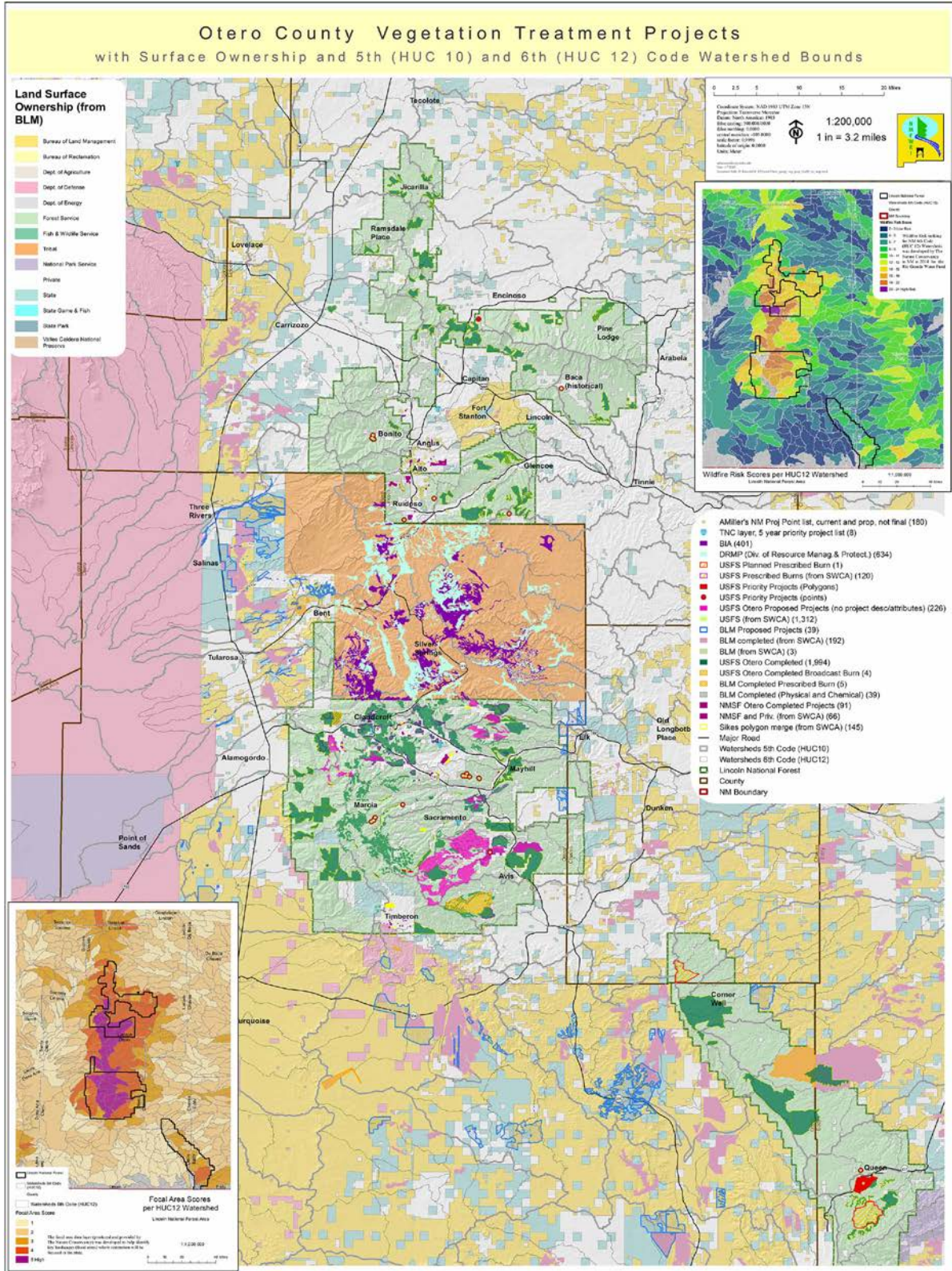
- Continue to integrate other watershed and landscape scale initiatives that occur within the county into OWG planning (i.e. Inter-State Stream Commission, USFS Lincoln National Forest Plan Revision, USFS Travel Management)

V. 4. Communication

- Use maps developed by the OWG to outreach and share with external groups and communities OWG projects completed and planned by focus area along with estimation of costs for planned projects
- Develop articles and communications about the progress of the OWG

Appendices

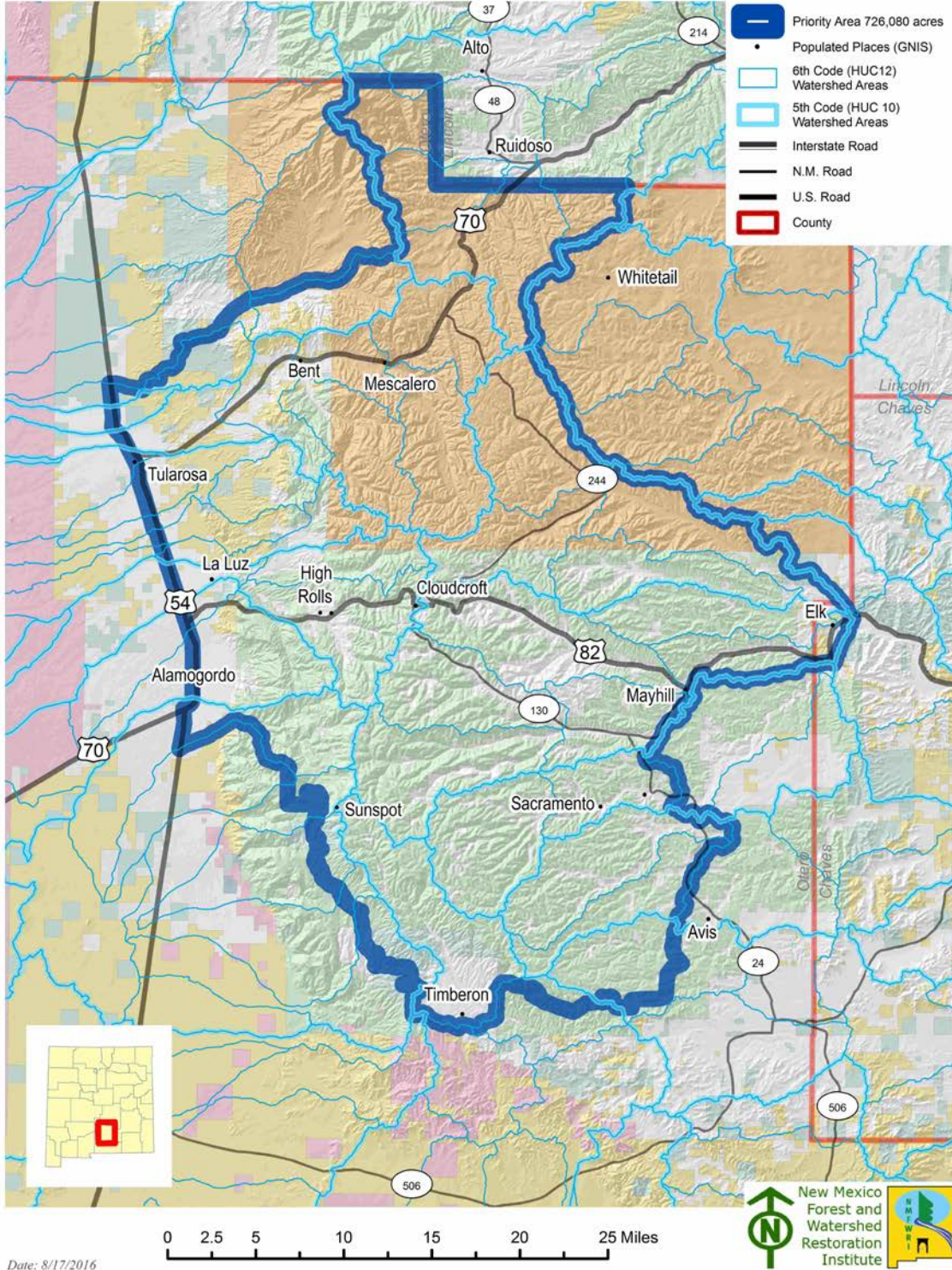
Appendix A



Appendix B

Otero County
Working Group

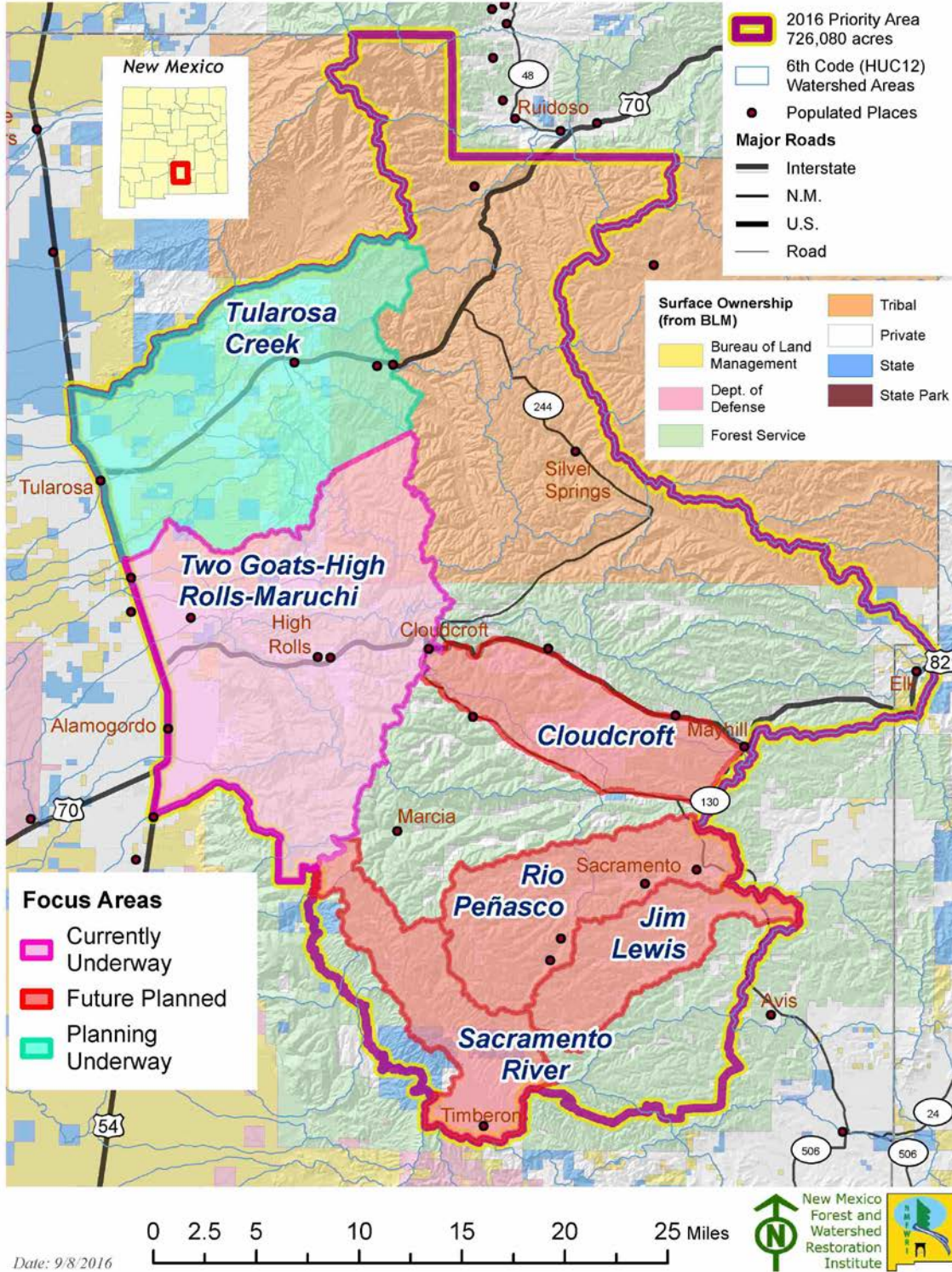
2016 Priority Project Area



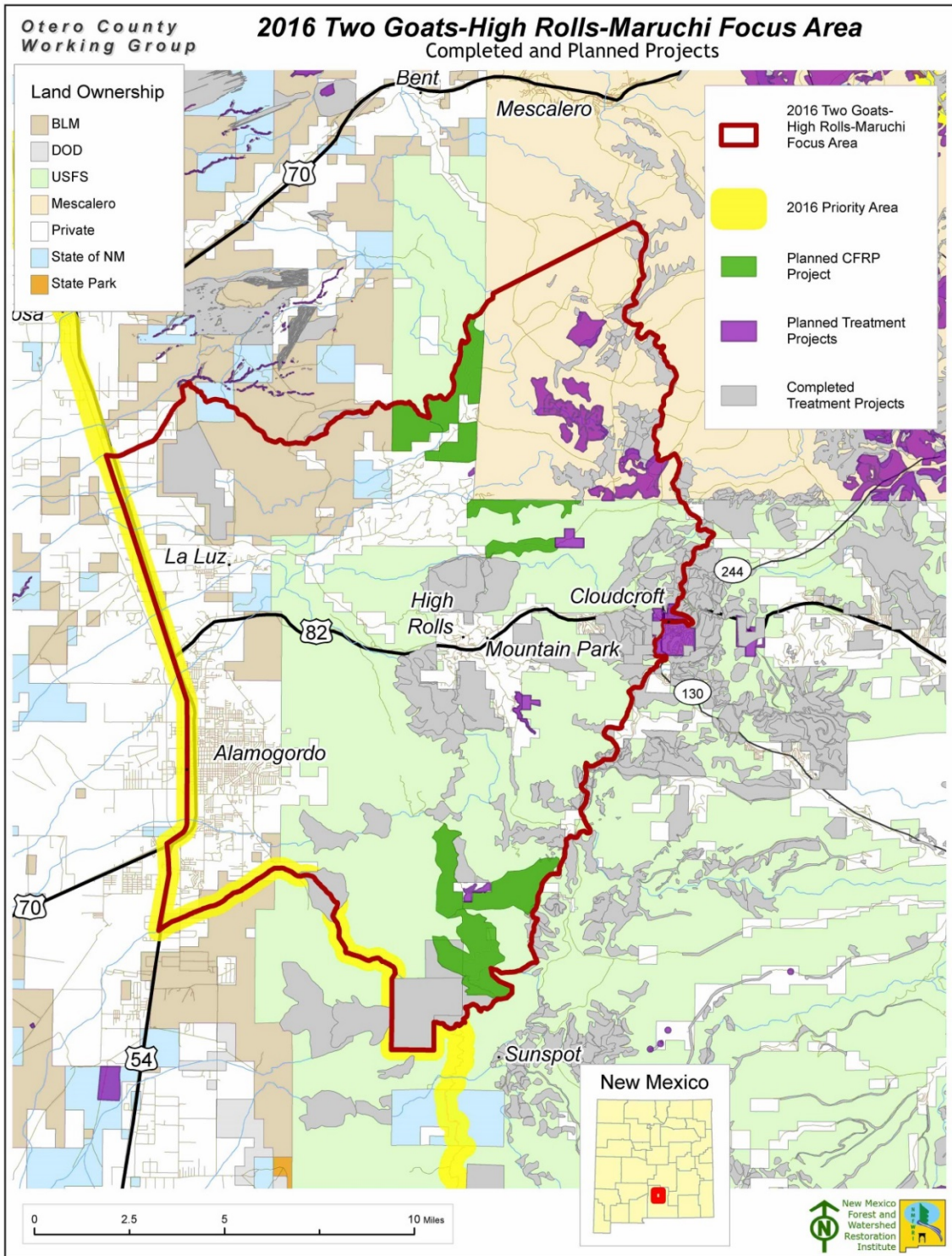
Appendix C

Otero County Working Group

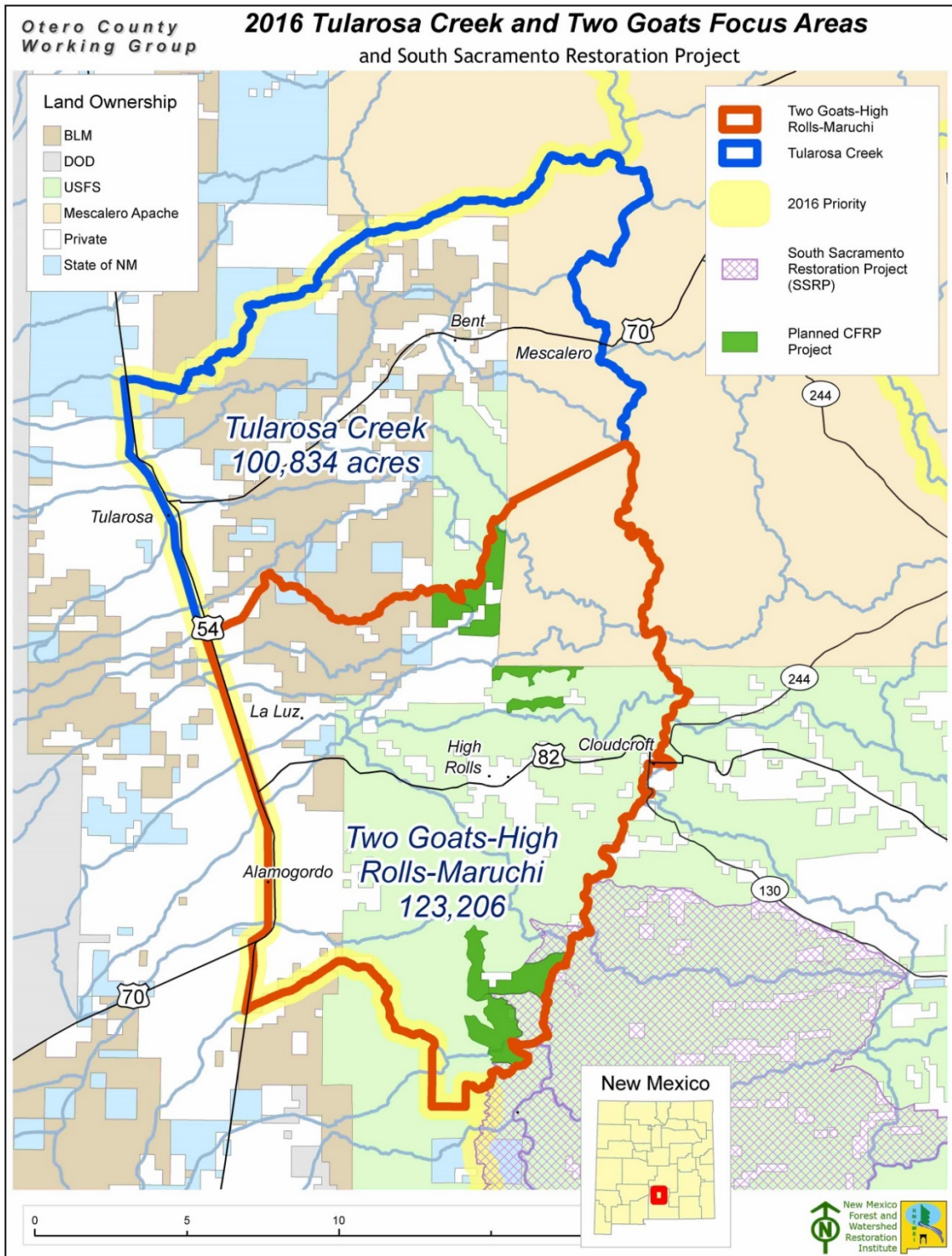
2016 Focus Areas



Appendix D



Appendix E



Appendix F

Collaborators in the Otero Working Group

Collaborators

Collaborators in the Otero Working Group include public and private entities in or near the project focus area. Collaborators generate information that strengthens decision-making, assist with fundraising for forest treatment projects, and furnish services that facilitate the goals and mission of the OWG. Collaborators may also benefit from ecosystem services that are enhanced by restoration projects, such as improved recreational opportunities, including hunting and fishing, and increased water quantity and improved water quality.

Collaborators in the OWG include the following organizations:

- **USDA Forest Service**

The Forest Service (USFS), a federal agency in the Department of Agriculture, is responsible for managing the nation's national forests and national grasslands. The Forest Service has a multiple use mandate, and manages its lands for timber, grazing, recreation, watershed protection and wildlife. Within the boundaries of a national forest there also is private land, including communities.

The Sacramento Ranger District of the Lincoln National Forest is located in Otero County. The Sacramento District supplies water to the Tularosa Basin and to the Pecos River, including the towns of Alamogordo and Tularosa, and the military bases on the western side of the Tularosa Basin. Villages within the Sacramento District include High Rolls, Mayhill, Cloudcroft, Weed, Sacramento and Timberon. The Sacramento District includes various vegetation types, such as Piñon-Juniper, Ponderosa Pine, mixed conifer forests, and subalpine forests, as well as riparian forests and grasslands.

The Forest Service actively manages the forests in the Sacramento Ranger District, with a focus on reducing fuels that have the potential to create catastrophic wildfires, restoring ecosystem and watershed functioning, and protecting habitat for wildlife.

For more information, visit <http://www.fs.usda.gov/Lincoln>.

- Mescalero Apache Tribe

The Mescalero Apache Tribe is located on a reservation just to the north of the Forest Service's Sacramento Ranger District. The Mescalero Apaches have a Natural Resources Department (NRD) in their Tribal Government. The NRD includes sections covering cattle growers, conservation law enforcement, a fence crew, a fish hatchery, Nde Farms, and the Parks and Recreation Department. The Department also has the Division of Resource Management and Protection, the Land Office, and the Mescalero Apache Fire & Rescue. The Mescalero Apache Tribal Government and Natural Resources Department collaborates with the Bureau of Indian Affairs to manage the forests and resources on the Mescalero Reservation.

For more information, visit <http://mescaleroapachetribe.com/>.

- Bureau of Indian Affairs

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) is a federal agency in the Department of the Interior. The mission of the BIA is to “enhance the quality of life, to promote economic opportunity, and to carry out the responsibility to protect and improve the trust assets of American Indians, Indian tribes, and Alaska Natives.” The BIA has an office in Mescalero, NM, and collaborates with the Mescalero Apache Tribe on natural resources management on the Mescalero Reservation.

For more information, visit
<http://www.bia.gov/WhoWeAre/RegionalOffices/Southwest/index.htm>.

- New Mexico State Forestry

The New Mexico State Forestry Division (NMSFD) is a state agency, one of five housed in New Mexico's Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD). NMSFD is responsible for regulating management of the state's forests located on private lands. The State Forestry Division is under the direction of the State Forester. Personnel from NMSFD's district office located in Capitan work with private landowners within the OWG focus area on managing their forests for various objectives, and to reduce fuel in forests to protect wildland-urban interface areas from the risk of wildfires.

For more information, visit <http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/SFD/districts/Capitan.html>.

- City of Alamogordo

The City of Alamogordo is located to the west of the Sacramento Ranger District in the Tularosa Basin, at the intersection of U.S. Highways 54, 82 and 70. Alamogordo has 30,753 residents and is 4,300 feet above sea level. The City is the county seat for Otero County and also home to the Lincoln National Forest Supervisor's Office as well as a branch campus of New Mexico State University. The White Sands National Monument is to the west of Alamogordo, as are Holloman Air Force Base and the White Sands Missile Range.

The City of Alamogordo Water Department manages land that the city owns on the west slopes of the Sacramento Mountains. The water supply for Alamogordo comes from watersheds in the Sacramento Ranger District, and the City has an interest in maintaining healthy forests and watersheds in the Lincoln National Forest.

For more information, visit <http://ci.alamogordo.nm.us/>

- Village of Tularosa

The Village of Tularosa is located in Otero County in the Tularosa Basin, 17 miles to the north of Alamogordo on U.S. Highway 54. Tularosa is located at 4,500 feet above sea level, and has a population of 2,920. The Sacramento Ranger District of the Lincoln National Forest and the Mescalero Apache Reservation are located to the east of Tularosa. Tularosa Creek flows to the north of the village, after passing through Tularosa Canyon on the Mescalero Apache Reservation. Residents and businesses in Tularosa rely on water from the Lincoln National Forest and the Mescalero Apache Reservation.

For more information, visit <http://villageoftularosa.com/index.html>.

- Otero County

The Otero County government has offices in Alamogordo, the county seat. Policy for the county is the responsibility of the Board of County Commissioners, whose three members are elected to four year terms. Like other Commissioners in New Mexico, the Otero Board has authority to adopt a budget, approve tax levies, and enact ordinances that provide for the health, safety, welfare, prosperity and morals of the community. Day-to-day operations and implementation of County Policies are handled by the County Manager, who is appointed by the Board of Commissioners. Other county functions are handled by other offices in the county

government, such as the County Assessor, the County Clerk, the County Treasurer, and the County Sheriff. The County also administers a local court system, and has a county Public Land Commission.

For more information, visit
http://ocwebserver7.co.otero.nm.us/Main_Page.php?Dept=commission.

- Bureau of Land Management

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is a federal agency in the Department of the Interior. The BLM manages rangelands in New Mexico for grazing, energy production, and recreation. Federally owned minerals, including oil and gas, are also managed by the BLM. There is a BLM state office in Albuquerque, which is responsible for public lands in Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas as well as New Mexico. Almost all of the Otero Working Group's focus areas are within the territory managed by the BLM district office in Las Cruces, with a small portion managed by the Carlsbad Field Office in the BLM-New Mexico's Pecos District.

For more information, visit <https://www.blm.gov/>.

- New Mexico State Land Office

The New Mexico State Land Office (NMSLO) manages the state trust lands, which are lands owned by the state and managed for the purposes of providing revenue that goes towards public institutions, such as state universities, hospitals, and prisons. The NMSLO is under the direction of the State Land Commissioner. The NMSLO has a district office in Carlsbad that covers the OWG's focus areas.

For more information, visit <http://www.nmstatelands.org/>.

- Water Users

Acequias are community irrigation ditches that deliver water for agricultural uses to an organization of farmers. The term acequia can refer to either the ditch or the community organization. Acequias exist throughout the State of New Mexico, and many date back to the early days of Spanish colonization in the 17th and 18th centuries. Under New Mexico law, acequias are recognized as a political subdivision of the state. The New Mexico Acequia Commission is a state agency that acts as a liaison between acequias and the state and federal

governments. The New Mexico Acequia Association is an umbrella membership organization that advocates for the rights of acequia organizations.

Acqueias in the OWG focus area include the Laborcita Community Ditch, the La Luz Community Ditch, the North Fresno Ditch, the Middle Fresno Ditch and the South Fresno Ditch.

For more information, visit <http://www.nmacequiacommission.state.nm.us/> and <http://www.lasacequias.org/>.

- Department of Defense

The federal Department of Defense (DOD) has land in the Tularosa Basin including the Holloman Air Force Base, McGregor Range and the U.S. Army's White Sands Missile Range, home to the Trinity Site where the first atomic bomb was detonated in 1945. The DOD also has land in the Sacramento Mountains, including wells near Dodd Canyon and in the Bonito Lake Area.

For more information, visit <http://www.holloman.af.mil/Home.aspx> and <http://www.wsmr.army.mil/Pages/home.aspx>.

- Village of Cloudcroft

Cloudcroft is a village of 682 inhabitants, located at 8,600 feet above sea level on U.S. Highway 82 within the Sacramento Ranger District. The picturesque village is a popular tourism destination, offering year-round outdoor activities such as hiking, cross-country and downhill skiing, snow-mobiling and ice skating. The USFS ranger station for the Sacramento District is located in Cloudcroft.

Cloudcroft Fire and Emergency Management Services (EMS) creates plans to reduce the impact of potential disasters on the community. Since Cloudcroft is surrounded by forests, the potential for wildfire is present, and EMS works to mitigate the risk of wildfire and its potential impact on residents and property in the village.

For more information, visit <http://Cloudcroft.com/> and <http://www.cloudcroftfire.com/emergency-management.html>.

- New Mexico State University

New Mexico State University (NMSU) is located in Las Cruces, NM, approximately 70 miles from Alamogordo and 90 miles from Cloudcroft. The university serves 15,500 students and offers over 90 undergraduate degree programs, including Agronomy, Agricultural and Community Development, Conservation Ecology, Environmental Science, Natural Resource Economics and Policy, Range Science and Wildlife Science. NMSU is the land grant university for the State of New Mexico, and administers extension services in each of the state's 33 counties. NMSU is also a NASA Space Grant College, and is a partner in administering the Apache Peak Observatory. NMSU operates a branch campus in Alamogordo that serves 1,850 students, offering associates degrees in 22 disciplines.

For more information, visit <https://www.nmsu.edu/>.

- National Wild Turkey Federation

The National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) is a membership organization founded in 1973 and has its headquarters in Edgefield, SC. The NWTF works to conserve wild turkeys and their habitat, and to preserve the hunting heritage that is so important in rural areas. In New Mexico, the NWTF collaborates with land management agencies to benefit wildlife populations, to improve forest and watershed health and to restore native prairies. NWTF also aims to increase access to hunting ground and to increase the number of hunters in the state.

For more information, visit <http://www.nwtf.org/>.

- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) is a membership organization dedicated to conserving elk and its habitat, as well as other species and hunting heritage. The RMEF dates back to 1984 and has its headquarters in Missoula, MT. The RMEF has more than 4,600 members in New Mexico, in 14 regional chapters.

For more information, visit <http://www.rmef.org/>.

- Natural Resources Conservation Service

The National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is a federal agency in the Department of Agriculture. The NRCS provides financial and technical assistance to landowners

to carry out conservation projects that protect soils and natural resources and enhance agricultural and range operations. In New Mexico, the NRCS has service centers in Alamogordo, Carlsbad and Roswell, and its statewide office is in Albuquerque under the direction of the State Conservationist.

For more information, visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/>.

- Otero County Soil & Water Conservation District

The Otero Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) was founded in 1940, and has its office in Alamogordo. Like other SWCD's, Otero SWCD is a political subdivision of the State of New Mexico. The purpose of the Otero SWCD is to promote and facilitate effective stewardship of the state's natural resources. To accomplish this, the Otero SWCD offers technical, financial, and educational assistance to residents of Otero County.

For more information, visit <http://www.oterowcd.org/>.

- Apache Point Observatory

The Apache Point Observatory is located on the Sacramento Ranger District of the Lincoln National Forest near Sacramento Peak off of State Road 6563, approximately 18 miles south of Cloudcroft. The observatory is owned by a consortium of universities and operated by New Mexico State University. Several large telescopes and other equipment are housed at the observatory.

For more information, visit <http://www.apo.nmsu.edu/>.

- New Mexico Department of Game and Fish

The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF) is a New Mexico state agency that manages the state's wildlife and fish. The NMDGF's mission is to conserve, regulate, propagate and protect wildlife to ensure a sustainable public food supply, recreation and safety. The Department's headquarters are located in Santa Fe, and it has area offices in Roswell and Las Cruces. The NMDGF manages the state's fish hatcheries, and wildlife, waterfowl and fisheries management areas. In addition, the NMDGF is the lead agency in developing recovery plans for species listed as threatened or endangered under the New Mexico Wildlife Conservation Act.

For more information, visit <http://www.wildlife.state.nm.us/>.

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is a federal agency in the Department of the Interior. The FWS manages over 560 national wildlife refuges across the U.S., as well as 38 wetland management districts and nearly 70 national fish hatcheries. In addition, the FWS is the lead federal agency in administering the Endangered Species Act and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

For more information, visit <https://www.fws.gov/>.

Facilitators

Facilitators provide organizational services to the Otero Working Group, to manage the OWG's group processes. Facilitators organize and steer meetings, manage group communications, and provide support services such as mapping. Two organizations provide facilitation services to the OWG.

- South Central Mountain Resource Conservation and Development Council

The South Central Mountain Resource Conservation and Development Council (SCMRC&D) was created in 1967, and is organized as a non-profit corporation. Its office is in Ruidoso, NM. The SCMRC&D Council was the vision of three soil and water conservation districts (SWCD), the Carrizozo SWCD, the Otero SWCD and the Upper Hondo SWCD. Today, the eight member, all-volunteer council includes representatives of the SWCDs, as well as town and county governments in Lincoln and Otero Counties. The SCMRC&D Council partners with other groups to carry out and acquire funding for community development projects.

For more information, visit <http://www.scmrcd.org/>.

- New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute

The New Mexico Forest & Watershed Restoration Institute (NMFWRI) is located in Las Vegas, NM, on the campus of New Mexico Highlands University. The mission of the NMFWRI is to support practices which reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires and support watershed health in New Mexico. The NMFWRI was created by Congress as part of the Southwest Forest

Health and Wildfire Prevention Act of 2004, and is supported by funding from the Forest Service and the State of New Mexico. The NMFWRI has expertise in monitoring the effects of forest treatments on ecological characteristics, assisting collaborative groups and mapping using Geospatial Information Systems (GIS).

For more information, visit <http://nmfwri.org/>.