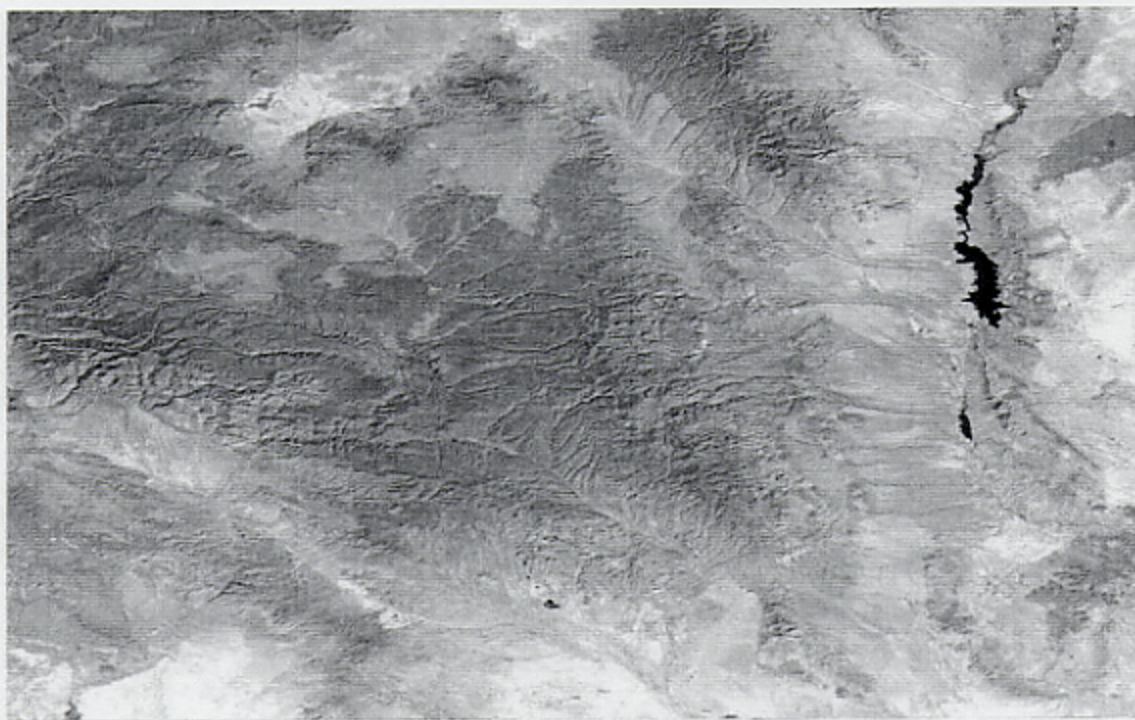


**FOREST STEWARDSHIP PLAN
FOR THE
20 COMMUNITIES/
2002 WESTERN STATE FIRE MANAGERS
LANDOWNER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
FOR GRANT COUNTY,
NEW MEXICO**



**Prepared by: Nick Smokovich, Timber Management Officer / Stewardship Forester
And Gary Benavidez, Asst. District Forester
Socorro District
Forestry Division
Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department**

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INTRODUCTION

COUNTY DESCRIPTION

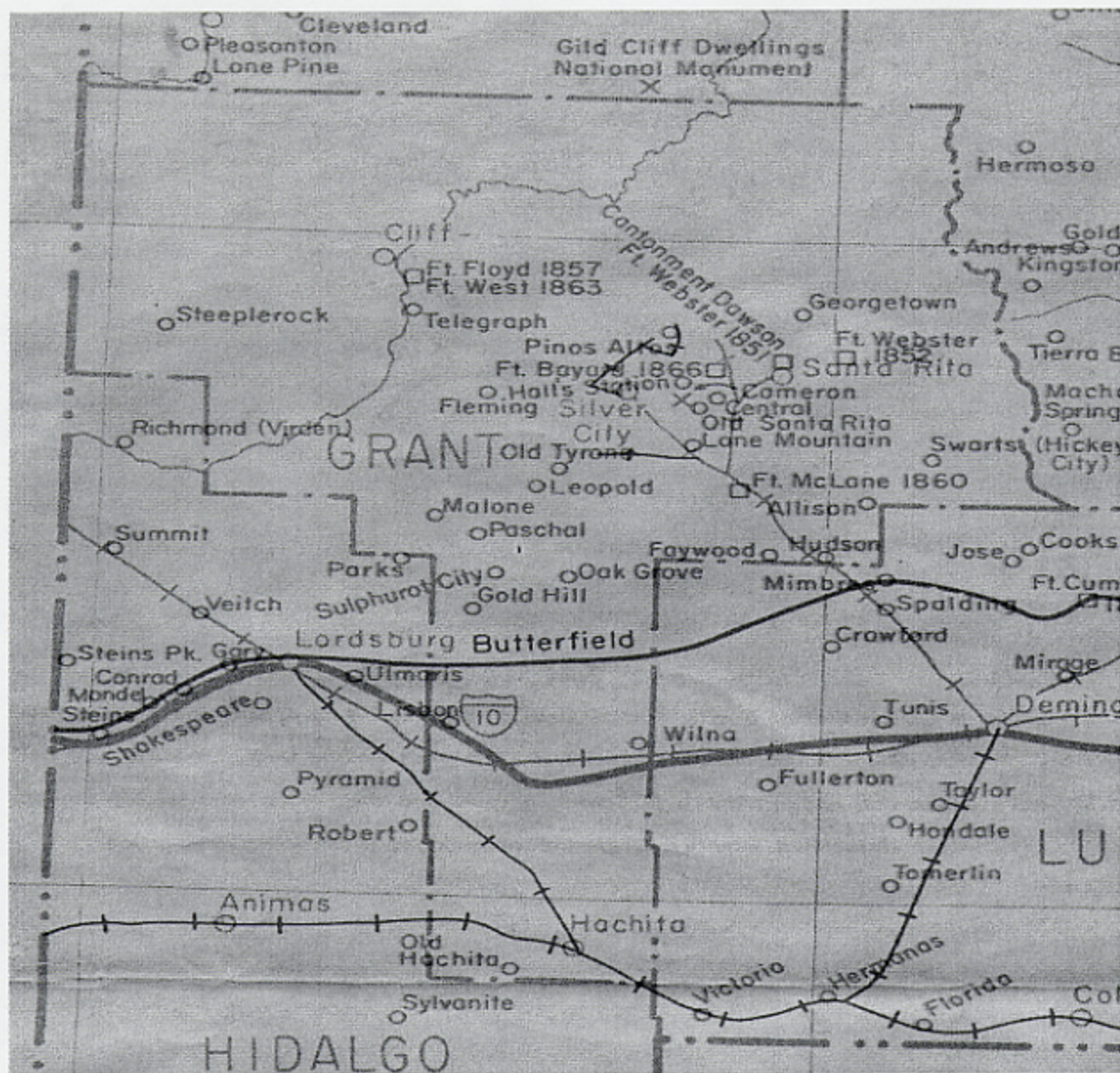
Grant County is located in Southwest New Mexico. Vegetation consists of transitions from desert grasslands in the south, to oak/pinyon-juniper savannah, to ponderosa pine stringers intermixed with pinyon/juniper woodlands, to pure ponderosa pine stands, and mixed conifers at higher elevations.

The area receives an above average number of lightning strikes, due mainly to the topographical change from desert to rolling mountains. The area also experiences very strong wind events during the spring and early summer associated with cold fronts moving through the central Rockies. Grant County experiences four mild, very enjoyable seasons. These mild seasons are responsible for the large growth in subdivisions and suburban development.

There have also been major efforts by Silver City and Grant County to develop the area as a retirement community. There has been a twenty two percent (22%) growth within Silver City and its "three mile extra territorial jurisdiction," over the past ten years (Source: Engineers Inc. Transportation Study for Silver City, 5/1/01).

With increased residential growth in or near the forest boundary, Silver city and most of Grant County is surrounded on all sides by wildland/urban interface areas, because of this risk from catastrophic wildfire has increased dramatically. Private in-holdings are being developed with multiple structures and limited access. This increased growth has also increased the traffic on roadways, resulting in safety concerns both emergency response and urban interface fire evacuations.

Silver City-the County seat, Tyrone, Santa Clara, Bayard, Hurley, Hanover, Fierro, Cliff, Pinos Altos, San Lorenzo are the larger towns, and there are a few crossroad gas stations and ghost towns. Other major political subdivisions in the county include portions of the Gila National Forests and the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument. Within the National Forest is set aside the Gila, Aldo Leopold and Blue Range Wilderness Areas.



PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of the project covered under this Stewardship Plan are:

1. Provide landowner's with over all knowledge of natural resource issues that affect their property. These resources include: forests, watersheds, wildlife, recreation, cultural resources, rangeland and endangered species.
2. Creating defensible space (30ft) around structures.
3. Thinning defensible zone (30-100ft) on the properties.

4. Develop fuel breaks along jurisdictional/private/state land boundaries.
5. Manage tree densities along Highway right-of-ways to reduce vehicle/wildlife collisions. This will also function as fuel breaks and wildfire suppression lines.
6. Maintain any future wildland fire as a "ground fire" where suppression efforts can be more effective.
7. Increase forest health and vigor throughout the county.
8. Provide for economic growth by developing a forest based contractor corps. That will accomplish the above work.

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WILDLAND/URBAN INTERFACE COMMUNITIES

This plan is designed to cover the most critical areas in Grant County, as defined by the Inter-agency Command Team and the Grant County WUI Fire Hazard Mitigation Plan. These critical areas are:

Silver City

Cliff-Gila Fire District:

Buckhorn
Cliff
Gila
Mangus Springs
Mule Creek
Pine Cienega
Riverside
Table Butte

Fort Bayard Fire District:

Fort Bayard

Lower Mimbres:

Faywood
Mimbres Hot Springs Ranch
San Juan

Pinos Altos Fire District:

Feeley
Owens
Pinos Altos
Wagon Wheel

Santa Rita Fire District:

Hanover/Fierro
Viva Santa Rita

Sapillo Fire District:

Gila Hot Springs
Lake Roberts
Lake Roberts Heights
Trout Valley

Upper Mimbres Fire District:

Paradise Acres I
Paradise Acres II
River Glen

Whiskey Creek Fire District:

East Peterson/West Race Track
East Racetrack/Santa Clara
Old Arenas Valley Road
Rosedale
Sunshine Estates

Tyrone Fire District:

Chisholm Ranch Subdivision
Cullum Estates Subdivision
Flying A Subdivision

Site-specific information for the above list is found in the "GRANT COUNTY WUI FIRE HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN" Appendix 1 Wildland Urban Interface Communities.

RESOURCE DESCRIPTION

SPECIES COMPOSITION

In a region where the elevation ranges from 4,000 feet along the Gila River at Redrock to 8,000 feet near Pinos Altos and Jack's Peak. Vegetation regimes, habitat types and species composition is extremely variable with Mixed Conifer/Ponderosa Pine forest at the highest elevation, open grown Ponderosa at mid-elevation, and extensive grasslands and pinyon/juniper types dominating the lower portion. Riparian vegetation is found according to the amount of overland flow present.

OVERSTORY SPECIES

Predominant overstory species consist of: **Pinyon pine** (*Pinus edulis*), **Alligator juniper** (*Juniperus deppeana*), **One-seed juniper** (*Juniperus monosperma*), **Ponderosa pine** (*Pinus ponderosa*), **Oaks** (*Quercus* spp.), **Rocky Mountain juniper** (*Juniperus scopulorum*), **Douglas fir** (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), **White Fir** (*Abies concolor*), **Aspen and Cottonwood** (*Populus* spp.).



Ponderosa Pine/Pinyon-Juniper Habitat Type , Elevation 7,000 feet.



Pinyon/Juniper Woodlands intermixed with open meadows.

These two vegetation types are the most common for Urban/Interface type development in Grant County.

UNDERSTORY VEGETATION

The primary understory community is comprised of shrubs, forbs, herbaceous plants, grasses, and cacti. Many of the following species are found in the Urban/Interface areas identified in this plan.

- ◆ The shrub species found **Mountain mahogany** (*Cercocarpus* spp.), **Broom snakeweed** (*Gutierrezia sarothrae*), **Rabbitbrush** (*Chrysothamnus* spp.), **Currant** (*Ribes* spp.), **Four-wing Saltbush** (*Atriplex canescens*), **Sagebrush** (*Artemisia* spp.), **Honey mesquite** (*Prosopis glandulosa*).
- ◆ Forbs include **true asters** (*Aster* spp.), **Sticky Aster** (*Machaeranthera bigelovii*), **Fleabane** (*Erigeron* spp.), **Buckwheat** (*Polygonum* spp.), and **Pussytoes** (*Antennaria* spp.)
- ◆ Herbaceous plants include **Indian paintbrush** (*Castilleja* spp.), **Harebell** (*Campanula* spp.), **Scarlet buglar** (*Penstemon* spp.), **Locoweed** (*Astragalus* spp.), **Geranium** (*Geranium* spp.), **Nodding onion** (*Allium cernuum*), **Pale trumpets** (*Ipomopsis longiflora*), and **Verbena** (*Verbena* spp.)
- ◆ Grasses found are **theewawn** (*Aristida*), **grama** (*Bouteloua* spp.), **lovegrass** (*Eragrostis* spp.), **muhly** (*Muhlenbergia* spp.), **dropseed** (*Sporobolus* spp.), **brome** (*Bromus* spp.), **fescue** (*Festuca* spp.), **bluegrass** (*Poa* spp.), and **wheatgrass** (*Elymus* spp.).
- ◆ Cacti species include **Banana yucca** (*Yucca baccata*), **Prickly pear** (*Opuntia* spp.)

INSECTS AND DISEASES

Insects and disease are as much a part of the forest and woodlands as floods, wildfire, drought and severe weather. In fact, it is because of these events, that pathogens become problems that must be addressed.

When conditions occur that will cause wide scale losses of trees, an **Integrated Pest Management Plan** needs to be formulated. The highlights of this plan include:

PREVENTION

1. Utilization of cut wood above 4 inches diameter outside bark (DOB), thereby eliminating potential breeding grounds for insects and pathogens.
2. Timing management programs when insect populations are low and when slash can dry out (Mid to late summer).
3. Avoiding activities that create slash for more than one year.
4. Disposing of green slash by burning, chipping/spreading, debarking, or burying.

SUPPRESSION

1. Covering infested firewood (4 in. DOB and larger) with clear plastic in direct sunlight.
2. Remove infested slash away from uninfected trees.
3. Infested firewood should not be removed from site until treated, so as not to spread insects.

Insects associated with the vegetation types to be encountered consist of:

Pinyon needle scale (*Matsucoccus acalyptus*)

Pine needle scale (*Chionaspis pinifoliae*)

Pinyon spindle gall midge (*Pinyonia edulicola*)

Pinyon needle miner (*Coleotechnites edulicola*)

Ponderosa pine needle miner (*Coleotechnites ponderosae*)

Tiger moth (*Halisidota* spp.)

Douglas-fir tussock moth (*Orgyia pseudotsugata*)

Western spruce budworm (*Coristoneura occidentalis*)

Conifer sawflies (*Neodiprion* spp.)

Conifer aphides (*Cinara* spp.)

Coley spruce gall adelgid (*Adelges cooleyi*)

Spider mites (*Oligonychus* spp.)

Pine tip moths (*Rhyaciona* spp.)

Pinyon pitch nodule moth (*Petrova arizonensis*)

Spittlebugs (*Aphrophora* spp.)

Bark moths (*Dioryctria* spp.)

Pitch moths (*Vespa mima* spp.)

Twig beetles (*Pityophorus* spp.)

Bark beetles (*Ips* spp.)

Round headed woodborers (Family *Cerambycidae*)

Flatheaded woodborers (Family *Buprestidae*)

Western cedar borer (*Trachykele blondeli*)

Juniper twig pruner (*Styloxus bicolor*)

The major problem with forest pests in the county is the Ips & Dendroctonus bark beetle infestation due to the droughts of 1999-2002. The droughts subsequently allowed large populations of beetles to become established in weakened Pinyon/Ponderosa in large quantities. A cold wet winter as well as diligent slash management will be needed to slow the spread of this infestation, and even then, there will be continued damage on individual trees.



Bark Beetle Mortality in Ponderosa Pine

Diseases associated with the vegetation types to be encountered consist of:

- Dwarf mistletoe (*Arceuthobium* spp.)
- True mistletoe (*Phoradendron* spp.)
- White pine blister rust (*Cronartium ribicola*)
- Stem rusts of junipers (*Gymnosporangium* spp.)
- Broom rust (*Chrysomyxa arctostaphyli*)
- Branch & shoot dieback on spruce (*Cytospora kunzei* Sacc.)

Dwarf mistletoe is currently wide spread throughout the county. Dwarf mistletoe has been seen in large quantities on the Ponderosa pine, Juniper and Oak. See *You Can Save Your Trees from Dwarf Mistletoe* in appendix for proper pruning procedures of diseased trees.

NOXIOUS WEEDS

The *Integrated Weed Management Plan* needs to be consulted before thinning operations begin to prevent the introduction or spread of the following invasive species. Additional assistance can be received from the county extension agent or the Natural Resource Conservation Service. Their phone number is (505) 388-1569 Ext. 3

2610 N. Silver St.
Silver City, NM 88061

Class "C" Weeds:

These Non-native species are widespread in the County and State. Long-term programs are necessary to manage these species.

Field bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis* L.)
Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia* L.)
St. Johnswort (*Hypericum perforatum* L.)
Salt cedar (*Tamarix pentandra*)

Class « B »Weeds :

Non-native species limited to a particular area. Preventing infestations in new areas has high priority.

Malta starthistle (*Centaurea melitensis*)

Class "A" Weeds:

There are three Non-native species with a limited distribution in the Grant County. **High priority** needs to be taken to prevent new infestations and eliminating existing infestations.

African Rue (*Peganum harmala*)
Camelthorn (*Alhagi pseudalhagi*)
Leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula*)
Yellow starthistle (*Centaurea melitensis*)

SOIL TYPES

See *SOIL SURVEY OF GRANT COUNTY, NEW MEXICO; CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN PART* also *SOIL ASSOCIATIONS AND LAND CLASSIFICATION FOR IRRIGATION GRANT COUNTY* by NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY in appendix. Soil types need to be identified in each area where work is done, in order to determine the site suitability, limitations, and determine the best course of action to mitigate potential erosion.

FISH & WILDLIFE CONCERNS/THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

Threatened and Endangered Species are a concern for all areas in Grant County. The County Commission has made every effort available to insure that the counties voice is heard when it comes to implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act and the Endangered Species Act..

The county forest resources are used by many game and non-game species. Some of the more common game species include:

Mule Deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*)
Elk (*Cervus elaphus*)
Pronghorn Antelope (*Antilocapra Americana*)
Black Bear (*Ursus americanus*)
Mountain Lion (*Felis concolor*)
Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*)
Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*)
Fox (*Vulpes spp.*)
Ringtail (*Bassariscus astutus*)
Badger (*Taxida taxus*)
Javelina (*Tayassu tajacu*)
Beaver (*Castor Canadensis*)

Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*)
Long-tailed Weasel (*Mustela frenata*)
Red Squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*)
Albert's Squirrel (*Sciurus aberti*)
Snow Goose (*Chen caerulescens*)
Canada Goose (*Branta Canadensis*)
Gambel's Quail (*Callipepla gambelii*)
Blue Grouse (*Dendragapus odscurus*)
Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*)
Band-Tailed Pigeon (*Columba fasciata*)

Some of the common non-game species include:

Dwarf shrew (*Sorex nanus*)
Least shrew (*Cryptotis parva*)
Rock squirrel (*Spermophilus variegates*)
Spotted ground squirrel (*S. spilosoma*)
Pocket Gopher (*Thomomys bottae*)
Plains pocket mouse (*Perognathus flavescens*)
Ord's kangaroo Rat (*Dipodomys ordii*)
Harvest mouse (*Reithodontomys megalotis*)
Plains harvest mouse (*R. montanus*)
Deer mouse (*Peromyscus maniculatus*)
N. Rock mouse (*P. nausutus*)
Porcupines (*Erethizon dorsatum*)

Spotted skunk (*Spilogale gracilis*)
Striped skunk (*Mephitis spp.*)
W. small-footed bat (*Myotis ciliolabrum*)
Black-tailed Jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*)
Coyotes (*Canis latrans*)
Scrub Jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*)
Common Raven (*Corvus corax*)
Red-shafted Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*)
Badger (*Taxida taxus*)
Black-tailed rattlesnake (*Crotalus molossus*)
Short-horned lizard (*Phrynosoma douglasii*)

The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, in their publication entitled *New Mexican Wildlife of Concern*; list **Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive species in Grant County**. These species are federally listed, state listed, or both. The species on this list that are most inclined to inhabit the county include:

Fish

Gila Trout (*Uncorhynchus gilae*)
Chihuahua Chub (*Gila nigrescens*)
Roundtail Chub (*Gila robusta*)
Gila Chub (*Gila intermedia*)

Spikedance (*Meda fulgida*)
Loach Minnow (*Rhinichthys cobitis*)
Gila Top Minnow (*Paeciliopsis occidentalis*)

Amphibian- Lowland Leopard frog (*Rana yavapaiensis*)

Reptiles- Gila Monster (*Heloderma suspectum*)

Narrowhead Garter Snake (*Thamnophis rufipunctatus rufipunctatus*)

Mexican Garter Snake (*Thamnophis eges megalopa*)

Birds

Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis carolinensis*)

Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)

Aplomado falcon (*Falco femoralis septentrionalis*)

Common Black-Hawk (*Buteogallus anthracinus anthracinus*)

American Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*)

Interior Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum athalassos*)

Mexican Spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis lucida*)

Neotropic Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*)

Common Ground-dove (*Columbina passerina pallescens*)

Gila Woodpecker (*Melanerpes uropygialis uropygialis*)

Southern Willow Flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*)

Bell's Vireo (*Vireo bellii*)

Grey Vireo (*Vireo vicinior*)

Varied Bunting (*Passerina versicolor*)

Abert's Towhee (*Pipilo aberti aberti*)

Yellow-eyed Junco (*Junco phaeonotus palliatus*)

Baird's Sparrow (*Ammodramus bairdii*)

Broad-billed Hummingbird (*Calothorax lucifer*)

Costa's Hummingbird (*Calypte costae*)

Elegant Trogon (*Trogon elegans canescens*)

Mammals- Spotted Bat (*Myotis Eudermis maculatum*)

Mexican gray Wolf (*Canis lupus baileyi*)

Desert Bighorn Sheep (*Ovis Canadensis Mexicana*)

Invertebrates- Gila Pyrg Snail (*Pyrgulopsis gilae*)

New Mexico Hot spring Pyrg Snail (*Pyrgulopsis thermalis*)

The New Mexico Forestry Division, in its' publication entitled Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of New Mexico (August, 1995), lists these endangered plant species in Grant County. The species are:

1. (*Agastache cana*)
2. (*Brickellia chenopodioides*)
3. (*Cleome multicaulis*)
4. (*Crataegus woottoniana*)
5. (*Desmodium metcalfei*)
6. (*Draba mogollonica*)
7. (*Grindelia arizonica* var. *neomexicana*)
8. (*Peniocereus greggii* var. *greggii*)
9. (*Penstemon linarioides* ssp. *Maguirei*)
10. (*Polygonatum cobrense*)
11. (*Pteris davidsonii*)
12. (*Puccinellia parishii*)
13. (*Scrophularia macrantha*)
14. (*Silene thurberi*)
15. (*Silene wrightii*)
16. (*Stellaria porsildii*)

At this time, no threatened or endangered species have been identified on the land base where Wildland/Urban Interface Mitigation activities will take place. If in the future such a species is found, care should be taken to protect both the species and its habitat.

WATERSHED AND WETLAND RESOURCES

There is considerable variation in precipitation between localities within Grant County; average annual precipitation is 9 to 30 inches per year, with a 2-inch increase for every 1000-foot rise in elevation.

As in all mountainous regions, there are numerous watershed and wetland resources with their individual needs and concerns. Relief and surface drainages in the area are the Gila, Mimbres, and Mangus Rivers, along with numerous washes and arroyos. The Gila River drains most of the northern highlands and areas west of the Continental Divide. The Mimbres River drains the area east of the Continental Divide. The Mangus River drains the Burro Mountains and is a tributary to the Gila River.



Gila River below Cliff, New Mexico

AESTHETIC RESOURCES

Grant County is characterized by rough and broken terrain, including steep mountainous areas, plateaus, and mesas intermingled with steep canyons, nearly level plains, and narrow valley bottoms. This resource has attracted Native Americans, ranchers, settlers, miners and present day second/seasonal homebuyers to Grant Count

Valley's offers view of typical pinyon/juniper woodlands interspersed with large open meadows. Surrounding all of this is numerous mountain peaks covered in ponderosa pine and mixed conifers. Ranges, panoramic views, and relative isolation all contribute to the aesthetic value of the area.

Bark Beetle and mistletoe problem in the pinyon/juniper and Ponderosa Pine, active gully erosion occurring around the county due to overstocked forest conditions, Pinyon/juniper invasion of historical open grasslands, catastrophic-stand replacement wildfire and uncontrolled growth and development all contribute to a decline in the aesthetic value of the county



Mogollon Mountains from Pinos Altos Mountain

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Grant County is located in a region that was extensively utilized by the Mogollon and Mimbres people of the past. It is not uncommon to find stone pits, temporary summer camps, and hunting sites on south facing slopes through out the county. To protect these cultural resource sites ground disturbance will be kept to a minimum during thinning and slash treatment operations. If evidence of a significant potential cultural site is revealed during ground operations, activities in the immediate area will be suspended, an adequate management buffer zone around the area will be established, and the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office will be notified.

Cattle ranching started in the 1870's when ranchers, primarily from Texas, braved the Indians and difficult winters to start ranches and homesteads in the upper reaches of the Gila and San Francisco Rivers. Many of the miners that discovered the ore deposits in the Silver City area came to the area as soldiers, and once discharged, came back to develop and prosper in the mining camps.

The mining industry essentially died in 1942 when all the miners went off to World War II and the silver veins played out. It was not until the mid 1960's that towns like Pinos Altos, Tyrone, Mimbres River Area, etc. started to grow with the advent of the second/seasonal home industry. Old miners cabins and shacks were repaired and rebuilt for second homes for people from as far away as El Paso, Albuquerque, Tucson, Phoenix and even Southern California.

All these immigrants have brought a new and unique character to Grant County, along with personalities, differences of opinion and various environmental ethics.

Every effort will be made to insure that the customs and culture of Grant County, both historical and current are protected during this project.

PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

THINNING AND PRUNING:

Each forest type will be treated accordingly, see *Wildland Urban Interface Prescriptions* by Ron Moody, with an emphasis on forest health and fire protection. Specific prescriptions will be included in the "TWENTY COMMUNITIES COST SHARE PROGRAM THINNING TREATMENT PLAN" that will be written for each property. Proper thinning of the pinyon-juniper woodland/ponderosa pine forest should concentrate on the removal of diseased, dead or dying trees first. An unusually low needle count, numerous mistletoe infestations, or excessive number of brown needles can identify diseased or dying trees. Individually diseased branches encountered when thinning should be removed, using proper pruning procedures see appendix *How to Prune Trees prepared by the USDA Forest Service*.

Remove branches from trees within the defensible zone of homes. [Healthy trees should be pruned to a minimum of 15 feet in ponderosa and 6 feet in pinyon/juniper. Mountain mahogany should be thinned at the same time diseased and low branches are removed. If at all possible, all junipers up to 8" DRC (diameter root crown) should be removed. An overall spacing between tree crowns of 10 feet, depending on slope, would eventually provide a nice layer of grasses and forbs.]

SLASH DISPOSAL

All of this pruning will provide a lot of firewood and "slash" (unutilized material). Firewood should include branches down to 3" in diameter. Care should be taken not to create piles of slash where stems exceed a diameter greater than two inches. Such piles can become breeding sites for wood boring beetles (see section of this document entitled **Insects and Diseases**). Slash should be scattered in areas prone to erosion, chipped, hauled off to one of the approved sites, or left in piles to be burned at a later date. Large scale burning should be conducted under the supervision of an individual with wildland firefighting experience. Piles of slash should not exceed 3 feet in height. See the accompanying pamphlet *Guidelines for Fuel wood Management for Private Landowners in New Mexico* for a further explanation of fuel wood management.

DEFENSIBLE ZONES

Reduction of wildfire threat can best be realized through a selective thinning and creating defensible space around homes and adjacent structures. Specifically, defensible space is defined as at least 30 feet of open space between a building and the forest leaving only a few widely spaced, pruned larger trees standing. *Creating Wildfire – Defensible Zones* a pamphlet from the New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service contains proper examples of defensible space and defensible zone for private landowners.



Pinos Altos Townsite from Pinos Altos Mountain

LANDOWNER WILDFIRE MITIGATION PROCEDURES

Application/Implementation Procedures - Grant County

Step 1. Property should be in the area of the county where there is at least a 50% crown cover of tree species and/or within 1 mile of National Forest or BLM lands.

Step 2. Cost-share assistance will be given in the form of 70% reimbursement and 30% landowner responsibility. The Landowner will request a *Wildfire Mitigation Cost-share Assistance Application* from the Grant County Soil and Water Conservation District in Silver City, NM (505)388-1569. The landowner should then complete as much of the application as possible and return it to the SWCD Office. **Please include a site map if possible.**

Step 3. When the application is completed, a representative from the SWCD, NM Forestry Division, US Forest Service or local volunteer fire department will make a site visit with the landowner to determine needs and will complete an **Treatment Plan** that identifies activities that need to take place to mitigate the hazard to the structure or property.

Approved activities will consist of:

- Structure Protection/Defensible Space/Zone
(That area within 30 feet/100 feet of the structure)
- Thinning
(From 100 feet out to 2 acres around the home)
- Fuel break development
(Fuelbreaks constructed along property boundaries or roads.)

Step 4. If during the site visit, it is determined that minimal work is needed to mitigate the threat, and that the landowner can complete the work in a short amount of time, then the process for that property will be complete. It is recommended that the landowner notify the representative when the work is done so another site visit can be scheduled to inspect the completed work.

Step 5. If the visit determines major action is needed to mitigate the threat to the property, then the representative will complete a **Treatment Plan**. The landowner can then apply for cost-share assistance from the SWCD as identified in the **Treatment Plan**.

Step 6. The landowner is responsible to complete 100% of the work.. Cost-share assistance will be given in the form of 70% reimbursement and 30% landowner in-kind for a total of 100 % of the cost.

Step 7. Once the **Treatment Plan** is complete, and has been signed by the landowner, SWCD and Socorro District Forester, the landowner will receive a **Notice to Proceed**. The landowner can then begin work.

Step 8. The Landowner(s) can then complete the work themselves or hire a contractor to do the work. (Cost Share Rates will be calculated in the **Treatment Plan**).

In-kind cost that can be calculated for the project:

- ✓ Hours worked by landowner/volunteers (calculated at \$15.39 per hour).
- ✓ Chainsaw time.
- ✓ Transportation Time (Moving slash to disposal site).

- ✓ Purchase and Installation of Spark Arrester(s) on chimney.
- ✓ Enclose eave overhangs and decks
- ✓ Cover all vents with 1/4" or smaller wire mesh
- ✓ Road Rehabilitation/ Erosion Control

Step 9. Once all work has been identified and the **Treatment Plan** has been complete, then the landowner will request an inspection be made of the property. If the work passes inspection, the landowner can 1) pay the contractor for services rendered according to their agreement or 2) if the landowner arranged the work to be done by him, he then needs to document all costs associated with the project on an itemized expense schedule. In both cases, landowners will provide SWCD Office or program manager with copies of all expenditures. Cost cannot exceed established rates indicated on the **Treatment Plan**, and landowner should show in-kind contributions of no less than the cost of the total project.

Step 10. Once an audit has been completed, the SWCD will request re-imbursement, once a month, from the NM Forestry Division. Once the SWCD Office receives re-imbursement, the landowner will then be reimbursed 70% of the total project cost written in the Action Plan. **Timeframe between landowner submittal of receipts and landowner re-imbursement should be no more than 60 business days, but initial re-imbursements may take longer.**

CONCLUSIONS

The intention of this project is to be a proactive opportunity available to fire-prone communities that teaches them to protect themselves from a wildfire before it occurs, by assisting private landowners with creating defensible space, defensible zones, and fuel breaks. The ultimate goals of protecting peoples lives, homes and investments from catastrophic wildfire. The by-product will be healthy, well-stocked, high quality woodland/forest relatively free of diseased, defective, and excess tree density. The thinning projects will also improve the wildlife forage on the property, bolster the occurrence of grass species, and reduce the wildfire hazard. A low thin or thinning from below method will be employed as needed.

A decision of "not likely to adversely affect endangered species" has been reached. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service biological assessment has identified no critical habitat in the Wildland/Urban Interface Fuel Treatment areas to be impacted. The planned low thinning of the land base will reduce the vulnerability of potential habitat to catastrophic wildfire.

A decision of “not likely to affect watershed resources” has been reached. Efforts will be made to minimize the amount of area exposed to bare mineral soil during tree and slash removal. Appropriate best management practices, such as water bar construction and grass seeding with weed free competitive grass seed will be employed where necessary to stabilize the soil.

The thinning operation will be a small contribution to the improvement of overall watershed health and yield. Thinning will create openings in the forest canopy, which promotes and increases the growth of grasses and forbs. Grasses and forbs are much better at temporarily trapping runoff from short duration, high-intensity storms and allowing the moisture to percolate into the watershed. Trees lock up available moisture much longer and are less capable of trapping moisture from rapid runoff. An excessive number of trees on the landscape can actually promote erosion by shading out the grasses and forbs capable of trapping rapid runoff from intense summer storms.

A decision of “not likely to affect aesthetic resources” has been reached. Activities will be within current subdivisions or proposed subdivision where aesthetics in most cases will be improved, not damaged. Landowners that have enrolled in the project expressed their most vocal concerns for maintaining or improving the aesthetics of the property.

A decision of “not likely to affect on cultural resources” has been reached. Actual ground disturbance will be held to a minimum, with most activities happening at the duff or surface level. It is assumed that landowners who do discover some type of cultural resource will want to protect it, as it will increase the value of the property and provide them with a link to New Mexico’s rich history.

APPROVAL PAGE

All Landowners agree to maintain the practice for a minimum of ten (10) years.

Planner
Nick Smokovich
Timber Management Officer

Date

Approved by:

Doug Boykin
Socorro District Forester

Date

