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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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February 21, 2025

**State Forestry Division starts post-fire restoration work in Ruidoso**  
*Free assistance on land damaged in South Fork and Salt Fires*

SANTA FE – Contractors hired by the New Mexico [Forestry Division](#) are helping Ruidoso-area landowners restore acres of forests and watersheds that were damaged by last summer’s South Fork and Salt fires.

This work, which includes removing hazardous trees and erecting erosion control barriers, is designed to mitigate the risks from dead or dying trees as well as future flooding due to scorched soil and terrain in the area.

Beyond these environmental effects, the South Fork and Salt fires destroyed or badly damaged more than 1,100 homes, including about 230 lost in post-fire flooding that also caused massive damage to surrounding landscape.

“Public safety after a wildfire is a top priority when it comes to effects like soil destabilization and dead or weakened trees falling on homes or people,” said **Rep. Harlan Vincent**. “This funding will help landowners in the Ruidoso area take steps to protect their lives and property.”

The restoration projects are funded by a \$10 million allocation the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department—the Forestry Division’s parent agency—received during a special legislative session called by Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham in July 2024.

In the same session, legislators set aside \$10 million for the state’s Homeland Security and Emergency Management Department to assist landowners awaiting settlement of Federal Emergency Management Agency claims, and \$10 million for the Mescalero Apache Tribe, which also suffered heavy losses in the fires.

“We thank Gov. Lujan Grisham and the legislature for being proactive in protecting this vulnerable area from the from future wildfire threats. It will serve as an example for many vulnerable regions in the state,” said **EMNRD Sec. Designate Melanie Kenderdine**.

Forestry Division contractors started work this month on a 140-acre area near Gavilan Canyon, a vital watershed in the Ruidoso area. Initial projects include tree cutting, erosion control, and mulching on private land that will help mitigate downstream flood risks in areas damaged by last year’s fires.

Work to help restore critical watersheds in and around Ruidoso will continue into summer, and the Forestry Division encourages landowners to sign up for this free assistance.

“Although it’s been over half a year since the fires, landowners still face an uphill battle when trying to mitigate the damage while also preparing for potential monsoon activity this summer,” said **State Forester Laura McCarthy**. “Now is the time to start preparing. We encourage landowners to request this state-funded assistance.”

### **How To Request Assistance**

Requests must come from landowners in Lincoln County within the boundaries of the fires burn scars. Assistance will include removing damaged trees within a specific distance from structures and/or roads and driveways. That distance must be less than or equal to twice the tree’s height.

Project implementation by State Forestry Division and selected contractors may include:

- **Hazard tree mitigation:** identification and felling of wildfire-damaged trees that pose an immediate threat of falling onto a road, powerline, or other improved property.
- **Contour felling and log erosion barriers:** cutting and securing burned trees on contour lines along slopes to slow runoff and capture sediment.
- **Ground roughening:** ripping or otherwise preparing soil for planting activities.
- **Seeding:** spreading seeds of fast-growing herbaceous plants to stabilize soil.
- **Mulching/chipping/mastication:** applying organic material like straw or wood to reduce erosion and retain moisture.
- **One rock dams:** constructing low rock barriers across small gullies (narrow channels formed by erosion) to slow water flow and reduce erosion.

For applications and guidelines for assistance, visit the Forestry Division’s Submission Manager - [Salt & South Fork Watershed Stabilization & Hazard Tree Mitigation Assistance Request](#).

A FAQ for landowners who wish to participate [is also available](#).

Link to this press release available here.



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