



Forest Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



WELCOME TO THE  
**REGION 3**  
**WILDFIRE CRISIS**  
**STRATEGY**  
**ROUNDTABLE**

2/22/2022





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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



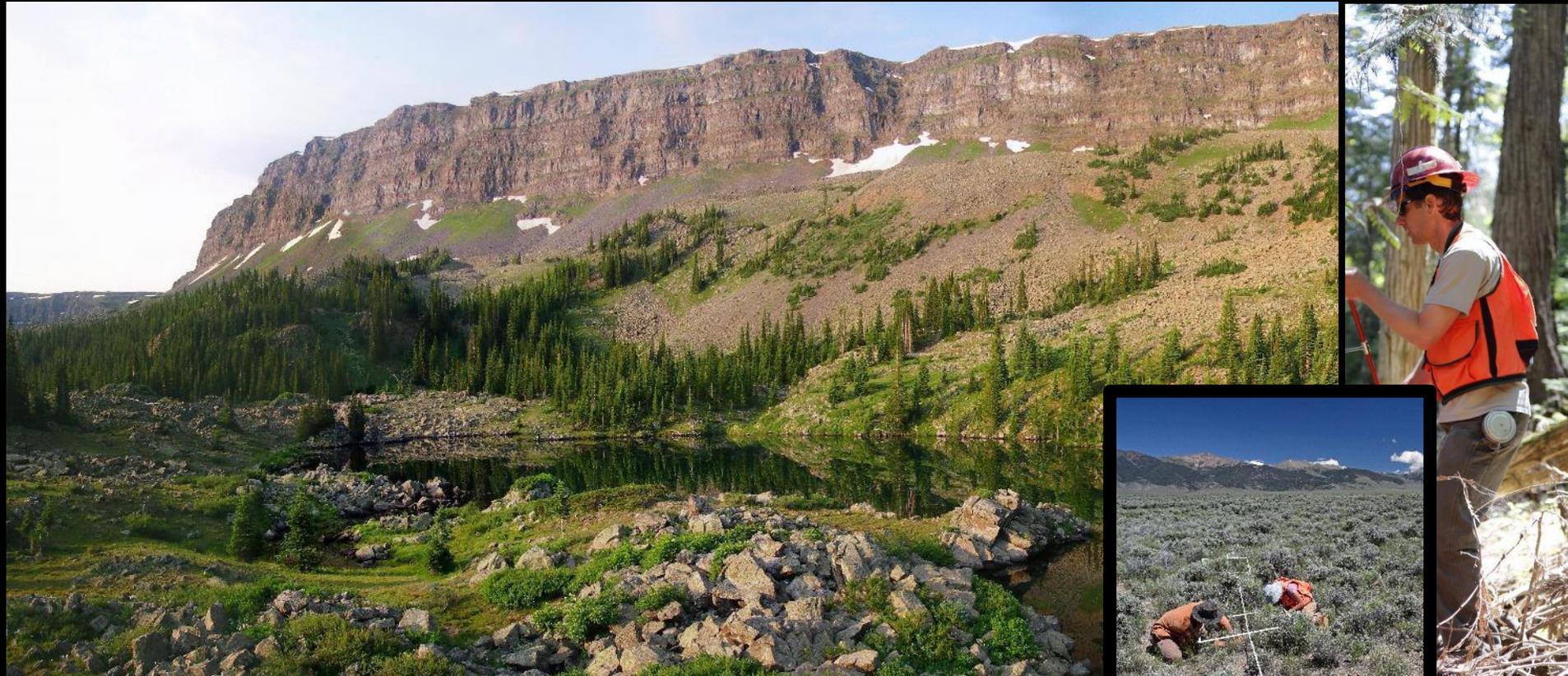
# Today's Agenda

- Welcome and Opening
- Partners in Leadership Panel
- 10-year Strategic Implementation Plan Overview and Plans for Engagement
- Questions and Answers
- What We Have Learned from Past Partner Input
- Closing

# Southwest Regional Roundtable

USDA Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station

Monica Lear, Station Director



# The charge to FS Research & Development



- Provide best available science as basis for decisions
- Project layout and development
- Building social acceptance of fire
- Monitoring and data collection
- Economics and the bioeconomy
- Integrate biological, physical and social sciences
- Data collection, management and availability

# Rocky Mountain Research Station



# Science Programs



- Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute
- Fire, Fuel and Smoke
- Forest and Woodland Ecosystems\*
- Human Dimensions
- Inventory and Monitoring / FIA\*
- Maintaining Resilient Dryland Ecosystems\*
- Water and Watersheds\*
- Wildlife and Terrestrial Ecosystems\*
- Science Applications and Communication

\*Scientists located in NM or AZ

NOTE: Scientists from other programs not located in R3 are doing work there.

# RMRS Science and the Wildfire Crisis Strategy

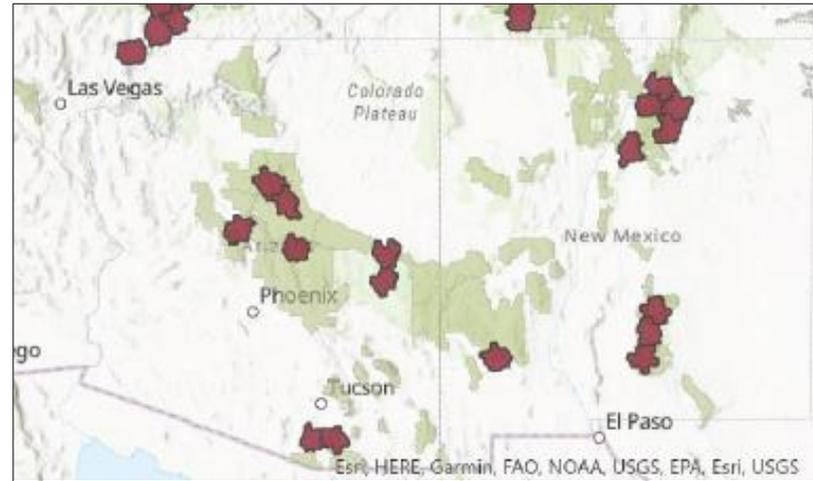


## Science-based decision making

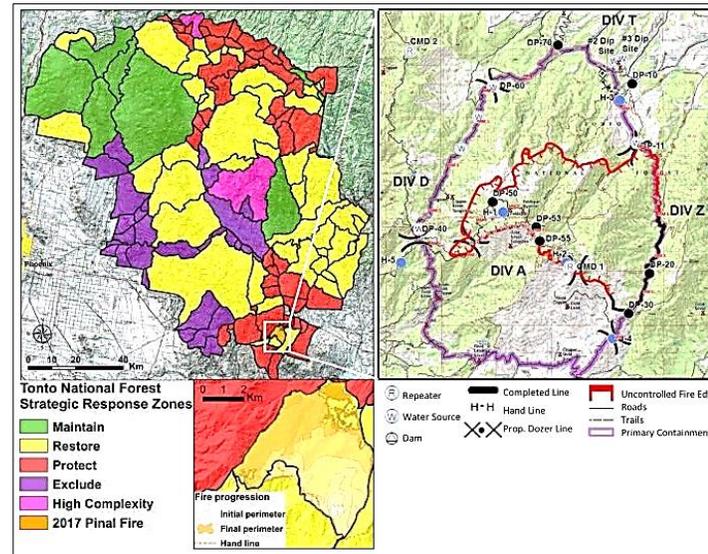
- Before, during and after fire
  - Assess risk
    - Priority landscapes
    - Critical watersheds
    - Communities
  - Mitigate Risk
    - Build community preparedness
  - Manage risk
    - Fire behavior modeling
    - Fire decision support
    - Firefighter safety

# Identifying the right places

Firesheds



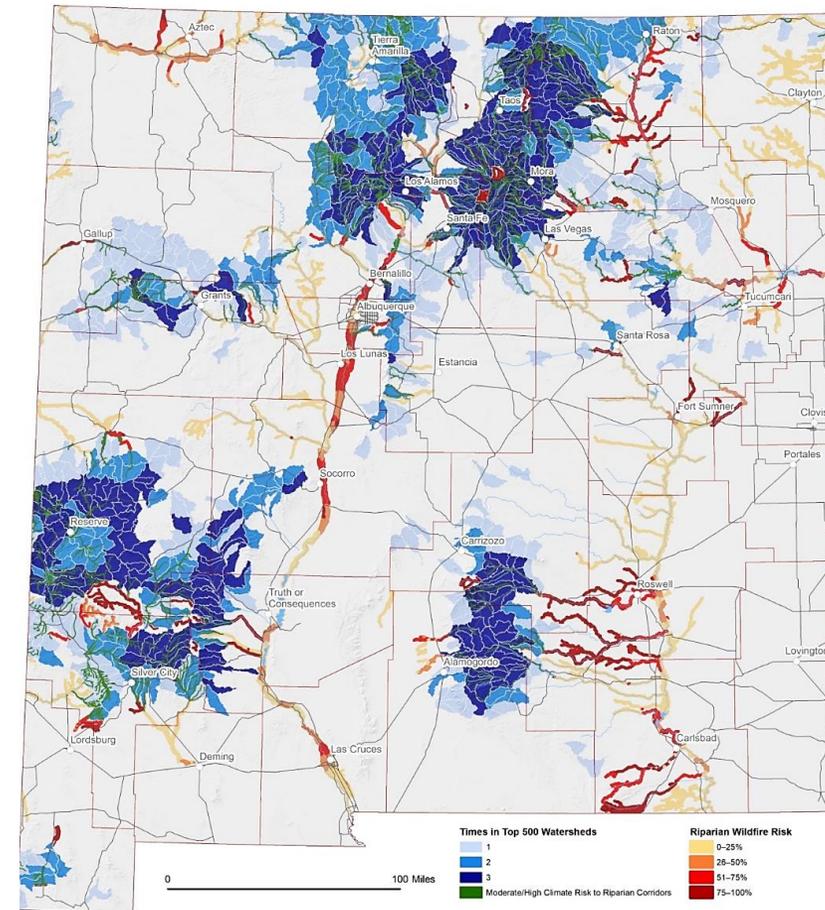
Pods



# Identifying the right places

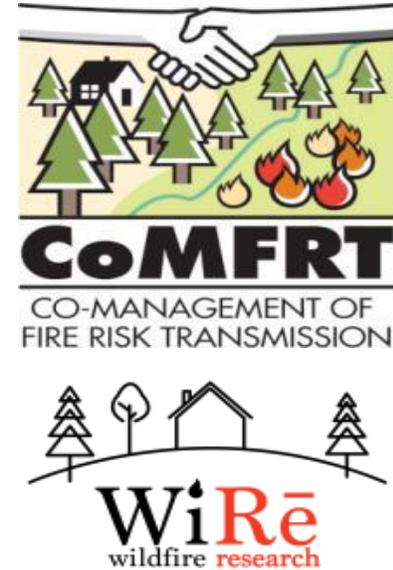
## Values at risk

- Wildfire risk to water resources



# Identifying the Right Places

- Building social acceptance
  - Rx Fire
  - Fire Management
  - Smoke effects
- Wildfire Risk to Communities
  - CoMFRT
  - Wildfire Research (WiRe)
- Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA)
- Habitat suitability models (e.g. FIRE-BIRD)
- Range conditions and fuels (FuelCast)



# Fire Response



- Fire and fuels management planning
- Wildland fire management planning and operations
- Fire behavior prediction tools
- Quantitative wildland fire risk analysis methods
- Modeling, assessment, and planning to support fire management decisions
- Real-time identification of wildfire responder hazards and operational management opportunities
- Strategic wildfire risk: aligning wildfire response actions with land and resource

# After the fire

- Modeling erosion and flood potential
- BAER mitigation
- After Fire Toolkit for Managers
- Prioritizing infrastructure protection
- Water quality monitoring
- Soil burn severity measurement
- Recovery and restoration
- Effectiveness monitoring



# Restoration



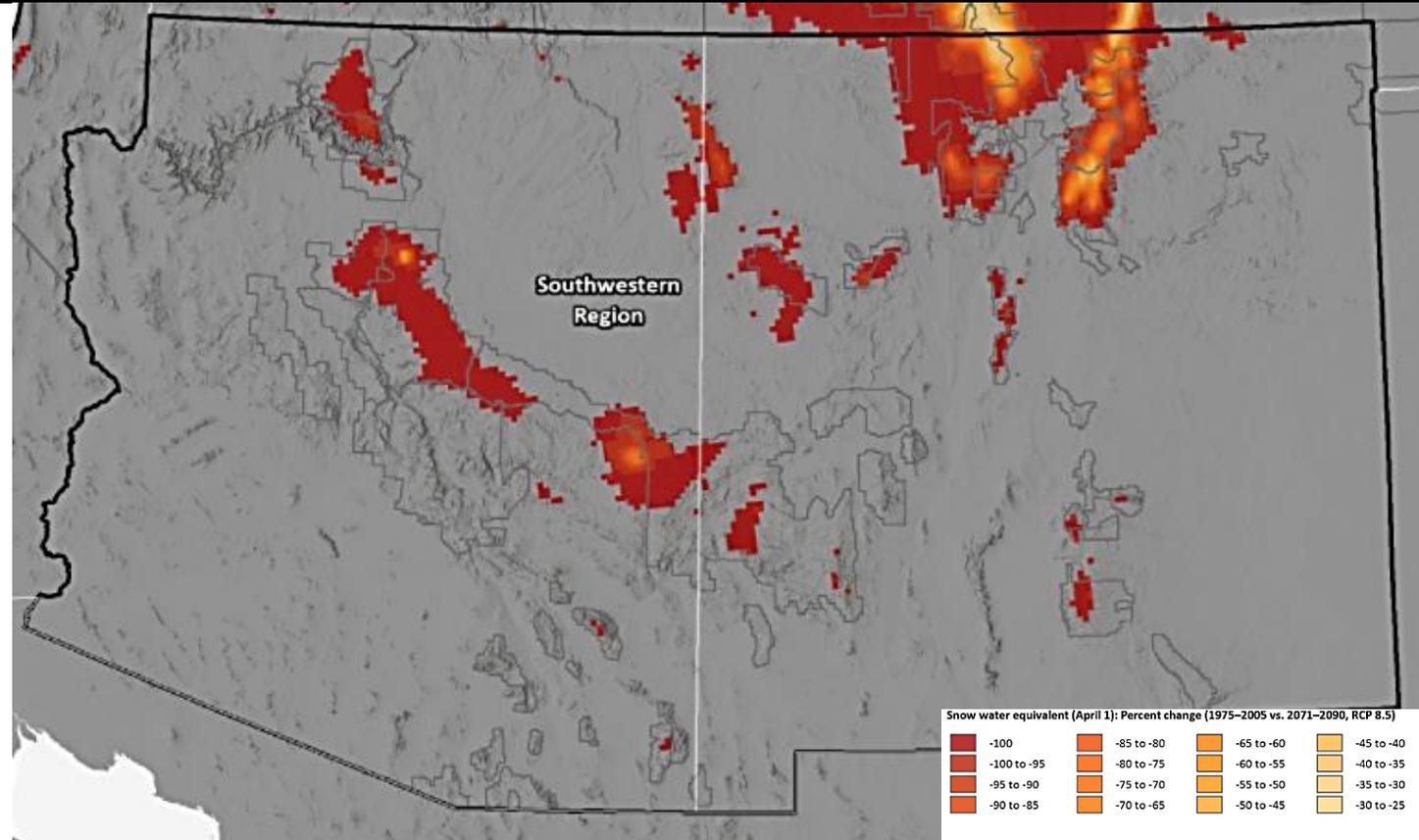
- Restoring dry mixed-conifer forest structure
- Post-fire patterns of Ponderosa Pine regeneration
- Western Center for Native Plant Conservation and Restoration Science

# Monitoring Outcomes

- Project layout and development
  - Design to provide science basis for future work under WCS
  - Use Research Natural Areas to address specific management outcomes
- Long-term studies of forest management and species of conservation concern
- Treatment effectiveness at reducing wildfire risk

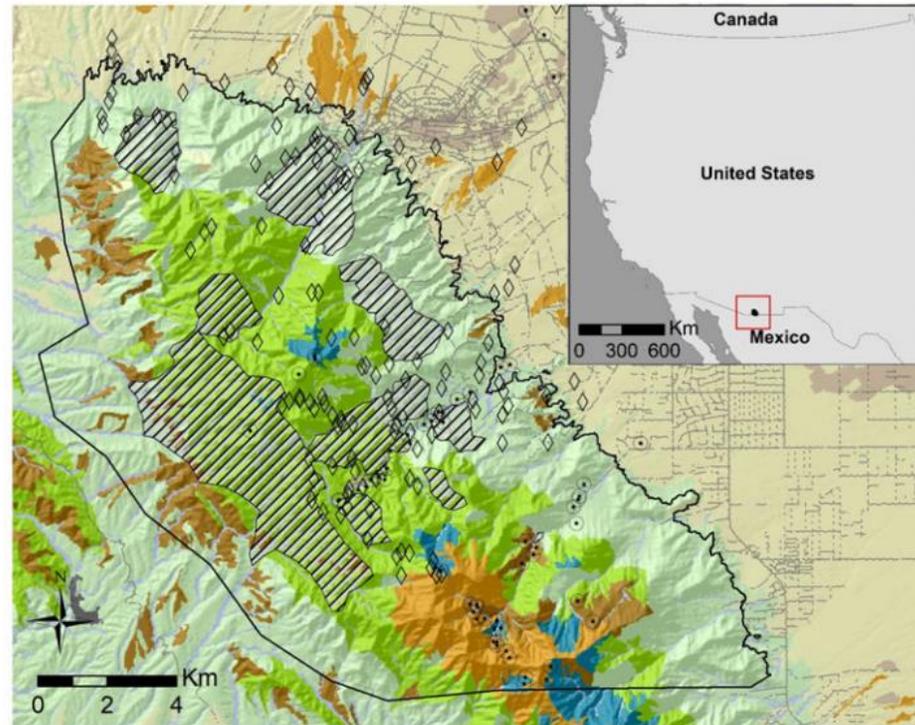


# Changing Climate



Projections are for a 30-100% reduction in April 1 snow water equivalent, meaning reduced water holding capacity at higher elevations.

# Changing Climate



Model Calibration Landscape



Modeling the effectiveness of fuel treatments and prescribed fire to mitigate the effects of climate change in AZ Sky Islands.

# *Partners in Leadership Panel*

- David Tenney, State Forester, Arizona
  - Laura McCarthy, State Forester, New Mexico
  - Governor Robert Mora Sr., Tesuque Pueblo
  - Cynthia West, Northern Research Station and Forest Products Lab
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# Wildfire Crisis and Shared Stewardship

Laura McCarthy, New Mexico State Forester



# 2020 Forest Action Plan



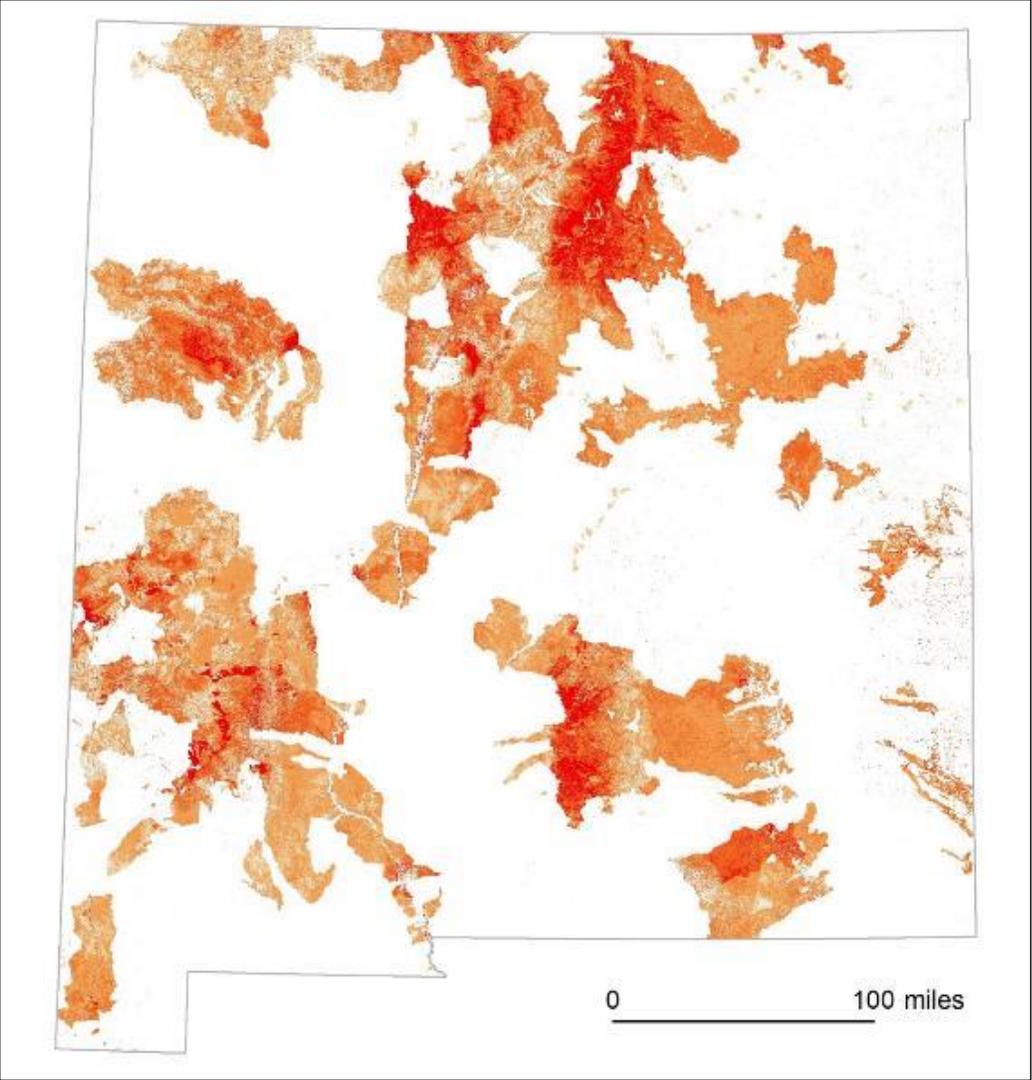
Photo Credit: Alan Eckert

# Forest and Watershed Health Coordinating Group: A Collaborative of Collaboratives

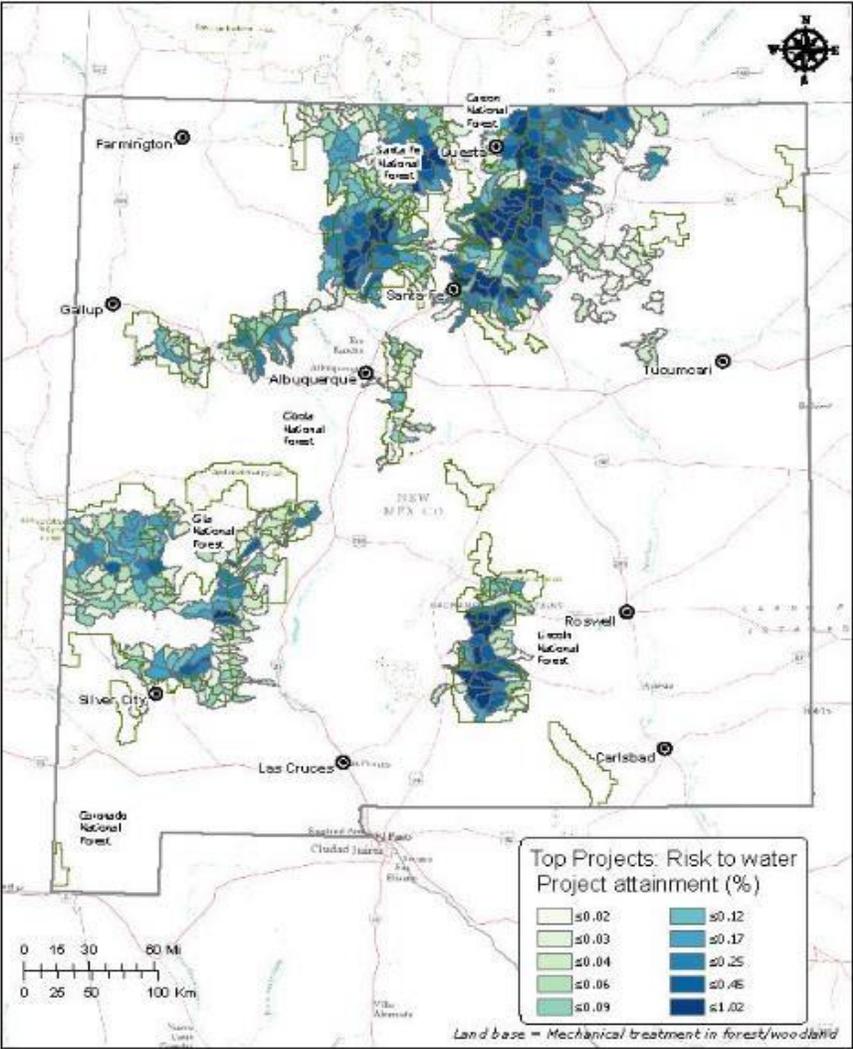


# Finer-Scale Analysis

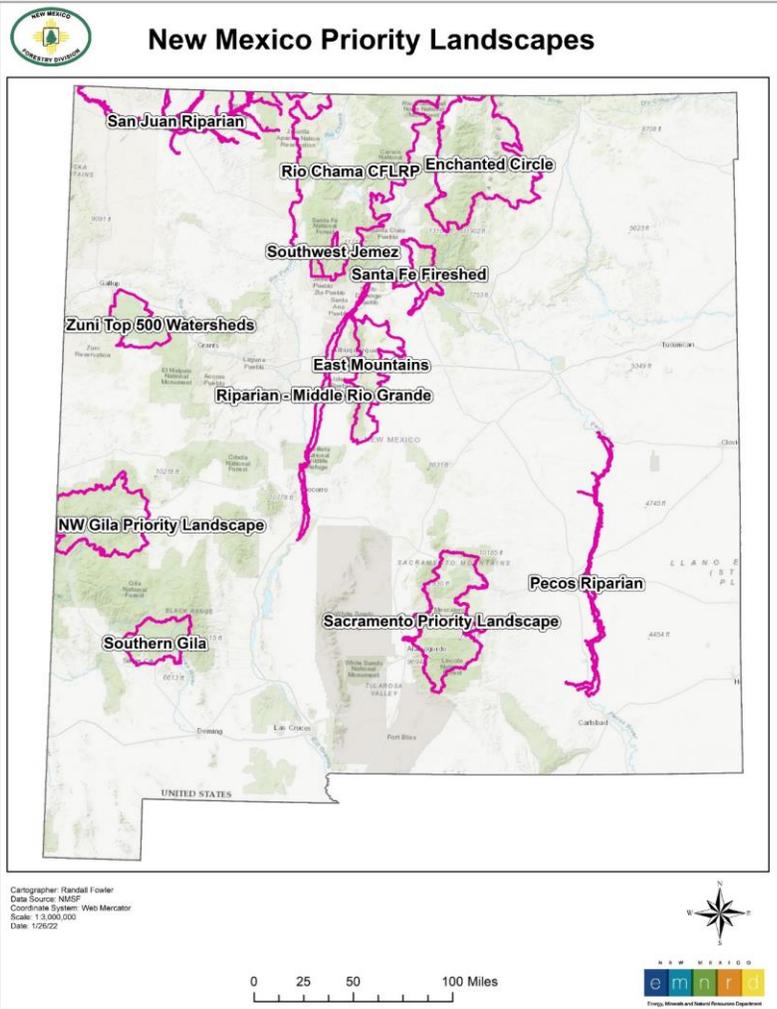
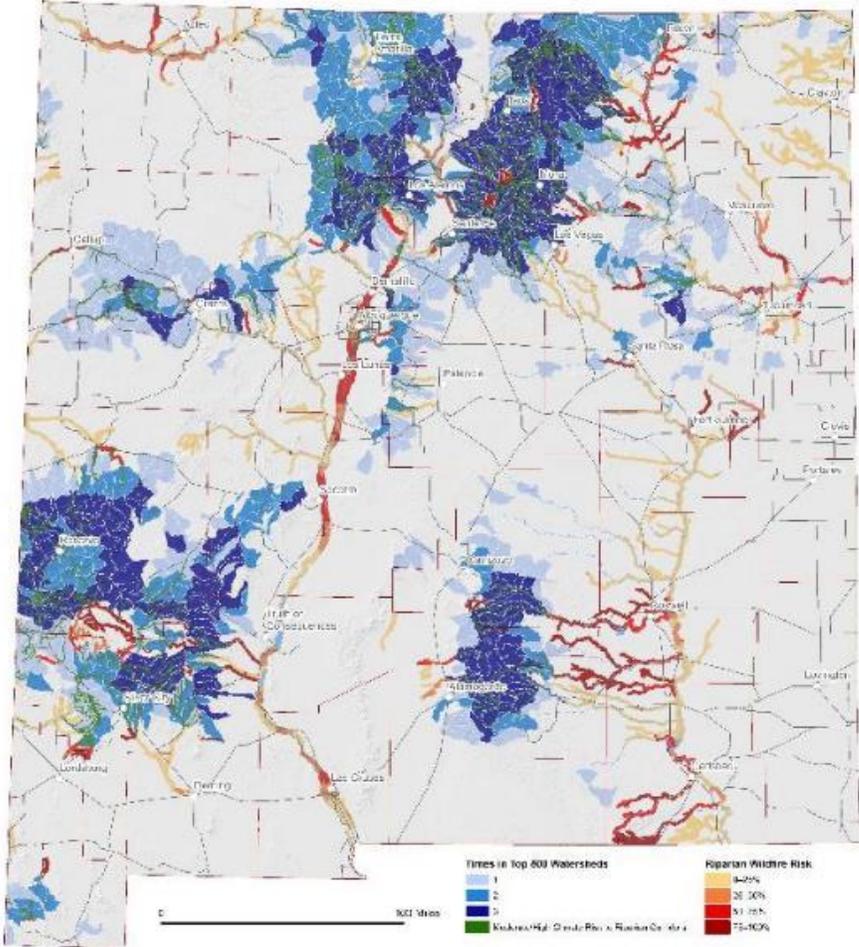
## Fire Risk



## Top 500 Watersheds



# New Mexico Shared Stewardship Priorities 2020 Forest Action Plan



# NM is Ready to Roll

- Planned Acceleration: SFPA goal of 300,000 acres treated per year
- Social License: SFAP priority landscapes have been thoroughly vetted with partners and the public
- Partners to Implement: All Lands Tactical Team started meeting monthly in 2019 to solve problems and pull together



REGIONAL ROUNDTABLE

# WILDFIRE CRISIS STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION



# FOREST SERVICE WORK UNDER THE INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AND JOBS ACT

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- WILDFIRE RISK REDUCTION INFRASTRUCTURE TEAM – Hazardous Fuels
- NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM
  - Recreation
  - Restoration
  - Reclamation
  - Roads/Trails
- STATE AND PRIVATE FORESTRY
  - Grants and Agreements
  - Firefighter Pay
  - Community Wildfire Protection Plans
- RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT – Supporting all efforts with up-to-date science



# THE HISTORY

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- More than 20 years of milestones have set the stage for our work today
- National Fire Plan (2000), Healthy Forests Restoration Act (2003), Emmitsburg 13 Meeting (2008), Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (2010), Accelerated Restoration (2012), National Cohesive Wildland Fire Strategy (2014), Fire Funding Fix (2018) and more



# THE NEED

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- Wildfires have been growing in size, duration, and destructivity.
- Nearly a quarter of the contiguous United States remain at moderate to very high risk of severe wildfires.
- We must dramatically increase fuels and forest health treatments on America's forests.



# CONFRONTING THE WILDFIRE CRISIS

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The Forest Service Wildfire Crisis Strategy combines an historic investment from congressional funding with years of scientific research and planning into a national effort that will dramatically increase the scale of forest health treatments.

**+20**  
MILLION

Treating up to an additional 20 million acres of National Forest System lands.

**+30**  
MILLION

Treating up to an additional 30 million acres of other Federal, State, Tribal and private lands.

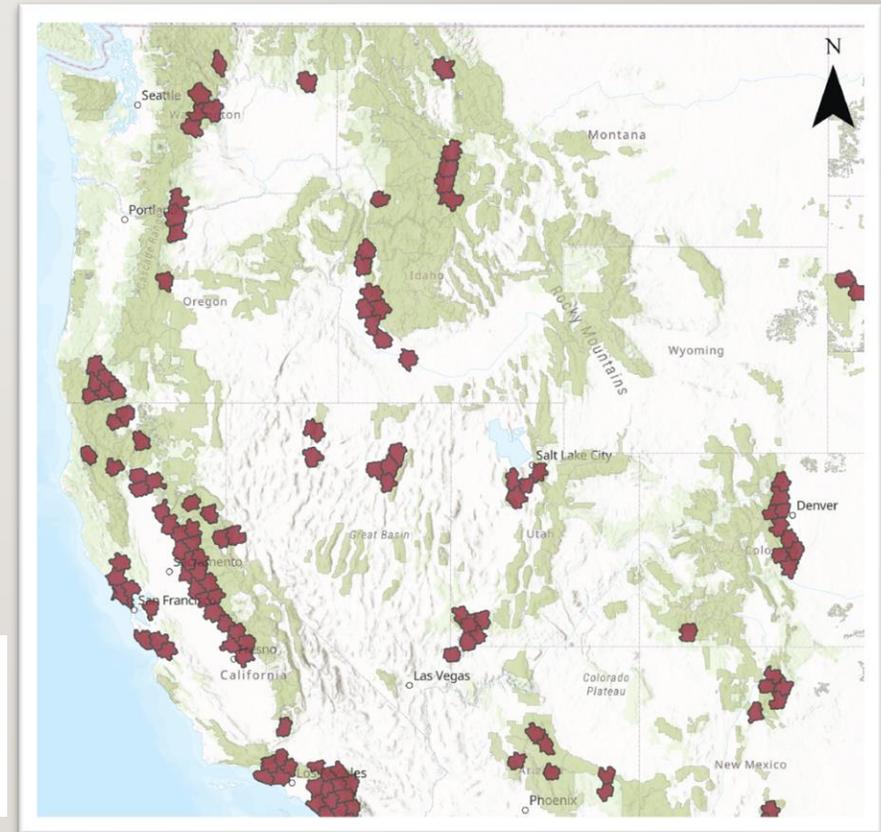
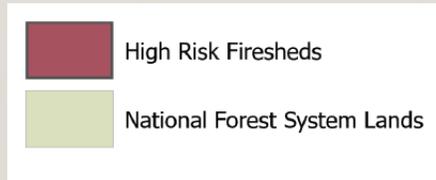
**10**  
YEARS

Developing a plan for long-term maintenance beyond the 10 years.



# HIGH-RISK FIRESHEDS

Community exposure is a central factor in the strategy to confront the wildfire crisis. Other factors include Tribal and State plans, watersheds, equity, climate forecasts, and partner priorities.



# IMPLEMENTATION

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- Years 1-2. Early implementation.
- Years 3-10. The right work, in the right place, at the right scale.



# AGENCY EXPECTATIONS

- Active management
- Engagement
- Equitability
- Accountability



# WHAT'S NEXT?

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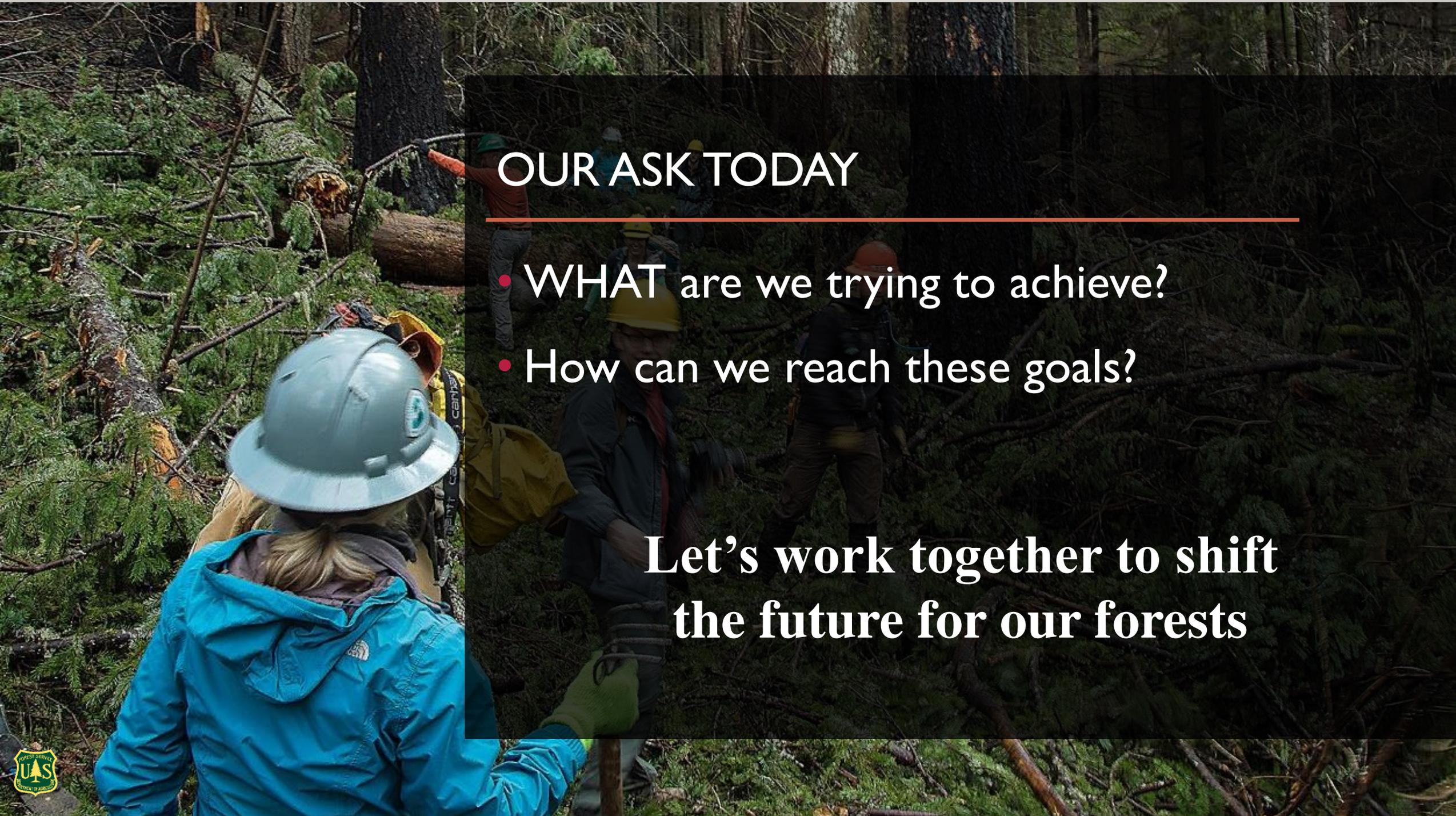
# INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT

## **PARTNER and EMPLOYEE ROUNDTABLES**

(Feb – May 2022)

- **Purpose:** Targeted listening sessions to identify opportunities and challenges in getting to scale with fuels and fire risk management efforts.
- **Post Engagement:** Presentation of findings and recommendations to the Forest Service - National Leadership Council in June. A series of webinars for participants and interested publics to follow.

Roundtable Geographical Focus	Timeframe
National	Complete – early Feb.
Region 3	February 22, 23, 24
Region 2	February 28, March 1, 2
Region 5	March 16-18
Region 6	April 5, 6, 7
Region 1	Mid-April
Region 4	Late April
Region 8	Early May
Region 9	Mid-May
Region 10	Late May
Tribal	TBD



## OUR ASK TODAY

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- **WHAT** are we trying to achieve?
- **How** can we reach these goals?

**Let's work together to shift  
the future for our forests**

# WHAT SUCCESS WILL LOOK LIKE IN 2031

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- **Treated up to 20 million acres** on the National Forest System and an **up to 30 million acres** on other Federal, State, Tribal, and private lands in the West.
- A plan for long-term maintenance.
- A paradigm shift in the way we work.



A photograph of a forest landscape. In the foreground, there are several young, vibrant green pine trees. The background is filled with tall, thin, dark trees, many of which appear to be dead or charred, standing against a clear blue sky. Large, light-colored rocks are scattered across the ground. The overall scene suggests a forest recovering from a fire.

THANK YOU

# Wildfire Risk Reduction Partner Recommendation Analysis

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February 2022

# Overview and Context

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- Forest Service plans to engage partners and employees around development and implementation of a **Strategic Implementation Plan** for wildfire risk reduction.
- Past recommendations from partners and agency employees provide **initial building blocks**.



# Framing the analysis

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Forest Service collected recommendation documents from partners – collaborative meetings, collaborative papers and reports.

- **Over 50 documents** were analyzed for issue and recommendations framing.
- Issues and recommendations were catalogued and **sorted into 11 topics**.
- Recommendations that arose frequently from many different sources and over multiple time periods were rounded up as **key themes**.

# Key Themes

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## **Provide sustained funding over multiple years.**

*Funding needs to be sustained and allocated across multiple years at project onset to create security and efficiencies for contractors and collaborative partners.*

## **Focus fire research with a social science lens.**

*Looking at biophysical and social issues together can help assess and minimize risk to communities, especially those that may be underserved.*

# Key Themes (continued)

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## **Create and maintain consistent and collective leadership support.**

*Coordination of leadership intent and support will help incentivize agency and partner investments. Coordinated support can also help advance large-scale, landscape-level collaborative projects.*

## **Increase the agency's ability to build and sustain partnerships and work with collaborative groups.**

*Increased training for employees on the science of relationships and creating and sustaining positions that support partnerships with the right people are key.*

# Recommendation Topics

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- **Incorporation of Best Available Science**
- **Prioritization and Planning**
- **Workforce Capacity**
- **Policy and Legislation**
- **Working Across Boundaries and Collaboration**
- **Funding and Finance**
- **Industry and Infrastructure**
- **Equity and Inclusion**
- **Communication**
- **Monitoring and Evaluation**

# Synthesis: What We've Heard

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## Incorporation of best available science

- *Better integration of biophysical and social sciences*
- *Better understanding of local contexts*
- *Create shareable platforms, databases and datasets*
- *Better track accomplishments*
- *Provide larger investments in smoke modeling*
- *Increase funding towards Joint Fire Sciences Program*

## Prioritization and planning

- *Create a comprehensive policy framework for this work*
- *Plan projects and management using information on high poverty areas and high fire risk areas to speak to environmental justice*
- *Assess the economic value of avoided costs based on investments into wildfire restoration*
- *Incentivize prescribed fire work*

# Synthesis: What We've Heard

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## Workforce Capacity

- *Minimize staff turnover, consider more year-round or long-term appointments*
- *Consider standing up specialized regional and national teams (e.g., NEPA)*
- *Use contractors or partnership agreements to fill agency capacity gaps and modernize processes*
- *Expand the use of authorities like Good Neighbor Authority and Stewardship Agreements*
- *Work with others to explore needs around a 21<sup>st</sup> Century forestry workforce*
- *Provide additional training on partnership authorities and contracting processes*

## Policy and Legislation

- *Coordinate post-disaster relief with partner agencies (e.g., Department of Homeland Security)*
- *Expand the use of prescribed burning*
- *Increase the duration of seasonal firefighter appointments*
- *Consider fire risk before permitting suburban or remote development*
- *Develop new outcome-based metrics*
- *Incentivize forests to exceed fuels reduction targets*

# Synthesis: What We've Heard

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## Working Across Boundaries and Collaboration

- *Use “All Hands” approach to bring depth of knowledge and skill base to project development*
- *Ensure local units are engaged in projects from the beginning*
- *Provide consistent funding to encourage larger- and longer-scaled projects*
- *Clarify and revise the Federal Advisory Committee Act*

## Funding and Finance

- *Fund capacity building and planning not just implementation and maintenance of treatments*
- *Incorporate the economic value of avoided costs and capture the value of social, economic, and ecological co-benefits in project design*

## Businesses Practices

- *Address the risk of low-value materials and impact on feasibility*
- *Increase cross-training on grants and agreements mechanisms, including Good Neighbor and 638 Authority*
- *Address issues related to match requirements (when applies, deviation, etc.)*

# Synthesis: What We've Heard

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## Industry and Infrastructure

- *Develop solutions to a general lack of market for small-diameter timber*
- *Leverage Wood Innovations Grant Program to support wood biomass market development*
- *Support State Wood Energy and Utilization Teams, cost of hazardous fuels reductions reduced in areas with local markets*

## Equity and Inclusion

- *Identify minority populations that may be disproportionately adversely affected at the onset of a project to improve outreach and collaboration*
- *Develop social initiatives to reduce fire risk*
- *Use existing program delivery (Rural Community Assistance Programs)*
- *Work with Indigenous peoples and work proactively on ecosystem management and equitable community preparedness work*

# Synthesis: What We've Heard

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## Communication

- *Create a national and locally targeted public communication campaign to increase public understanding overall*
- *Focus communication on topics such as air quality and the public health benefits of prescribed versus unplanned fires*
- *Coordinate messaging among partners on the nature and benefit of prescribed fire and active management*

## Monitoring and evaluation

- *Closely coordinate research, monitoring, and science with partners*
- *Collaboratively develop socioeconomic performance measures for restoration work*
- *Develop a longer-term social condition framework (similar to watershed condition framework)*
- *Provide additional guidance on adaptive management and monitoring, incorporating the importance of external accountability and review in monitoring*

# Internal and External Engagement

## Keys to success:

- *Build upon the strong foundations of **relationships, trust, and understanding.***
- ***Explore options** with others on how to improve and build better future conditions.*
- ***Learn** from each other on what's working and not, what tools to apply where and when.*
- *Ensure **transparency and accountability.***
- *Look for **long-term solutions, long-term capacity, long-term investments.***



# Where do we go from here?

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**This is what we've heard from partners and employees over the last 10-15 years.**

- Some feed into requirements and abilities under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law
- Which still resonate for you?
- What new challenges, opportunities, solutions do you have?

# Questions?

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**THANK YOU FOR  
PARTICIPATING**

