

NEW MEXICO REFORESTATION CENTER

The mission of the New Mexico Reforestation Center will be to meet current and future reforestation needs in New Mexico through its comprehensive seed bank, nursery, and planting operations combined with research, education and outreach activities.

FACTS:

- New Mexico continues to experience hot, dry summers making our state's forests more susceptible to wildfires year-round.
- Over the past 20 years, wildland fires in New Mexico have burned over 5.45 million acres.
- The two largest fires in our state's history (Hermits Peak and Calf Canyon and Black Fires) burned throughout summer 2022.
- New Mexico currently needs to plant between 1 to 2.6 million acres, which would require 150 to 390 million seedlings.
- Current seedling production capacity in New Mexico is approximately 300,000 seedlings per year, well below the needs for the state.

Source: National Interagency Fire Center and New Mexico EMNRD, Forestry Division



New Mexico's Forests are Central to Sustaining Our Way of Life

- Forests supply 50% to 75% of all water used by municipalities and agriculture in the state.
- They provide recreational opportunities, wildlife habitat, timber, and other valuable resources.

New Mexico's Forests are Threatened by Wildfire

- Our forests are at risk of continued catastrophic wildfires, and the area burned by wildfires is increasing.
- Natural tree regeneration is rare after catastrophic wildfires and tree planting is necessary.
- The EMNRD Forestry Division, NMHU, NMSU, and UNM are collaborating to reforest these burned landscapes through the creation of the *New Mexico Reforestation Center*.

The New Mexico Reforestation Center is Essential to Restoring Forests

- The *Center* would produce up to 5 million seedlings per year and make progress in addressing the massive planting needs.
- The *Center* would support forest-based economic growth and valuable ecosystem services throughout New Mexico.
- The *Center* would use science-based approaches to meet New Mexico's reforestation goals.

New Mexico Reforestation Center Funding Needs:

The NMRC developed a phased funding approach to establish a fully functional reforestation program that includes seed collection and storage, nursery production, and tree planting.

- Phase 1 (\$8,516,980) "Acquisition and Design" is for land acquisition, architectural design, engineering fees, and design.
- Phase 2 (\$27,177,393) "Initial Construction" is for the construction of 25% of the total greenhouse capacity (~1.25 million seedlings annually), admin buildings, seed bank, common spaces, other construction costs, and additional equipment.
- Phase 3 (\$17,578,801) "Build for 3.75 million Seedlings" is for the construction of an additional 50% of the total greenhouse capacity (75% total), equipment storage, other construction costs, and, additional equipment and supplies.
- Phase 4 (\$10,726,597) "Final Construction" is for the completion of the remaining 25% of the total greenhouse capacity, temporary housing, storage, and other construction costs. Additional equipment and supplies for seed collection/bank, nursery operations, and planting program. Once completed the nursery will produce up to 5 million seedlings per year.

NMRC Accomplishments

- **Seed collection to enhance the foundation of New Mexico's reforestation pipeline.** Received Congressionally directed spending (\$1 million) to develop new seed collection, processing, and banking capacity for the NMRC. A 1:1 match is required and all NMRC partners contributed. Funds are committed to equipment purchases to increase capacity and fund a new Seed Collection Coordinator position at NMHU. EMNRD also filled a reforestation position for seed collecting and planting coordination and the two positions will work in tandem.
- **On-the-ground pilot projects are progressing and serving as important learning labs.** Secured National Science Foundation research funds (\$1.3 million over 5 years) focused on improving post-fire reforestation success. Through this project 13,000 seedlings were planted as of fall of 2022. EMNRD is developing reforestation projects with tribes affected by wildfires using state FY22 and FY23 funds (\$160,000).
- **New Mexico needs tree seedlings and the economics of the NMRC are sound.** The historic 2022 wildfire season burned over 900,000 acres and the need for tree seedlings has grown exponentially. Reforestation of the burned lands will take 200 million seedlings. With the current NM tree nursery capacity (300,000 grown per year) it will take 300 years to reforest. Collectively, we continue to move reforestation forward, regardless of fire impacts. Additionally, a third-party comprehensive economic analysis of the NMRC identified 474 jobs supported/year, and \$1.25 billion in economic impact over a 30-year period.
- **NMRC collaborators continue to seek national and private funding support for needs.** The NMRC partners continue to identify possible funding support from federal and state agencies, public and private entities and are committed to pursuing all opportunities to avoid reliance solely on state funds and to ensure each state dollar is leveraged as much as possible.

The New Mexico Reforestation Center is a partnership between EMNRD – Forestry Division, NMHU –Department of Forestry, NMSU – John T. Harrington Forestry Research Center, and UNM –Department of Biology. The Center will use research, education, and training to help develop a reforestation economy that restores New Mexico's forests and all of the ecosystem services they provide.



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