

South Fork Watershed Stabilization & Hazard Tree Mitigation Program

Frequently Asked Questions

Who does this program benefit and what does it do?

The program benefits everyone in and downstream of the burn scar by helping to stabilize the watershed. However, requests must come from landowners within the boundaries of the South Fork fire's burn scar (check with the map here: [South Fork Fire perimeter map](#)). The program provides funding for contractors to assess properties and conduct mitigation projects on private land. These projects will remove dead trees that pose a risk to structures, powerlines, and roads, as well as stabilizing slopes to reduce erosion and minimize downstream impacts from flooding.

How do I apply for this program?

For applications and guidelines, visit [NM EMNRD - Forestry Division Submission Manager - Salt & South Fork Watershed Stabilization & Hazard Tree Mitigation Assistance Request](#) or follow the QR code.



Is there an application deadline?

Applying as soon as possible is recommended, as funding for the program is limited, and we cannot guarantee treatment for every enrolled property. However, there is no set deadline, and applications will be accepted on a rolling basis for properties within the burn scar. Contractors assess properties neighborhood by neighborhood, and if your application is not submitted before work in your area is completed, they may move on to the next location.

Is there a fee for this service?

There is no cost to the landowner. The New Mexico State Legislature provided funding to EMNRD's Forestry Division to implement this program.

Can I apply for this program for a neighboring property that isn't mine?

You must own the land that you are applying for assistance on. Proof of ownership will be required before any work can be implemented.

What if my property was burned or affected by a different fire, like McBride in 2022, does this program help?

No, this funding was specifically designated for landowners in Lincoln County whose properties are located within the South Fork and Salt fires' burn scars.

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If I applied for the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM) Private Property Debris Removal Program (PPDR) or Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) programs, do I need to file a separate application for the EMNRD program?

Yes. Each program is funded and operated separately, requiring landowners to submit individual applications. If you qualify for more than one program, you must apply separately for each program you wish to participate in. Applying for other programs will not affect your eligibility for the Forestry Division's program.

What will happen to felled trees left on my property?

The Forestry Division does not have the authority to remove trees that were left behind through other programs. For trees felled through this program, we will be using much of the felled material to implement erosion control -- such as mulching and contour felling. For excess materials beyond what is needed for erosion control, you are encouraged to provide trees cut on your property to contractors who are willing to take excess materials to their facilities so they do not create a new fire hazard.

If you have concerns about trees felled and left by your power utility, we recommend you contact the utility directly. If trees have been displaced by flooding, they may be eligible for removal under DHSEM's PPDR program (see below).

Who can help with flood debris and flood protection?

DHSEM is now operating a full-service debris removal program (PPDR) at no cost to private property owners impacted by the South Fork Fire or subsequent flooding. Learn more by following the QR code or visiting this link: [Full-Service Debris Removal - NMDHSEM](#)



Landowners are encouraged to apply for the NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program for further assistance protecting life and property from flooding and/or soil erosion. Access the application by following the QR code or visiting: [Landowner Request for Assistance Form - SCM RC&D](#)



When will the contractor perform the site visit/assessment?

Our contractors have begun assessments in the burn scar, and they are moving through properties as efficiently as possible. To maximize resources and reduce travel time, they are assessing properties neighborhood by neighborhood rather than in the order that applications were received, maximizing watershed recovery. While we aim to assist as many landowners as possible, funding is limited, and we cannot guarantee treatment for every enrolled property. Prioritization will follow the criteria outlined in the Submittable application, particularly the location of properties within key watershed areas to help minimize downstream impacts. If you have concerns about the status of your application, please contact the Forestry Division's [local or state offices](#).

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Will the landowner have a say in what work will get done?

The contractor and the Forestry Division will determine the best course of action for tree removal and soil stabilization based on their expertise. However, you will have an opportunity to discuss your concerns with them. Upon request, the Forestry Division will provide you with a copy of the work plan for your property prior to implementation.

What if I disagree with the Division's plan of work?

If you disagree with the contractor's assessment or the Forestry Division's work plan, you have the option to withdraw from the program. To do so, please contact the Division's local or state offices to notify them of your decision.

<https://www.emnrd.nm.gov/sfd/contact-us/find-a-district-office/>

When can I replant trees?

Replanting should only begin once the site is stabilized to prevent erosion and ensure young trees have the best chance to establish. In some areas, natural regeneration may be sufficient, especially where surviving trees can provide seed or where the area burned at a low severity.

If reforestation is needed, the process typically takes one to two years of planning.

1. Soil stabilization measures like contour felling and native grass seeding should be implemented.
2. Assessments should identify areas needing replanting, determine suitable tree species, and secure seedlings (which should be ordered 12-18 months in advance).
3. Proper planning also includes selecting planting locations, considering factors like elevation, moisture, and protection from browsing animals.

For the best results, consult forestry professionals to develop a site-specific reforestation plan. Your local [Forestry District in Capitan](#) and its partners are actively working on these concerns and will provide further guidance in 2026.

As I rebuild, what can I do to reduce my new homes vulnerability to wildfire?

Incorporating fire-resistant building materials and defensible space principles can help protect your home from future wildfires. For more information, visit:

- [Firewise – Preparing Homes for Wildfire](#)
- [Fire Adapted Communities – Building a Wildfire-Resistant Home: Codes and Costs - Fire Adapted Communities](#)