

Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District: Forestry Programs

October 2026



What is Ciudad SWCD? Est. 1944

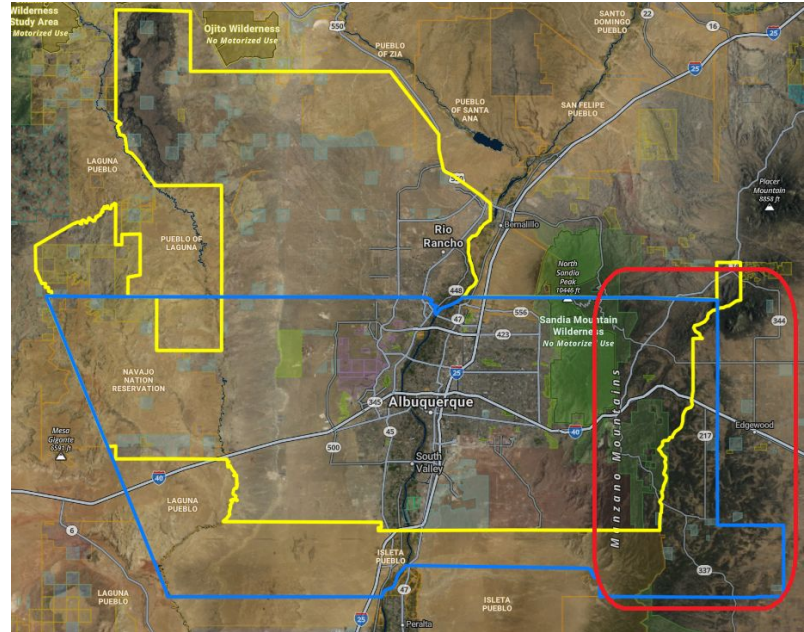
Ciudad is the Spanish word for city, we are the City Soil and Water Conservation District

1 of 47 Conservation Districts in NM

There are over 3,000 in the country!

- Established in 1944 following the dust bowl to protect natural resources. Each district is unique.
- We are a Special District local government. *Not city, county, state or federal.*
- Grant-funded and tax-funded

Everything we accomplish is done in partnership!



Ciudad SWCD Programs

We have numerous ongoing programs within Ciudad SWCD:

<u>Forestry</u>	East Mountain Forest Health Program, Bosque Forest Health Program, Chipper Days, Reflective Signs, Thinning and Soil Health Monitoring Program
<u>Education</u>	RiverXchange, Arroyo Classroom, NM Envirothon, Land and Water Summit, Master Naturalists, Rainwater Harvesting Installation, Watershed Stewards, and more!
<u>Agriculture</u>	Grow the Growers, Healthy Soil Program, Composting education
<u>Watershed</u>	Candelaria Nature Preserve, Tijeras Creek Watershed Restoration Project, Wildland Seed Harvesting, Urban Waters, Green Stormwater Infrastructure

For more info: ciudadswcd.org

***Images and text about catastrophic wildfire in slides ahead**

Dog Head Fire 2016, West of Chilili



The Dog Head fire burns near Tajique on Thursday. Courtesy Haley Rush/KRQE



RUIDOSO
New Mexico

EarthCam

South Fork Fire 2024, Ruidoso

Photo Credit: Village of Ruidoso

YOUR COMMUNITY IS *AT RISK*.



The communities of Cedar Crest, Tijeras, Cedro, Sandia Park/San Antonito, Sedillo, and others have been identified as high-risk areas in the 2022 Bernalillo County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). These areas are a top priority for wildfire prevention and mitigation efforts.

According to the 2020 New Mexico Forest Action Plan, these communities fall within the East Mountains Priority Landscape — an area the New Mexico Forestry Division considers critical for wildfire treatment and prevention.

In fact, many neighborhoods in the East Mountains have a higher wildfire hazard potential than 90% of communities nationwide.

Zoomed in to East Mountains

Greater Wildfire Hazard Potential than % of US communities:

Ponderosa Pine, NM 97.3%

Cedar Crest, NM, 96.7%

Cedro, NM 96.5%

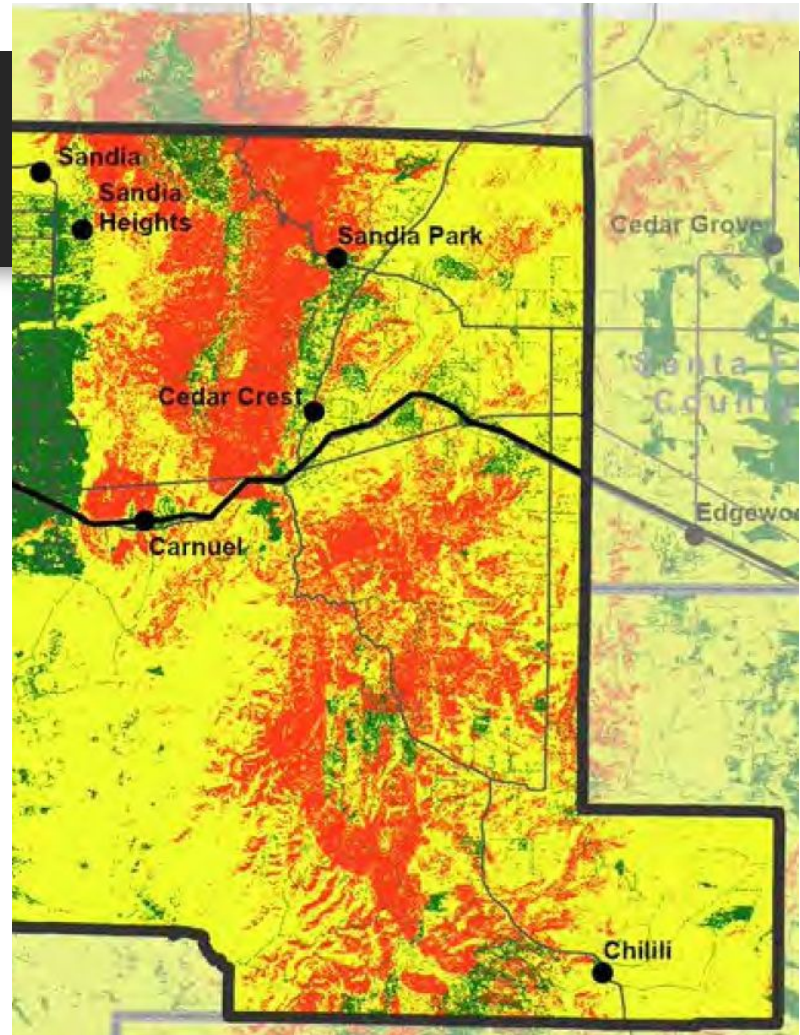
San Antonito, NM 96.5%

Sandia Knolls, NM 91.2%.

Sedillo, NM, 92.2%

Tijeras, NM, 92.2%

Source: <https://wildfirerisk.org/cwdg-tool>



High severity wildland fires are increasing across all forest types



Reedy 2016

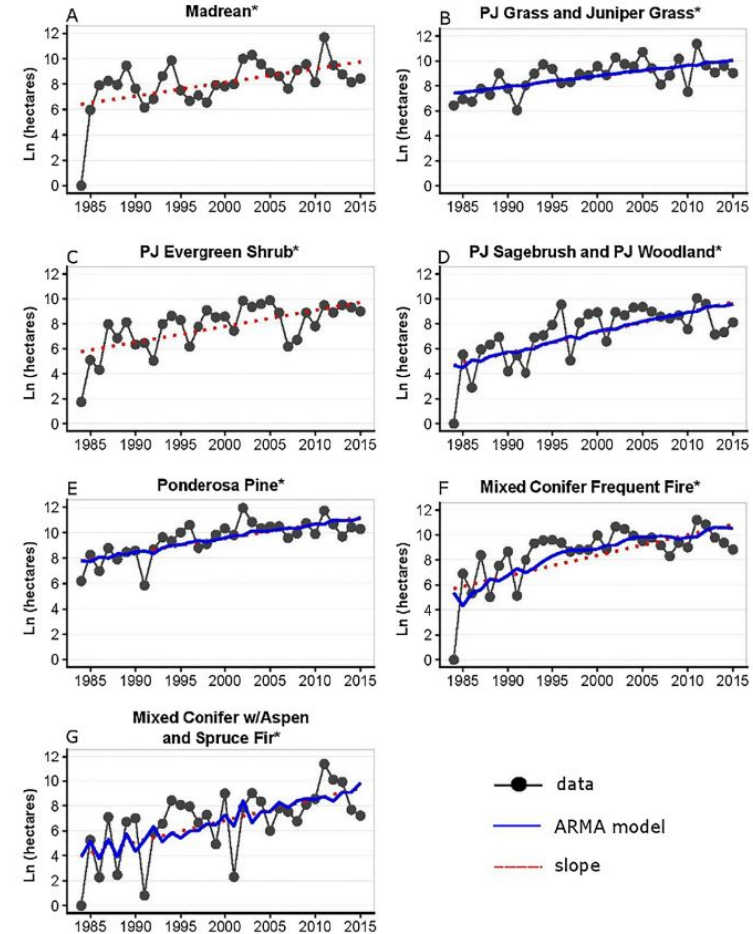


Fig. 4. Results in temporal trend analysis in area burned for each ERU Fire Regime Type from 1984 to 2015. *All trends are significantly increasing ($P \leq 0.005$).

Fire-Suppressed Forest

or a riparian forest where introduced species are prolific and intermittent flooding no longer occurs



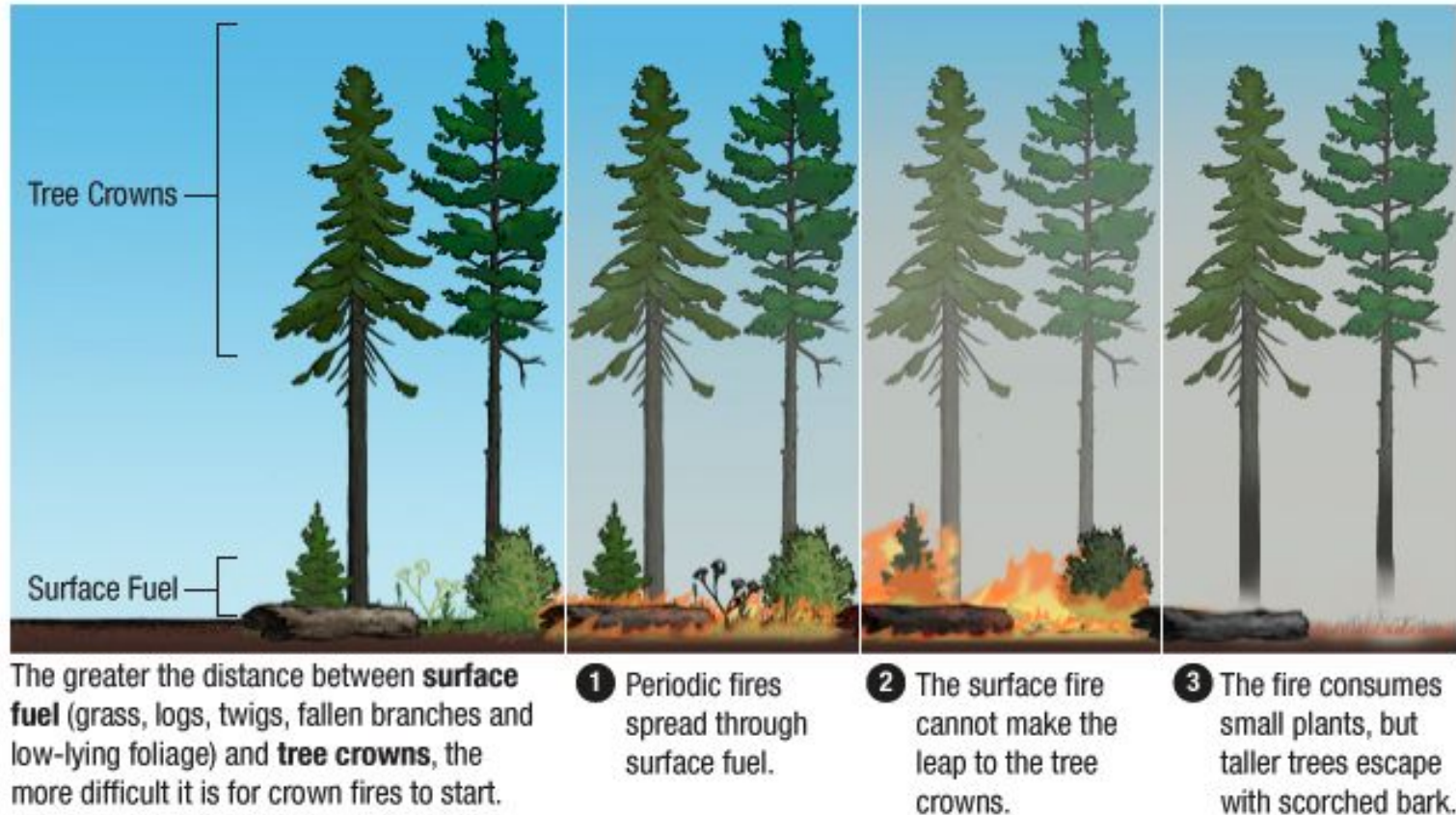
In a forest where fires rarely happen, fuel builds up: There's **surface fuel** (grass, logs, woody debris, brush); **ladder fuel** (shrubs, small trees, snags); and **tree crowns**.

1 Surface fires spread quickly through brush and woody debris.

2 Ladder fuels allow the fire to move up toward the forest canopy.

3 Tree crown fires are so intense, they're difficult to control.

Forests Where Fires Are Frequent or thinning has been done!



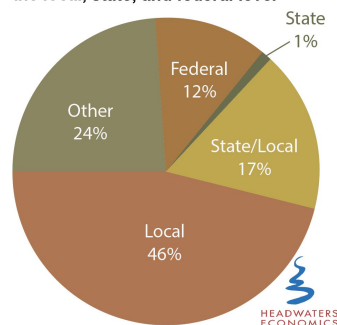
The Wildland Urban Interface is growing

- Between 1990 and 2020, the United States added 179,000 square kilometers of wildland-urban interface (WUI), an area equivalent in size to the state of Washington. During the same period, the number of homes in WUI areas of the United States increased by 47 percent.
- National forests are hotspots for WUI growth, with a 38 percent increase in WUI area and 46 percent growth in WUI houses from 1990 to 2010 for the area around national forests. Growth within national forests was higher than the surrounding area. USFS Mockrin 2025

The rural communities east of the Sandia and Manzano Mountains are collectively referred to as the East Mountains. With approximately 25,000 residents, the area is New Mexico's largest wildland-urban interface community. Fires are common in the forest and residential neighborhoods but rapid response and favorable conditions have generally spared the area from wildfire impacts. However, recent fires in the nearby Manzano Mountains provide a glimpse of the devastation that could result from large-scale wildfire. 2015 EMCWPP

The costs of high severity wildfire

Proportion of wildfire costs paid for at the local, state, and federal level



FEMA Provides More Than \$3.5 Billion to Survivors of the Historic Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Fire FEMA



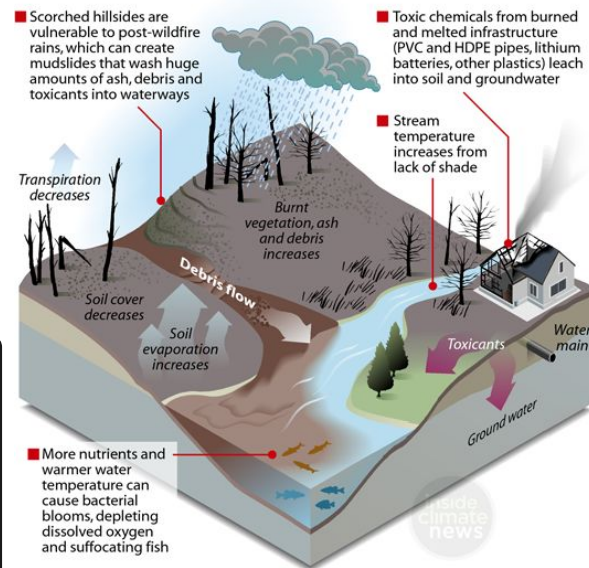
Updated: 7:07 AM MDT Jul 22, 2025

[Editorial Standards](#)

RUIDOSO, N.M. — New Mexico is now accepting intent-to-apply forms for **\$137 million** in federal disaster recovery grants aimed at helping residents rebuild after the devastating South Fork Fire, Salt Fire, and 2024 flooding events in Lincoln and Chaves counties.

How Wildfires Can Negatively Impact Water Quality

Intense fires cause chemical reactions that release metals, nutrients and other toxicants into the soil. Subsequent rains can wash these contaminants into rivers and reservoirs, which can negatively affect wildlife, agriculture and humans. Here are some examples:



SOURCES: Water Quality Australia; Purdue University

PAUL HORN / InsideClimate News

Flood After Fire



FEMA



Did you know wildfires dramatically alter the terrain and increase the risk of floods? Excessive amounts of rainfall can happen throughout the year. And properties directly affected by fires and those located below or downstream of burn areas are most at risk for flooding.

1

During normal conditions, vegetation helps absorb rainwater.

2

But after an intense wildfire, burned vegetation and charred soil form a water repellent layer, blocking water absorption.

3

During the next rainfall, water bounces off of the soil.

4

As a result, properties located below or downstream of the burn areas are at an increased risk for flooding.

Degree of Land Slope

Higher degrees of land slope speed up water flow and increase flood risk.

Flash Floods

Intense rainfall can flood low-lying areas in less than six hours. Flash floods roll boulders, tear out trees and destroy buildings and bridges.

Mudflows

Rivers of liquid and flowing mud are caused by a combination of brush loss and subsequent heavy rains. Rapid snowmelt can also trigger mudflows.



The benefits of forest fuel thinning

Thinning a forest to reduce severe wildfire is projected to...



increase forest growth by 30%



increase flow in headwater streams by 20%



reduce tree mortality by 25%



increase forest carbon storage by 15%



...even under a changing and variable climate.

SOURCE: Multiple TNC studies, 2014-2022

Forest Fuel Treatments Reduce Wildfire Spread, Prevent \$2.8 Billion in Damage

Large-Scale Study Finds Every \$1 Spent on Prevention Saves \$3.75

UC Davis 2026

by Amy Quinton | May 07, 2026

The impacts of the Dog Head Fire were devastating in terms of property losses and damage to natural resources on private and National Forest lands. Fortunately for the Isleta Pueblo, tribal land experienced only negligible effects. This can be attributed, in part, to the Isleta East Boundary Fuelbreak. If the fuelbreak had not been in place the fire could have affected an estimated additional 4,520 acres of Pueblo land. This would have resulted in serious consequences for tribal cultural values, as well as direct economic impacts approaching \$3 million. From a fire management investment perspective, if the total of all avoided costs (\$2,951,000) are considered in relation to the present value of fuelbreak construction costs (\$129,000) the resulting benefit/cost ratio is nearly 23:1.

Dog Head FTEM Report BIA

The benefits of forest fuel thinning w/burning

6 BENEFITS OF PRESCRIBED BURNING

Prescribed burns are fires deliberately started and maintained by private parties, NGOs, tribal, local, state, and federal officials for the purpose of land management. There are many benefits to using fire as a tool for landscape management.

- 1 Lowers risk of more dangerous fires
- 2 Increases water availability through plant removal
- 3 Increases plant diversity
- 4 Helps control invasive species
- 5 Reduces tree competition
- 6 Improves wildlife habitat



Prescribed burning is the lowest-cost method of reducing overgrown brush and trees. It costs under \$200 per acre. Cutting trees ranges from \$500 to \$2,000 per acre, and suppressing wildfire costs even more, from \$100,000 to \$1 million per day, depending on the circumstance. emnr.dnrm.gov/sfd/prescribed-burning/

Mechanical thinning and prescribed fire target different forest fuels. Thinning reduces live tree canopy density and removes smaller trees that can function as ladder fuels, both of which contribute to crown fire behavior," said Knapp. "Prescribed fire consumes litter, dead and down wood, and knocks back understory shrubs, reducing intensity of any future fire." Knapp, Pacific Southwest Research Station, USFS



Bootleg Fire, USDA Climate Hub

NM Forest Action Plan Strategy #1 (out of 10)

#1 Restore Forests and Watersheds, addresses what is arguably the **most expensive issue facing forest management today— the legacy of fire exclusion and current land conditions**. In the absence of naturally occurring wildfires, **forests have generated excessive fuels** which has, in the past two decades, resulted in catastrophic wildfires burning much hotter than previously experienced.

These “mega-fires” are happening every year around the West and **threaten water supply, lives and property**. Experience has demonstrated that **forest management treatments such as thinning, burning, and especially a combination of thinning and burning, can moderate fire behavior**. The Restore Forests strategy and substrategies outline a plan for addressing these fuel conditions and restoring forest stand densities to healthier conditions.

NM State Forestry is a major partner and funding source for Ciudad Forest Health projects

NEW MEXICO NEWS

State Forestry Division releases report indicating tree deaths tripled in 2025

by: [Natasha Lynn](#)

Posted: Jun 13, 2026 / 08:52 PM MDT

Updated: Jun 15, 2026 / 05:20 AM MDT

Forestry Program Initiatives



Ciudad
Soil & Water
Conservation District

01

**Private Land
Forest Health
Cost-Share**

02

**Public Land
Forest Health
Projects**
(Bosque and Upland)

03

**Chipper Events
& Green Waste
Days**

04

**Reflective
House
Numbers**

05

**Thinning &
Soil Health
Monitoring
Project**

06

**Outreach and
Education**

Private Land Cost-Share Program

- 80/20 cost share split on total project cost
 - **Ciudad pays 80%!**
- Professionally developed individual project plans
- Trained and insured contractors
- Receives NM Forestry Division approval on plans and inspections once completed
- Projects can be any size, but 1 acre is the minimum cost
- Cutting season is October-April

Please visit the FAQ on our website.

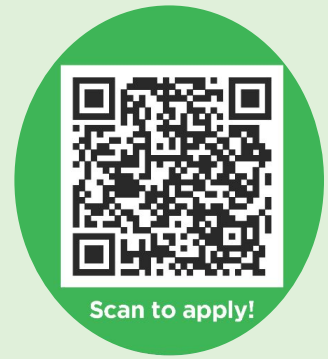


Holistic Approach: Mimicking Fire

- Thinned to an average of 40-60 sq. ft of basal area in pinon-juniper woodlands, based of many forest studies and BMP's
- Leave a variety of tree species, size and age classes.
- Remove trees showing sign of stress, disease, bug activity, mistletoe.
- Remaining trees will be left in groups/clumps, creating random openings.
- Remove ladder fuels beneath leave trees.
- Firewood will be left in piles (no > 4'x4'x4') out in the open.
- Slash will be chipped and spread to an average of 1".



There are TWO steps to securing an assessment:



1.
—

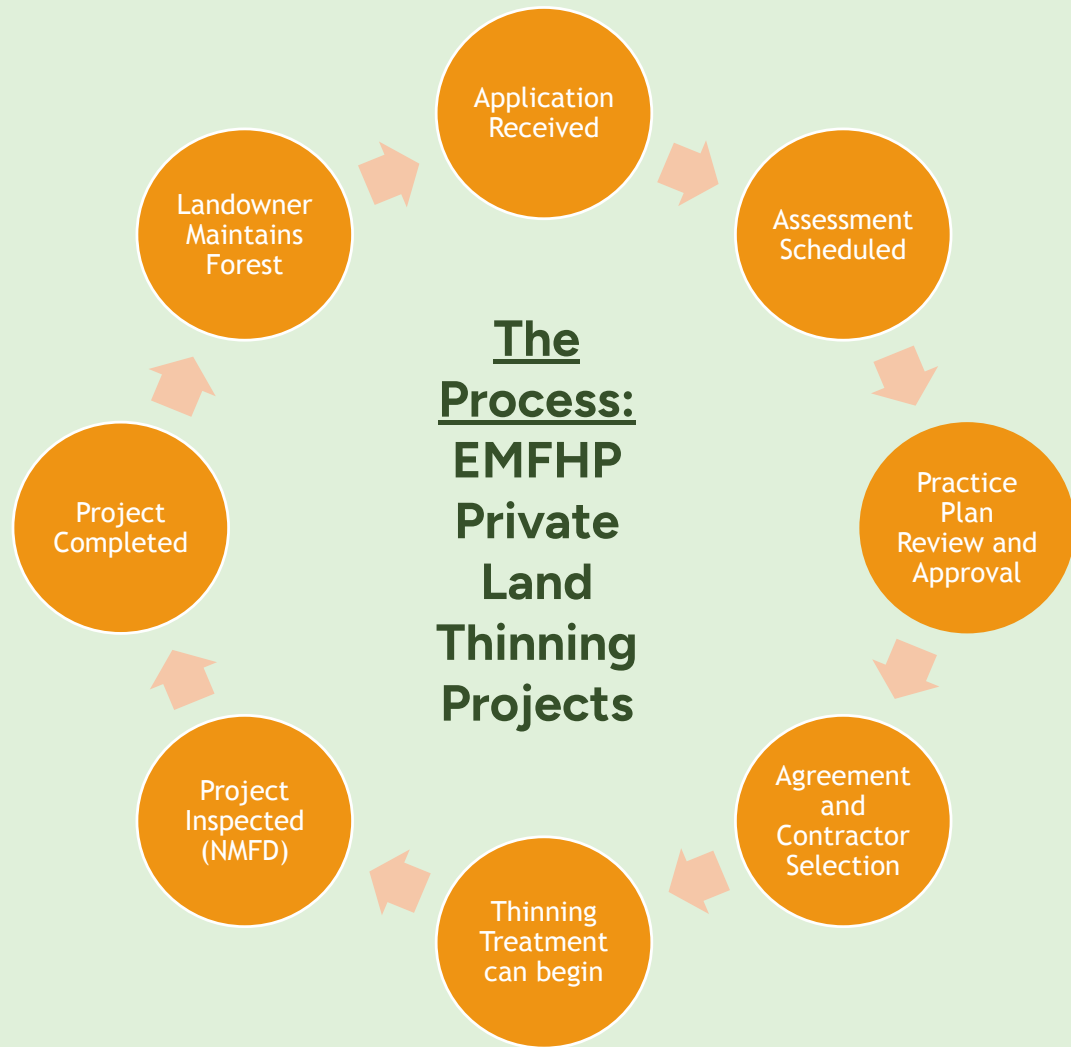
Submit an application

Fill out the application form on our website.

2.
—

Pay your \$100 non-refundable assessment fee

This covers the cost of someone from our team coming to your home, discussing the program in depth with you, assessing your property and writing up a personalized treatment plan.



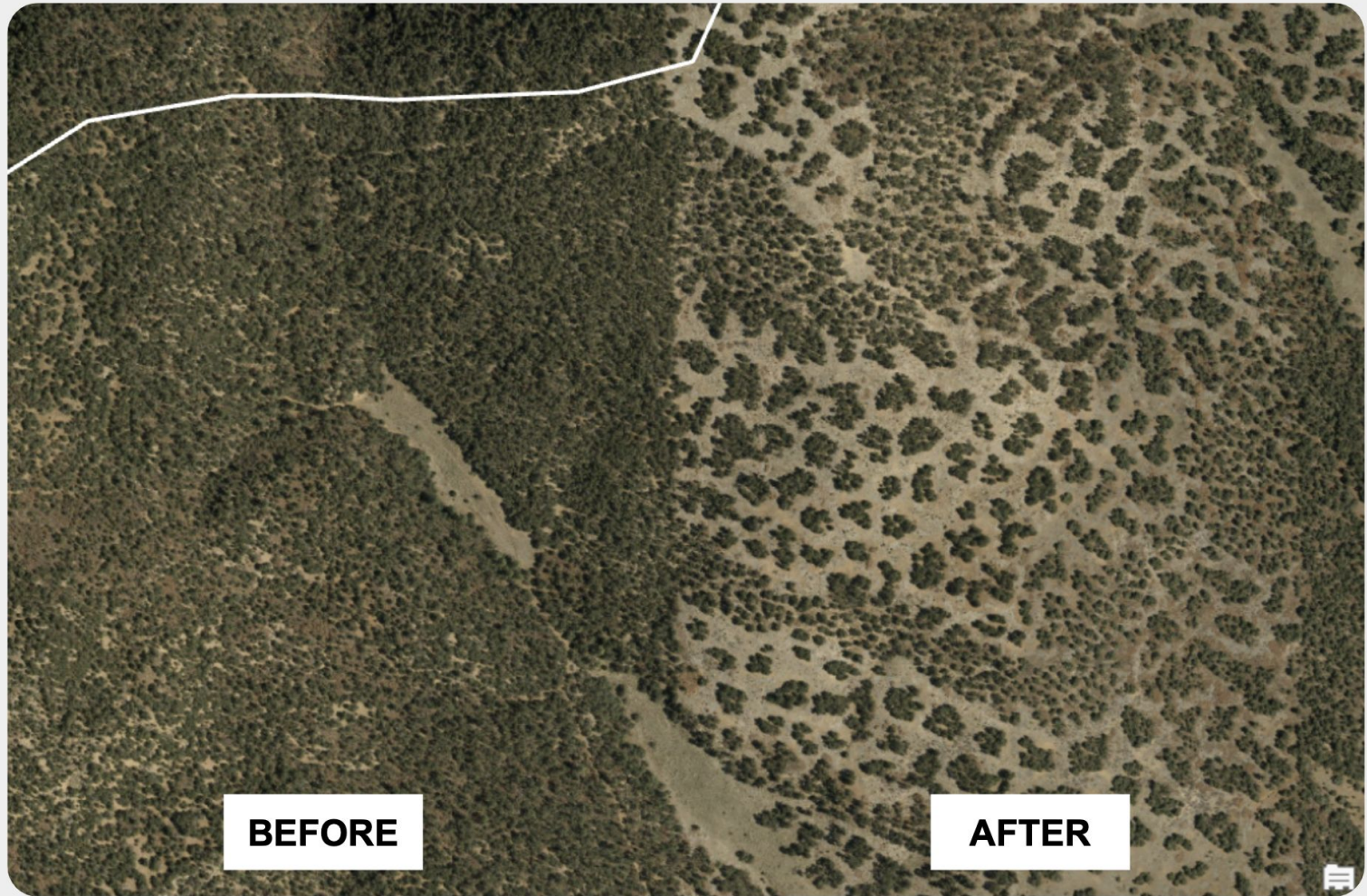
BEFORE



AFTER

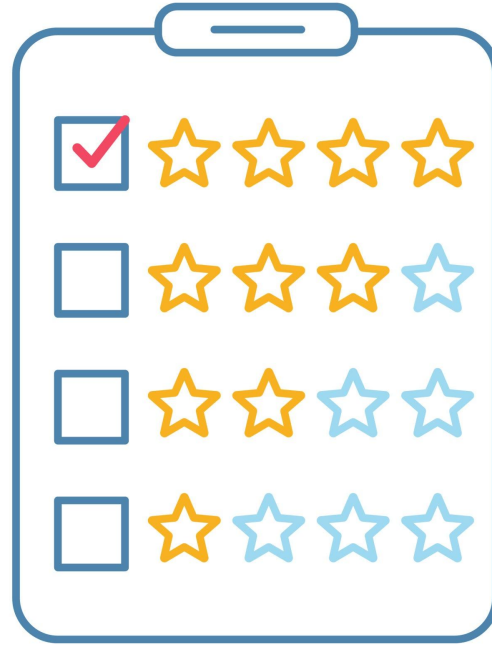


Sedillo Ridge Open Space



**95% of
landowners who
complete a
project with
Ciudad
recommend the
program to their
neighbors**

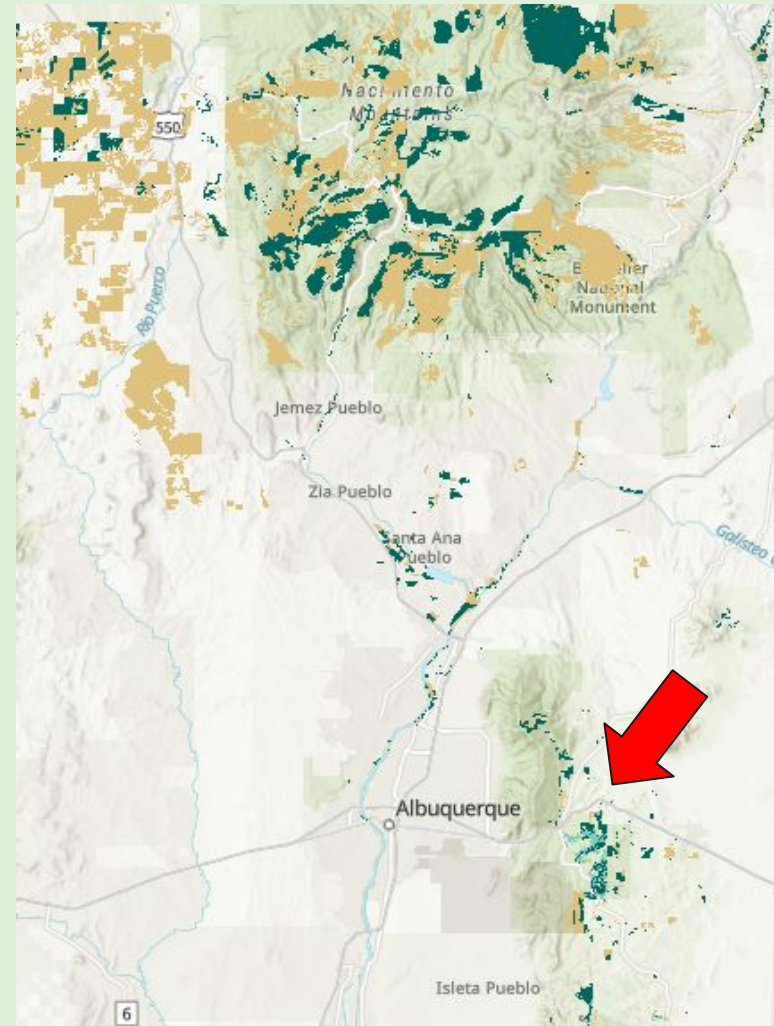
*According to responses from post treatment
survey for landowners who completed thinning
projects with Ciudad over the last 4 years



There's a lot of work to do.

Pace and scale - We are very behind in this work.

- Remember, landscape thinning achieves more than just wildfire defense – It improves ecosystem health and creates a desirable landscape.
- What if I'm tired? What if I'm busy?
- Wildfires don't care about any of that, but more help is available!
- Communities can and are adapting. Fuel treatments projects are ongoing in the area.



We more than tripled our private land thinning acreage this past season.

2022-2025	2026 and beyond
Private Land Forest Health Projects	Private Land Forest Health Projects
40-70 acres thinned per year	240+ acres thinned per year

*We also increased acreage on public land projects,
with several more planned for this upcoming season.
We are involved in upland and bosque projects.*

2022-2025	2026 and beyond
Public Land Forest Health Projects	Public Land Forest Health Projects
~30-400 acres thinned per year	600+ acres thinned per year



Spring
2026

East Mountain
Transfer Station

711 Highway 333
Tijeras, NM

Free
Drop Off

East MOUNTAIN GREEN WASTE Days

April 27
through May 10
8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

All loads must be covered
Call 505.281.9110

Dispose of all resulting
slash and debris.

Sweep roof and
clean out gutters.

Reduce overall density of
surrounding forest.

Reduce 'ladder-fuels' leaves,
dead branches, brush, etc.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY

Bernalillo County, County Commissioner Eric C. Olivas,
and Ciudad Soil & Water Conservation District

DISPOSE OF GREEN WASTE FOR **FREE!**

Green Waste Days

If you've started thinning your property to reduce wildfire risk, you might be wondering what to do with all the branches and debris. Green Waste Days offer a free, convenient solution.

For 2 weeks every spring and fall, East Mountain residents can drop off green waste at the Tijeras Transfer station at no cost during designated weeks at the Tijeras Transfer Station.

This program has been helping East Mountain landowners for over a decade, thanks to a partnership between Ciudad SWCD and Bernalillo County.



REFLECTIVE HOUSE NUMBERS **SAVE LIVES.**

In the chaos of a wildfire, every second counts. Thick smoke, low visibility, and fast-moving flames can make it nearly impossible for first responders to locate homes without clear, visible address numbers.



Request yours here!

That's why having large, reflective address numbers posted at the end of your driveway is not just a good idea — it's a critical part of your wildfire preparedness plan. **It could mean the difference between help arriving in time or not.**

NEIGHBORHOOD CHIPPER EVENTS

CLEAR BRUSH. *REDUCE RISK.*

Ciudad SWCD partners with neighborhood associations, villages, and local groups in the East Mountains to offer chipping events — **free or low-cost opportunities for residents to dispose of hazardous wildfire fuels like tree limbs and brush right at the curb.**

These events make it easier for you and your neighbors to create defensible space and reduce wildfire risk across the entire community.

In 2025, Ciudad is able to partially or fully fund 4-5 neighborhood chipping events. Recent partners include: Tijeras, Paa-Ko, and Sierra Vista Estates

Interested in hosting an event in your neighborhood?

East Mountain residents and community leaders can contact Ricky at ricky@ciudadswcd.org for more information.



ciudadswcd.org



Search



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Agriculture and Soil Health ▾

Forestry and Wildfire ▾

Watershed and Urban Waters ▾

Neighborhood Chipper Event Interest Form

Reduce hazardous wildfire fuel at the curbside by partnering with Ciudad SWCD to host a Neighborhood Chipper Event.

Join our mailing list

Final Points

- Wildfire is an increasing risk to Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) communities (all forested areas within Ciudad) due to past management practices, climate change, and increased human development

- Home Hardening and Defensible space creation (as promoted by Green Waste Days, chipper events, workshops, etc) is a necessary practice for homeowners to take initial action for homes to survive wildfires

- Landscape scale action(thinning, wildfire management, burning) is necessary to prevent catastrophic wildfire spread and improve current forest health conditions in WUI zones like the East Mountains and MRG Bosque (MRG Bosque is NOT fire adapted)

- Ciudad is working with partners to provide several resources to help landowners and the greater community of Ciudad to reduce wildfire risk and improve the overall health and resiliency of our forests



Cibola NF, Magdalena District, Prescribed Pile Burn 2026. USFS



Post mastication pine tree sprout at Juan Tomas Open Space

Thanks!

questions?

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brooks@ciudadswcd.org

amy@ciudadswcd.org

ricky@ciudadswcd.org



Education and outreach is important to us!

We'd love to come speak with your friends and family's neighborhoods. Please contact us with any inquiries.