

Restoring Open Woodlands

Prescribed Fire Treatments in Central New Mexico

*Using prescribed fire
as a tool to restore
wildlife habitat and
watershed health*

Historic agricultural practices, along with successful fire suppression activities, have altered many of New Mexico's pinon-juniper woodlands and native grasslands. Lightning-caused fires historically played an important role in reducing the density of the vegetation and maintaining the balance between these adjacent ecosystems. With grasses reduced, wildfires were unable to make their periodic "runs" from the grasslands into the woodlands to thin the pinon-juniper vegetation, resulting in the expansion of woodland vegetation and reduction of grasslands.

Prescribed burns are an effective treatment for removing thick vegetation and reversing the intrusion of pinon and juniper into grasslands. Reintroducing fire into the ecosystem mimics the natural role that wildfires once played in maintaining healthy and productive woodlands and grasslands.

Case Study: Socorro Field Office

Since 1998, the BLM and its partners have been working on an initiative to restore wildlife habitat and improve watershed health across the Ladrone-Mesa Sarca landscape. This area is home to big game species such as mule deer, antelope, elk and bighorn sheep, and many other species.

In May 2008, BLM ignited a large prescribed fire that successfully treated 8,500 acres on Ladrone Mountain. The fire burned under ideal conditions that resulted in mosaic patterns, leaving 10- to 100-acre patches of unconsumed vegetation. This pattern increases habitat diversity, creates edges between mature and new vegetation, and offers wildlife both browse and shelter. Prescribed fire, along with other habitat improvement activities, is helping return the Ladrone-Mesa Sarca watershed to a healthier and more natural condition.

Numerous partners have joined BLM in this restoration effort including the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish-Bighorn Sheep Program, New Mexico Habitat Stamp Program, Quail Unlimited, and the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep.



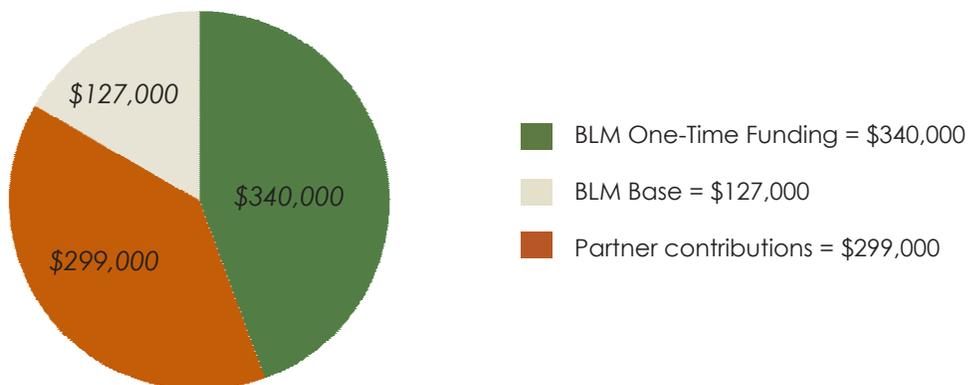
Prescribed fire burns in woodland savannah near Socorro



After burn, juniper shrubs are thinned; grasses and forbs return



Socorro Field Office Prescribed Fire Treatments



BLM One-Time Funding From:

- Range (1020)
- Soil, Water, & Air (1010)
- Wildlife (1110)
- Fire - Fuels Management (2823)

Used For:

- Crews, supplies (including plastic spheres), and contract for helicopter

BLM Base Used For:

- Planning/NEPA
- GIS mapping & database
- Landscape assessments
- Contract administration

Partnership Contributions From:

Quail Unlimited	\$21,000
Foundation for North American Wild Sheep	\$3,000
Wildlife Habitat Stamp Program	\$260,000
NM Game and Fish, Bighorn Sheep Program	\$15,000
TOTAL	\$299,000

Future Goals

for Restoring Open Woodlands in Central New Mexico

Treatment	Future Acres	Estimated Cost/Acre	Total Funding Needed
Mechanical	10,000	\$500	\$5,000,000
Invasive Shrubs	21,000	\$40	\$840,000
Prescribed Fire	140,000	\$20	\$2,800,000
Riparian	2,800	\$1,500	\$4,200,000
Erosion Control	300	\$3,500	\$1,050,000
TOTAL	473,800	\$29*	\$13,890,000

*Average Cost/Acre

