

106TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 1288

To provide incentives for collaborative forest restoration projects on National Forest System and other public lands in New Mexico, and for other purposes.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 28, 1999

Mr. BINGAMAN introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

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## A BILL

To provide incentives for collaborative forest restoration projects on National Forest System and other public lands in New Mexico, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Community Forest  
5 Restoration Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 The Congress finds the following:

8 (1) Forest lands in New Mexico that are dense-  
9 ly stocked with small diameter, even-aged trees can

1 erupt in catastrophic wildfire that can endanger  
2 human lives and livelihoods.

3 (2) Forest lands that are densely stocked with  
4 small diameter trees can reduce biodiversity and pro-  
5 vide fewer benefits to human communities, wildlife,  
6 and watersheds.

7 (3) Healthy and productive watersheds mini-  
8 mize the threat of catastrophic wildfire, provide  
9 abundant and diverse wildlife habitat, and produce a  
10 variety of timber and non-timber products including  
11 better quality water and increased water flows.

12 (4) Restoration efforts are more successful  
13 when there is involvement from neighboring commu-  
14 nities and better stewardship will evolve from more  
15 diverse involvement.

16 (5) Designating demonstration restoration  
17 projects through a collaborative approach may—

18 (A) lead to the development of cost effec-  
19 tive restoration activities;

20 (B) empower diverse organizations to im-  
21 plement activities which value local and tradi-  
22 tional knowledge;

23 (C) build ownership and civic pride; and

24 (D) ensure healthy, diverse, and productive  
25 forests and watersheds.

1 **SEC. 3. PURPOSES.**

2 The purposes of this Act are—

3 (1) to promote healthy watersheds and reduce  
4 the threat of catastrophic wildfire, insect infestation,  
5 and disease in the forests in New Mexico;

6 (2) to improve the functioning of forest eco-  
7 systems and enhance plant and wildlife biodiversity  
8 by reducing the unnaturally high number and den-  
9 sity of small diameter trees on Federal, State, and  
10 tribal forest lands;

11 (3) to improve communication and joint prob-  
12 lem solving among individuals and groups who are  
13 interested in restoring the diversity and productivity  
14 of forested watersheds in New Mexico;

15 (4) to promote the use of small diameter trees;  
16 and

17 (5) to encourage sustainable communities and  
18 sustainable forests through collaborative partner-  
19 ships whose objectives are forest restoration.

20 **SEC. 4. DEFINITIONS.**

21 As used in this Act—

22 (1) the term “Secretary” means the Secretary  
23 of Agriculture acting through the Chief of the For-  
24 est Service; and

1           (2) the term “stakeholder” includes tribal gov-  
2           ernments, educational institutions, landowners, and  
3           other interested public and private entities.

4 **SEC. 5. ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM.**

5           (a) The Secretary shall establish a cooperative forest  
6 restoration program in New Mexico in order to provide  
7 cost-share grants to stakeholders for experimental forest  
8 restoration projects that are designed through a collabo-  
9 rative process (hereinafter referred to as the “Collabo-  
10 rative Forest Restoration Program”). The Federal share  
11 of an individual project cost shall not exceed eighty per-  
12 cent of the total cost.

13           (b) **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS.**—To be eligible to  
14 receive funding under this Act, a project shall—

15           (1) achieve one or more of the following  
16 objectives—

17                   (A) reducing the danger of catastrophic  
18 wildfire and re-introducing natural fire regimes  
19 on Federal, State, or tribal forest lands;

20                   (B) restoring healthy, biologically diverse,  
21 and productive watersheds on Federal, State, or  
22 tribal forest lands; or

23                   (C) improving the use of, or add value to,  
24 small diameter trees;

1           (2) comply with all Federal and State environ-  
2           mental laws;

3           (3) include a diverse and balanced group of  
4           stakeholders as well as appropriate Federal, State,  
5           and tribal government representatives in the design,  
6           implementation, and monitoring of the project;

7           (4) incorporate current scientific forest restora-  
8           tion information;

9           (5) include a multi-party assessment to report,  
10          upon project completion, on the impact and effec-  
11          tiveness of the project including improvements in  
12          local management skills and on the ground results;

13          (6) create local employment or training oppor-  
14          tunities within the context of accomplishing restora-  
15          tion objectives, that are consistent with the purposes  
16          of this Act, including summer youth jobs programs  
17          such as the Youth Conservation Corps where appro-  
18          priate;

19          (7) not exceed four years in length;

20          (8) not cost more than \$150,000 annually nor  
21          \$450,000 total;

22          (9) leverage Federal funding through in-kind or  
23          matching contributions; and

1           (10) include an agreement by the stakeholders  
2           that they will attend an annual workshop with other  
3           groups that receive funding pursuant to this Act.

4 **SEC. 6. SELECTION PROCESS.**

5           (a) After consulting with the technical advisory panel  
6           established in subsection (b), the Secretary shall select the  
7           proposals that will receive funding through the Collaborative  
8           Forest Restoration Program.

9           (b) The Secretary shall convene a technical advisory  
10          panel to evaluate the proposals for forest restoration  
11          grants and provide recommendations regarding which proposals  
12          would best meet the objectives of the Collaborative  
13          Forest Restoration Program. The technical advisory panel  
14          shall consider current scientific forest restoration information,  
15          the effect on long-term management, and seek to use  
16          a consensus-based decision making process to develop such  
17          recommendations. The panel shall be composed of 12 to  
18          15 members, to be appointed by the Secretary as follows:

19                 (1) A State Natural Resource official from the  
20                 State of New Mexico.

21                 (2) At least two representatives from Federal  
22                 land management agencies.

23                 (3) At least one tribal or pueblo representative.

1           (4) At least one academic or other scientist,  
2           qualified to address issues of southwestern forest  
3           ecology.

4           (5) Equal representation from—

5                   (A) conservation interests;

6                   (B) local communities; and

7                   (C) commodity interests.

8   **SEC. 7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION.**

9           The Secretary shall establish a multi-party moni-  
10          toring and evaluation process in order to assess the cumu-  
11          lative accomplishments of the Collaborative Forest Res-  
12          toration Program. The Secretary shall include any inter-  
13          ested individual or organization in the monitoring and  
14          evaluation process.

15   **SEC. 8. REPORT.**

16          No later than five years after the first fiscal year in  
17          which funding is made available for this program, the Sec-  
18          retary shall submit a report to the Committee on Energy  
19          and Natural Resources of the United States Senate and  
20          the Committee on Resources of the United States House  
21          of Representatives. The report shall include an assessment  
22          on whether, and to what extent, the projects funded pursu-  
23          ant to this Act are meeting the purposes of the Collabo-  
24          rative Forest Restoration Program.

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