

Beyond Grant Writing Panic:

Building the Collaborative Infrastructure to Bolster Long-term Forest and Community Resilience from Wildfire in Taos County

















**Collaborative
planning began in
more than a
decade ago with
the development
of the 2009 Taos
County CWPP
and creation of
the Core team**



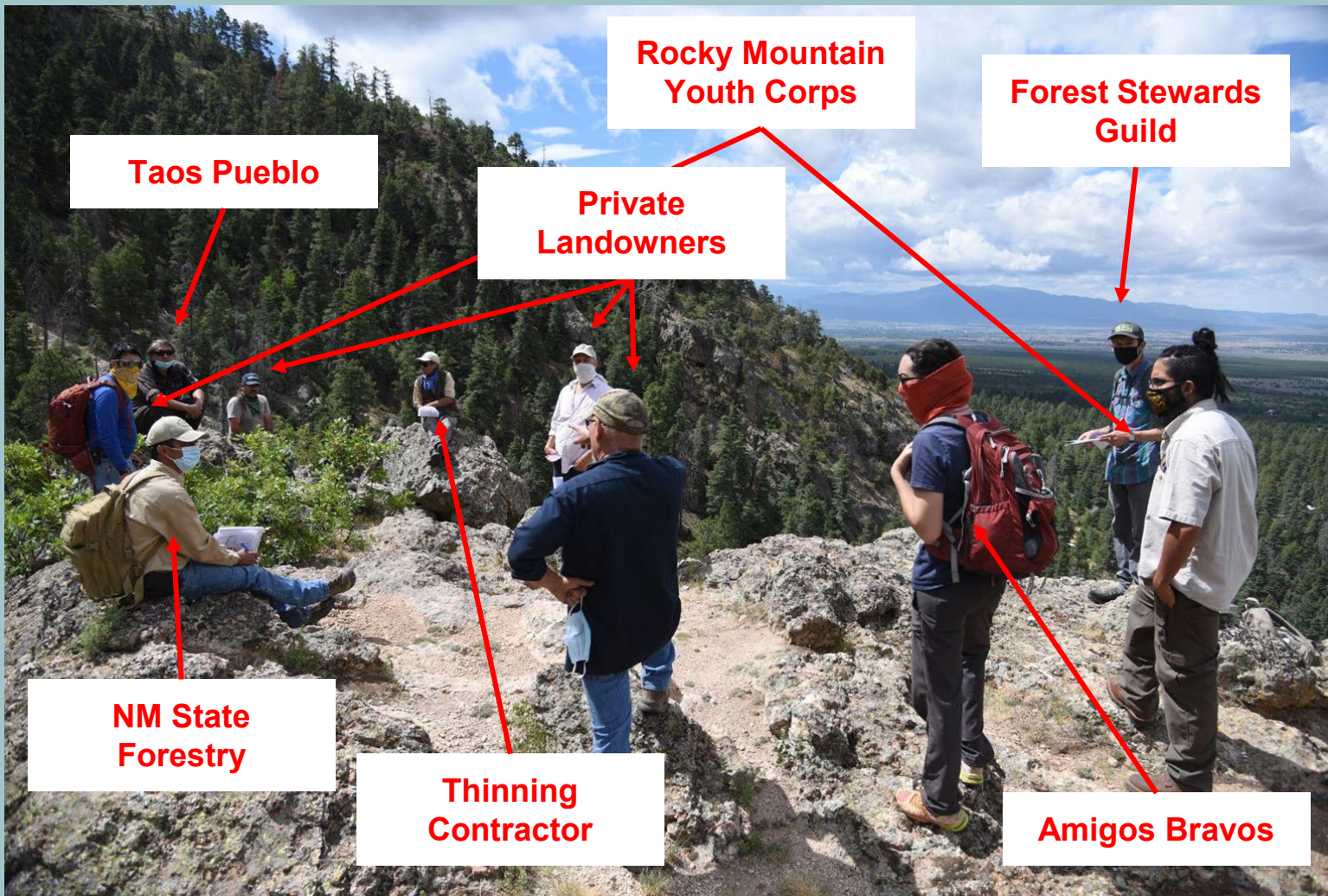
Ron Gardiner

In 2015, the Taos Valley Watershed Coalition was formed as a subcommittee of the CWPP Core Team.

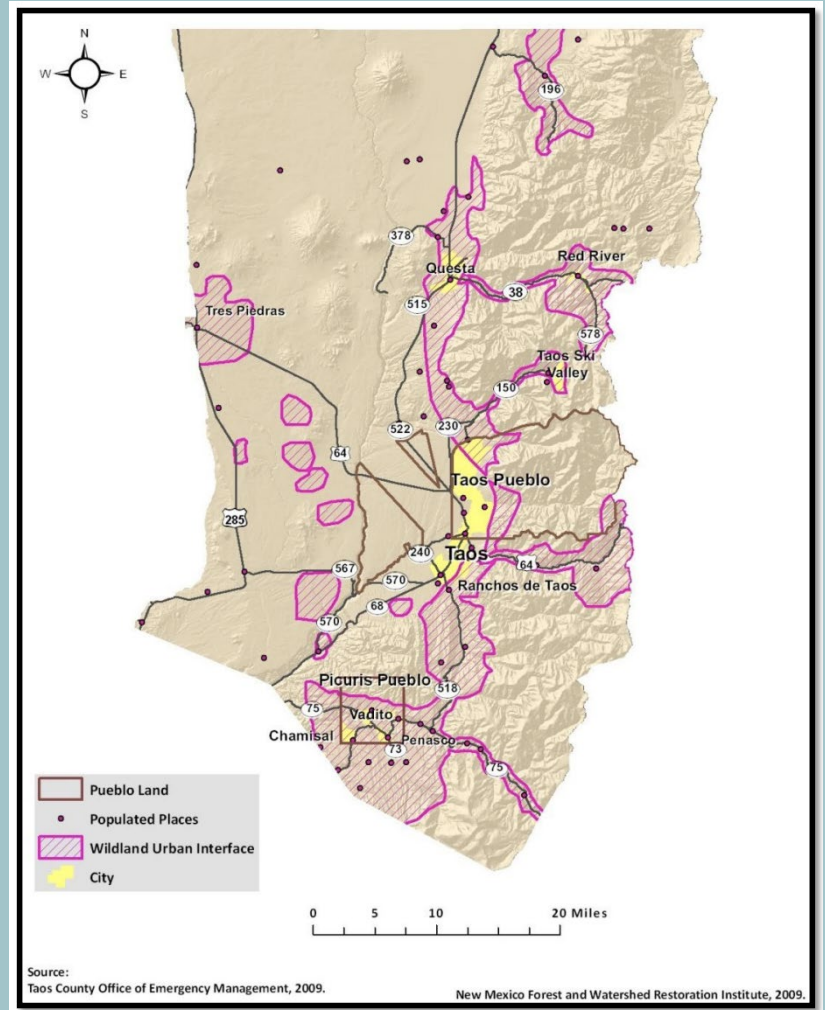
The coalition represented the first focused effort to coordinate treatments at a landscape scale.



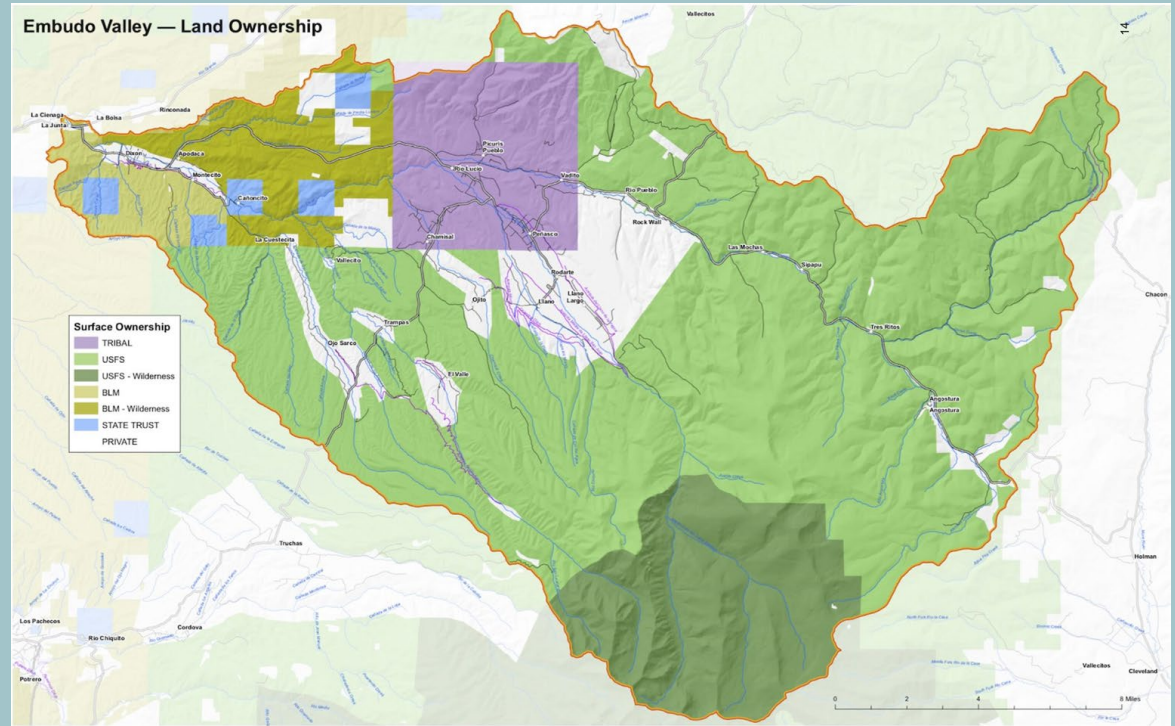




**In 2016, partners
finished an update of
the Taos County
CWPP, with an
emphasis on the
connection between
forest resilience and
watershed health**



**In 2019, a new
collaborative group
— the Tres Rios
Watershed Coalition
— was formed to
coordinate work in
southern Taos County**



Because of Those Plans and Partnerships, Great Things Are Happening:



- The Cerro Negro Forest Council has recruited more than 100 *leñeros* to thin 275 acres north of Valdez. Those locals have been paid to harvest more than 600 cords of wood so far while protecting the mountain above their homes from wildfire. Two other groups are copying this model, **including one funded by Taos County (Santa Barbara Land Grant).**

Because of Those Partnerships, Great Things are Already Happening:



- The New Mexico Forest Industry Association has worked out a deal to help local professional crews get bigger jobs on the Carson. Since October 2020, five local contractors have thinned more than 200 acres while putting more than 40 area residents to work. We expect them to complete as many as 1,000 acres before February 2023 under this agreement.

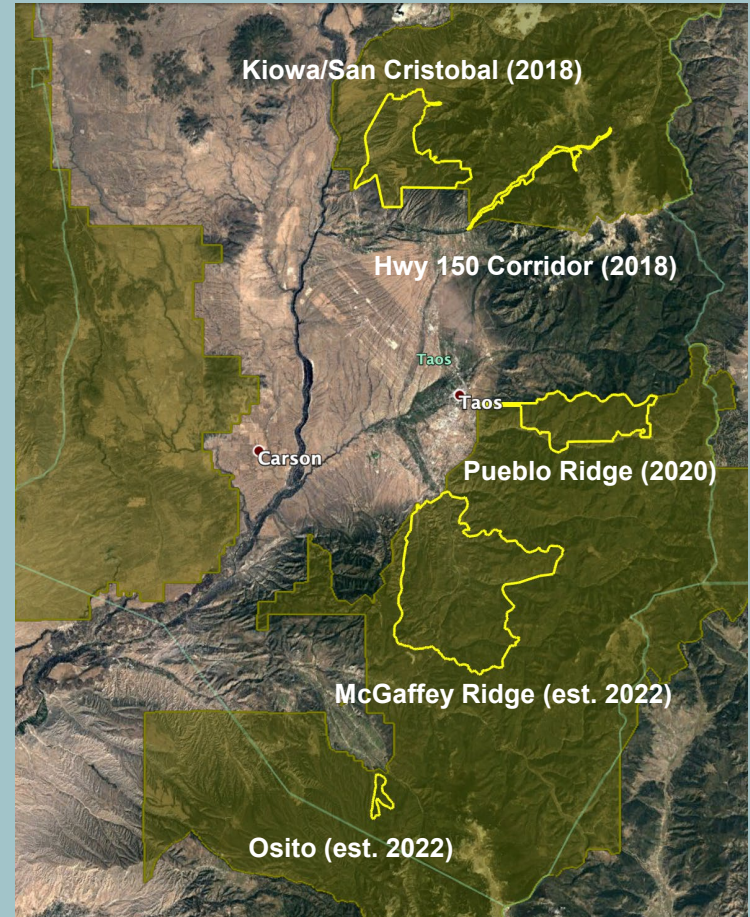
**The Taos Soil and Water
Conservation District
now fields a student
monitoring crew to
conduct pre- and post-
treatment stand exams
while also creating a
natural resources career
pipeline for young
people**



**We're very proud of these
successes.**

**But it's taken a lot of duct tape
and bailing wire to get this far and
it's getting harder to sustain the
momentum, let alone build on it.**

- There are currently **22,600 acres** of NEPA-cleared National Forest lands ready for treatment on the west slope of the Sangres in Taos County.
- In the next two years, we expect an **additional 30,750 acres** of NEPA-cleared acres to be online and ready for project work.



**If we want to hit “pace and scale,”
we need to streamline the flow of
putting money on the ground and
add administrative capacity.**

**We also need to ensure our priorities
match the good planning that the
state and feds are working on right
now.**

Taos County Can Significantly Ramp Up Work to Protect Watersheds, Support Traditional Uses and Promote Economic Development

- This spring, the U.S. Forest Service invited Taos County to enter into a Master Good Neighbor Agreement based on the successes of other similarly sized counties.
- This agreement makes it possible for the Forest Service to transfer funds to Taos County to perform specific project work, including forest restoration, hazardous fuels reduction, stream restoration and road/trail maintenance on Forest Service lands.
- The purpose of these agreements is to provide local entities a seat at the table when it comes to planning and implementing projects that improve ecological resilience, promote rural economic development, and improve community health and safety.

MASTER
STEWARDSHIP AGREEMENT
Between
County of Tuolumne
And the
USDA FOREST SERVICE, STANISLAUS NATIONAL FOREST

This Master Stewardship Agreement is hereby made and entered into by and between County of Tuolumne, a political subdivision of the State of California, hereinafter referred to as "County of Tuolumne," and the USDA Forest Service, Stanislaus National Forest, hereinafter referred to as the "U.S. Forest Service," under the authority and provisions of the Agricultural Act of 2014, Pub. L. 113-79, sec. 8205.

Background: In 2003 Congress authorized the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management to enter into stewardship contracts and agreements "to achieve land management goals for the national forests that meet local and rural community needs." The primary focus of this legislation is to achieve land management goals through stewardship projects awarded under contracts or agreements. Unique to the legislation is the ability to exchange goods for services that meet the land management objectives.

The area addressed in the Master Stewardship Agreement incorporates the area known as the Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions Project Area, capturing all of the Stanislaus National Forest within Tuolumne County, as shown in Exhibit A. It includes all of the Miwuk Ranger District and portions of the Groveland Ranger District, Summit Ranger District, and Calaveras Ranger District. This area includes an un-estimated number of acres to be treated during the terms of this Master Stewardship Agreement.

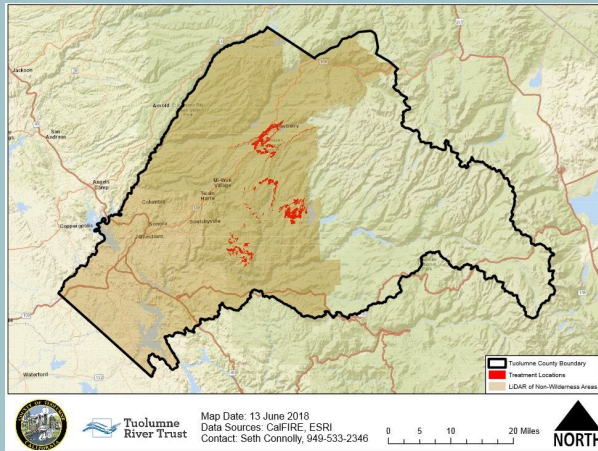
The area includes portions of the Tuolumne and Stanislaus River Watersheds, which provide important ecological, social, and economic resources whose value extends from the crest of the Sierra Nevada to the San Francisco Bay Area. The watershed produces high-quality water for agricultural, industrial, and urban domestic use, including more than 2.5 million Bay Area residents. In addition, the watersheds provide habitat for several State and Federally listed threatened, endangered, sensitive and candidate plant and animal species. Several thousand people live in the wildland urban interface areas and the area includes historic and active Miwuk cultural sites as well as world-class recreation opportunities.

The forested mountain landscape has served as the region's socio-economic foundation for hundreds of years. The native Miwuk people were stewards of this land as they moved seasonally through the watershed and lived on its rich abundance of plants, fish, and animals. The miners of the 1849 California Gold Rush displaced tons of ore in search of gold. As the

*Example Forest Service/Local County Master
Stewardship Agreement - Tuolumne County, CA*

A Quick Case Study: Tuolumne County, California

- Central California county with a population of 55,000
- The Forest Service manages about 42% of the land within the county boundaries
- An *ad hoc* collaborative group was formed in 2010 to prioritize watershed and forest restoration efforts, but it struggled for years to scale up its work.



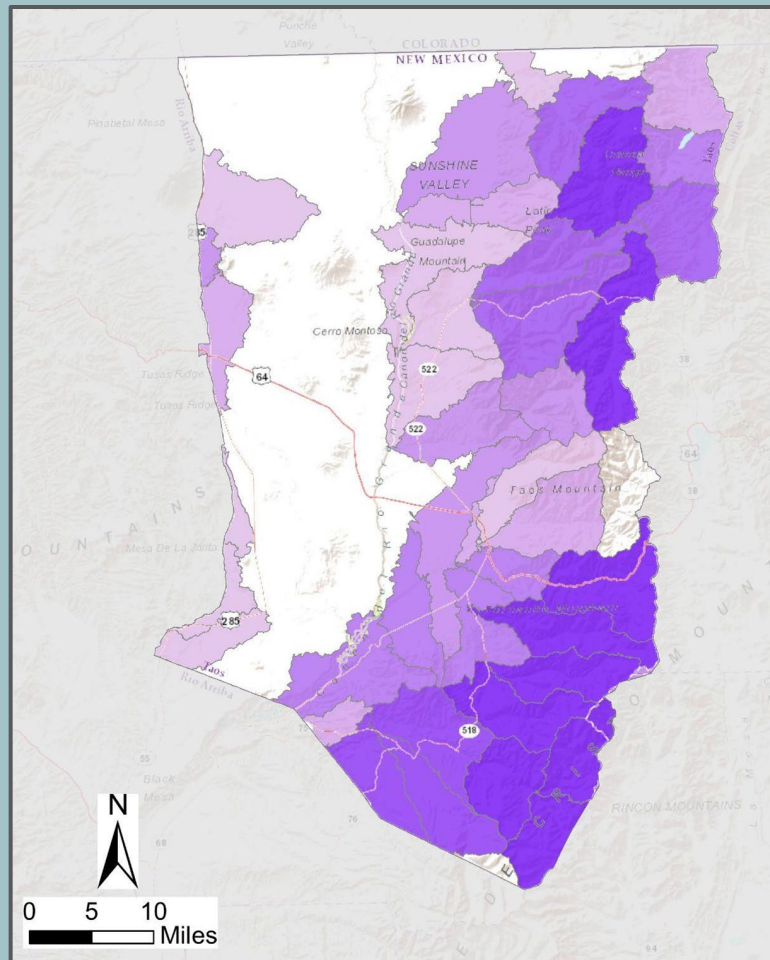
In the three years since Tuolumne County signed a Master Stewardship Agreement, it has received more than **\$20 million** in federal and state funding to accelerate restoration efforts.

**The Good Neighbor Agreement sets
Taos County up to be more nimble
when it comes to putting “Shared
Stewardship” into action.**

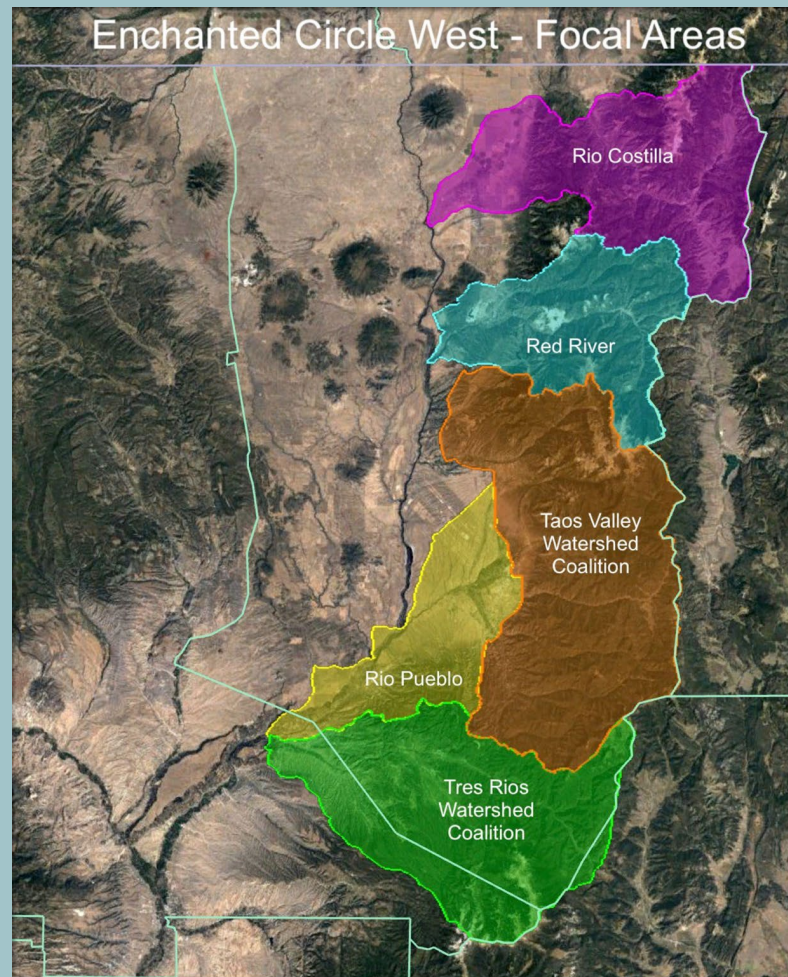
Taos County CWPP is the umbrella document for all things wildfire resilience-related.

The current Taos County CWPP update is focused on aligning local priorities with priorities coming from the top down (Shared Stewardship).

Priority HUC 12 Watersheds
Per 202 NM Forest Action Plan

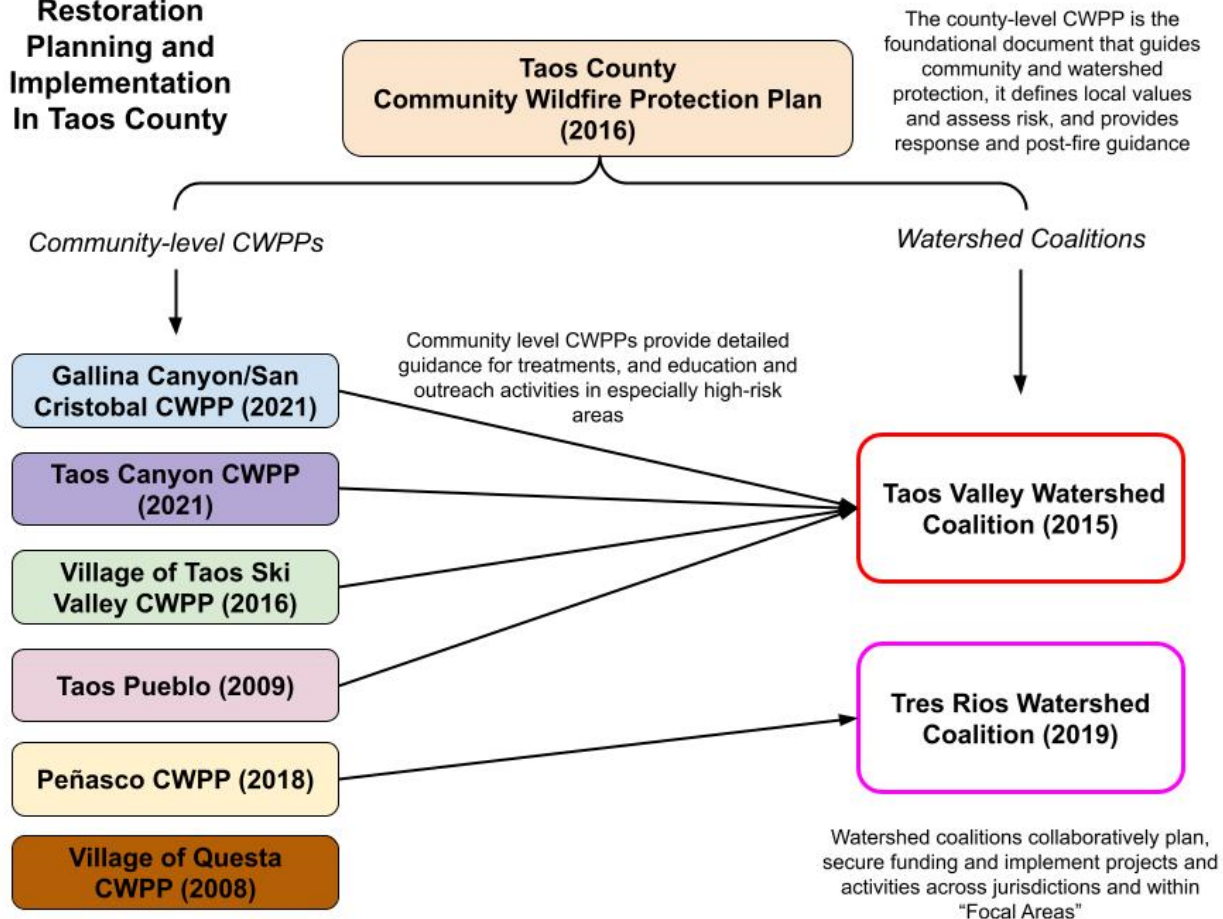


Focal Area Name	Total Acres	Location	Who is working there?	Opportunities	Priority Watersheds (numbers)
Red River	121,000	The Red River Drainage, from south of the town of Red River to the confluence with the Rio Grande	CNF, BLM, Taos County	The Red River Working Group has negotiated a settlement with the Natural Resources Trustee to perform environmental restoration below the Questa mine site.	19 - Upper Red River; 81 - Middle Red River; 122 - Gabresio Creek
Rio Costilla	177,000	The forested portions of the Rio Costilla drainage, plus the Urraca Wildlife Management Area	CNF, NMFD, RCCLA, Vermejo Park	RCCLA has a Forest Management Plan (completed 2020); the Carson National Forest has large Rx burns planned in the Valle Vidal; the Comanche Creek Working Group has accomplished significant in riparian restoration in the Comanche Creek Drainage	22 - Latir Creek/Costilla Creek; 76 - Ute Creek/Costilla Creek; 84 - Comanche Creek; 131 - Comanche Creek/Costilla Creek; 251 - Urraca Canyon
Rio Pueblo de Taos	100,000	Portions of the Arroyo Seco, from south of El Salto to El Prado, as well as the town of Taos, Miranda Canyon and the Steakout area to Pilar	CNF, BLM, Taos Pueblo, Alianza Agricultura de Taos, Taos Valley Acequia Association	A number of efforts are underway to restore stream function in the valley lands and on agricultural properties. The TVAA has organized most of the acequias in this area. The Carson National Forest is developing a management plan for the newly acquired Miranda Canyon property.	136 - Cañada Comanche/Rio Grande; 228 - Arroyo del Alameda/Rio Pueblo de Taos; 277 - Arroyo Seco/Rio Pueblo de Taos
Taos Valley Watershed Coalition	270,000	West slope of the Sangres, from San Cristobal in the north to Pot Creek in the south	CNF, Taos Pueblo, Taos County, NMFD, NRCS, RGWF, El Salto del Agua Association, Firewise Communities, Rio Fernando de Taos Collaborative	The TVWC has leveraged more than \$3M in funding since 2015, and has 66,000 NEPA acres open or under analysis. Partners have been able to build trust and accomplish a number of projects related to workforce development, traditional use, and cross-boundary restoration.	13 - Headwaters Rio Fernando de Taos; 16 - Headwaters Rio Grande del Rancho; 25 - Rio Chiquito; 27 - Rito de la Olla; 133 - Outlet Rio Grande del Rancho; 159 - Outlet Rio Fernando de Taos; 277 - Arroyo Seco/Rio Pueblo de Taos; 287 - Headwaters Arroyo Hondo
Tres Rios Watershed Coalition	204,000	Entire Rio Embudo Basin, from pass at Angostura to Dixon	CNF, BLM, Picuris Pueblo, NMSLO, NMFD	Coalition includes a diverse group of stakeholders, many of whom are already implementing landscape scale projects. The coalition approved and adopted a forest restoration strategy in 2020 and is implementing projects according to that plan.	11 - Osha Canyon/Rio Pueblo; 30 - La Junta Creek; 37 - La Junta Canyon/Rio Pueblo; 52 - Cañada del Ojo Sacro/Embudo Creek; 53 - Rio Santa Barbara/Rio Pueblo; 59 - Outlet Rio Santa Barbara



**The collaborative groups in Taos County are now
tasked with coordinating implementation and
activities within their respective focal areas**

Wildfire and Forest Restoration Planning and Implementation In Taos County



Watershed Coalition Roles in Long-Term Project/Activity Planning and Implementation

- Long-term project development (location, activity types) based on CWPPs, Forest Action Plan, etc...

- Includes NEPA (“**projects**”) and thinning/burning work (“**activities**”) that dovetail with the Carson Forest 5-year plan

- Delegation of coalition partner roles/opportunities in specific activities (treatment work, fundraising, monitoring, etc...)

**Taos Valley
Watershed Coalition**

**Tres Rios
Watershed Coalition**

***FUTURE* Watershed
Coalitions in other
Focal Areas**

**US Forest Service Good
Neighbor Agreement**

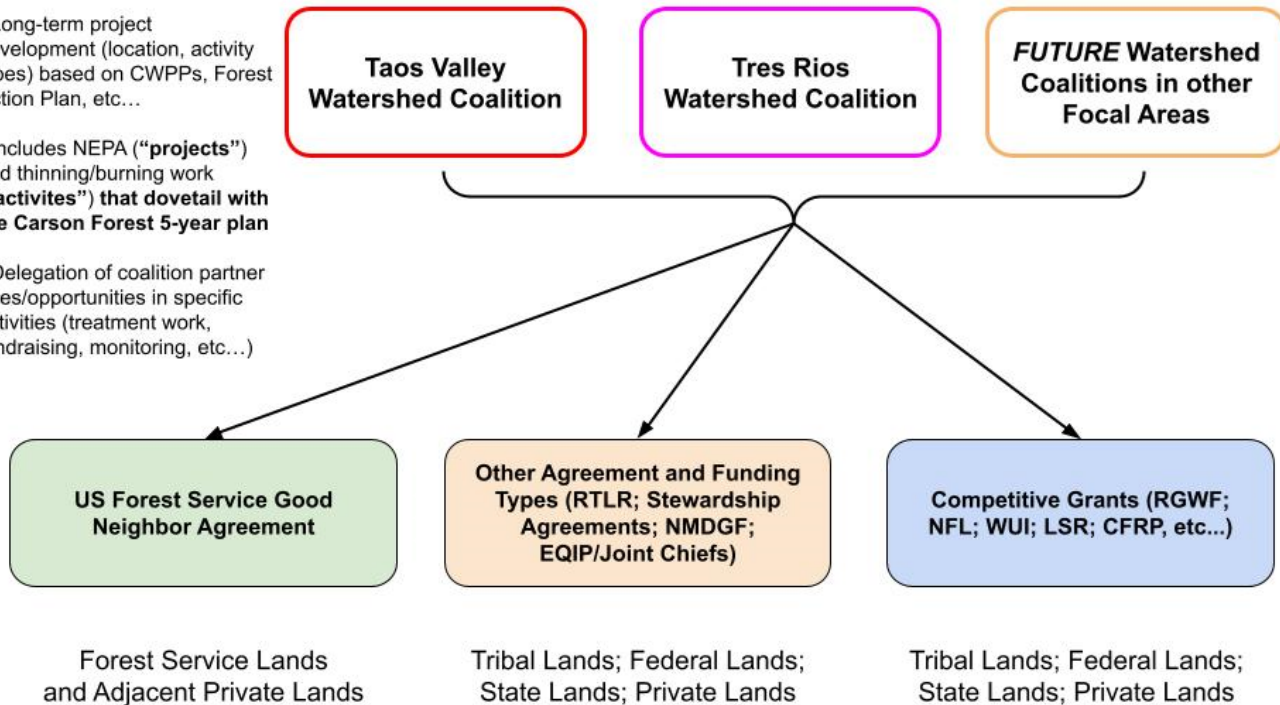
Forest Service Lands
and Adjacent Private Lands

**Other Agreement and Funding
Types (RTL; Stewardship
Agreements; NMDGF;
EQIP/Joint Chiefs)**

Tribal Lands; Federal Lands;
State Lands; Private Lands

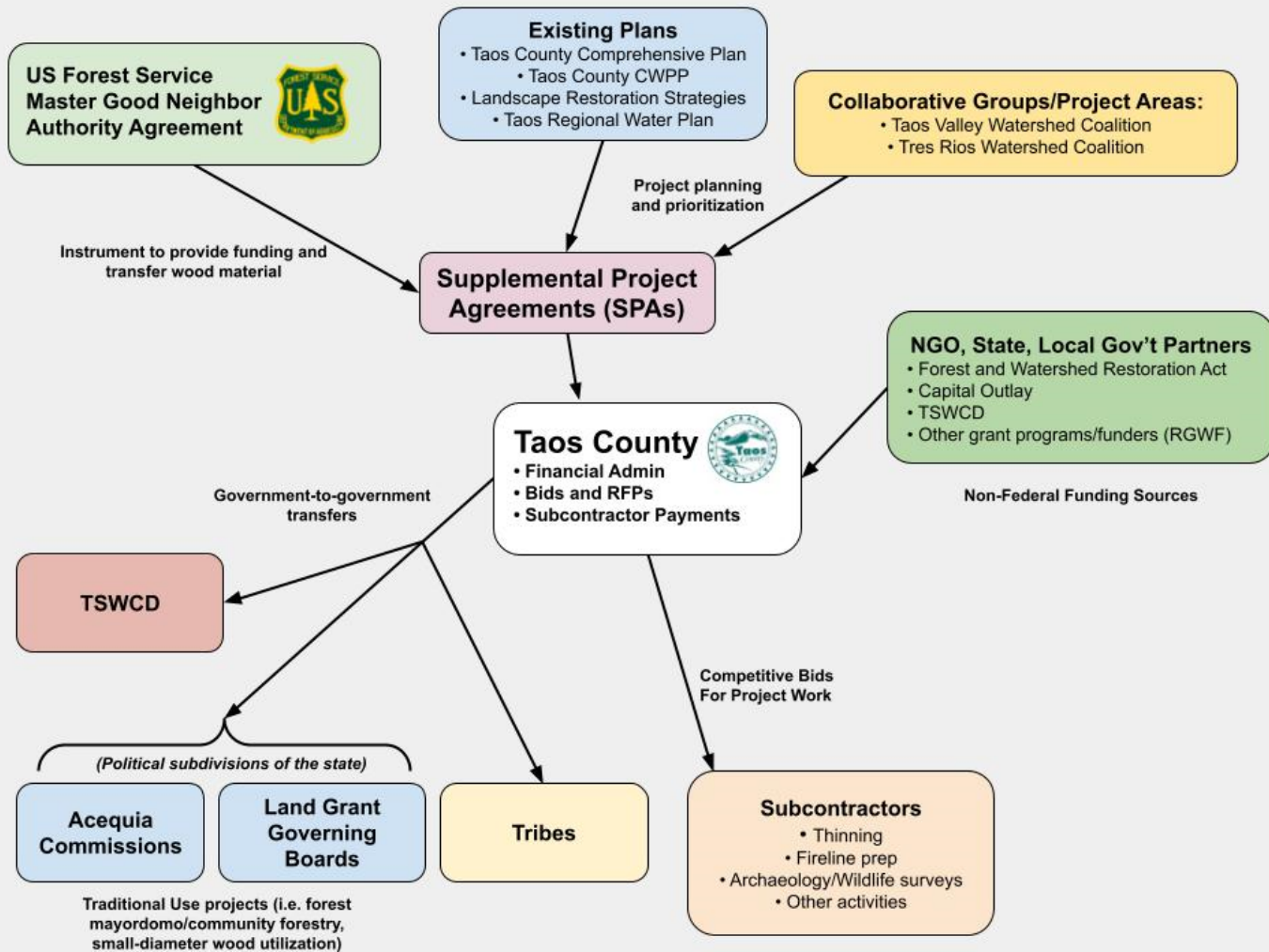
**Competitive Grants (RGWF;
NFL; WUI; LSR; CFRP, etc...)**

Tribal Lands; Federal Lands;
State Lands; Private Lands



Initiation Year	Focal Area	Project Area	Priority Watershed	Land Ownership	Implementation/Actiivty Block
2021	Taos Valley Watershed Coalition	▼ Rio Lucero Watershed Restoration Project	▼ 277 - Arroyo Seco/Rio Pueblo de Taos	▼ Taos Pueblo	▼ Taos Mountain Fuel Break
2021	Taos Valley Watershed Coalition	▼ Rio Lucero Watershed Restoration Project	▼ 277 - Arroyo Seco/Rio Pueblo de Taos	▼ Private (Single Landowner)	▼ El Salto Land Association Fuel Reduction
2021	Taos Valley Watershed Coalition	▼ Kiowa-San Cristobal WUI Project	▼ (None)	▼ Carson National Forest	▼ Cerro Negro Forest Mayordomo CFRP
2021	Taos Valley Watershed Coalition	▼ Kiowa-San Cristobal WUI Project	▼ (None)	▼ Carson National Forest	▼ NMFIA San Cristobal Unit 1
2021	Taos Valley Watershed Coalition	▼ Kiowa-San Cristobal WUI Project	▼ (None)	▼ Carson National Forest	▼ NMFIA San Cristobal Unit 2
2021	Taos Valley Watershed Coalition	▼ Kiowa-San Cristobal WUI Project	▼ (None)	▼ Private (Multiple Landowners)	▼ Gallina Canyon Non-Federal Lands
2021	Taos Valley Watershed Coalition	▼ Hwy 150 Corridor WUI Project	▼ 287 - Headwaters Arroyo Hondo	▼ Carson National Forest	▼ Parking Lot south
2021	Taos Valley Watershed Coalition	▼ Hwy 150 Corridor WUI Project	▼ 287 - Headwaters Arroyo Hondo	▼ Private (Single Landowner)	▼ Taos Land & Cattle 2021 Thinning Treatments
2021	Red River	▼ Rio Grande Del Norte Forest Restoration	▼ (None)	▼ Private (Single Landowner)	▼ Guadalupe East Thinning
2021	Tres Rios Watershed Coalition	▼ Rio Trampas Project	▼ 052 - Cañada del Ojo Sarco/Embudo Creek	▼ Carson National Forest	▼ Rio de las Trampas Forest Council RGWF
2021	Tres Rios Watershed Coalition	▼ Rio Trampas Project	▼ 052 - Cañada del Ojo Sarco/Embudo Creek	▼ Carson National Forest	▼ Rio de las Trampas Forest Council CFRP
2021	Tres Rios Watershed Coalition	▼ Copper Hill Project	▼ 052 - Cañada del Ojo Sarco/Embudo Creek	▼ State Land Office	▼ Santa Barbara Land Grant Forest Mayordomo
2021	Tres Rios Watershed Coalition	▼ Rio Trampas Project	▼ 052 - Cañada del Ojo Sarco/Embudo Creek	▼ Carson National Forest	▼ NMFIA Entrañas Unit
2021	Tres Rios Watershed Coalition	▼ Rio Trampas Project	▼ 052 - Cañada del Ojo Sarco/Embudo Creek	▼ Carson National Forest	▼ Wood Sharks LLC CFRP
2021	Rio Costilla	▼ RCCLA Forest Restoration	▼ 022 - Latir Creek/Costilla Creek	▼ Private (Single Landowner)	▼ Rio Costilla Cooperative Livestock Association Fuel Reduc
2021	Rio Costilla	▼ RCCLA Forest Restoration	▼ 022 - Latir Creek/Costilla Creek	▼ Private (Single Landowner)	▼ Rio Costilla Cooperative Livestock Association Forest Hea
2021		▼	▼	▼	▼
2021		▼	▼	▼	▼
2021		▼	▼	▼	▼
2021		▼	▼	▼	▼
2021		▼	▼	▼	▼

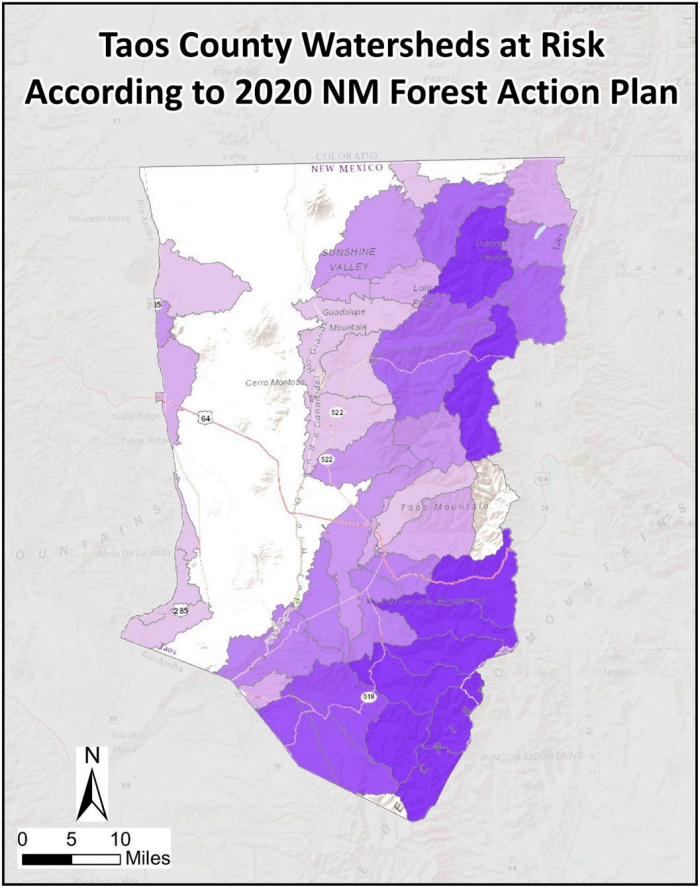
**Once planning and design are done, the next step
is moving the money**



Here's an example:

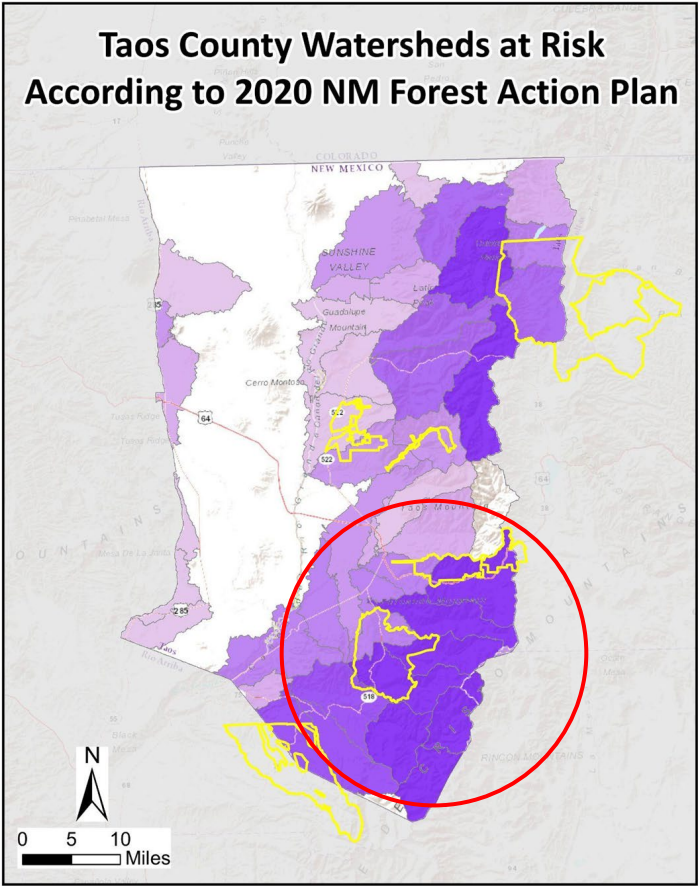
For Example...

**Taos County Watersheds at Risk
According to 2020 NM Forest Action Plan**



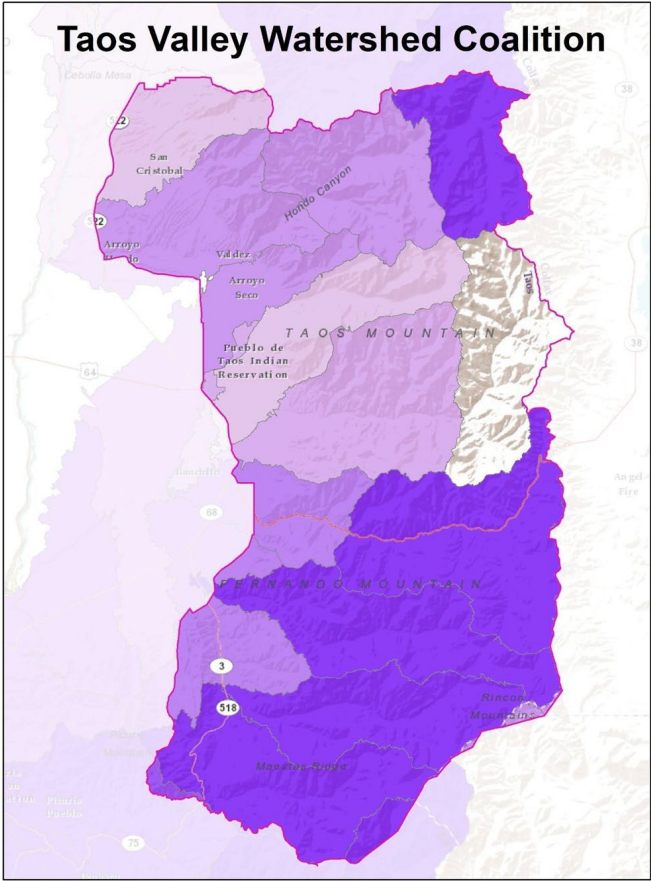
For Example...

**Taos County Watersheds at Risk
According to 2020 NM Forest Action Plan**



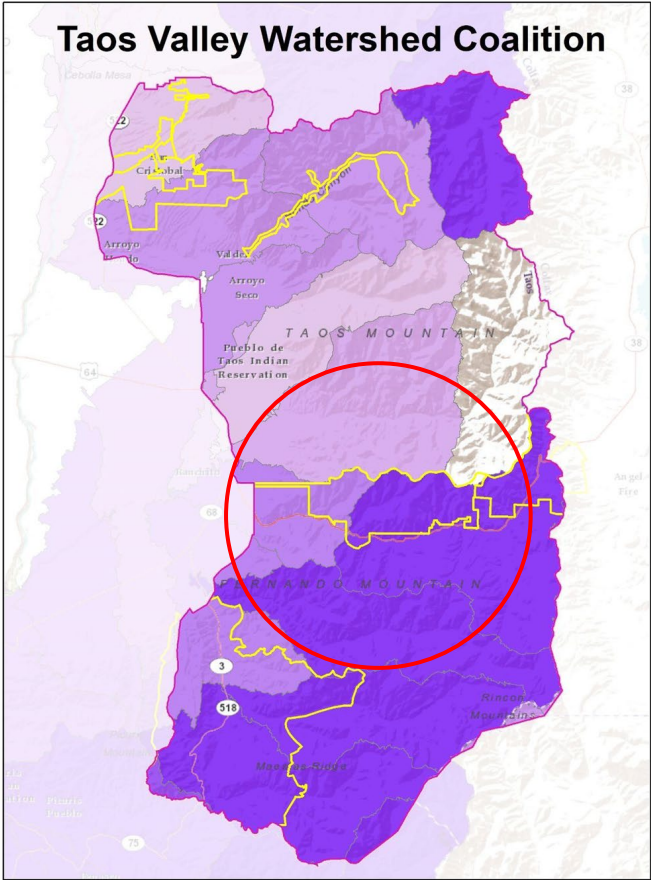
For Example...

Watershed Coalition



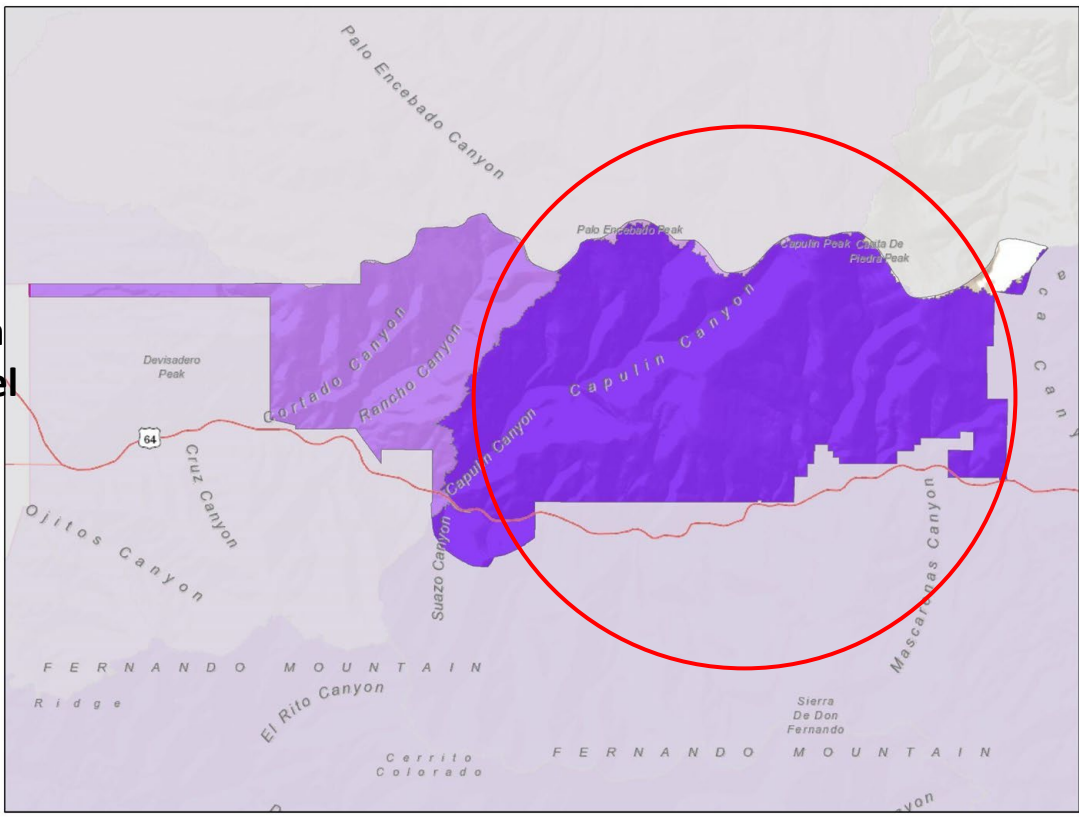
For Example...

Watershed Coalition



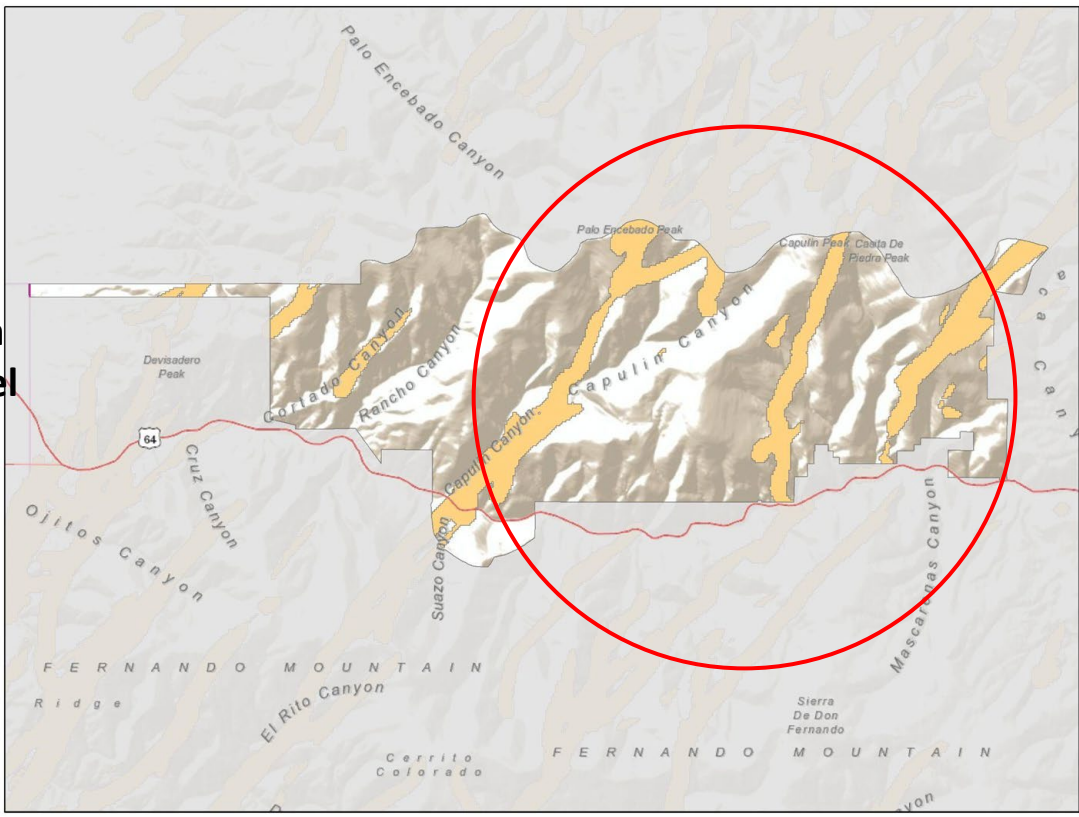
For Example...

Watershed Coalition
And Community-Level
CWPP



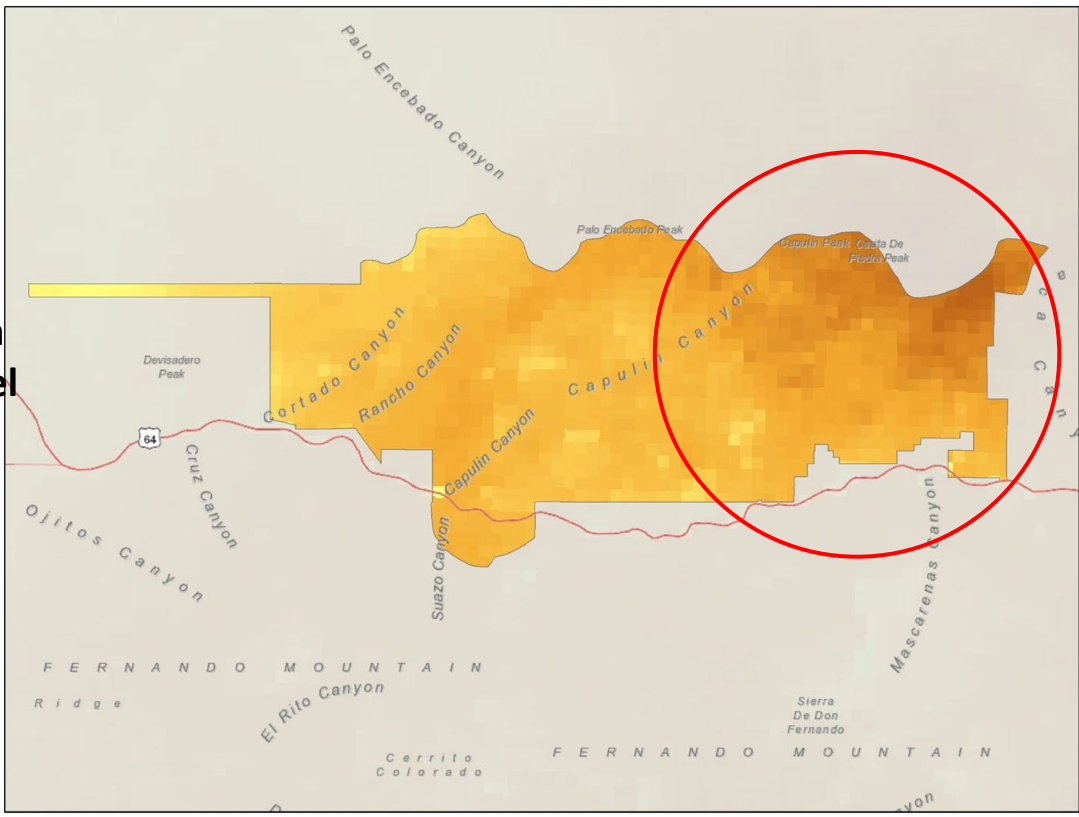
For Example...

Watershed Coalition
And Community-Level
CWPP



For Example...

Watershed Coalition
And Community-Level
CWPP



For Example...

Watershed Coalition
And Community-Level
CWPP





**Once a project area is identified, the collaboratives
what “tools” from the “toolbox” are best suited to
get work done while accomplishing our other goals:**

- Forest Mayordomo/Community Forestry
- Local contractors, including Rocky Mtn. Youth Corps
- Production acres (larger national contractors)
- Burn Teams (All Hands, All Lands, etc...)

The collaboratives can also agree on which funding source(s) are easiest for accomplishing that work.

So where are we now?

The Carson National Forest has already completed a 5-year plan for fuels and fire treatments

Taos County and the Carson have agreed to several projects from that plan that we expect to see funded and implemented using Good Neighbor

We are now working with State Forestry Division, tribes, land grants, acequias, Firewise communities and other private landowners to work up cross-boundary projects that compliment work on the National Forest



By the end of this calendar year, we expect to have several million dollars worth of “shovel ready” projects on all types of land (Forest Service, BLM, tribal, private) and in high priority areas that have been vetted by the collaborative groups.

We also expect to have an updated Taos County CWPP that validates those project areas, and details the values we want to achieve when completing work (fuelwood, local jobs, wildlife habitat, etc...)



Key Takeaways:

- **Good planning means aligning federal, state, local and hyperlocal priorities.**
- **With solid plans in place, collaborative groups can move beyond kumbaya relationship building and into detailed project development and implementation**
- **Streamlining the flow of funding and adding local government capacity may prove to be the key to achieving “pace and scale” at the landscape level.**

Questions? Comments?



J.R. Logan
Taos County WUI Coordinator
johnrogerlogan@gmail.com
(575) 779-5467
www.taoscountywildfire.org