

Policy Update: Taking Action in the WUI

Presentation at the
New Mexico Wildland Urban
Interface Summit

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The List of Possibilities

1. Update the Fire Planning Task Force
2. Support Communities to Prepare for Wildfire
3. Improve Funding for Wildfire Response



Existing Authority

68-2-34 NMSA 1978



68-2-34. Fire planning task force;

A. The "fire planning task force" is created. The task force shall consist of twelve members as follows:

- (1) the state fire marshal;
- (2) the director of the local government division of the department of finance and administration;
- (3) a representative of the commissioner of public lands;
- (4) a representative of the federal bureau of land management on behalf of the United States department of the interior, appointed by the governor after consulting with the department of the interior;
- (5) a representative of the United States forest service, appointed by the governor, after consulting with the forest service;
- (6) a member of a local fire department, appointed by the governor;
- (7) a member of a volunteer fire department;
- (8) a representative of the New Mexico association of counties;
- (9) a representative of the New Mexico municipal league;
- (10) the director of the construction industries division of the regulation and licensing department;
- (11) the state forester; and
- (12) a representative of an Indian nation, tribe or pueblo, appointed by the governor.

B. The chair of the task force shall be elected by the task force. The task force shall meet at the call of the chair.

C. The public members of the task force shall receive per diem and mileage pursuant to the Per Diem and Mileage Act [10-8-1 to 10-8-8 NMSA 1978].

D. The forestry division of the energy, minerals and natural resources department, with assistance from the department of finance and administration, shall provide staff for the task force.

Fire Planning Task Force

Ideas & Options for 68-2-34 NMSA 1978

Section A. Expand members from twelve to sixteen as follows:

- (13) superintendent of insurance;
- (14) department of homeland security and emergency management;
- (15) a representative of home builders, appointed by the secretary of the regulation and licensing department;
- (16) a representative of realtors, appointed by the governor.

Existing Authority: Fire Planning Task Force Duties

68-2-34 NMSA 1978

- (1) identify those areas within the state that, because of the interface between forests and urban buildings, are the most vulnerable to danger from forest fires;
- (2) develop standards for building codes and ordinances that will reduce the threat of forest fires. In developing the standards, the task force shall:
 - a. recognize the distinction between altering existing situations and establishing standards for new construction;
 - b. consider the benefits of thinning overgrown forests, conducting controlled burns, clearing spaces around homes and other structures, using noncombustible roofing materials and double-pane windows and taking other fire suppression or prevention measures;
 - c. consider the impact of fire mitigation measures on wildlife; and
 - d. solicit comments from affected landowners, land users and local governments;
- (3) work with communities in the affected areas in adopting and implementing the building codes and ordinances; and
- (4) report its progress and any recommendations for legislation to the governor and the legislature by December 15 of each year.

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Replace Section E.(2) with actionable language

1. Identify and map those areas within the state that, because of the interface between forests and buildings, are the most vulnerable to danger from wildfires.
2. Provide guidance for local government adoption of wildland urban interface building codes to promote wildfire prepared homes.
3. Develop a model ordinance to promote defensible space in the wildland urban interface.
4. Develop a certification program to support hardening of existing structures and provide retrofit grants with requirements for community action.

Managing New Mexico's wildfire costs

Structuring budgets for volatility

Presentation to Legislative Finance Committee on August 22, 2024
Peter Muller and Ronojoy Sen



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How New Mexico currently funds fire suppression

- Salary, personnel, and employee benefits are appropriated annually with a mix of general and federal grants
- Fire suppression readiness and wildfire costs are paid from executive orders as needed
- Local governments are reimbursed for their expenses to suppress wildfire within 45 days and the forestry division seeks federal reimbursement
- Federal reimbursements return to the general fund
- Fire engines, fire response vehicles, and facilities are funded through capital outlay



An alternative approach for funding wildfires

- Establish a dedicated fund for wildfire.
- Decide the uses of the dedicated fund.
- Determine what to do with unused funds and reimbursements.
- Designate funding source and amount.
- Create an expenditure reporting requirement.



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Questions and Discussion



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