Forestry Division:
Updates and Future Initiatives

Wildland Urban Interface Summit
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What we do:

- Provide technical support to private landowners
- Wildland fire suppression on 43-million acres
- Grants for rural volunteer fire department
- Helping private landowners with forest health concerns and management options
- Protecting rare plants and conserving ecologically important lands
- Private land prescribed burn training
- Reforestation Initiatives
- Tribal Collaboration

Mitigating Wildfire Risk with Forest Treatments

Treating overgrown forests through thinning and prescribed fire - paired with defensible space around communities - is the state's most effective strategy for reducing wildfire risk.

Updates:

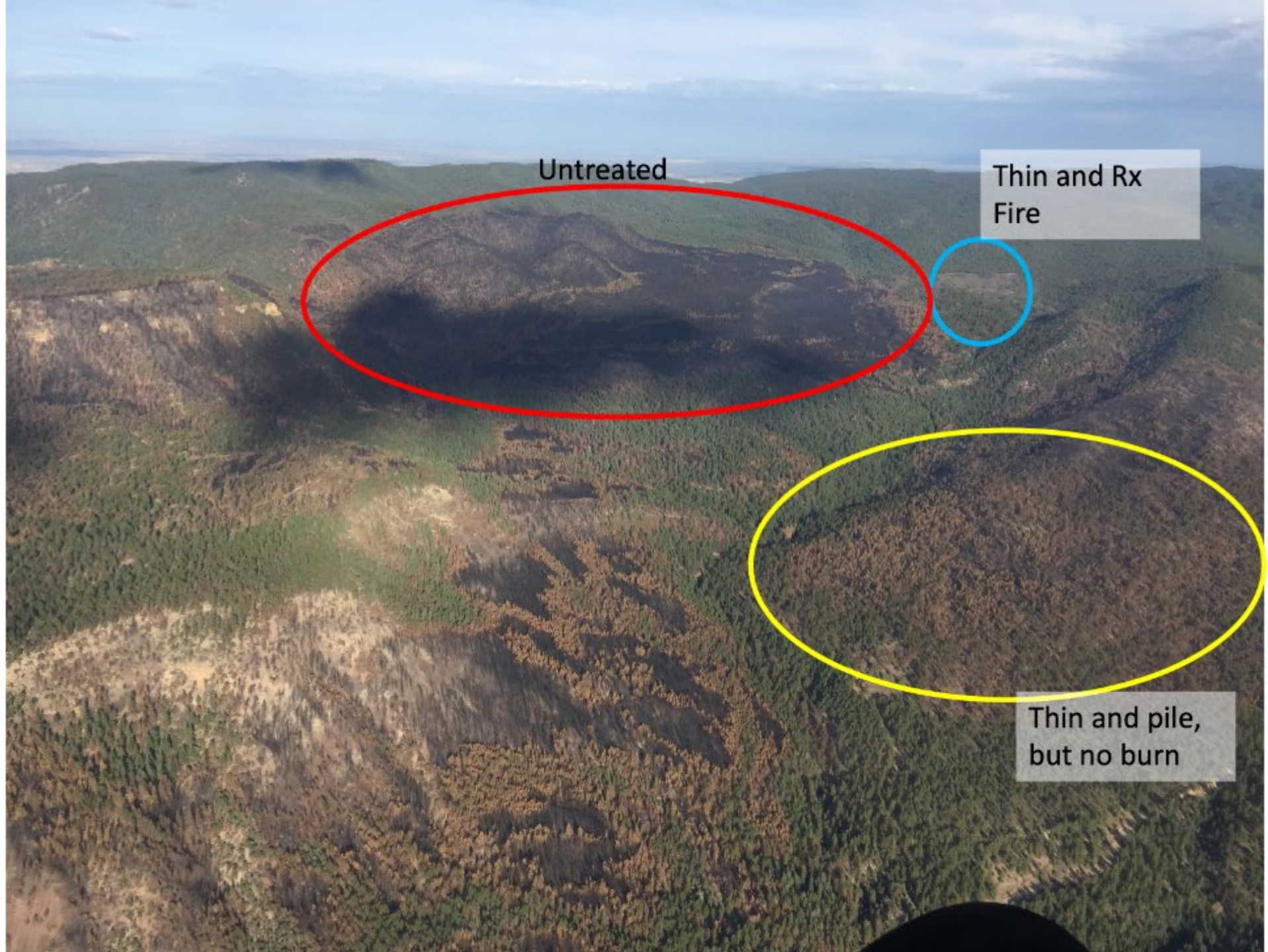
- Forestry Division treated 19,931 acres in FY25; and 22,101 acres in FY26
- Piloted Landscape Stewardship Planning
- Community Wildfire Mitigation Buffers
- Shared Stewardship Agreement with National Forests
- Timber Grading Certification Program

Issues and Opportunities:

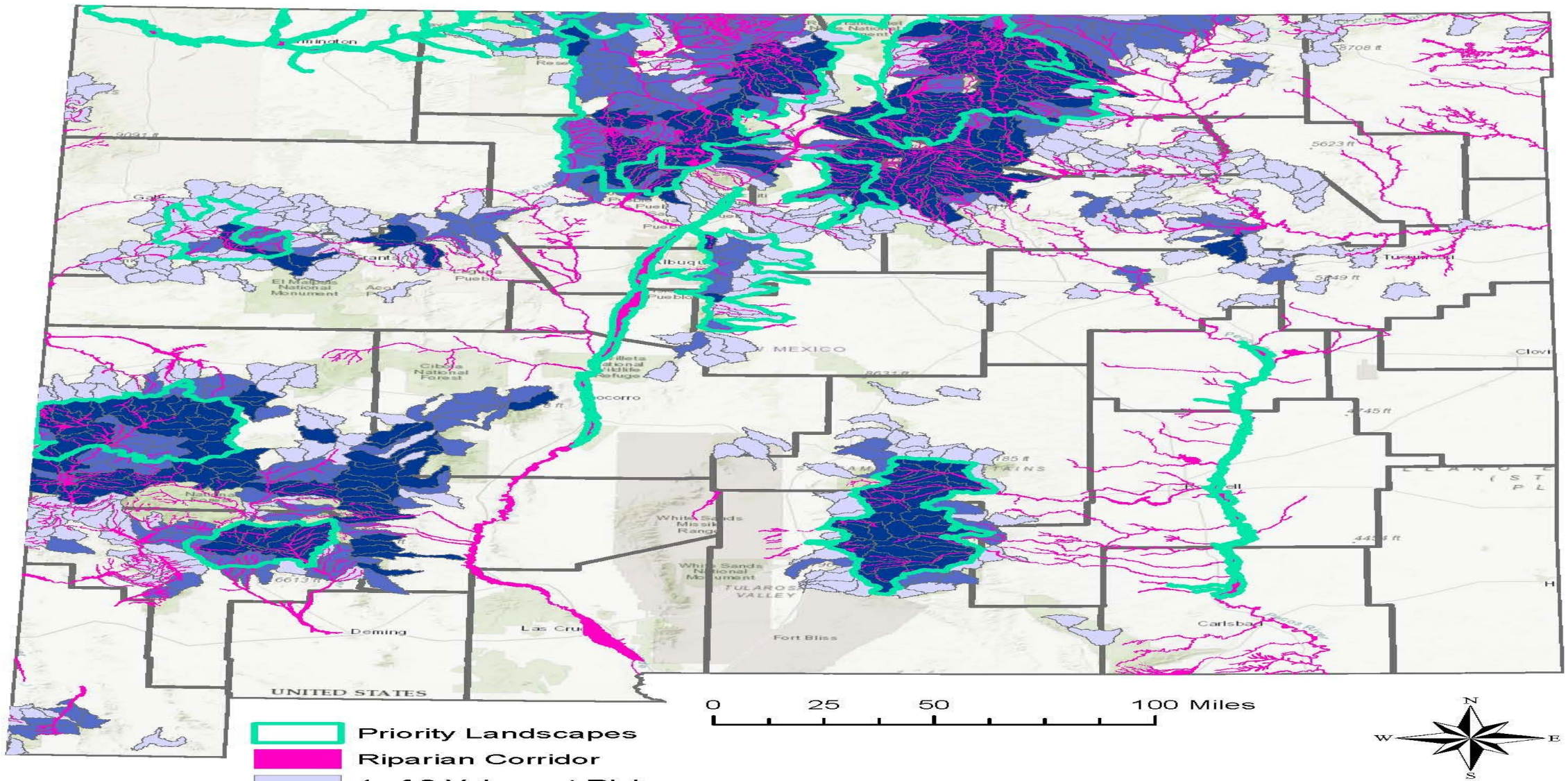
- More trees die than are removed at a pace of 13:1
- Current pace of treatment is insufficient
- Forest treatment ROI is 9:1 on jobs and economics alone
- Every dollar spent on wildfire risk-reduction saves about $3 in suppression costs and up to $39 when post-fire damages are included



References:
USDA Forest Service. 2026. Forests of New Mexico, 2022: FIA Annual Snapshot. FS-821; NM EMNRD Forestry Division. 2025. Senate Joint Memorial 1 (SJM1) Report to the Legislature.
NM EMNRD. 2025. New Mexico Climate Action Plan; Beagles, J., et al. 2024. New Mexico 2021 Wood Products Industry Highlights; Barker, J., et al. 2024. Costs and Benefits of Pile Burning. Frontiers in Forests and Global Change.
Troy, A., et al. 2022. The True Cost of Wildfire in the Western U.S. WFLC; Strabo, F., Bryan, C., and Reimer, M.N. 2025. Wildfire Damages and the Cost-Effective Role of Forest Fuel Treatments. SSRN 5337929.


Untreated
Thin and Rx Fire
Thin and pile, but no burn

Shared StewardshipTop 500 Watersheds



SJM1 Report - New Mexico's Forest & Wildfire Challenges

Scale of the Problem

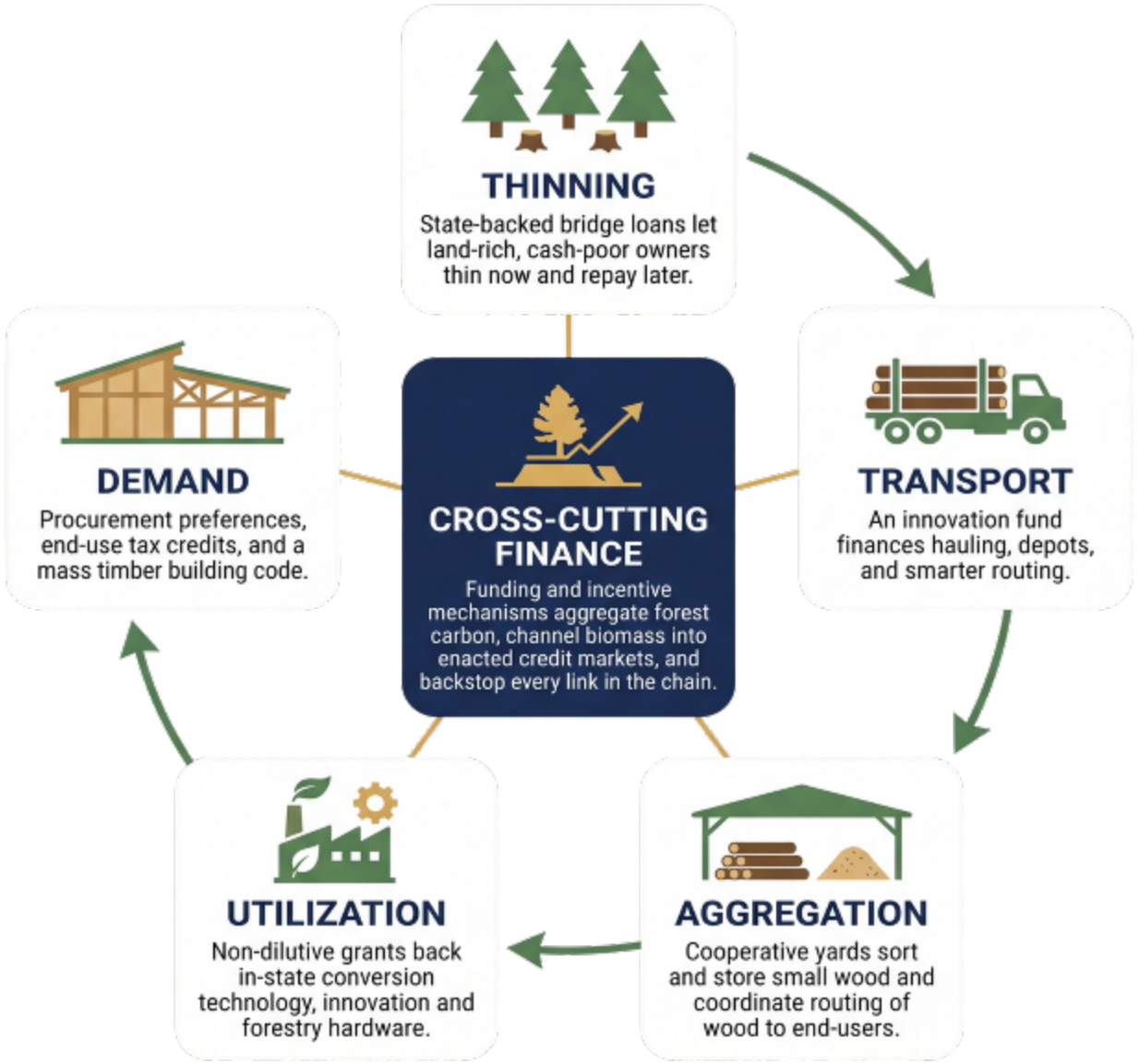
- 16.8M acres of non-federal forested land; most are overstocked and fire-prone.
- Current treatment pace (~125,000 acres/year statewide) would take 136 years to restore priority acres.
- To reach healthy conditions within a generation, NM must treat 1.7M acres/year (a 14x increase).

Key Barriers

1. Capital constraints for landowners ("land rich, cash poor") and contractors.
2. Insufficient workforce for thinning, burning, and forest operations.
3. High transportation costs and lack of regional woodyard infrastructure.
4. Underdeveloped wood-products economy compared to AZ, CO, OR.
5. Rising wildfire risk demonstrated by HPCC (341,000 acres; >$5B claims fund for damages).



Value-Chain to Convert Wildfire Risk to Economic Opportunity and Scale Outcomes

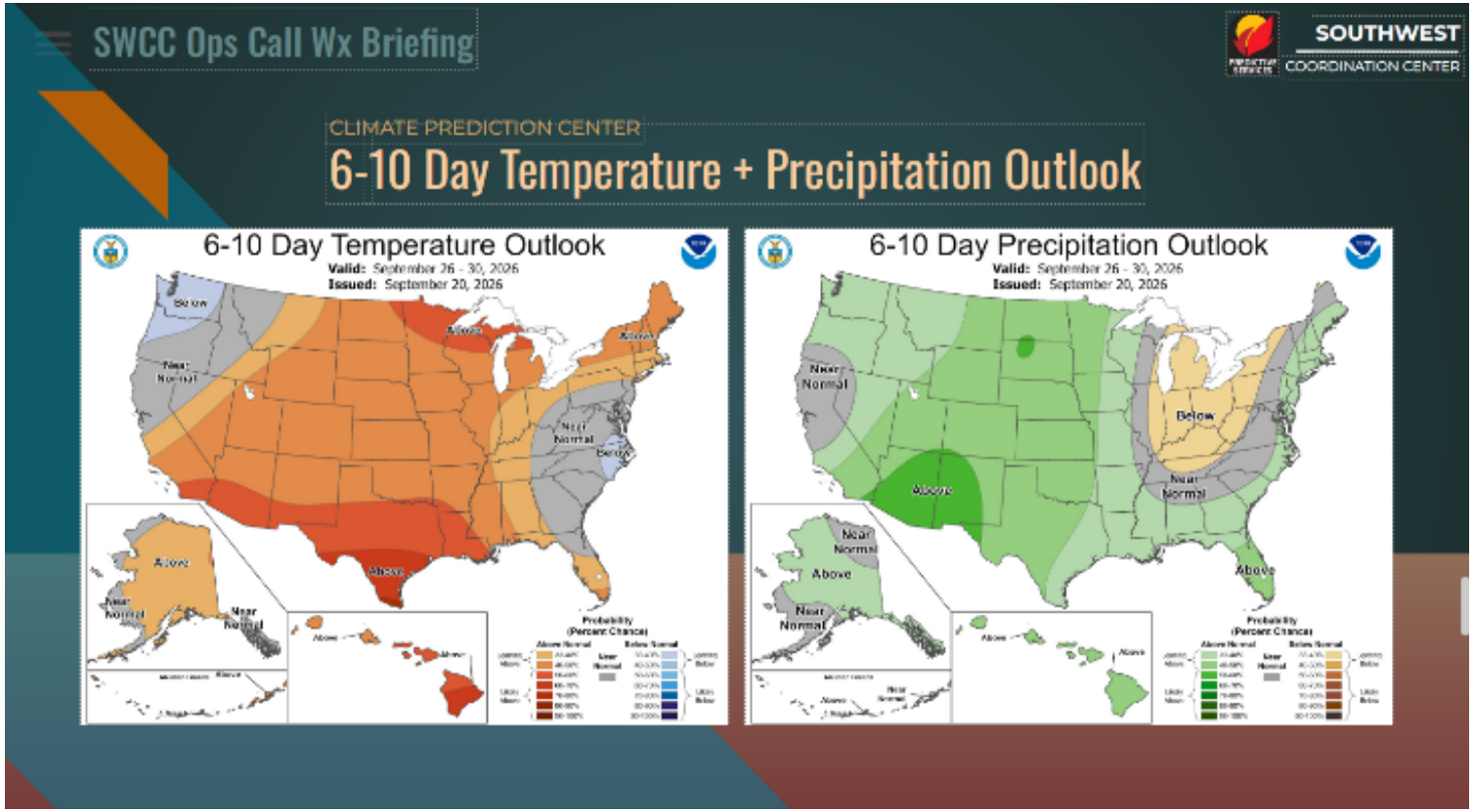


New Mexico Biomass Economy Working Group

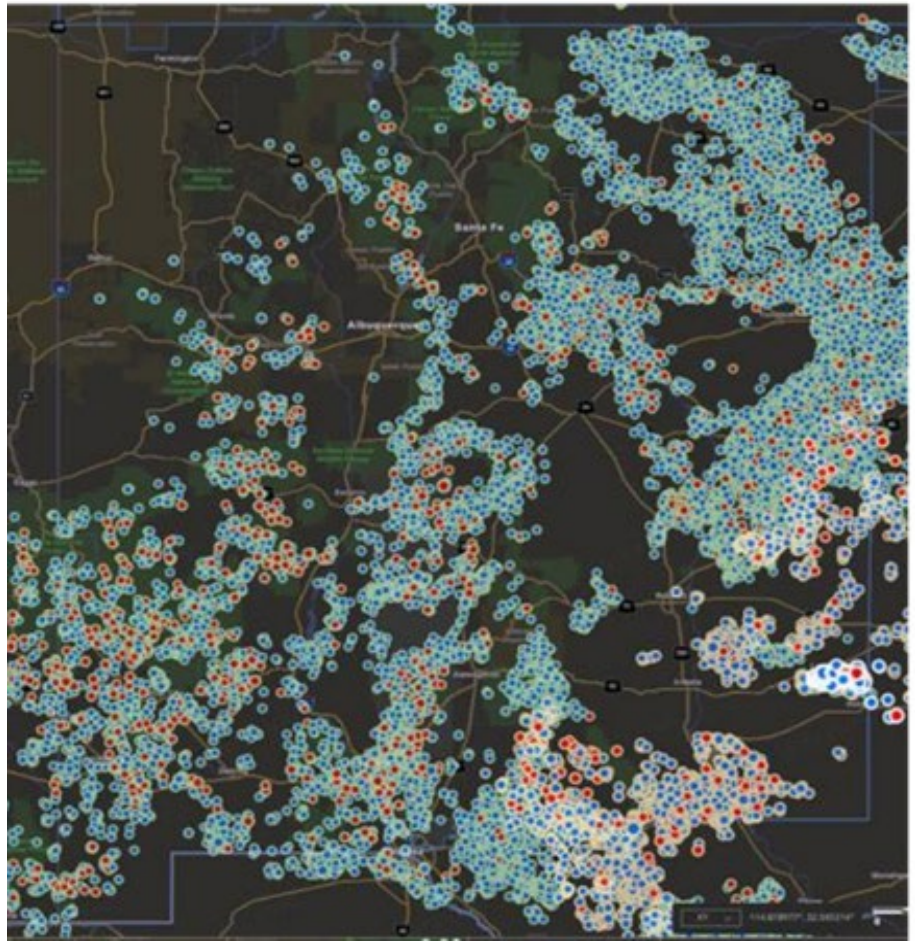


Wildfire Suppression

- Above normal 2026 Wildland Fire Potential
- 30,000 lightning strikes in one day is common
- Since January 1, over 1,700 wildfires and 189,000 acres burned



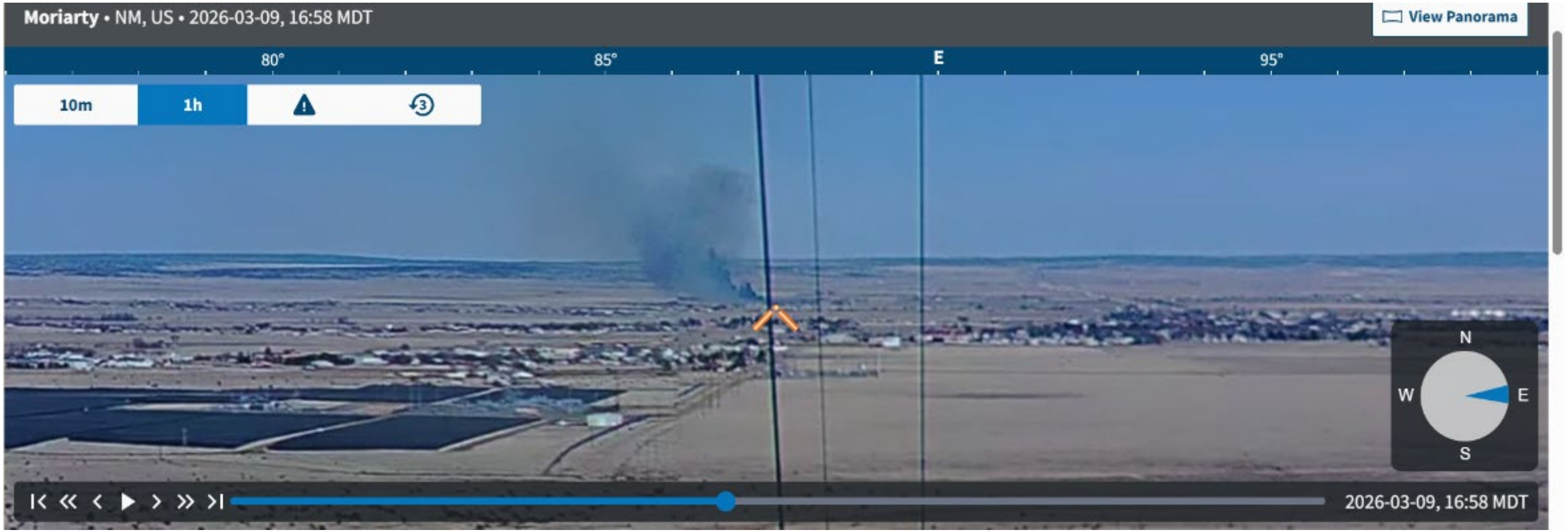
One day of lightning strikes in June 2026



Wildfire Early Detection Cameras

- 11 cameras in FY26 and 21 in FY27 with special appropriations as a pilot program
- Average 40 minutes saved in response time

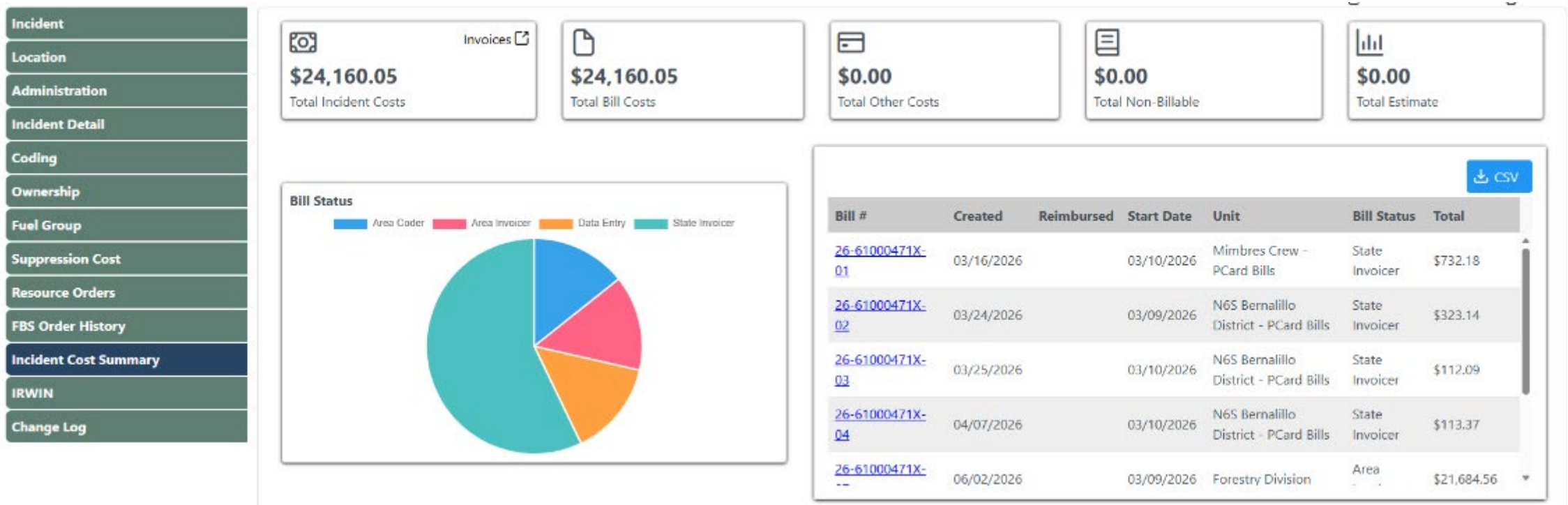
Photo: View of a new smoke detected by Pano AI camera and seen by Forestry Division staff; this was named the Cummings fire.



Faster Response = Money Saved

How Wildfire Early Detection Cameras Save the State Money

- Delay would have required additional apparatus, overhead to manage the resources, and possibly aviation.
- Cummings fire suppressed in 2 days at 94 acres.
- Given fuels and wind that day, the fire could have doubled or tripled in size, costing 10 times as much.



Overview of Wildfire Response Resources





- **Mimbres Crew** on the road to qualify for Hotshot Type 1, targeting certification in 2027
- **Pecos River Crew** hired Superintendent, crew leaders and firefighters, moving toward starting the certification process
- **Wildfire Response Program:** 1 fully staffed Type-2 Initial Attack crew; a 10-person module; multiple engines
- **State Type-6 Fire Engines:** 8 FTE engine bosses and 18 Type-6 engines
- **Over 200 Administratively Determined** (AD) emergency-hire firefighter applications: highest # for recruitment in recent time
- **2,293 firefighters trained** for FY26: increased capacity statewide, compared to slightly more than 2,000 firefighters trained in FY25.

Local Government RMP

The Forestry Division works with Counties and Municipalities through our Resource Mobilization Plans (RMP) that allow their wildland fire resources to participate in firefighting statewide and nationally.

- 10 Counties
- 19 Municipalities

Capacity in 2026 includes:

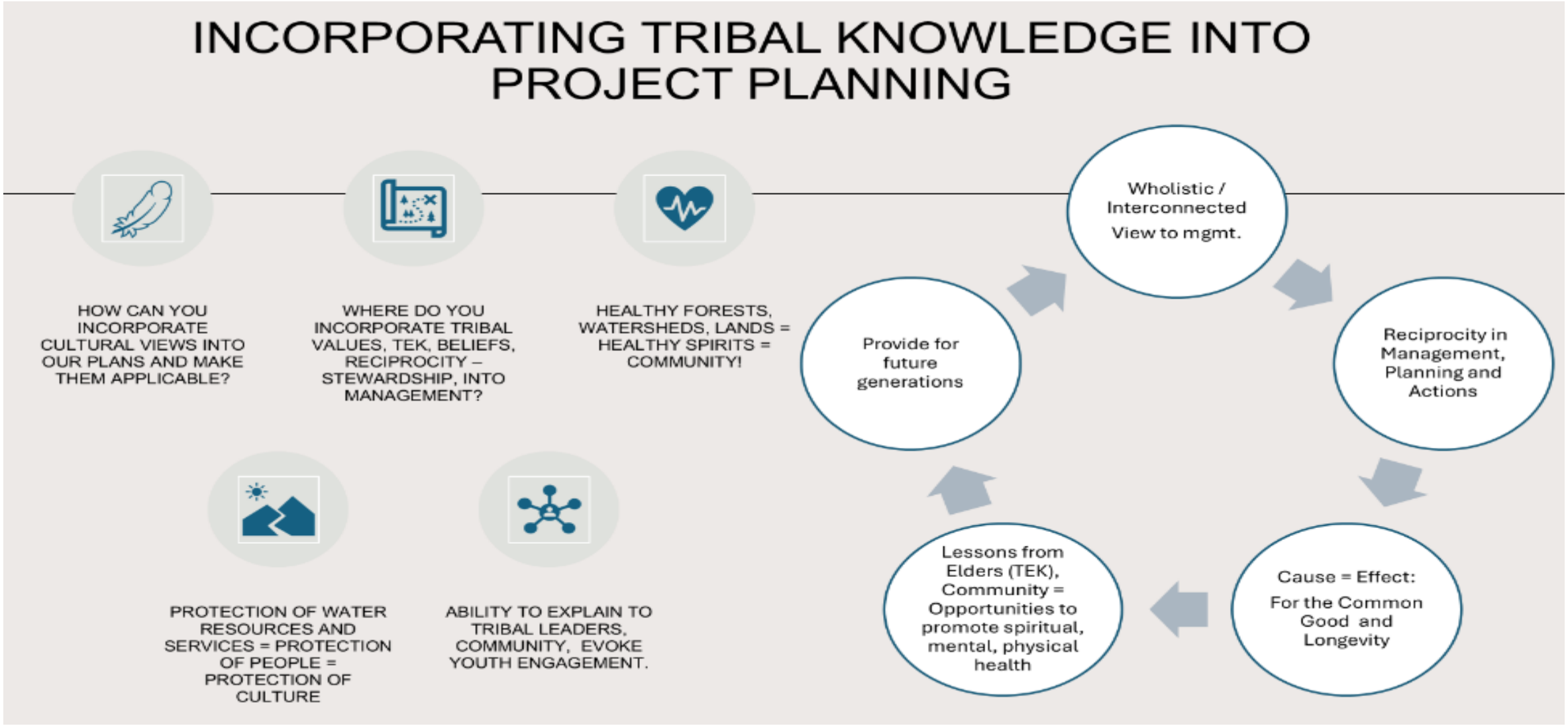
- Emergency Medical Units
- Type 6 Wildland Engines
- Type 3 Wildland Engines
- Water Tenders
- Overhead Positions
- 20 Person Hand Crew
- Wildland Response Module





Photos: Bottom, Rio Communities Fire Dept filling a water tank for helicopter bucket dips. Top, Valencia County Wildland Captain providing leadership for initial attack.

Tribal Forestry and Wildfire Management
















PICURIS
PUEBLO
natural
CHARCOAL
PICURIS
PUEBLO
natural
CHARCOAL
All Natural
LOCAL Picuris Pueblo Charcoal




NM TRIBAL FIRE & FORESTRY
WORKING GROUP



Future:

Our Work needs to be:

- Science informed while incorporating cultural knowledge, attuned to current conditions and what the land is telling us.
- Focused on fire impacts not fence lines
- Adapting with the landscape shifts
- Seeking increased opportunities for prescribed burning
- Consider the impacts of increased mortality from forest insects and disease
- Biomass Economy – legislative and local support

Conclusion

- Is the climate making our models, protocols and prescriptions obsolete?
- Is the integration of FAP, Shared Stewardship and New/Old Science and traditional practices providing a futuristic road map?
- What are we missing? Are we adapting our strategies and policies fast enough?
- Is funding the right answer?



Thank You!

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