



DECISION MEMORANDUM FOR THE
SECRETARY

THROUGH: Mark Rey
Under Secretary, NRE

FROM: Dale N. Bosworth
Chief

SUBJECT: Ecological Restoration Institutes
FILE CODE: 5100

Issue:

Formal designation of three Southwestern Universities as host institutions for Southwestern Ecosystem Restoration Institutes, as required under Public Law 108-317, the Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act of 2004.

BACKGROUND:

Public Law 108-317, the Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act, was signed by the President on October 5, 2004. The goal of this legislation is to promote the use of adaptive ecosystem management to reduce the risk of wildfires and restore the health of forest and woodland ecosystems in the interior West. It is intended to establish three Southwestern Institutes to “enhance the capacity to develop, transfer, apply, monitor, and regularly update practical science-based forest restoration treatments that will reduce the risk of severe wildfires, and improve the health of dry forest and woodland ecosystems in the interior West” in collaboration with land managers, other research organizations, and other stakeholders who design and implement restoration treatments. The bill authorizes the appropriation of \$15 million each fiscal year to carry out the Act, but does not direct agencies to provide funding.

The bill directs the United States Department of Agriculture, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service, and in consultation with the Secretary of the Department of the Interior, to establish three institutes, one in Arizona, Colorado and New Mexico, within 180 days of passage of the Act, or by April 5, 2004. Congressional language identified the intended host institution for Arizona as Northern Arizona University and for New Mexico as New Mexico Highlands University, but it did not designate a host for the Colorado Institute.

The Agency believes Colorado State University is the appropriate host institution to lead the Colorado Ecosystem Restoration Institute because it has:



- Demonstrated the capacity and vision to implement the applied work envisioned by this legislation.
- Demonstrated commitment, through the Colorado Forest Restoration Institute, in Fort Collins, to form the Colorado Forest Restoration network, a formalized collaborative network to connect people across Colorado with information, technology, and with other practitioners. Stakeholders include the Colorado State Forest Service, USDA Forest Service land managers and research scientists, Colorado State University and University of Colorado scientists, managers, policy makers, Club 20, county government, and conservation organizations.
- A century of experience and engagement in forest management in the Rocky Mountains. Its College of Natural Resources has over 70 faculty members, within a land-grant university representing a full suite of expertise in the social and natural resource sciences.
- Developed close collaboration and association with a wide variety of partners, including the Colorado State Forest Service, the USDA Forest Service's Rocky Mountain Research Station, the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest, the USDA National Wildlife Research Center, the Colorado Natural Heritage Program, the United States Geological Survey's Fort Collins Science Center, and the Center for Environmental Management of Military Lands. Regional headquarters for the USDA Forest Service and USDA's National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife are nearby in Denver.
- Committed and strong leadership at the host institution in Fort Collins, along with the Colorado State Forester, and the USDA Forest Service partners.
- Worked to meet the intended goals of Public Law 108:317 by collaborating with the proposed institutes in Arizona and New Mexico to develop an overarching strategic plan for the Southwestern Restoration Institutes and by developing a state plan to support forest restoration in Colorado.

OPTIONS:

1. Designate New Mexico Highlands University and Northern Arizona University as lead institutions for their states as directed in Public Law 108-317, and Colorado State University as the lead institution for Colorado as recommended by the Forest Service.
 - a. Pros—As discussed above, Colorado State is highly qualified to fill the designated role.
 - b. Cons—None
2. Designate a different lead institution in Colorado.
 - a. Pros—None



- b. Cons—No other university in Colorado has an equivalent track record of collaboration activities in this area, or the high level of capacity and experienced staff in forest restoration in the Interior West.

RECOMMENDATION:

Formally designate the following three southwestern universities as their state’s lead host for the collaborative network of Southwestern Ecosystem Restoration Institute.”

- Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff as the host of the Arizona Ecosystem Restoration Institute.
- New Mexico Highlands University in Las Vegas as the host of the New Mexico Ecosystem Restoration Institute; and
- Colorado State University in Fort Collins as the host of the Colorado Ecosystem Restoration Institute.

These three institutions are the most appropriate locations to carry out the intent of Public Law 108-317, the Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act.

DECISION BY THE SECRETARY:

Approve X

Date 2/20/05

Disapprove _____

Discuss with me _____

Reviewed by: /s/ Dale W. Moore

