

Restore

re store, vt. 1. to return something to its proper owner or place; 2. to bring something back to an earlier and better condition; 3. to reestablish or put back something that was once but is no longer there. Encarta® World English Dictionary® 1999

The Restore New Mexico partnership is becoming a model for restoring landscapes across the nation. Won't you join us?

-Linda Rundell, BLM-New Mexico State Director



New Mexico Partners Restore 500,000th Acre

Restore New Mexico has achieved yet another milestone this year – the restoration of 500,000 acres of land in New Mexico since the program was launched 3 years ago. We will celebrate this accomplishment in May or June, inviting partners and

dignitaries to view restoration and reclamation work near Roswell.

This is huge! Partners are restoring landscapes on a scale that few of us thought could actually happen. This issue of *Restore* is dedicated

to everyone involved in the effort and to new partners who will be joining us this year. In three short years, we've gone from concept to action, gaining significant results on the ground statewide.





Healthy Lands, Healthy Wildlife

Linda Rundell, BLM New Mexico,
State Director

I recently heard a presentation from a graduate student from New Mexico State University on low birth weights in New Mexico mule deer fawns. One of the photos showed a newborn fawn that was small enough to fit on the student's clipboard!

I couldn't help but think of Restore New Mexico and how our goal of restoring landscapes and watersheds to their proper condition will be so beneficial to native wildlife populations.

As we restore habitats, wildlife thrive. At times, we work with partners to augment existing big game herds or reintroduce other species – such as turkey and Aplomado falcons – into historic areas where the species no longer exist, or would benefit from additions to the gene pool. While some people may find it difficult to get excited about the restoration of native grasses and forbs, once they understand how restoration

benefits wildlife, they typically have an “aha!” moment.

Many things in nature are out of our control, such as annual rates of precipitation and climate change, but the better condition our rangelands and woodlands are in, the better they and the species they support will be able to adapt to changing conditions. One of my goals for Restore New Mexico is to leave a legacy of healthy landscapes so that in the future we won't see mule deer fawns small enough to fit on a clipboard.

What's Next?

Jesse Juen, BLM New Mexico,
Associate State Director

Now that we're restoring our desert grasslands at breakneck speed, what's next? Our challenge will be to sustain healthy, productive grasslands throughout the state. We will use fire in a prescriptive

manner to keep invasive brush species in check and to sustain the fire-dependent grasses and forbs throughout these ecosystems.

Prescribed fires will need to be conducted on large landscapes, and repeated every 7 to 15 years. With this challenge also comes the opportunity to expand our partnerships to help plan, implement, and monitor the results of the fires.

Another challenge for Restore New Mexico will be bringing balance back to woodlands throughout the state. In many regions of our state, piñon/juniper tree canopies have become so dense that most if not all the understory vegetation is shaded out. This has led to



degraded, unhealthy watersheds with forests that support catastrophic fire conditions and little else. We will be targeting restoration of these woodlands back to healthy, productive states that allow a vegetative understory that encourages a fire-dependent community once again.

Our future success will depend on our partnerships with other agencies and landowners to be as effective as possible across watersheds. We have the advantage of having people that have gone before us who have demonstrated the techniques and advantages of managing our woodlands.

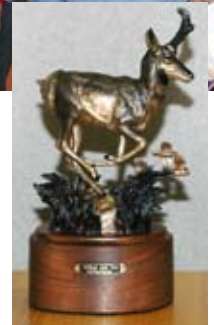
Recognizing Our Partners

Restore New Mexico has hit the big time, and partners involved in the effort are starting to get major recognition! Four individuals and organizations were presented a special Restore New Mexico award – a limited edition bronze sculpture of an antelope – to recognize their outstanding contributions.

The first two awards were presented to Devon Energy and Marbob Energy for contributions they made to support restoration efforts. In December, an award was presented to southeast New Mexico rancher Monty Beckham for his contributions to restore lands within his allotment.



Restore New Mexico Award presented to Monty Beckham at the New Mexico Cattle Growers annual meeting in December 2007 (left to right: Jesse Juen, BLM; Alisa Ogden, Cattle Growers; Monty Beckham; Billie Jean Beckham; Don Ellsworth, BLM).



And on February 13, 2008, Dennis Alexander, NRCS State Conservationist, was presented the award for his agency's support of Restore New Mexico at the annual meeting of the National Association of Conservation Districts.

Congratulations to you all!

The Department of the Interior has selected restoration work done by the BLM's Pecos District and a variety of partners for its prestigious Cooperative Conservation Award, to be personally presented by Secretary Kempthorne on April 21 in Washington, D.C.

In January, the New Mexico Section of the Society for Range Management (SRM) presented its Excellence in Range Management award to the BLM for its work to restore degraded rangelands and wildlife habitat in southeastern New Mexico. In addition, BLM-Las Cruces range conservationist Lane Hauser was presented the SRM's New Mexico Range Conservationist of the Year award at its national convention in Louisville, Kentucky, for his work with grazing allottees, the NRCS, and other partners to arrange for treatment of almost 90,000 acres of rangelands in 2007.

"It's encouraging the BLM has taken a proactive, multi-faceted approach in addressing rangeland health. As a partner in Restore New Mexico, I am better able to implement projects on the total ranch instead of piecemeal areas."

- Alisa Ogden, President, NM Cattle Growers' Association

In BLM we like to say 'Git-R-Done.' Managers involved with Restore New Mexico have this motto proudly festooned on their desks, and they'd like to talk to you about it!



Treated lands south of Carlsbad. On the left is an area one year after treatment; on the right is an area five years after treatment.

News of Note

Southeast New Mexico

The BLM's Carlsbad Field Office recently completed aerial treatments on over 54,000 acres of creosote on areas southeast of Carlsbad, including 6,000 acres of private lands. Partners included the New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts, six ranchers and local soil and water conservation districts. The Carlsbad office also completed prescribed burns on a 2,650-acre tract to reduce the incidence of shrubs, catclaw and prickly pear to help restore grasslands. A second prescribed fire involved 260 acres of public lands along

the Black River southwest of Carlsbad to clear out salt cedar sprouts and overgrown cattail stands in order to provide habitat that's more beneficial to nesting birds. Last year, during a tour of the area, Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne was able to see a dozen turkeys out of a flock that had been reintroduced to the area.

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has awarded a grant of \$250,000 to restore more than 6,000 acres of degraded grasslands in Eddy County north of Carlsbad, benefiting quail, meadowlarks and other grassland birds. State and private partners have raised almost \$400,000 to match the grant, which will be used to restore

grasslands, construct soil erosion structures, and build earthen tanks to benefit grassland-dependent wildlife. Partners include ranchers and the Carlsbad Soil and Water Conservation District, which will oversee contracting and on-the-ground implementation of restoration efforts.

In the Roswell Field Office, 72,000 acres have been included in this year's contract for mesquite treatments, which are scheduled to begin in late May. The treatment areas are concentrated in Lesser Prairie Chicken habitat and focus on the lands addressed in the BLM's Sensitive Species Resource Management Plan Amendments.

Both the Roswell and Carlsbad Field Offices prioritize their treatment areas based on the willingness of private land owners to contribute, adjacent private EQIP contracts and other opportunities available to leverage funding and acreage. Based on the above ranking factors, BLM believes that an additional 12,000 acres of private and State lands will be treated within the landscapes.

The Roswell office is also continuing to combat infestations



Prescribed burn near Carlsbad to reduce shrub encroachment in native grassland.



“The Restore New Mexico program is doing a wonderful job of improving habitat conditions and overall rangeland health. Devon is honored to be a Restore New Mexico partner.”

- Vicky Sanchez, Devon Energy

Sagebrush shaving North of Taos done in February 2008 to create a mosaic of grasslands and sagebrush that will benefit deer and elk.

of salt cedar along the Pecos River and associated tributaries. One contract was issued in January and crews are working on completing 350 acres of salt cedar removal along the corridor with another planned for early to mid summer that would accomplish an additional 300 acres.

In the Fort Stanton area 450 acres of juniper trees were thinned. The material is currently being cut and stacked for local communities to obtain for fuel wood. The office is currently working on an Environmental Assessment that would add an additional landscape to our planning efforts. A plan for the Tularosa watershed is scheduled for completion this summer and would provide an additional 110,000 acres for creosote/catclaw treatment.

Northern New Mexico

The BLM’s Taos Field Office took advantage of frozen ground northwest of Taos in February to do ‘sagebrush shaving’ on 218 acres within a 620-acre parcel of land, creating mosaics of

grass- and sagebrush-dominated landscape that will benefit deer and elk. Sagebrush shaving allows large bulldozers to float their blades above frozen ground with minimal ground disturbance. Frozen sagebrush plants snap off at ground level, and are then windrowed and burned. Over seeding with native forbs and grasses will occur later in the season.

The BLM’s Farmington Field Office will implement a project this spring and summer to enhance native vegetation and wildlife

habitat within the 4,500-acre La Manga Watershed Basin west of Navajo Reservoir. The project includes sagebrush thinning, seeding of native grass species, thinning of encroaching piñon and juniper and placement of erosion control structures.

The office is continuing efforts with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish to improve mule deer habitat on 500 acres in the Crow Mesa Wildlife Area south of Farmington. The project includes mowing, seeding, burning and use of a Dixie Harrow that thins sagebrush and applies native grass and forbs seed at the same time. The BLM will also close and rehabilitate roads in the area to reduce habitat fragmentation.

Meanwhile, in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, about 30,000 acres of land managed by the



BLM sagebrush shaving crew.



will be done with prescribed fire and herbicides. As part of this project the BLM will be treating cheatgrass with herbicides, with a contingency to reseed the area if need be.

Southern New Mexico

The Las Cruces District Office has been engaged in Restore New Mexico since 2006, when 31 grazing permittees were approved for participation in the NRCS EQIP program. This has resulted in over 240 brush control (mesquite and creosote) and structural range improvements planned over the next several years.

The office has completed 100,000 acres of vegetation treatment since 2006 including 76,000 acres in the Jornada Landscape Area in 2007. The office has formed partnerships with livestock operators, NRCS, Quail Unlimited, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, State Land Office, and the Department of Game and Fish to restore native

grasslands on nearly 400,000 acres over the next 5-10 years.

In Socorro, the BLM is planning a 140,000-acre prescribed burn program in the Pelona Mountain area of Catron County to restore an open woodland landscape that will benefit deer and elk, and restore the watershed's natural function. The first phase will include up to 40,000 acres of burns and will continue over the next few years.

"We're thrilled to be a part of the habitat restoration efforts in the Jornada Basin, and we look forward to seeing more projects like this in southern New Mexico."

- John T. Moen, Chairman, Quail Unlimited - Southwestern New Mexico

BLM, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Navajo Nation and State Land Office are scheduled for sagebrush treatments this fall to improve watershed and rangeland health. Sagebrush thinning will be done to promote growth and spread of existing forbs and native grasses to improve the health of the land.

The BLM is also planning treatments to control cheatgrass this fall. Two areas have been identified to conduct initial treatments and monitoring to determine the best management practices for controlling this invasive plant.

The Rio Puerco Field Office has proposed several restoration projects totaling 273,846 acres. The majority of this work will be control of piñon/juniper and sage brush. The work will be accomplished by the use of prescribed fire and herbicides. The La Ventana project will consist of 42,745 acres of control work, which



Linda Rundell, Jesse Juen and Ron Dunton (BLM) on field trip to the Jornada area. Behind them on the right is land restored several years ago; land on the left was restored last fall.

Future Priorities

The BLM's Farmington District has identified 121,600 acres of treatments on sagebrush, including continued work on Crow Mesa in partnership with the Department of Game and Fish, plus salt cedar and Russian olive control work on the San Juan River. Road closure and reclamation work has been identified on over 900 miles of roads in the San Juan Basin.

The Pecos District has identified 1.3 million acres of grassland restoration and oilfield reclamation work. Restoration will target mesquite, creosote, salt cedar and catclaw; reclamation efforts will continue to focus on abandoned oil and gas infrastructure.

Within the lesser prairie chicken/sand dune lizard area BLM and its partners have already treated 91,965 acres of shrub-invaded grasslands on federal, private and state land, and reclaimed 509 acres of oilfield lands (well pads, roads and pipelines). For each acre of oilfield we reclaim, we defragment an average of 100 acres.



Photo courtesy of Diane Hargraves

Partner Profile: Wildlife News NRCS

The Natural Resources Conservation Service has provided over \$4 million over the past three years in Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) grants to over 100 landowners with federal grazing allotments to restore degraded rangelands in New Mexico. The BLM, landowners and other partners have been able to match or exceed these funds, greatly enlarging the size and scope of the restoration projects.

Special thanks are due to State Conservationist Dennis Alexander and his predecessor Rosendo Trevino for their support, as well as Hollis Fuchs and Philip Carter in the field.

This year is shaping up to be a banner year in terms of reintroductions of native wildlife to restored habitats. This summer will feature the third year of Aplomado falcon reintroductions south of Socorro, in cooperation with The Peregrine Fund, the State Land Office and other partners.

River otters will be reintroduced to native habitat along the Rio Grande north of Taos in cooperation with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Amigos Bravos, New Mexico Friends of the River Otter and Defenders of Wildlife.

Watch also for reintroductions of turkey, antelope and bighorn sheep this year! BLM will work with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish to announce these accomplishments when they happen.

Spreading the



Word

For more information and stories about Restore New Mexico, check out these websites:

Mule Deer Foundation Magazine, feature story by BLM wildlife biologist Jack Barnitz
www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/nm/programs/restore_new_mexico/restore_documents.Par.9680.File.dat/mule_deer_nm_redacted.pdf

Department of the Interior Newsletter - People, Land and Water
www.peoplelandandwater.gov/scienceandstewardship/blm_11-26-07_new-mexico-landscape.cfm

BLM-NM
www.blm.gov/nm/st/en/prog/restore_new_mexico.html

BLM NEW MEXICO

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