

Addressing Threats to Water Supply Caused by Overgrown Forests and Increasing Aridity in the San Juan and Rio Chama Watersheds

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Poster Abstract

Anticipated high-severity wildfires in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado, and subsequent post-fire flooding, pose an enormous threat to the region's watersheds and downstream communities that depend on them for water supply. This poster describes the practical application and effectiveness of forest treatments in the San Juan and Chama watersheds, including the headwaters above the Bureau of Reclamation's San Juan-Chama Project and the private lands affiliated with the Chama Peak Land Alliance, the San Juan - Chama Watershed Partnership, and the San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership. The applications discussed in this poster build off GIS mapping previously conducted by The Nature Conservancy to evaluate fire and debris flow risks originating in these forested watersheds and their effect on downstream water users such as Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District. The Chama Peak Land Alliance, Bureau of Reclamation, and other members of the San Juan - Chama Watershed Partnership, have used The Nature Conservancy's research as a basis for prioritizing forest treatment projects to promote forest health and watershed security in the region. With partner funding from the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, the Rio Grande Water Fund, the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, and the Albuquerque-Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority, projects are underway to reduce the threat of high-severity wildfire in these critical watersheds. This poster highlights these important project implementations and the exciting partnership between government agencies, nonprofits, and landowners.

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