

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact
Mike DeBonis
Forest Guild
P.O. Box 519
Santa Fe, NM 87504
(505) 983-8992 x14

**WORKERS COMPENSATION INSURANCE RATES SLASHED
FOR
FORESTRY WORK**

Santa Fe, May 15, 2006: The Forest Guild is pleased to announce that workers' compensation insurance rates have been drastically reduced for forestry work in New Mexico. Alan Seeley, Chief Property/Casualty Actuary at the New Mexico Division of Insurance, informed the organization that the new rate, which applies to safety certified workers, became effective May 1, 2006. More than 130 workers have been certified since the New Mexico Forest Worker Safety Certification program was launched in March. The new rate for safety certified workers is 30 percent; last year's rate was 79 percent. Michael DeBonis, Forest Guild's Southwestern Region Director said "The new rate goes a long way toward helping forest workers in New Mexico attain worker's compensation insurance and compete for local forestry contracts."

Until now, extremely high workers' compensation rates in New Mexico represented one of the biggest barriers to local businesses being able to win fuels reduction and wildfire hazard mitigation contracts. New Mexico workers compensation insurance rates for forest workers were higher than any other western state, and as a result, the majority of our thinning and logging work has been going to out of state contractors.

The Forest Guild's mission is to promote ecologically, economically, and socially responsible forestry as a means of sustaining the integrity of forest ecosystems and the human communities dependent upon them. The Guild provides training, policy analysis, and research to foster excellence in stewardship, to support practicing foresters and allied professionals, and to engage a broader community in the challenges of forest conservation and management. Please visit www.forestguild.org for more information.