NEWS RELEASE

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Forest Guild Map Spotlights NM Forest Restoration Projects

Local area projects have restored forest health and reduced future fire risk

Santa Fe, NM – The **Forest Guild** has long supported New Mexico's Collaborative Forest Restoration Program (CFRP) through which communities, tribes, and state and federal land managers work together to restore forests that have become unhealthy because of decades of **fire suppression**. CFRP has been an outstanding model for the rest of the country, and now in collaboration with New Mexico Highlands University's **New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute** (NMFWRI) and the USDA Forest Service (USFS) the Forest Guild has created a map of the 102 CFRP projects funded over the last six years throughout New Mexico.

With the Guild's new map of CFRP locations, people can appreciate the extent and distribution of these restoration projects across the state. With more than $30 million dollars invested in CFRP projects, it is impressive to see where the projects are happening. The map also showcases the effectiveness of multiparty monitoring, a process that brings together diverse stakeholders (often with divergent opinions about forest management) to collaboratively work toward common forest goals. "Multiparty monitoring will be greatly assisted by the information provided through this map and will hopefully foster increased collaboration between grantees and the public relating to ecological and socioeconomic concerns, outreach, education, and wood utilization," explained Guild Community Forestry Coordinator Eytan Krasilovsky.

The public is invited to access the map through the Forest Guild website at: http://www.forestguild.org/CFRP/. In addition to finding and plotting the location of all projects, the Guild created links on the website so that people can easily learn more about projects in their local area. By establishing a connection between project locations and what they are accomplishing, there can be increased public involvement in the forest restoration effort. "The web-based map illustrates the impact of the CFRP program over the past five years, and also demonstrates the power of mapping as a forest restoration planning tool." added Guild Southwest Region Director Mike Debonis.

Background information

The Forest Guild is a national association of professional foresters and associated resource professionals whose mission is to promote ecologically, economically, and socially responsible forestry – excellent forestry – as a means of sustaining the integrity of forest ecosystems and the human communities which depend upon them. The Guild provides training, policy analysis and research to foster a broader community in meeting the challenges of forest conservation

and management. The Guild is headquartered in Santa Fe, New Mexico, with regional offices in Massachusetts, California, and Wisconsin.

New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute, located at New Mexico Highlands University, provides state-of-the-art information about forest and watershed restoration and collaborates with all participating groups to restore New Mexico forests and watersheds in an ecologically, socially, and economically sound manner. For more information visit their website: http://www.nmhu.edu/nmfwri/.

Fire suppression and forest restoration - Many foresters and scientists realize – after decades of fire suppression – that the effective natural cycle of low-intensity, limited area fires burning through open forest grasslands no longer exists in most ponderosa forests. In the ponderosa pine forests of the American Southwest today, the majority of the trees in the forest are smaller than 12 inches in diameter. These small densely growing trees pose a high risk for catastrophic wildfires because they create a “ladder fuel effect” whereby a low intensity ground fire ascends or “climbs” into the tops or crowns of the largest trees and quickly expands into a high intensity, rapidly moving (sustained crown) fire that requires massive manpower and millions of dollars to extinguish. In forests where ladder fuels are limited and tree crowns are more widely spaced, a wildfire is much less likely to explode into a catastrophic wildfire. By removing smaller trees from the spaces and openings among groups of more mature trees, the potential for a sustained crown fire is reduced. There is consensus among scientists and other natural resource professionals that the practice of thinning small trees - known as fuels reduction treatments - is an effective preventive measure and lowers the risk of catastrophic wildfires in forests.

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