

NEWS RELEASE



Release date: April 16, 2008

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FIRE PREVENTION IN NORTHERN NEW MEXICO

Local Youth Work with Hoopa Crew to Reduce Forest Fire Risk, Improve Forest Health

Chimayo, NM – With the New Mexico fire season now upon us, youth from the **Chimayo Youth Conservation Corps (YCC)** and a visiting **Hoopa crew** of Native American youth from Arizona and California have been working together to reduce the fire risk and improve the health of forests near the northern New Mexico village of Chimayo.

The seven Chimayo YCC crew members (all over 18 years old) are veterans in their third year of fire prevention and forest restoration work in Northern NM. Under the management of Chimayo YCC director, Suellen Strale, the Chimayo crew is being trained for fire assignments and emergency response situations, and is currently able to bid on fence work, landscape, and other thinning and reforestation projects. This spring Strale arranged to have the Chimayo crew team up with a professional Hoopa crew sponsored by The Tribal Community Civilian Corps (TCCC) that receives funding from the Corporation for National Community Service and the Hoopa Tribe of California. The Hoopa crew members (from CA and AZ) are all trained first responders, fire fighters, and certified for low-angle-rope rescue among other qualifications.

For the past four weeks, the two crews have been working with the **Forest Guild** on a forest restoration project to thin the piñon, juniper, and Ponderosa pine trees in the Santa Cruz and Embudo Creek Watersheds and the Carson National Forest. They also piled the slash and cut the logs into fireplace-length pieces that will be available for removal by the public. Forest Guild senior forester, Orlando Romero praised both crews, "This work situation is unique because it has involved two youth crews with different cultural backgrounds and experience who have bonded together so well to professionally complete the project. "

The Guild's Santa Cruz and Embudo Creek Watersheds Multi-jurisdictional Forest Restoration Project is funded by the US Forest Service's (USFS) Collaborative Forest Restoration Program. The three-year project began in the summer of 2007 and is groundbreaking in that it involves multiple landowners—Truchas Land Grant, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and USFS—working together to improve the health of forests and lower the risk of catastrophic fires across land ownerships.

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 is headquartered in Santa Fe, New Mexico, with regional offices in Massachusetts and California.

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