

Habitat Stamp Project Descriptions FY25

1. Whitewater Creek Restoration

The Whitewater Creek Gila Trout Habitat Restoration Project is located within the Catwalk Recreation Area on the Glenwood Ranger District. Restoration objectives included increasing hydraulic diversity and shelter habitat for trout, increasing pool frequency and depth, reducing width-to-depth ratio, reducing streambank erosion potential and increasing channel shading with native riparian vegetation. These activities are expected to improve the morphological and ecological diversity of Whitewater Creek by increasing aquatic functions.

2. Black Mesa

Due to the decades-long suppression of wildfires, the natural fire regime throughout the Southwest has been interrupted. This has led to overly dense forests with high fuel loads and an increased risk of catastrophic wildfires. This 700-acre project on the Mt. Taylor District in Cibola National Forest is part of a multi-agency landscape-scale effort to thin forests. This would promote resilience and prepare the land for controlled burns that will restore the landscape and lower the risk of catastrophic fire. In addition to thinning trees, shrubby browse would also be cut to encourage new growth, benefitting wildlife like deer and turkeys.

3. Wildlife Habitat Connectivity

Historic sheep grazing led to the use of net wire around pastures throughout the state. Although the shift to cattle has negated the need for net wire, much of the old fencing remains. It impacts the movement of wildlife across a landscape, and removing it would benefit many species including pronghorn, javelina, deer, and elk. This project would fund the removal of 17-20 miles of net wire or other non-wildlife friendly fence on BLM land, replacing it with wildlife friendly fence. Hundreds of miles of non-wildlife friendly fencing has already been removed and replaced, making this project part of an ongoing multi-agency effort. It would target critical areas in the Bootheel, Macho, and Taos Plateau areas.

4. Rio de las Vacas

Parts of Rio de las Vacas have become incised, eroding a channel into the ground and disconnecting it from its natural floodplain. Historic and current activities have contributed to its degradation, such as overgrazing, beaver dam and woody debris removal, and the high density of roads and human activity in sections of Santa Fe National Forest. In collaboration with our partners at the U.S. Forest Service, we would work to restore a section of Rio de las Vacas that has become degraded. This would entail an enclosure fence to prevent overgrazing, willow plantings, and in-stream structures like beaver dam analogues (BDAs) and post assisted log structures (PALS).

5. Prescribed Burns on Carson, Cibola and Santa Fe National Forests

Due to the decades-long suppression of wildfires, the natural fire regime throughout the Southwest has been interrupted. This has led to dense forests with high fuel loads and an increased risk of catastrophic wildfires. This project would contribute to controlled burns on the Carson, Cibola, and Santa Fe National Forests. In many cases, this project would follow up on pre-burn work funded in part by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. The objective of this project is to increase forest health and fire resilience, benefitting wildlife at a landscape scale.

6. El Rito Fish Barrier Assessment

The assessment will determine the best suitable location and design for a fish barrier to restore Rio Grande cutthroat trout (RGCT) populations in El Rito Creek by eliminating upstream passage of non-native trout species that compete with, prey on, and hybridize with native species.

7. Middle Ponil Fish Barrier

Securing the population of RGCT in this stream requires building a new barrier. This population was rescued from Rito Morphy during the Calf Canyon/ Hermits Peak Fire. Middle Ponil Creek was an ideal location to place these rescued fish as it is within the Canadian drainage and a barrier was in place to secure the population from hybridizing with other trout. A treatment was completed to remove nonnatives and allow the Department to stock the rescued RGCT within a short period. Since this restoration NMDGF hired an engineer to evaluate the current barrier and the resulting recommendation was to build a new barrier to eliminate potential for movement of nonnative trout upstream during certain flows.

8. Snow Lake, Fenton Lake, Glenwood Pond Dredge Evaluation

Survey and map each lake to determine current depth, contour, and bottom density. Through these evaluations the Department can determine silt depth and quantify the amount (cubic yards) of sediment deposited in each lake since originally constructed, provide an estimate of how much material would need to be removed to get the lake back to its historic level, test content of sediment for heavy metals, phosphorus and nitrogen, and provide a report of findings including recommendations to get the lake back to historic conditions (e.g. dredging).

9. SolarBee Water Circulator Purchase

The purpose is to preserve and enhance fish and wildlife resources by utilizing solar-powered lake circulators to enhance water quality, increase oxygen circulation, and improve habitat conditions for aquatic species in New Mexico's lakes.

10. Soda Springs Restoration

Located on BLM land northeast of the Cabezon Wilderness Study Area, the existing Soda Springs enclosure surrounds 100 acres encompassing a natural spring and earthen dam,

which inundates over 30 acres in wet years. This wetland and riparian habitat supports game species such as elk, mule deer, pronghorn, and waterfowl. The existing barbed wire fence is consistently damaged, allowing overgrazing, the spread of invasive plants, and erosion. The proposed pipe and cable fence would need little to no maintenance over the years. This proposal includes the chemical and mechanical treatment of invasive plants such as salt cedar and Russian olive, which could then be pile dried and used for erosion control or burned.

11. Cebolla Canyon Enclosure Project

This 55-acre enclosure on BLM land surrounds an earthen dam and sediment trap that holds water for most of the year, and is one of the few consistent water sources in the area. This important water source is surrounded by 11,000 acres of forest and meadows that have been restored over the course of decades. This project would remove the barbed wire fence and replace it with pipe rail fencing that will need little to no maintenance, more effectively protecting this valuable water source, wetland vegetation, and delicate soils.