



DRAFT Citizen Advisory Committee 2023 Prioritized Project Tracking

Public Land User Stamp 19.34.6

In July of 2023, the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) prioritized restoration projects for the expenditure of \$1,500,000 of HSP funds. These projects improved riparian and wetland areas, restored habitat connectivity for various wildlife species, and addressed overly dense ponderosa pine forest, preparing a landscape for beneficial fire. Specifically, habitat stamp funds furthered forest restoration efforts on the Black Mesa landscape of the Cibola National Forest, resulting in nearly 700 acres of forest thinning accomplished in FY24. This project, in conjunction with previously funded thinning efforts, is vital to preparing the ~20,000 acre landscape on the Mt Taylor Ranger District for beneficial fire. It also builds off the forest restoration that had previously been accomplished on neighboring BLM lands (Ignacio Chavez).

Completed projects from this prioritization also involved a continued effort to convert net-wire fence to wildlife friendly fence, resulting in ~ 20 miles of wildlife barriers being removed. These efforts continue to improve landscape connectivity for wildlife on the northern Taos Plateau and southern Macho landscapes on BLM lands. Initially, the Macho Habitat Connectivity Project was ranked below the funding threshold by the CAC, but cost savings on higher ranked projects resulted in its partial funding (Table 1). Implementation of the La Belle Creek Restoration Project was key in achieving large-scale remediation on the Valle Vidal of the Carson National Forest. Connecting to previous work on the Rio Costilla and Comanche Creek, this project benefited fish and wildlife by addressing erosion and incision in this important stream and wet meadow network.

Other prioritized projects in FY24 included the Rio Bonito Restoration Project and a compliance component for Whitewater Creek Restoration. The timeline for implementation of Rio Bonito shifted from Fall of 2024 to Spring of 2025 due to contractor scheduling timelines, but all necessary permits are in place and the project will be complete by Summer 2025. Execution of this project will improve fish habitat, angling opportunities, and fish stocking access. While the CAC prioritized the Whitewater Creek Compliance Project, ultimately, the USFS made the decision to take on the task without external assistance. The Hidden Barrel Forest Restoration project was delayed indefinitely due to leadership changes on the Gila National Forest. \$8,124.49 remained of the FY24 habitat stamp budget. This remainder will be available for CAC project prioritization in the fall of FY25.





Table 1. FY24 Habitat Stamp Projects and budget expenditures. The surplus will carryover for FY25 Habitat Stamp Projects that are prioritized by the CAC. (F) or (W) in the Project Name column indicates if the project was designated as a Fish Project (F) or a Wildlife Project (W). In FY24, the initial budget for Habitat Stamp funds was \$1,500,000. FY24 numbers pending final Department audit approval.

Project Name	CAC Rank	Federal Partner	Initial Estimate	FY24 Expenditures	Estimated FY25 Expenditures	Remaining Budget (\$1,500,000 Initial)	Status
La Belle Creek (F)	1	Carson National Forest	436,000	430,897.19	0	1,069,102.81	Complete
Black Mesa Restoration (W)	2	Cibola National Forest	350,000	234,135.00	0	834,967.81	Complete
Taos Plateau Connectivity (W)	3	Taos BLM	375,000	260,787.30	0	574,180.51	Complete
Whitewater Creek (compliance) (F)	4	Gila National Forest	50,000	0	0	574,180.51	USFS completed without Habitat Stamp Funds.
Rio Bonito Restoration (F)	5	Roswell BLM	550,000	0	430,867.19	143,313.32	Implementation to begin in March 2025
Hidden Barrel Restoration (W)	6	Gila National Forest	175,000	0	0	143,313.32	Cancelled by USFS
Macho Connectivity (W)	7	Taos BLM	490,000	135,188.83	0	8,124.49	Complete
Delaware River Planning (F)	8	Carlsbad BLM	75,000	0	0	8,124.49	Insufficient funds
North Spring Habitat Protection (W)	9	Las Cruces BLM	300,000	0	0	8,124.49	Insufficient funds
				1,061,008.32	430,867.19		