

UNANNOTATED

CHAPTER 68 Timber

ARTICLE 1 Restrictions and Regulations

68-1-1. [Protection of growing timber; public policy.]

That the protection of growing timber and young growth from fire hazard and the prevention of logging practices which will increase fire hazard and prevent the maintaining of favorable conditions of water flows are hereby declared to be a public policy of the state of New Mexico.

History: Laws 1939, ch. 141, § 1; 1941 Comp., § 64-101; 1953 Comp., § 62-1-1.

68-1-2. Logging operations; fire prevention; reserving young trees and seed trees; fire lines.

Any person, firm, association or corporation cutting sawtimber species from lands within the state shall:

- A. take all reasonable precaution to prevent the starting of fires, and promptly suppress all fires that may be started on timberlands before, during or after cutting;
- B. take all reasonable precaution in felling trees on the area being cut and to reserve uncut sufficient trees of seed-bearing size on the land being cut over to insure natural reforestation, as follows:
- C. reserve and leave uncut, in operations cutting logs for lumber and timber manufacturing purposes, all trees measuring twelve inches or less in diameter outside bark, at a point four and one-half feet from the ground and in addition, leave not less than two live wind firm seed trees per acre measuring seventeen inches or more in diameter outside bark, at a point four and one-half feet from the ground; provided that in operations removing trees twelve inches or less in diameter outside bark at a point four and one-half feet from the ground, for nonlumber manufacturing purposes, such as railroad ties, mine props, stulls, poles or wood for products manufactured from pulp, or any combination thereof, trees required to produce said items may be cut to a minimum diameter of five inches outside bark at a point four and one-half feet from the ground, but in such cuttings there shall be reserved and left uncut not less than four live, wind firm seed trees per acre measuring seventeen inches or more in diameter outside bark, at a point four and one-half feet from the ground; provided, further, however, that in the

event that no live, wind firm trees measuring seventeen inches or more in diameter outside bark at a point four and one-half feet from the ground exist on said area at the time of cutting, then the largest live, wind firm trees available on said area shall be left for seed trees in the number prescribed above for operations cutting logs for lumber and timber manufacturing purposes and for operations removing trees twelve inches or less in diameter for nonlumber manufacturing purposes respectively; provided, however, on spruce-type areas or mixed spruce and fir-type areas, an adequate stand of young growth shall be reserved and left uncut or, if such young growth is not present, there shall be reserved and left uncut not less than five percent of the coniferous trees, a substantial portion of which shall be of seed-bearing size; such trees may be reserved in long corners of creeks, across valleys, along ridges or natural firebreaks or in isolated settings of timber;

D. construct fire lines by piling and burning slash on a strip fifty feet wide on each side of main hauling roads.

History: Laws 1939, ch. 141, § 2; 1941 Comp., § 64-102; 1953 Comp., § 62-1-2; Laws 1961, ch. 221, § 1.

68-1-2.1. Restriction.

Sections 68-1-1 and 68-1-2 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1939, Chapter 141, Sections 1 and 2, as amended) shall apply only to logging operations and timber cutting pursuant to contracts or agreements entered into prior to January 1, 1979.

History: Laws 1979, ch. 395, § 12.

68-1-3. Violations; penalties.

Any person, firm, association or corporation violating any of the provisions of Section 68-1-2 NMSA 1978 shall be required by the secretary of natural resources to pay a civil penalty in an amount not to exceed two hundred dollars (\$200). The secretary of natural resources may cause suit to be filed for the collection of this penalty upon the failure of the violator to remit the penalty assessed against him. Each violation shall be a separate offense.

History: 1978 Comp., § 68-1-3, enacted by Laws 1981, ch. 298, § 1.

68-1-4. Repealed.

68-1-5. [Timber subject to mortgage on February 1, 1939; partial exemption from cutting restrictions.]

That it is not the intention of this act [68-1-1, 68-1-2, 68-1-5 NMSA 1978] to abrogate any existing mortgage or encumbrance upon timber, or contract for the sale, cutting or

logging of timber, and it is therefore provided that any timber included in and described in a bona fide mortgage, encumbrance or contract entered into prior to February 1, 1939 shall be and the same is hereby exempted and excepted from all of the provisions of Section 2, Subparagraph C [68-1-2C NMSA 1978], of this act for the term and duration of such mortgage or contract; provided that in any event no trees shall be harvested less than ten inches in diameter outside bark, at a point twelve inches above the ground.

History: Laws 1939, ch. 141, § 5; 1941 Comp., § 64-105; 1953 Comp., § 62-1-5.

68-1-6 to 68-1-9. Repealed.

68-1-10. Recompiled.

68-1-11. Wildland firefighters not subject to criminal liability.

Employees or agents of governmental entities who authorize volunteer firefighters not certified according to national wildland firefighting standards to respond to wildland fires shall not be subject to criminal liability solely for allowing those volunteer firefighters to engage in firefighting activities.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 16, § 1.

ARTICLE 2

Forest Conservation

68-2-1. Short title.

Sections 68-2-1 through 68-2-27 NMSA 1978 may be cited as the "Forest Conservation Act".

History: 1953 Comp., § 62-3-1, enacted by Laws 1959, ch. 122, § 1; 1978 Comp., § 68-2-1; 1979, ch. 395, § 2; 2023, ch. 64, § 1.

68-2-2. Acceptance of federal laws.

The state is authorized to accept the provisions of the act of congress dated June 7, 1924 (43 Stat. 653) commonly known as the Clarke-McNary Act and the act of congress dated July 1, 1978 (92 Stat. 365) commonly known as the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978, as amended.

History: 1953 Comp., § 62-3-2, enacted by Laws 1959, ch. 122, § 2; 1978 Comp., § 68-2-2; 2023, ch. 64, § 2.

68-2-3. State forester; compensation; qualifications.

A. The director of the forestry division of the energy, minerals and natural resources department is the "state forester" and shall be paid a salary, set by the secretary of energy, minerals and natural resources.

B. No individual may be appointed as the state forester unless the individual is, by reason of scientific education and experience, knowledgeable in the principles of forest management.

History: 1953 Comp., § 62-3-3, enacted by Laws 1959, ch. 122, § 3; 1977, ch. 254, § 76; 1978 Comp., § 68-2-3; 1987, ch. 234, § 45; 2023, ch. 64, § 3.

68-2-4. Forestry division office; state forester in charge; executive officer.

The forestry division shall establish an office in the city of Santa Fe, with the state forester in charge as executive officer of the division.

History: 1953 Comp., § 62-3-4, enacted by Laws 1959, ch. 122, § 4; 1977, ch. 254, § 77.

68-2-5. State forester; employment of personnel; state fire chief; office clerk.

The state forester, with the approval of the secretary of energy, minerals and natural resources, shall employ, at salaries in accordance with the Personnel Act [Chapter 10, Article 9 NMSA 1978], those employees necessary to carry out the responsibilities of the forestry division.

History: 1953 Comp., § 62-3-5, enacted by Laws 1959, ch. 122, § 5; 1977, ch. 254, § 78; 1987, ch. 234, § 46.

68-2-6. Division to serve as contracting agency for state; contracting authority.

For the purposes of the Forest Conservation Act, the forestry division of the energy, minerals and natural resources department is designated as the agent of the state and is authorized to enter into contracts and cooperative agreements with the secretary of agriculture of the United States of America, private landowners, the commissioner of public lands of the state, individuals, corporations or other local, state, federal and private agencies or organizations to carry out the provisions of the Forest Conservation Act and to do all other acts necessary to take advantage of and carry out the provisions of the acts of congress promulgated for the purposes of the Forest Conservation Act and the federal Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978, as amended.

History: 1953 Comp., § 62-3-6, enacted by Laws 1959, ch. 122, § 6; 1963, ch. 24, § 1; 1977, ch. 254, § 79; 1978 Comp., § 68-2-6; 2023, ch. 64, § 4.

68-2-7. Forest fire and suppression defined.

As used in the Forest Conservation Act:

A. "forest fire" means a fire burning uncontrolled on lands covered wholly or in part by timber, brush, grass, grain or other vegetation; and

B. "suppression" means all of the activities to extinguish, limit or contain forest fire spread.

History: 1953 Comp., § 62-3-6.1, enacted by Laws 1967, ch. 208, § 1; 1978 Comp., § 68-2-7; 2023, ch. 64, § 5.

68-2-8. Forestry division responsibility for statewide forest fire protection and forest conservation; authority; police power.

A. The forestry division of the energy, minerals and natural resources department is responsible for the conservation of forests and forest resources and the prevention and suppression of forest fires on all nonfederal, nonmunicipal lands in the state. The division, whether independently or in cooperation with federal, state or local agencies, is authorized to:

- (1) conserve forests and forest resources;
- (2) maintain and improve forest health;
- (3) prevent, control and suppress forest fires;
- (4) conduct forest fire suppression rehabilitation and repair;
- (5) conduct post-fire slope stabilization, erosion control, riparian restoration, seeding and reforestation of burned areas;
- (6) research forestry and forest fires;
- (7) prescribe uses of fires;
- (8) conduct urban and community forestry;
- (9) establish and support nurseries;

(10) furnish forestry and forest fire-related technical advice to the people of the state, including technical advice and projects related to the mitigation of or adaptation to changing climatic conditions; and

(11) provide financial, technical and related assistance to local governments to organize, train and equip local firefighters to prevent, control and suppress forest fires threatening the natural resources of rural forest areas or communities.

B. The forestry division and the division's agents:

(1) shall have unrestricted access to private and state lands, including the use of roads and trails to carry out forest fire suppression work; and

(2) shall not be liable to civil action for trespass or for damages for acts done in the course of their official duties unless otherwise expressly provided by contract or agreement with the landowner, which contract or agreement is made pursuant to the provisions of the Forest Conservation Act.

C. The police power of the state shall extend to such control of private forest lands as is necessary for the suppression of forest fires.

D. The authorization provided in Subsection A of this section with respect to forest conservation, fire prevention and post-fire forest rehabilitation activities, but not forest fire suppression activities, is to be exercised in cooperation and pursuant to an agreement with the underlying landowner or land manager.

History: 1953 Comp., § 62-3-6.2, enacted by Laws 1967, ch. 208, § 2; 1978 Comp., § 68-2-8; 1979, ch. 395, § 3; 2023, ch. 64, § 6.

68-2-9. Penalty for obstruction.

Any person obstructing the access of the forestry division of the energy, minerals and natural resources department or the division's agents to lands, as provided in Section 68-2-8 NMSA 1978, is guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction may be sentenced to not less than thirty days nor more than ninety days in the county jail or fined not less than one hundred dollars (\$100) nor more than one thousand dollars (\$1,000), or both such imprisonment and fine.

History: 1953 Comp., § 62-3-6.3, enacted by Laws 1967, ch. 208, § 3; 1978 Comp., § 68-2-9; 2023, ch. 64, § 7.

68-2-10. Administrative districts.

The state forester shall divide the state into [a] suitable and convenient number of administrative districts and shall appoint a supervising forest officer for each district.

History: 1953 Comp., § 62-3-6.3, enacted by Laws 1967, ch. 208, § 4.

68-2-11. Contracts for protection of forest areas.

The commissioner of public lands is authorized to enter into contracts and cooperative agreements with the forestry division of the energy, minerals and natural resources department for the protection and conservation of forests and denuded forest areas under the commissioner's jurisdiction and control and is authorized to pay the assessments thereunder from the state land office maintenance fund, provided that such contracts and agreements do not commit the use of the lands in a manner and do not entail expenditures of the maintenance fund contrary to the provisions of the act of congress dated June 20, 1910, entitled Enabling Act for New Mexico.

History: 1953 Comp., § 62-3-7, enacted by Laws 1959, ch. 122, § 7; 1977, ch. 254, § 80; 1978 Comp., § 68-2-11; 2023, ch. 64, § 8.

68-2-12. Acquisition and disposition of land by division.

The division is authorized, with the approval of the commissioner of public lands, to acquire land or interest in land, either by gift or by purchase, title to which shall be taken in the name of the state of New Mexico. Land or interest in land no longer needed may be disposed of as provided by law.

History: 1953 Comp., § 62-3-8, enacted by Laws 1959, ch. 122, § 8; 1977, ch. 254, § 81.

68-2-13. Repealed.

68-2-14. Enforcement of laws; investigation of violations.

A. The forestry division of the energy, minerals and natural resources department is authorized to enforce all laws and rules relating to all forested, cut-over or brush lands lying within the state under the following circumstances:

- (1) prevention and suppression of forest fires;
- (2) logging and timber operations and practices;
- (3) trespass, waste and littering; and
- (4) conservation of forests and forest resources and products.

B. The state forester, all persons the state forester designates as peace officers and any other peace officers are authorized to go upon forested, cut-over or brush lands lying within the state to investigate violations of the Forest Conservation Act and are

given the necessary police powers to apprehend and arrest on warrant issued by any magistrate or judge of the state for violation of the Forest Conservation Act or without warrant for violations thereof committed in their presence and shall not be liable to civil actions in trespass for acts done in discharge of their duties.

History: 1953 Comp., § 62-3-9, enacted by Laws 1959, ch. 122, § 9; 1977, ch. 254, § 83; 1978 Comp., § 68-2-14; 1979, ch. 395, § 4; 2023, ch. 64, § 9.

68-2-15. Repealed.

68-2-16. Rules of division.

The forestry division of the energy, minerals and natural resources department is authorized to make and enforce rules not in conflict with any law now in force as it deems necessary for the prevention and suppression of forest fires, for the control of forest insects or diseases and for the application of commercial or silvicultural forest practices within the state. The rulemaking power includes the requiring of registration of sawmills, declaring of designated areas to be high hazard fire areas and closing them to entry by the general public for reasonable periods and requiring native forest vegetative types to be harvested or treated in such manner as to support forest practices that maintain and enhance the benefits of forests and forest resources to New Mexico. Rules shall be provided to all interested parties upon request. Nothing in the Forest Conservation Act shall prevent a landowner from converting forest vegetative types to nonforest vegetative types for such purposes as range, wildlife habitat, farming, surface mining or subdivision development; provided, however, any slash resulting from such conversion shall be treated in a manner that will minimize the spread of forest fires and the possibility of insect or disease epidemic.

History: 1953 Comp., § 62-3-11, enacted by Laws 1959, ch. 122, § 11; 1961, ch. 113, § 1; 1977, ch. 254, § 85; 1978 Comp., § 68-2-16; 1979, ch. 395, § 5; 2023, ch. 64, § 10.

68-2-17. Laws; rules and regulations; violations; penalties.

It is unlawful for any person to violate any provision of the Forest Conservation Act [68-2-1 to 68-2-27 NMSA 1978] or any provision of a rule or regulation adopted pursuant thereto. Such violation is a misdemeanor and upon conviction thereof such person shall be punished for each violation by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars (\$1,000) or by imprisonment in the county jail not to exceed one year or both.

History: 1953 Comp., § 62-3-12, enacted by Laws 1959, ch. 122, § 12; 1977, ch. 254, § 86; 1979, ch. 395, § 6; 1980, ch. 84, § 1; 1987, ch. 143, § 1.

68-2-18. Repealed.

68-2-19. Repealed.

History: 1953 Comp., § 62-3-14, enacted by Laws 1959, ch. 122, § 14; 1977, ch. 254, § 88; 1978 Comp., § 68-2-19 repealed by Laws 2023, ch. 64, § 16.

68-2-20. Repealed.

68-2-21. Revolving fund created.

There is created in the state treasury a revolving fund to be known as the "conservation planting revolving fund". The conservation planting revolving fund shall consist of money appropriated to the fund by the legislature, all receipts from the sale of trees for conservation plantings and any other revenues directed to the fund. Expenditures may be made from the conservation planting revolving fund upon vouchers signed by the state forester and warrants issued by the secretary of finance and administration for the purpose of purchasing, selling or distributing trees to New Mexico landowners, schools, civic or community groups or other organizations for conservation plantings or generally to protect or enhance the state's environment. Money in the conservation planting revolving fund shall not revert to the state general fund.

History: 1978 Comp., § 68-2-21, enacted by Laws 1979, ch. 221, § 2; 1979, ch. 395, § 7; 1990, ch. 96, § 6; 1991, ch. 3, § 1.

68-2-22. Cutting and removing woody material without written consent.

A. As used in this section:

(1) "owner" means any public agency, person, partnership, firm, corporation and recognized agents owning or having legal control to the surface rights of the land upon which the woody material is located and having legal authority to issue permits or enter into agreements for the disposal of the woody material; and

(2) "woody material" includes any live or dead evergreen, coniferous or deciduous tree, branch, bough, bush, sapling or shrub in its natural condition, trimmed or untrimmed, and with or without roots.

B. No person shall cut, remove, transport or sell any woody material without written consent of the owner or proof of ownership, whether the land is publicly or privately owned. The written consent shall contain a legal description of the land where the woody material is removed, the name and address of the legal owner, the volume or amount of material to be removed, the date of execution and the expiration date of the consent. In addition, any person purchasing woody material from another for the purpose of resale must possess a valid bill of sale containing the date of sale, the amount of material purchased and the name, address and signature of the seller. The written consent, bill of sale or a true copy shall be carried by every person in charge of

cutting, removing, transporting or selling the woody material and shall be exhibited to any peace officer at the officer's request. This provision shall not apply to campers, picnickers, hunters and persons fishing who gather woody material for use in the immediate vicinity of their campsite or private landowners removing woody material from their own land for their personal use.

History: 1953 Comp., § 62-1-13, enacted by Laws 1961, ch. 200, § 1; 1963, ch. 316, § 1; 1967, ch. 15, § 1; 1977, ch. 254, § 75; 1979, ch. 395, § 1; 1978 Comp., § 68-1-10 NMSA 1978, recompiled as § 68-2-22 by Laws 1979, ch. 395, § 13; 1987, ch. 143, § 2; 2023, ch. 64, § 11.

68-2-22.1. Repealed.

68-2-23. Repealed.

History: 1978 Comp., § 68-2-23, enacted by Laws 1979, ch. 395, § 8; repealed by Laws 2023, ch. 64, § 16.

68-2-24. Forest land policy.

Recognizing that the forest makes a vital contribution to New Mexico by providing wood products, jobs, grazing, quality water, wildlife habitat, young trees, taxes and other economic benefits, it is hereby declared to be the public policy of the state to adopt forest practices that maintain and enhance such benefits and such resources and to recognize varying forest resources by employing silvicultural planning, including fire prevention that provides for the removal of trees in a manner that provides reasonable assurance for the natural or artificial regeneration of native tree species; provided, however, nothing in this section shall be in conflict with any law now in force.

History: 1978 Comp., § 68-2-24, enacted by Laws 1979, ch. 395, § 9; 2023, ch. 64, § 12.

68-2-25. Forest owner assistance.

Upon the request of any landowner, the state forester shall advise and encourage the use of good management practices through an educational program and by providing technical forestry assistance to any landowner for specific sites prior to and during harvesting or other forestry-related activities.

History: 1978 Comp., § 68-2-25, enacted by Laws 1979, ch. 395, § 10; 2023, ch. 64, § 13.

68-2-26. Enforcement; Forest Conservation Act.

Any peace officer enforcing the provisions of the Forest Conservation Act may:

A. stop any vehicle or means of conveyance containing any woody material for the purpose of inspection and investigation;

B. inspect the woody material in any vehicle or other means of conveyance, including common carrier;

C. seize and hold any woody material cut, removed, piled, transported or offered for sale in violation of this section. Upon determination by the appropriate court that a section of the Forest Conservation Act has been violated and the court's issuance of an order authorizing the sale, the forestry division of the energy, minerals and natural resources department shall sell the woody material and all money collected is to be deposited into the forest land protection revolving fund; and

D. seize and hold any property used in violation of this section and, upon determination of the appropriate court that a section of the Forest Conservation Act has been violated, keep or dispose of the property upon order of the district court. All money collected, if any, shall be deposited into the forest land protection revolving fund.

History: 1978 Comp., § 68-2-26, enacted by Laws 1987, ch. 143, § 4; 2023, ch. 64, § 14.

68-2-27. Using false information to comply with the Forest Conservation Act.

It is unlawful for any person to use false information or documentation to obtain any permit, license or other benefit under the Forest Conservation Act [68-2-1 to 68-2-27 NMSA 1978]. Any person who is found guilty of violating the provisions of this section shall be sentenced according to Section 68-2-17 NMSA 1978.

History: 1978 Comp., § 68-2-27, enacted by Laws 1987, ch. 143, § 5.

68-2-28. Forest land protection revolving fund created.

A. There is created in the state treasury a revolving fund to be known as the "forest land protection revolving fund". The forest land protection revolving fund shall consist of all receipts as provided by Section 68-2-26 NMSA 1978, fees collected pursuant to the Prescribed Burning Act [68-5-1 to 68-5-8 NMSA 1978], appropriations, gifts, grants, donations and revenue received by the forestry division of the energy, minerals and natural resources department from the federal government or other state agencies and other sources for conducting forest and watershed management projects. Subject to legislative appropriation, expenditures may be made from the forest land protection revolving fund upon vouchers signed by the state forester and warrants issued by the secretary of finance and administration:

(1) for the administration, implementation and enforcement of the Forest Conservation Act;

(2) to administer and fund forest and watershed management projects, including acquisition of tools and equipment and expenses incurred by the forestry division in planning and supervising forest and watershed management projects;

(3) to fund approved projects pursuant to the Forest and Watershed Restoration Act; and

(4) to administer the Prescribed Burning Act.

B. Money in the forest land protection revolving fund shall not revert to the general fund.

History: 1978 Comp., § 68-2-28, enacted by Laws 1987, ch. 143, § 6; 1996, ch. 74, § 1; 2016, ch. 65, § 1; 2019, ch. 62, § 7; 2021, ch. 13, § 10; 2023, ch. 64, § 15.

68-2-29. Short title.

Sections 1 through 5 [68-2-29 to 68-2-33 NMSA 1978] of this act may be cited as the "New Mexico Forest Re-Leaf Act".

History: Laws 1990, ch. 96, § 1.

68-2-30. Findings and purpose of act.

A. The legislature finds that the health and safety of our increasingly fragile environment is threatened daily by increased emissions of carbon dioxide. These emissions deplete the stratospheric ozone and cause dangerous greenhouse and global warming effects. Trees naturally synthesize carbon dioxide into oxygen as a byproduct of photosynthesis and thereby reduce the harmful environmental effects caused by carbon dioxide.

B. Trees protect and promote soil, energy and water conservation and generally enhance the state's environment.

C. The purpose of the New Mexico Forest Re-Leaf Act [68-2-29 to 68-2-33 NMSA 1978] is to help protect the environment and to improve the quality of life by encouraging and arranging for the planting of trees throughout the state by children, students, parents, schools, civic and community groups and all residents of New Mexico.

History: Laws 1990, ch. 96, § 2.

68-2-31. Definition[s].

As used in the New Mexico Forest Re-Leaf Act [68-2-29 to 68-2-33 NMSA 1978]:

A. "division" means the forestry division of the energy, minerals and natural resources department; and

B. "tree" means any living single-stemmed or multi-stemmed woody material.

History: Laws 1990, ch. 96, § 3; 1993, ch. 76, § 1.

68-2-32. Tree plantings; promotions and programs; duties of the division and the state forester; authorizing regulations; tree planting program applications.

A. The division shall promote the importance of planting trees for soil, energy and water conservation, to enhance the state's beauty and generally to protect and improve the quality of the environment. The division shall attempt, through the promotion of tree planting campaigns and other efforts, including public education, to grant or sell trees to individuals and groups to provide for effective planting of trees throughout the state.

B. To promote tree planting, the division shall implement, in harmony, the New Mexico Forest Re-Leaf Act [68-2-29 to 68-2-33 NMSA 1978] and the conservation planting revolving fund provided for in Section 68-2-21 NMSA 1978. The division is authorized to adopt regulations necessary or appropriate to administer and achieve the purposes of the New Mexico Forest Re-Leaf Act and the conservation planting revolving fund.

C. Persons may apply to the division, on forms and in accordance with rules and procedures the division may adopt, for grants or purchases of trees to plant in the state. The division shall encourage applications from schools and universities, environmental education programs and civic and community groups. Each application shall indicate whether any applicable local soil and water conservation district has reviewed and approved the application.

D. Applications to receive and plant trees shall be granted or denied by the division in accordance with criteria the division shall establish. In granting applications, the division shall ensure that no less than twenty percent of the balance of the conservation planting revolving fund shall be granted free to groups or individuals in any fiscal year for the purpose of planting trees.

History: Laws 1990, ch. 96, § 4; 1993, ch. 76, § 2.

68-2-33. Tree planting advisory committee created; purpose of committee; composition.

A. The state forester shall appoint a tree planting advisory committee. The committee shall meet at least twice a year to review the division's tree planting programs. The committee shall seek public input on the division's programs and may

recommend to the division and the state forester how best to achieve the purposes of the New Mexico Forest Re-Leaf Act [68-2-29 to 68-2-33 NMSA 1978] and the conservation planting revolving fund.

B. The committee shall include at least one member from the soil and water conservation commission, one member from the state association of soil and water conservation districts, two members from nonprofit environmental organizations dedicated primarily to protecting the environment and two members from the New Mexico association of nursery industries. Other committee members may include representatives from the state department of public education, state universities, the commission on higher education, the local government division of the department of finance and administration and other persons whom the state forester determines will assist the committee in performing its functions.

C. A majority of the members of the committee constitutes a quorum for the transaction of business. The committee shall elect a chairman from among its membership.

D. Staff for the committee shall be provided by the division.

History: Laws 1990, ch. 96, § 5.

68-2-34. Recompiled.

History: Laws 2003, ch. 115, § 1; 2003, ch. 303, § 1; § 68-2-34, recompiled and amended as § 68-2A-3 by Laws 2025, ch. 55, § 3.

ARTICLE 2A

Wildfire Prepared

68-2A-1. Short title.

This act [68-2A-1 to 68-2A-5 NMSA 1978] may be cited as the "Wildfire Prepared Act".

History: Laws 2025, ch. 55, § 1.

68-2A-2. Definitions.

As used in the Wildfire Prepared Act:

A. "assessment" means an assessment of a structure or property for compliance with wildfire preparedness standards;

B. "buffer" means an area treated to reduce wildfire fuel in order to act as a barrier between properties to limit and halt the spread of wildfire and provide a safe zone for firefighters to engage with wildfires;

C. "certification" means a certificate provided pursuant to the wildfire prepared program indicating that a structure or property meets wildfire preparedness standards;

D. "department" means the energy, minerals and natural resources department;

E. "division" means the forestry division of the energy, minerals and natural resources department;

F. "eligible property owner" means a New Mexico resident who owns a residence in New Mexico and meets all requirements developed by the task force to be eligible for a wildfire prepared program grant;

G. "high-risk area" means an area identified by the task force as having a high probability of wildfire that is likely to spread to structures or property;

H. "noncombustible" means made from material of which no part will ignite and burn when subjected to fire;

I. "property" means the land adjacent to a structure;

J. "qualified entity" means a political subdivision of the state or an entity contracted with for the hardening of structures to be wildfire prepared;

K. "residence" means a dwelling structure designed for long-term habitation and its property;

L. "structure" means a constructed object, including residences or commercial buildings and outbuildings such as barns and sheds;

M. "task force" means the fire planning task force;

N. "wildfire" means a fire originating from an unplanned ignition, such as lightning, volcanoes, an unauthorized or accidental human-caused fire or a prescribed fire that is declared a wildfire;

O. "wildfire prepared" means being resistant to wildfire through actions to harden and make noncombustible structures and property to reduce the risk of structure ignition and building-to-building fire spread, including the use of noncombustible and ignition-proof building materials and landscaping property to reduce hazardous fuels; and

P. "wildfire preparedness standards" means the standards developed by the task force for structures and property to be wildfire prepared.

History: Laws 2025, ch. 55, § 2.

68-2A-3. Fire planning task force; duties; wildfire prepared program; standards; requirements.

A. The "fire planning task force" is created. The task force shall consist of:

- (1) the state fire marshal;
- (2) the director of the local government division of the department of finance and administration;
- (3) the commissioner of public lands;
- (4) the state director of the federal bureau of land management on behalf of the United States department of the interior;
- (5) the regional forester of the United States forest service;
- (6) a member of a local fire department, appointed by the governor;
- (7) a member of a volunteer fire department, appointed by the state forester;
- (8) the director of the New Mexico association of counties;
- (9) the director of the New Mexico municipal league;
- (10) the director of the construction industries division of the regulation and licensing department;
- (11) the state forester;
- (12) the secretary of Indian affairs;
- (13) the superintendent of insurance;
- (14) the secretary of homeland security and emergency management;
- (15) a member with expertise in wildfire science and structures, appointed by the state forester; and
- (16) a representative of a state-based property insurance carrier trade association, appointed by the state forester, after consulting with the office of superintendent of insurance.

B. The chair of the task force shall be elected by the task force. The task force shall meet at the call of the chair.

C. The public members of the task force shall receive per diem and mileage pursuant to the Per Diem and Mileage Act [10-8-1 through 10-8-8 NMSA 1978].

D. The division, with assistance from the department of finance and administration, shall provide staff for the task force.

E. The task force shall:

(1) identify and map high-risk areas within the state;

(2) develop standards for building codes, defensible space requirements and ordinances that will reduce the threat of wildfires. In developing the standards, the task force shall:

(a) recognize the distinction between altering existing situations and establishing standards for new construction;

(b) consider other fire suppression measures, including thinning overgrown forests, conducting controlled burns, clearing spaces around homes and other structures, using wildfire-resistant, noncombustible and ignition-resistant building materials and national standards for defensible space requirements, including making the five-foot zone closest to and surrounding structures noncombustible;

(c) consider the impact of fire mitigation measures on wildlife; and

(d) solicit comments from affected landowners, land users and local governments;

(3) work with communities in the affected areas in adopting and implementing the building codes and ordinances;

(4) develop wildfire preparedness standards for certification that are consistent with and no less stringent than the most recent standards developed by a nationally recognized wildfire prepared standard-setting organization, such as the insurance institute for business and home safety;

(5) develop by June 30 of each year guidelines and requirements for eligibility for grants consistent with the provisions of and provided through the wildfire prepared program pursuant to Section 4 [68-2A-4 NMSA 1978] of the Wildfire Prepared Act; and

(6) report its progress and any recommendations for legislation to the governor and the legislature by December 15 of each year.

History: Laws 2003, ch. 115, § 1; 2003, ch. 303, § 1; § 68-2-34, recompiled and amended as § 68-2A-3 by Laws 2025, ch. 55, § 3.

68-2A-4. Wildfire prepared program; no right of action, guarantee of benefits or enforceable interest.

A. The "wildfire prepared program" is created in the department to make structures and properties in New Mexico wildfire prepared. The department shall provide technical assistance and training, conduct assessments, provide certification and award grants to:

(1) political subdivisions of the state to:

(a) make changes to structures and properties to make them wildfire prepared;

(b) conduct hazardous fuels reduction to provide buffers for structures and properties in high-risk areas; and

(c) establish community-based programs to conduct assessments and provide certification; or

(2) qualified entities to assist eligible property owners with making the necessary changes to their residences for the sole purpose of making the residences wildfire prepared.

B. At least fifty percent of the grant money awarded pursuant to this section shall be made to qualified entities for the purpose of assisting eligible property owners with making the necessary changes to their residences to make them wildfire prepared.

C. Grants awarded pursuant to the wildfire prepared program shall be consistent with the guidelines and requirements developed by the task force.

D. Nothing in the Wildfire Prepared Act shall create any additional right of action under the law, and the provisions of that act do not guarantee any benefits and shall not be construed to create an interest in property that is enforceable under state law or that does not otherwise exist.

History: Laws 2025, ch. 55, § 4.

68-2A-5. Wildfire prepared fund.

A. The "wildfire prepared fund" is created as a nonreverting fund in the state treasury to provide funding for the wildfire prepared program. The fund consists of distributions, appropriations, gifts, grants, donations and income from investment of the fund.

B. The department shall administer the fund. Money in the fund is appropriated to the department to administer, staff and carry out the provisions of the Wildfire Prepared Act.

C. Expenditures from the fund shall be by warrant of the secretary of finance and administration pursuant to vouchers signed by the secretary of energy, minerals and natural resources or the secretary's authorized representative.

History: Laws 2025, ch. 55, § 5.

ARTICLE 3

Interstate Compact for the Prevention and Control of Forest Fires

68-3-1. Interstate Compact for the Prevention and Control of Forest Fires.

The Interstate Compact for the Prevention and Control of Forest Fires is enacted into law, and New Mexico hereby enters into the compact as a member state with all other jurisdictions legally joining therein in the form substantially as follows:

INTERSTATE COMPACT FOR THE PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF FOREST FIRES

ARTICLE I

Purpose

The purpose of this compact is to promote effective prevention and control of forest fires in the great plains region of the United States by the maintenance of adequate forest firefighting services by the member states, and providing for reciprocal aid in fighting forest fires among the compacting states of the region, including South Dakota, North Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado and any adjoining state of a current member state.

ARTICLE II

Operative Date

This compact is operative immediately as to those states ratifying it if any two or more of the member states have ratified it.

ARTICLE III

State Compact Administrator; Forest Fire Plan

(a) In each state, the state forester or officer holding the equivalent position who is responsible for forest fire control may act as compact administrator for that state, consult with like officials of the other member states and implement cooperation

between the states in forest fire prevention and control. The compact administrators of the member states may organize to coordinate the services of the member states and provide administrative integration in carrying out the purposes of this compact.

(b) Each member state may formulate and put in effect a forest fire plan for that state.

ARTICLE IV Aid to Other Member States

If the state forest fire control agency of a member state requests aid from the state forest fire control agency of another state in combating, controlling or preventing forest fires, the state forest fire control agency of that state may render all possible aid to the requesting agency, consonant with the maintenance of protection at home.

ARTICLE V Claims and Reimbursement

(a) Any member state rendering outside aid pursuant to this compact shall be reimbursed by the member state receiving the aid for any loss or damage to, or expense incurred in the operation of, any equipment used in answering a request for aid, and for the cost of all materials, transportation, wages, salaries and maintenance of employees and equipment incurred in connection with the request. However, nothing in this compact prevents any assisting member state from assuming the loss, damage, expense or other cost, from loaning the equipment or from donating the services to the receiving member state without charge or cost.

(b) Each member state shall assure that workers compensation benefits in conformity with the minimum legal requirements of the state are available to all employees and contract firefighters sent to a requesting state pursuant to this compact.

(c) For the purposes of this compact, the term "employee" includes any volunteer or auxiliary legally included within the forest firefighting forces of the aiding state under the laws of the aiding state.

(d) The compact administrators may formulate procedures for claims and reimbursement under the provisions of this article in accordance with the laws of the member state.

ARTICLE VI Effect of Compact on Existing Statutes; Duties

(a) Ratification of this compact does not affect any existing statute so as to authorize or permit curtailment or diminution of the forest firefighting forces, equipment, services or facilities of any member state.

(b) Nothing in this compact authorizes or permits any member state to curtail or diminish its firefighting forces, equipment, services or facilities. Each member state shall maintain adequate forest firefighting forces and equipment to meet the demands for forest fire protection within its borders in the same manner and to the same extent as if the compact were not operative.

(c) Nothing in this compact limits or restricts the powers of any state ratifying the compact to provide for the prevention, control and extinguishment of forest fires, or to prohibit the enactment or enforcement of state laws, rules or regulations intended to aid in the prevention, control and extinguishment of forest fires in the state.

(d) Nothing in this compact affects any existing or future cooperative relationship or arrangement between the United States forest service and a member state or states.

ARTICLE VII Representatives of the United States Forest Service

Representatives of the United States forest service may attend meetings of the compact administrators.

ARTICLE VIII Operation of Articles IV and V

The provisions of Articles IV and V of this compact that relate to reciprocal aid in combating, controlling or preventing forest fires are operative as between any state party to this compact and any other state which is party to this compact in another region if the legislature of the other state has given its assent to the mutual aid provisions of this compact.

ARTICLE IX Withdrawal from Compact

This compact shall continue in force and remain binding on each state ratifying it until the legislature or the governor of the state takes action to withdraw from the compact. Such action is not effective until six months after notice of the withdrawal has been sent by the chief executive of the state desiring to withdraw to the chief executive of all states then party to the compact.

History: Laws 2016, ch. 66, § 1.

ARTICLE 4 Forest and Watershed Restoration

68-4-1. Short title.

Sections 1 through 6 [68-4-1 to 68-4-6 NMSA 1978] of this act may be cited as the "Forest and Watershed Restoration Act".

History: Laws 2019, ch. 62, § 1.

68-4-2. Definitions.

As used in the Forest and Watershed Restoration Act:

- A. "board" means the forest and watershed advisory board;
- B. "division" means the forestry division of the energy, minerals and natural resources department;
- C. "project" means a large-scale forest and watershed restoration project on any lands in the state that increases the adaptability and resilience to recurring drought and extreme weather events of the state's forests and watersheds; protects water sources; reduces the risk of wildfire, including plans for watershed conservation; restores burned areas or thins forests; and includes a related economic or workforce development project or a wildlife conservation or habitat improvement project; and
- D. "sponsor" means a federal, state or local government agency, tribal entity, corporation or organization that applies for a project or is conducting a project in conjunction with the division.

History: Laws 2019, ch. 62, § 2.

68-4-3. Forest and watershed advisory board created; membership; appointments; terms; compensation.

A. The "forest and watershed advisory board" is created and is administratively attached to the energy, minerals and natural resources department. The board consists of the following members:

- (1) the New Mexico state forester;
- (2) the state engineer or the state engineer's designee;
- (3) the commissioner of public lands or the commissioner's designee;
- (4) the secretary of economic development or the secretary's designee;
- (5) the secretary of environment or the secretary's designee;
- (6) the director of the department of game and fish or the director's designee;

(7) the state fire marshal or the fire marshal's designee; and

(8) three public members appointed by the governor from a list of nominees submitted to the governor jointly by the president pro tempore of the senate and the speaker of the house of representatives:

(a) one of whom shall be a representative of the forest products industry;

(b) one of whom shall be a representative of local government interests, such as a member of New Mexico counties or the soil and water conservation commission; and

(c) one of whom shall be a representative of an academic or nonprofit conservation organization with a focus on ecological restoration science.

B. Public members of the board shall serve until their successors have been appointed.

C. A majority of the members of the board constitutes a quorum for transaction of business. The board shall elect a chair from among its members.

D. Members of the board are entitled to receive per diem and mileage pursuant to the Per Diem and Mileage Act [10-8-1 to 10-8-8 NMSA 1978] and shall receive no other compensation, perquisite or allowance.

History: Laws 2019, ch. 62, § 3.

68-4-4. Board; division; powers and duties.

A. The board shall:

(1) recommend guidelines, protocols and best management practices for projects;

(2) foster partnerships and cooperation among federal, state and county agencies, tribal entities, political subdivisions of the state, soil and water conservation districts, the forest products industry and other public or private organizations dedicated to forest and watershed conservation and restoration programs or projects or wildlife conservation or habitat improvement programs or projects for the purpose of co-funding or leveraging funding for priority projects; and

(3) evaluate and recommend projects to the division for funding.

B. The division may:

(1) seek and accept all public and private funds and gifts, devises, grants and donations from others to carry out the provisions of the Forest and Watershed Restoration Act;

(2) beginning July 1, 2019, provide partial or full funding for approved projects and facilitate and coordinate funding from multiple sources for projects, when appropriate; and

(3) adopt rules to carry out the purposes of the Forest and Watershed Restoration Act.

History: Laws 2019, ch. 62, § 4.

68-4-5. Use of forest and watershed restoration fund; project evaluation and prioritization.

A. Money in the forest land protection revolving fund may be used to administer and carry out the purposes of the Forest and Watershed Restoration Act and to fund projects authorized by the division on any lands in the state for:

(1) on-the-ground restoration treatments;

(2) project planning;

(3) economic development programs to advance the use of small-diameter trees and wood biomass removed for hazardous fuel reduction and forest and watershed restoration; or

(4) workforce development for wood utilization projects.

B. A project is eligible for funding if the project is for a public benefit and:

(1) is part of a current state forest and watershed health plan or forest action plan, a community wildfire protection plan, other comprehensive forest and watershed treatment plan or wildlife conservation or habitat improvement plan approved by the board;

(2) incorporates actions recommended by current plans or, where new plans are developed, seeks to integrate forest, fire and water management with community and economic development plans;

(3) protects watersheds that are the source of drinking or irrigation water;

(4) targets an area at high risk of catastrophic wildfire; or

(5) has obtained all requisite state and federal permits and authorizations necessary to initiate the project, if the project is other than a planning project.

C. A project that is eligible for funding in accordance with Subsection B of this section shall be given priority for funding by the division if the project:

(1) leverages federal, state, local, tribal or private sources and, if available, support from other public or private water, forest, fire, wildlife habitat or economic development programs;

(2) is in an area:

(a) with a wood supply that can be used as biomass for energy production;

(b) where small-diameter trees may be put to commercial use; or

(c) where traditional forest products may be produced;

(3) is clustered around priority areas that are able to supply a useful amount of wood products for industry; or

(4) creates incentives to increase investment by federal, state, local, tribal or private entities, including investment by downstream water users to manage forested headwaters and water sources.

D. Beginning July 1, 2019, sponsors may apply to the division for project funding.

History: Laws 2019, ch. 62, § 5.

68-4-6. Report by division.

At least forty-five days prior to each legislative session, the division shall submit a report concerning its activities, the projects implemented and any recommended legislation to the governor and the legislature.

History: Laws 2019, ch. 62, § 6.

ARTICLE 5

Prescribed Burning

68-5-1. Short title.

Sections 1 through 8 [68-5-1 to 68-5-8 NMSA 1978] of this act may be cited as the "Prescribed Burning Act".

History: Laws 2021, ch. 13, § 1.

68-5-2. Definitions.

As used in the Prescribed Burning Act:

A. "certified prescribed burn manager" means a person certified pursuant to the prescribed burn manager certification program;

B. "department" means the energy, minerals and natural resources department;

C. "division" means the forestry division of the department;

D. "extension service" means the New Mexico state university cooperative extension service;

E. "pile burning" means the burning of vegetation, usually sticks, limbs or boles of trees and brush, resulting from land management activities, that have been stacked in piles, but does not mean the burning of a single or few small piles of yard waste or pruning debris on an individual's property; and

F. "prescribed burn" means the controlled application of fire to existing vegetative fuels through pile burning or the burning of vegetation over predefined areas under appropriate weather and environmental conditions for purposes of community protection, watershed resilience, silviculture, wildland fire hazard reduction, fuels reduction, rangeland improvement, wildlife management, habitat improvement, invasive species management and ecological maintenance or restoration, but does not include agricultural burning to clear fields of stubble or slash or to manage invasive species impacting crop production, as part of orchard management or to clear irrigation ditches of vegetation and debris in order to improve or restore efficient water flow and delivery.

History: Laws 2021, ch. 13, § 2.

68-5-3. Prescribed burn use.

A. Prescribed burning is considered in the public interest and not a public or private nuisance.

B. Except as limited in Subsection C of this section, a private landowner or a private landowner's agent, contractor or legally authorized designee shall have a right to conduct a prescribed burn on the landowner's property, except when the state forester or a county or municipality issues restrictions prohibiting a prescribed burn because of drought or wind conditions; provided that the prescribed burn is conducted with appropriate precautionary measures, including: the use of sufficient personnel and equipment; the prior notification of local fire officials; burn and contingency planning;

and the use of appropriate prescribed burn techniques that cause the fire to be confined to a predetermined area.

C. A prescribed burn shall not be started when the national weather service has issued a red flag warning for the area where the prescribed burn is planned to take place.

History: Laws 2021, ch. 13, § 3; 2023, ch. 88, § 1.

68-5-4. Civil liability.

A. A private landowner or a private landowner's agent, contractor or legally authorized designee who is a certified prescribed burn manager and who conducts a prescribed burn is liable for any damages to property or for personal injury caused by the prescribed burn, including the reignition of a previously contained prescribed burn, if that person was negligent in starting, controlling or extinguishing the prescribed burn.

B. A private landowner or a private landowner's agent, contractor or legally authorized designee who is not a certified prescribed burn manager and who conducts a prescribed burn is liable for double damages to property or for personal injury caused by the prescribed burn, including the reignition of a previously contained prescribed burn, if that private landowner or that private landowner's agent, contractor or legally authorized designee was negligent in starting, controlling or extinguishing the prescribed burn.

History: Laws 2021, ch. 13, § 4.

68-5-5. Model prescribed burn permits.

The department shall promulgate rules establishing a model prescribed burn permit for use by counties or municipalities. The rules shall provide for required terms and conditions of a prescribed burn permit, including:

- A. common terminology and definitions;
- B. standards for data collection regarding the ownership of land, fuels used, size of the prescribed burn, location of the prescribed burn and entity conducting the prescribed burn;
- C. the types of prescribed burning authorized by the permit;
- D. procedures to coordinate with the requirements of the department of environment's smoke management program;
- E. requirements for the distance of the prescribed burn from structures, buildings and fences;

F. the number of acres and estimated number of burn piles authorized under the permit;

G. requirements for notification of the public and of appropriate personnel, such as fire dispatch personnel, fire department personnel and county or municipal fire marshals, prior to and upon ignition and termination of the prescribed burn;

H. procedures to permit prescribed burns that cross jurisdictions; and

I. procedures to aggregate permit data and report annually on the effectiveness of the model prescribed burn permit.

History: Laws 2021, ch. 13, § 5.

68-5-6. Criteria for counties or municipalities issuing prescribed burn permits.

A county or municipality may adopt an ordinance to require a private landowner to obtain a permit to conduct a prescribed burn. A county or municipality that requires landowners to obtain a permit to conduct a prescribed burn shall use the model prescribed burn permit adopted by the department.

History: Laws 2021, ch. 13, § 6.

68-5-7. Prescribed burn manager certification.

A. The division shall create a prescribed burn manager certification program accessible to private landowners and private landowners' agents, contractors or legally authorized designees who conduct prescribed burns. The certification program shall include training, which shall be provided by the extension service, on all relevant aspects of prescribed burn, including legal requirements, safety, weather, fire behavior, smoke management, prescribed burn techniques, public relations, planning and contingencies.

B. The department shall adopt rules to create the prescribed burn manager certification program, including the training and certification of certified prescribed burn managers; training components and engagement of subject matter experts; application processes; qualification for and terms and durations of certification; types of certification, if applicable; oversight of the program; grounds and processes for renewal, suspension and revocation of certifications; and application, certification and renewal fees.

C. The department, by rule, may establish a fee at an amount not to exceed the amount required to recover costs that the division incurs in providing certification and processing applications for persons seeking certification as certified prescribed burn

managers pursuant to this section. All proceeds from that fee shall be deposited in the forest land protection revolving fund.

D. Nothing in this section may be construed as creating a mandatory prescribed burn manager certification requirement to conduct prescribed burning.

History: Laws 2021, ch. 13, § 7.

68-5-8. Prescribed burn training.

The extension service shall provide the training required for prescribed burn manager certification as specified in rules adopted by the department. The extension service may collect fees for providing the training. The fees shall not exceed the amount required to recover costs that the extension service incurs in providing the training.

History: Laws 2021, ch. 13, § 8.