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Ignitions Complete on Blue Hole Prescribed Fire

Santa Fe – Today in Santa Rosa, fire crews led by the New Mexico Forestry Division completed ignitions at 3:50 p.m. on the Blue Hole Cienega Prescribed Burn. They conducted mop-up and holding operations this afternoon and evening and will continue to monitor the area tomorrow.

As weather conditions proved to be within the prescription plan, crews initiated a test fire this morning at 10:55 a.m.; ignitions commenced at 11:37 a.m. Fire crews used drip torches to coax the fire, starting on the east side of the Cienega, and letting the heat and wind do their job to move the low-intensity fire across the two burn units.

“Today was a success on two levels,” said Division Burn Boss Andy Lopez. “We stayed safe, and the burn was completed within its prescription boundaries. Every firefighter who contributed brought their A-game, and we provided training opportunities for Division staff as well as local fire departments.”

Smoke impacts were minimal within the city of Santa Rosa, and a good light wind helped smoke to travel mostly to the south, and away from the I-40 corridor. Tonight, the area should expect low-hanging residual smoke, through tomorrow morning.

The fire’s objective was to clear out overgrown grass and brush from the 115-acre Blue Hole Cienega to encourage growth of the Pecos sunflower, a state and federally endangered plant in New Mexico. Introducing fire to the landscape helps protect and regenerate the sunflower’s population in the area. The Cienega was last treated with prescribed fire seven years ago, and

this plan is a continuation of a decades-long effort to monitor and improve the health of the Cienega within the greater Santa Rosa area.

Cooperating agencies included the U.S. Forest Service, local volunteer fire departments, the New Mexico Department of Transportation, the Guadalupe County Emergency Manager, the Guadalupe County Maintenance team, and the city of Santa Rosa.

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