

Michelle Lujan Grisham, Governor
Melanie A Kenderdine, Cabinet Secretary-Designate
Dylan M. Fuge, Deputy Secretary
Laura McCarthy, State Forester

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: George Ducker
Communications Coordinator
george.ducker@emnr.d.nm.gov
505-699-0601



June 14, 2024

State-Led Mimbres Crew tackles first wildland fire

New Mexico's new firefighting crew completes initial assignment on Whitetail Fire

SANTA FE – The [New Mexico Forestry Division](#)'s Mimbres Wildfire Crew completed its first field assignment last weekend, performing suppression efforts on the Whitetail Fire south of Silver City, New Mexico.

The 19-member crew, which recently earned Type-2 wildland firefighting certification, responded to a 54-acre fire south of Highway 90. Based in Socorro, this crew is one of two that the Forestry Division has assembled with the expectation that, over time, they will gain the training and expertise to become certified Type-1 firefighting crews, also known as Hotshots. The other crew is the Pecos River Crew, based in Las Vegas, New Mexico.

After the disastrous fire season of 2022, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham and the Energy Minerals and **Natural Resources Department's Forestry Division sought to bolster the state's wildfire response** capacity. This effort led to a legislative budget allocation of approximately \$1.3 million dollars for the creation of these crews.

"Every journey begins with a first step," said Laura McCarthy, **State Forester**. "This is a new journey for our firefighters and the state of New Mexico. Adding capacity to our wildland firefighting efforts is a win-win -- it protects homes and property and creates around 40 new full-time positions in a field **that's** typically reliant on seasonal **employment.**"

The Mimbres Crew's **initial assignment began** on Saturday morning, June 8. Upon arriving at the scene of the Whitehall Fire, the crew encountered a moderately inclined foothill terrain with grass and brush fuel types. They worked to mop **up the fire's perimeter** as well as inside the burned area through tactics such as cold-trailing and gridding. These tactics ensure that any spots of residual heat are extinguished, either through use of portable water systems or by stirring up mineral soil around a heat source to cool it off. The Mimbres Crew remained on the fire for five days until the fire reached full containment. The lightning-caused Whitetail Fire is now 100% contained.

“I’m proud of this crew and their achievements in such a short time,” said Candice Kutrosky, Mimbres Superintendent. **“We had a great response to our hiring efforts, and now the results are in the field. We look forward to many more assignments this fire season.”**

The Mimbres Crew began forming **earlier this year when the state Forestry Division’s new Hotshot** program went online. Positions such as Squad Leader, Administrative Officer, Senior Firefighter and Crew Member were filled, and staff began physical training and suppression exercises together—all with the goal of becoming a cohesive unit, which is critical for wildland fire crews.

Over the coming years, both the Mimbres Crew and the Pecos River Crew will develop their programs. As they gain experience working together, the crews will be reviewed and evaluated by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group to graduate from Type-2 status and become Type-1 firefighting crews, and official Interagency Hotshot Crews (IHCs).

Typically, IHCs are funded and managed through federal agencies like the U.S. Forest Service or the Department of the Interior. Only two other states—Alaska and Utah—have state-funded Hotshot crews.

###

Video content is available [here](#):



Mimbres Crew receives a morning briefing before going to work on the Whitetail Fire. Photo by: Stephanie Finch



Mimbres Crew lines out to the fire. Photo by: Stephanie Finch



Mimbres Crew works through the burned area of the Whitetail Fire. Photo by: Stephanie Finch

Link to this press release available [here](#).

###

The Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department provides resource protection and renewable energy resource development services to the public and other state agencies.
<https://www.emnrd.nm.gov>





