

# Linking forests to faucets: Investigating alternative approaches for securing long-term funding for watershed restoration in New Mexico

**Edward McCorkindale (Dr. Robert Berrens, advisor)**

Water Resources Program and Department of Economics, University of New Mexico

## Purpose of Study

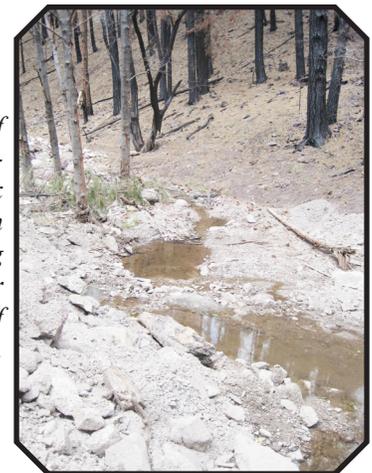
This research will conduct a policy analysis of potential alternative institutional arrangements or adaptations in New Mexico for securing long-term funding for watershed restoration, which better links “forests to faucets” and provides water security for those communities at least partially dependent on water supplies that originate or move through montane forests.

## Study Underway

Research begins with a literature review of efforts elsewhere in the western US (e.g., Denver, CO), and a synthesis of efforts in NM to secure long-term funding for watershed restoration. There have been individual local endeavors, and more recent broader aims to initiate collaborative efforts and study (e.g., NM Senate and House Memorials in 2013). For example, the Santa Fe Municipal Watershed (SFMW), based on payment-for-ecosystem services, has sought to have water users pay for watershed restoration and protection efforts and stands as a pilot for the Rio Grande Water Fund (RGWF), which seeks to scale up current forest management and watershed restoration to 600,000 acres of fire-adapted forests in the Rio Grande, Rio Chama, and tributary watersheds. The SFMW consists of a small number of players requiring few inter-agency agreements, and is fairly simple in magnitude and number of funding sources. The RGWF is distinct in that restoration covers multiple jurisdictions. Further, scale of the project requires multiple, secure funding sources for 20 years of forest and water management activities, education and outreach, and monitoring.

## Benefits

The expected result of this analysis is to inform public debate in NM, and key connections with policy networks have already been established (e.g., collaboration with the Nature Conservancy, which has helped lead recent forums and RGWF efforts). The second half of this study considers how restoration projects are prioritized once funding is secured.



*The legacy of Whitewater-Baldy Complex Fire has been severe flooding in Silver Creek east of Mogollon, NM.*

*UNM Water Resources Program students, including Ed McCorkindale, studied the Gila watershed in Summer 2013, including Silver Creek east of Mogollon, NM, where impacts from the Whitewater-Baldy Complex Fire were observed.*