

PL 108-317: Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act

Situation Analysis

- Research shows that the trend towards large, severe and frequent crownfire will continue in frequent fire forests—73 million acres in the Intermountain West are vulnerable to unnatural, catastrophic fire
- Fires of this magnitude are a symptom of unhealthy forests
- The land management agencies will implement millions of acres of treatments over the next fifteen years
- Well designed forest restoration treatments reduce the threat of unnatural wildfire and simultaneously reinvigorate forest health, wildlife habitat and benefit other natural resource values
- Congress, the Western Governors' Association, and agency policy documents call for using the best available science to inform the design of forest restoration treatments

Why the Institutes are Important

The intent of the Southwest Forest Health Restoration and Wildfire Prevention Act is to ensure that the best available science is used to design and implement forest restoration treatments. It is the responsibility of the Institutes to respond to the information needs of land managers, communities and other stakeholders engaged in the development of treatments.

Specifically the Institutes will:

1. Develop and synthesize the knowledge required to **design** treatments that provide long-term, comprehensive solutions to the unnatural wildfire and forest ecosystem health crisis that exists today;
2. **Translate scientific knowledge** into the formats and language appropriate for land managers, communities and stakeholders; and,
3. **Transfer that knowledge** through a multitude of approaches including: direct technical assistance, workshops, fieldtrips, continuing education and the web.

The Purpose of the Charter

Congress passed PL 108-317 in October of 2004. It authorizes the Ecological Restoration Institutes in Arizona, Colorado and New Mexico to provide the applied scientific research, information translation and transfer required by land managers (state, federal, local) and stakeholders engaged in the development of forest restoration treatments. It also authorizes up to \$15 million in federal appropriations to meet the goals of the Act.

The Institutes are working with federal and state agencies (under the leadership of the Forest Service) to develop a framework for cooperation. Central to efficient and effective implementation of the legislation is ensuring that the states of Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado and their respective universities work cooperatively to identify areas of regional and state need, seek complementarity in missions and use the unique strengths of the individual universities to develop solutions to the challenge of restoring forests.

The Charter defines the working relationship between the Institutes and state governments. It demonstrates the commitment that exists between the states and federal government to work collaboratively and cooperatively to improve forest health.