

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA, and the Department of Homeland Security NEPA directives, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has prepared this Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) to assess the potential effects to the human environment based on actions proposed by FEMA to address watershed resiliency and post-wildfire treatments. The proposed action evaluated in this PEA may be undertaken by FEMA's grant recipients or subrecipients in the State of New Mexico (NM).

The purpose of the proposed action is to reduce the potential for loss of life, property, infrastructure, and watershed functioning resulting from the primary and secondary effects of wildfire. The ecosystem services provided through watershed functioning aid in reducing the adverse effects from wildfire and monsoon season cycles, common in the Southwest United States. The primary adverse effects of wildfire include serious damage to property, threat to human life, and in the case of uncharacteristic wildfire, adverse effects on ecosystems. The secondary effects of wildfire can occur during monsoon rains and include flooding, erosion, and debris flows. The need for the proposed action is linked to the chronic and evolving threats faced by watersheds due to prolonged periods of drought, repetitive or uncharacteristic wildfire, post-wildfire monsoon flooding, and anthropomorphic stressors such as a warming atmosphere, demands on water flow, and increased development in fire-prone areas. The primary and secondary effects of wildfire and monsoon can have significant and long-lasting effects on communities, infrastructure, and regional economies in NM.

FEMA evaluated two project alternatives in the PEA; a No Action Alternative, evaluated as a baseline, and a Proposed Action Alternative evaluated as a range of potential actions that promote watershed functioning and post-wildfire treatments, thereby mitigating the primary and secondary effects of wildfire. The range of potential actions collectively identified as the Proposed Action Alternative broadly includes: vegetative thinning, hazardous tree removal, and noxious weed abatement; restoration and reforestation of fire-adapted vegetation types; restoration of riparian areas; post-wildfire hillslope stabilization treatments; post-wildfire channel treatments; post-wildfire road, culvert, and trail flow diversion treatments; post-wildfire ash, sediment, and debris removal and infrastructure repairs; structure demolition, relocation, or alteration; and hydraulic capacity improvements and protection of water infrastructure. The spatial and temporal scope for this PEA includes a total project footprint not to exceed 500 acres per project and are initiated within a five year period. The Proposed Action Alternative has short-term, mostly minor effects but in some cases up to moderate effects to resources, primarily relating to the temporary construction actions associated with post-wildfire treatments. Moderate adverse effects are measurable locally or regionally and would be limited with best management practices and conformance with applicable permits. FEMA expects the Proposed Action Alternative to have a

beneficial long-term effect on watershed functioning based on a potential for increased resiliency in mitigating the primary and secondary effects of wildfire. The PEA was made available for agency and public review and comment for a period of 30 days following publication of the public notice. The PEA was also available on FEMA's website for download at <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/practitioners/environmental-historic/nepa-repository>.