

Claunch-Pinto, East Torrance, and Edgewood SWCDs Respond to Threat

Being the true-hearted partners they are, the Claunch-Pinto, East Torrance, and Edgewood Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) kicked into high gear when the Trigo Fire in the Manzano Mountains happened. They have rallied resources for landowners impacted by the fire, and served as liaisons to keep communications open and clear.

The Trigo Fire began April 15, 2008, and burned 21 square miles and 59 homes in New Mexico's Manzano Mountains. This human-caused fire, visible from Albuquerque, was 100 percent contained on May 11, 2008. Imminent hazards to life and property, including exigencies, were a real possibility in the aftermath of this fire, particularly because New Mexico's monsoon seasons that typically start in July are notorious for heavy thunderstorms and flash floods.

Ninety percent of the watershed above the community of Manzano and a retreat located in the area was burned. The communities of Torreon and Tajique were also effected by this fire, but to less an extent. The Manzano Land Grant is an old Spanish land grant that is in the effected area.

The SWCDs immediately swung into action when the fire started. One of their major roles has been to keep communications open and clear, providing landowners with information about erosion issues and felling of dead trees. They have fulfilled liaison tasks with the U.S. Forest Service's BAER team, congressional delegation, and local landowners.

But their support of local landowners has gone well beyond communications. They are using funds they have to create defensible spaces to thin trees, mustered their reseeding equipment to help in that endeavor, and ordered trees for re-plantings. For landowners that have lost existing boundary fences, the East Torrance SWCD is broadening its cost-sharing



abilities to help finance reconstruction of boundary fences. They are working on arrangements for well testing for landowners that are concerned about their water supplies. Meanwhile, the Claunch-Pinto SWCD provided some fence building equipment and supplies during the initial rehabilitation on private property.

Meanwhile they are doing a yeoman's task of helping NRCS by getting permissions for access to property so Damage Survey Reports can be done as a preliminary step to gain federal Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) funds. They have either committed or are in the process of committing to the 25 percent local cost-share that is necessary for EWP funds that can be used to relieve imminent hazards to life and property caused by such natural occurrences.

The local SWCDs have also seen fit to reach out to the National Association of Conservation Districts for their assistance at the federal level.

The Claunch-Pinto, East Torrance, and Edgewood Soil and Water Conservation Districts have truly been "putting the local into locally-led conservation" and supporting the landowners of their districts.