



## Western Forestry Leadership Coalition Issue Brief Southwest Forest Restoration Institutes

### **Summary:**

Southwest Forest Restoration Institutes have been established in Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona to conduct and disseminate research on forest and watershed restoration issues in the West and partner with state and federal scientists.

### **Background:**

The Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act (“the Act”), signed into law on October 5, 2004, authorized the creation of three research institutes in the interior west. The institutes are charged with promoting the use of adaptive ecosystem management to reduce the risk of wildfires and restore the health of forest and woodland ecosystems. The Ecological Restoration Institute at Northern Arizona University, in existence since 1999, has now been joined by the Forest and Watershed Institute at New Mexico Highlands University and the Colorado Forest Restoration Institute at Colorado State University. Collectively, these three Institutes are called the Southwest Forest Restoration Institutes (SWERI).

On June 13, 2005, at the Western Governors’ Association (WGA) annual meeting, the Governors of Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico signed a charter with the Universities to formalize the role of the SWERI and provide a framework for collaboration. The framework establishes the SWERI Coordinating Committee which includes: representatives of the three Governors, the three state foresters, directors of each of the Institutes, and a representative of the WGA.

### **Current Issues:**

Colorado and New Mexico, as the newest members of the SWERI, are currently in the process of developing statewide “needs assessments” to identify research and service needs specific to their states. Arizona will be drawing mostly on existing work to contribute to an integrated program of work for the SWERI. This preliminary work plan is expected by the end of 2005.

Funding for the SWERI was authorized through the 2004 Act at \$15 million per year through the USDA Forest Service, but FY05 appropriated funding only totaled \$400,000. The Ecological Restoration Institute (ERI) in Arizona sent \$50,000 of those funds to Colorado and New Mexico assisting their initial needs assessment. FY06 funding includes a \$1.6 million earmark for the ERI, but no designated funding for either of the other two Institutes. At this time, the Institutes are working together to identify other possible sources of funding for FY2006, likely to take the form of earmarks for all the Institutes in the FY07 budget.

**Recommendations:** The WFLC staff will track the implementation of the 2004 Act, the development of research agendas at each Institute, and the establishment of funding strategies to support that work. Updated progress reports will be developed when information becomes available.

### **Contact Information:**

AZ SWERI: Dr. Wally Covington; 928-523-7128; Wally.Covington@nau.edu  
NM SWERI: Dr. Tony Gallegos; tfgallegos@nmhu.edu  
CO SWERI: Dr. Dan Binkley; 970-491-6519; dan@cnr.colostate.edu  
WFLC: Lisa Dale; 303-445-4363; lisa.dale@colostate.edu