

Estancia Basin Watershed Health Restoration and Monitoring Project

Policies and Procedures

1. Purpose: These policies and procedure are designed to describe the roles and responsibilities of the Estancia Basin Watershed Health Restoration and Monitoring Project and to describe the procedures to be used in conducting business related to project activities.
2. Mission and Organization
 - a. The mission of the Estancia Basin Watershed Health Restoration and Monitoring (EBWHRM) Project is to improve watershed health and conservation, increase water recharge, reduce property and natural resource loss from fire, and ensure consistent implementation of restoration projects through the collaborative efforts of member Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) and other stakeholders in the Estancia basin.
 - b. EBWHRM was formed by the Claunch-Pinto SWCD, East Torrance SWCD, Edgewood SWCD, and Ciudad SWCD and operates under the direction of a steering committee comprised of representatives from each of these districts, an at-large landowner representative, and representatives from the New Mexico Environment Department and New Mexico State Forestry. It receives advice and technical assistance from a variety of partner organizations including the New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute, the United States Forest Service, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the New Mexico Department of Agriculture, the Estancia Basin Water Planning Committee, and other public entities that have an interest in the overall health and management of natural resources in the Estancia Basin.
3. Definitions.
 - a. EBWHRM Project. An activity sponsored by and overseen by the Estancia Basin Watershed Health, Restoration, and Monitoring steering committee. Projects may include, but are not limited to forest restoration treatments(e.g. hazardous fuel reduction, forest health improvement, and brush management), riparian restoration treatments (invasive species removal and habitat improvement and protection), erosion control treatments, and ecological monitoring.
 - b. Watershed. A region of land that drains to a particular body of water such as a river or a lake. Rain or snow that falls anywhere in that watershed eventually flows to that water body. It may travel overland as surface water or flow underground as groundwater.
 - c. Restoration. The process of assisting the recovery of resilience and adaptive capacity of ecosystems that have been degraded, damaged, or destroyed. Restoration focuses on establishing the composition, structure, pattern, and ecological processes necessary to

make terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems sustainable, resilient, and healthy under current and future conditions." www.fs.fed.us/restoration/

- d. Treatment. On the ground activities aimed at addressing a project's restoration objectives.
 - e. Monitoring. The collection and analysis of repeated observations or measurements to evaluate changes in condition and progress toward meeting a resource or management objective. (USDA Forest Service 2009).
 - f. Funding. EBWHRM can receive funding from many sources. The three shown below are the sources that have been utilized to date. Projects will often use a combination of funds from these sources.
 - i. Water Trust Board (WTB). The statutory purpose of the New Mexico Water Trust Board is to provide for water use efficiency, resource conservation and protection, and the fair distribution and allocation of New Mexico's scarce water resources for beneficial purposes of use within the state. To meet this purpose, each year the WTB provides funds to local government entities to promote restoration and management of watersheds, including water quality improvements, riparian ecosystem restoration, Endangered Species Act protection and healthy forest initiatives. This is the primary and largest source of recurring funds for the EBWHRM project.
 - ii. Non-Federal Lands (NFL). U. S. Forest Service funds distributed to local government entities through the New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD), Forestry Division. Funds are to be used to reduce the fire threat to New Mexico's communities and on lands adjacent to or near U. S. Forest Service land.
 - iii. Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). U. S. Forest Service funds distributed to local government entities through the New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD), Forestry Division. Funds are to be used by governmental entities that are surrounded by hazardous forest fuels that pose a threat in the event of a wildland fire for the planning and implementation of hazardous fuels mitigation projects that will reduce the fire threat in Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas in New Mexico.
4. Roles and responsibilities
- a. The Steering Committee.
The decision-making body of the EBWHRM. It leads and directs the accomplishment of

the EBWHRM mission. It develops and implements procedures within the constraints of the Project funding sources and fiscal agent's statutory requirements. It determines allocation of funds received by the EBWHRM Project. Membership is comprised of a representative from each member SWCD, an at large representative of landowner interests, and a representative each from the New Mexico Environment Department and New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD), Forestry Division. Steering committee members may serve in a non-voting capacity at the direction of their parent organization or agency.

- b. Member Soil and Water Conservation Districts.
 - i. Provide a representative to the Steering Committee who is authorized to vote on behalf of that District or otherwise represent the interests of that District.
 - ii. Propose projects for funding and implementation.
 - iii. Direct project implementation actions and activities developed in the District in accordance with approval actions of the District Board of Supervisors.
 - iv. Track project implementation and report progress through their Steering Committee representative.
 - v. Provide general oversight of EBWHRM through the District Board of Supervisors.
- c. Individual steering committee members
 - i. Provide input to and vote on decisions relating to EBWHRM activities
 - ii. Represent the positions and perspectives of their parent organization.
 - iii. Provide personal perspective based on their professional experience.
 - iv. Provide technical advice in their personal and organization's areas of expertise
- d. Project partners
 - i. Provide technical advice and support in their personal and organization's areas of expertise.
 - ii. Identify potential project needs and opportunities to the Steering Committee.
- e. Landowners and land managers
 - i. Apply for EBWHRM project funding.
 - ii. Complete projects in accordance with Landowner Agreement and contract guidelines.
 - iii. Provide stewardship and maintenance of property treated with EBWHRM resources.

f. Fiscal agent

- i. Applies for funding on behalf of the EBWHRM Project.
- ii. Manages funds in accordance with funding entity guidelines and regulations.
- iii. Manages all EBWHRM Project contract activities.
- iv. Tracks expenditures of funds and reports funds status to the EBWHRM Steering Committee in a timely manner.

5. Procedures

a. Meetings and Decision-making

- i. The Steering Committee or their designee will call meetings monthly, but no less than quarterly. Special meetings may be called to address specific items of interest to the committee.
- ii. Meetings will be facilitated by a representative of the New Mexico Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute (NMFWR) or another external entity agreed upon by the steering committee. In the absence of the designated facilitator, meetings will be facilitated by the EBWHRM fiscal agent representative. A draft agenda will normally be sent out a week in advance of a scheduled meeting. Draft minutes from the previous meeting will be distributed with the agenda. Meeting business can only be conducted if a quorum is present. In absence as a quorum, the meeting may continue as an informational meeting, with no actions taken or policies discussed. A quorum shall consist of a greater than 50% of the voting members of the steering committee.
- iii. Steering Committee members will be authorized to vote on behalf their organization on all matters before the Committee.
- iv. Regular meetings will normally follow the following agenda:
 1. Call to Order
 2. Quorum determination
 3. Approval of agenda
 4. Approval of minutes
 5. Projects (normally by water trust Board funding year)
 6. Open items
 7. New items (e.g. landowner training, database issues)
 8. Report on Monitoring
 9. Partner and Public Comment
 10. Review of action items
 11. Adjourn

- v. At the first meeting of each fiscal quarter, the fiscal agent will present a list of the current year's projects, to include each project's funding and status. The status will describe whether the project has started, estimated percent complete, and inspection status, as appropriate. Individual projects requiring, or potentially requiring immediate committee attention may be presented at any regular meeting.
- vi. Meeting minutes will be prepared and distributed promptly.
- vii. Approved agendas and meeting minutes will be posted on the New Mexico Forest and Watershed Health Information Clearinghouse (allaboutwatersheds.org).

b. Collaborative Efforts

- i. The Steering Committee will make decisions related to any projects that come under the purview of the Estancia Basin Watershed Health, Restoration, and Monitoring Project activities.
 - 1. Decisions will be made by a consensus vote of Steering Committee members. Roll call votes may be requested by any Steering Committee member.
 - 2. If the Steering Committee has issues that cannot be resolved within its membership, the four SWCD representatives will take the issue back to their respective boards for a District Board decision on the issue. The SWCD representatives will then come back to the Steering Committee to resolve the issue with a majority vote.
- ii. Each participating agency that obtains funds through the EBWHRM Program will operate under an agreement with the fiscal agent for continuity of expenditure of funds.
- iii. The Steering Committee will not issue letters of support or other written correspondence reflecting the position of the EBWHRM Project. Requests for such letters will be referred to the each Committee member's sponsoring organization. If correspondence reflecting the coordinated position of the EBWRM Project are required, such correspondence will be signed by an authorized official of each Committee member's sponsoring organization.
- iv. The Steering Committee shall be allowed to increase its collaborative partnership as deemed necessary to accomplish business and obtain leadership input from multiple partners involved in land treatment programs of the committee.
- v. Members of the Steering Committee may withdraw their membership at any time. If a member chooses to withdraw, the following shall apply:
 - 1. Members shall submit planned projects from participating landowners to the Steering Committee for preparation of treatment contracts. If a member withdraws from the Steering Committee, only the completed planned projects and associated

contracts on record with the fiscal agent at the time of member withdrawal will be honored for execution by the fiscal agent.

2. If a member withdraws from the Steering Committee in the current fiscal year of operation, that member may not reapply for membership into the Steering Committee during the same fiscal year in which they withdrew their participation.

c. Funding

- i. The fiscal year for the Estancia Basin Watershed Health, Restoration, and Monitoring Project is July 1 – June 30. Fiscal cycles for project management and implementation are determined by the funding source.
- ii. Project funds are maintained by the fiscal agent. Each member SWCD is allocated a portion of the funding; however, actual funds are retained by the fiscal agent and disseminated via reimbursement based on invoices against allowable expenses.
- iii. Initial distributions/allocation decision. Initial allocation of funds will generally be based on equal distribution to each member SWCD. In cases where a member SWCD does not anticipate a sufficient number of projects to utilize their full share, the Steering Committee will determine an appropriate allocation among the member SWCDs.
- iv. Funding allocation adjustments decision. If a member SWCD is unable to utilize its full allotment after the allotment has already been made, the Steering committee will determine how the projected unexpended funds will be utilized by the EBWHRM project.
- v. Participating agencies will coordinate requests for meetings, trainings, and other contracted consultant support with the fiscal agent.
- vi. Funds matching and cost shares. No funds may be applied to EBWHRM projects without approval of the Steering Committee. This includes funding obtained by individual member districts as well as grant funding obtained by the Fiscal Agent.
- vii. Authorized administrative expenses and match

d. Thinning Project Management

- i. Timelines. Project accomplishment timelines are driven by the funding source. Since the Water Trust Board has been the dominant funding source, project implementation and reimbursement schedules are normally driven by the WTB's timelines. The sequence shown in figure __ is generally followed.
- ii. Public announcements. The announcement of the availability of EBWHRM funding is on each member SWCD website and is posted at the SWCD offices.

- iii. Landowner requests for assistance. Landowners may submit a Landowner Request for Assistance form (see attachment __) to the SWCD, with required documentation, at any time. Requests are handled on a first come-first serve basis. Requests will be logged and date/time stamped.

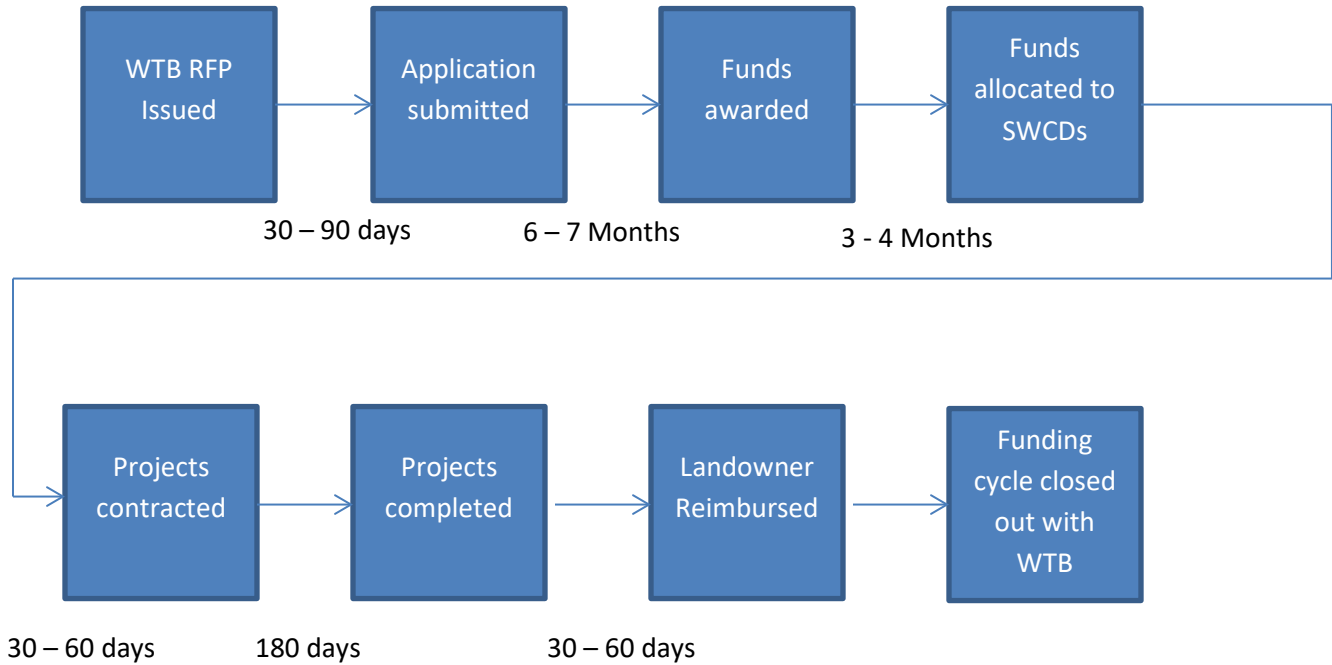
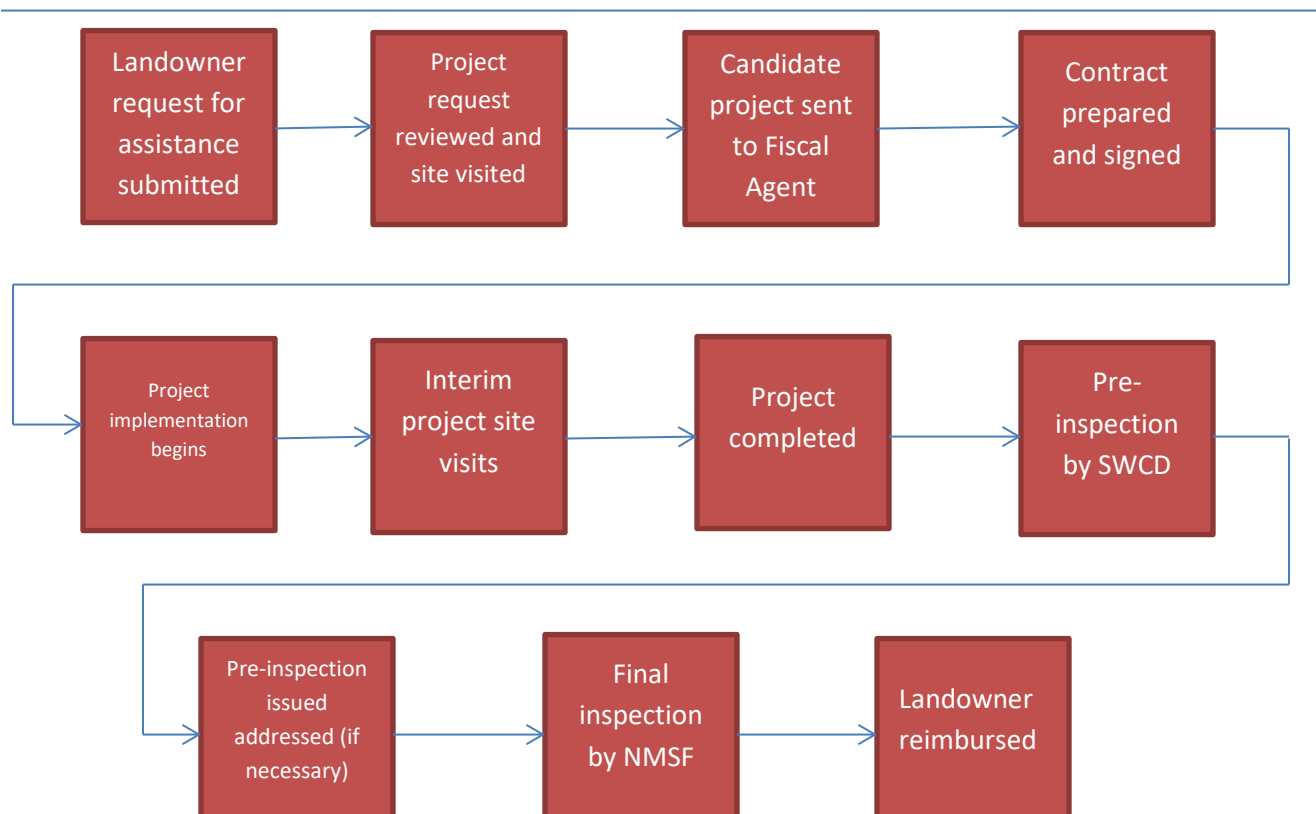


Figure ____. General funding timelines/flow



iv. Practice plans: design and implementation

1. Prescriptions. All projects must follow EBWHRM site specific prescription guidelines. Prescriptions must be reviewed by the EBWHRM NM State Forestry representative. An Archaeological Records Management Section (ARMS) review will be conducted for each project prior to the beginning of treatments. The Fiscal agent will review and approve the project budget.
2. Projects are limited to 20 acres. Landowners who want to complete more than 20 acres can write one or more contracts for up to 20 acres each with the understanding that no more than two 20 acre projects can be worked at a time. An inspection must be performed and passed on the initial 20 acres in order to move forward on the third 20 acre project, with projects rolling forward so that no more than two 20 acre projects are in progress at the same time.
3. Change orders. Any changes to the project scope, design, or prescription must be approved by NM State Forestry and the fiscal agent, in coordination with the appropriate district conservationist.

v. Authorized reimbursable rates and expenses.

1. Landowners. Reimbursement rates are established by New Mexico State Forestry. Reimbursable expenses generally include contractor fees and consumable items. Purchase or repair of equipment items such as vehicles, chainsaws, or chippers are not eligible for reimbursement. See attachment ___ for a list of items that may be reimbursed.
2. SWCDs. Certain costs related to planning and administration of projects may be reimbursed to member SWCDs. See attachment ___ for a list of reimbursable costs.
3. In kind contributions. Some costs incurred by districts and landowners may not be eligible for cost reimbursement, but may be considered for in kind match on grants. Districts and landowners are encouraged to track and submit these items. This will help stretch the fund awarded to EBWHRM projects and enhance the EBHRM project's ability to secure future funding.
4. Invoicing and payment. Project costs can be reimbursed once the project passes inspection. Landowners submit invoices to the fiscal agent for reimbursable expenses and can expect payment in 30 to 60 days, depending New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration guidelines and procedures. Landowners utilizing contract

services for treatments have the option of having the contractor invoice the fiscal agent directly.

- vi. Project inspection. Up to two inspections are allowed at no cost to the landowner. If the project does not pass the second inspection, the landowner will pay for all subsequent inspections until the project passes. The project must pass in order to be reimbursed.
 - vii. Reporting. Project accomplishment reporting is performed in accordance with funding authority guidelines. Quarterly accomplishment reports and a final close-out report are submitted to the Water Trust Board for projects funded through that sources.
- e. Monitoring
- i. Individual Projects. Pre- and post- treatment photo points are collected for all project sites. Each point included photos in each cardinal direction and a GPS-derived location.
 - ii. Estancia Basin Watershed Health and Monitoring Project
- f. Landowner and partner training. The EBWHRM steering committee regularly schedules pre-implementation training for contractors and landowners. An agenda for typical training is at attachment __. All landowners or contractors engaged in EBWHRM managed projects must complete this training prior to beginning work on a project and annually thereafter, if they are continuing to work on such projects.