



The Clock is Ticking to Reforest New Mexico

New Mexico’s forests are more than just beautiful and awe-inspiring, they are also an elegant ecological system that provides humans and wildlife alike with multiple benefits. The tandem challenges of wildfires and climate change has already resulted in the loss of hundreds of thousands of acres of forest. If we want our forests back, we need to dramatically ramp up our reforestation efforts because nature cannot do it alone. A forest devoid of seed-producing trees will not grow back without intervention from us. That loss represents more than just an altered vista. Wildlife habitat, livelihoods, recreation, cultural connections, and perhaps most importantly, fresh water that sustains us all depends on resilient forests. We can get our forests back, but only if we make it a shared priority.

OUR CHALLENGES



NM’s greenhouse capacity is 300 thousand seedlings per year. Reforestation efforts need 150-390 million seedlings.



High severity fires have left whole landscapes devoid of a seed source.



Habitat loss: What were once conifer forests have converted to grass and shrub lands.



Workforce: Collecting seeds and planting trees takes many hands and we have yet to establish reforestation as a career pathway.

THE SOLUTIONS

The NM Reforestation Center: a partnership between NM State Forestry, NM Highlands University, NM State University, and the University of NM, is working to coordinate the full scope of reforestation efforts from seed collection to workforce development.

Climate adapted seedlings and planting strategies: We need to give seedlings the best chance for success starting in the greenhouse and continuing with how and where we plant.

Workforce development: There are economic as well as ecological benefits to collecting seeds and planting trees. Reforestation will support 474 jobs per year and \$1.25 billion in economic impact over 30-year period.

(Berry M., 2022, New Mexico reforestation: Program investment and economic analysis. NMHU Report.)

GAPS TO SUCCESS

Funding: More funding is needed from various sources to increase greenhouse capacity, and to grow the reforestation workforce to collect and grow seeds and plant trees.

Best available science: Sharing the best available science with greenhouse operators and land managers on how to grow and plant trees in the face of a changing climate and dramatically altered post-fire landscapes.

Time: With each wildfire, we are racing the clock to re-plant NM’s forests. The longer we wait, the more type-conversion takes hold and the harder our work becomes and the more devastating the effects are on wildlife, our water systems, and our forest-dependent communities.



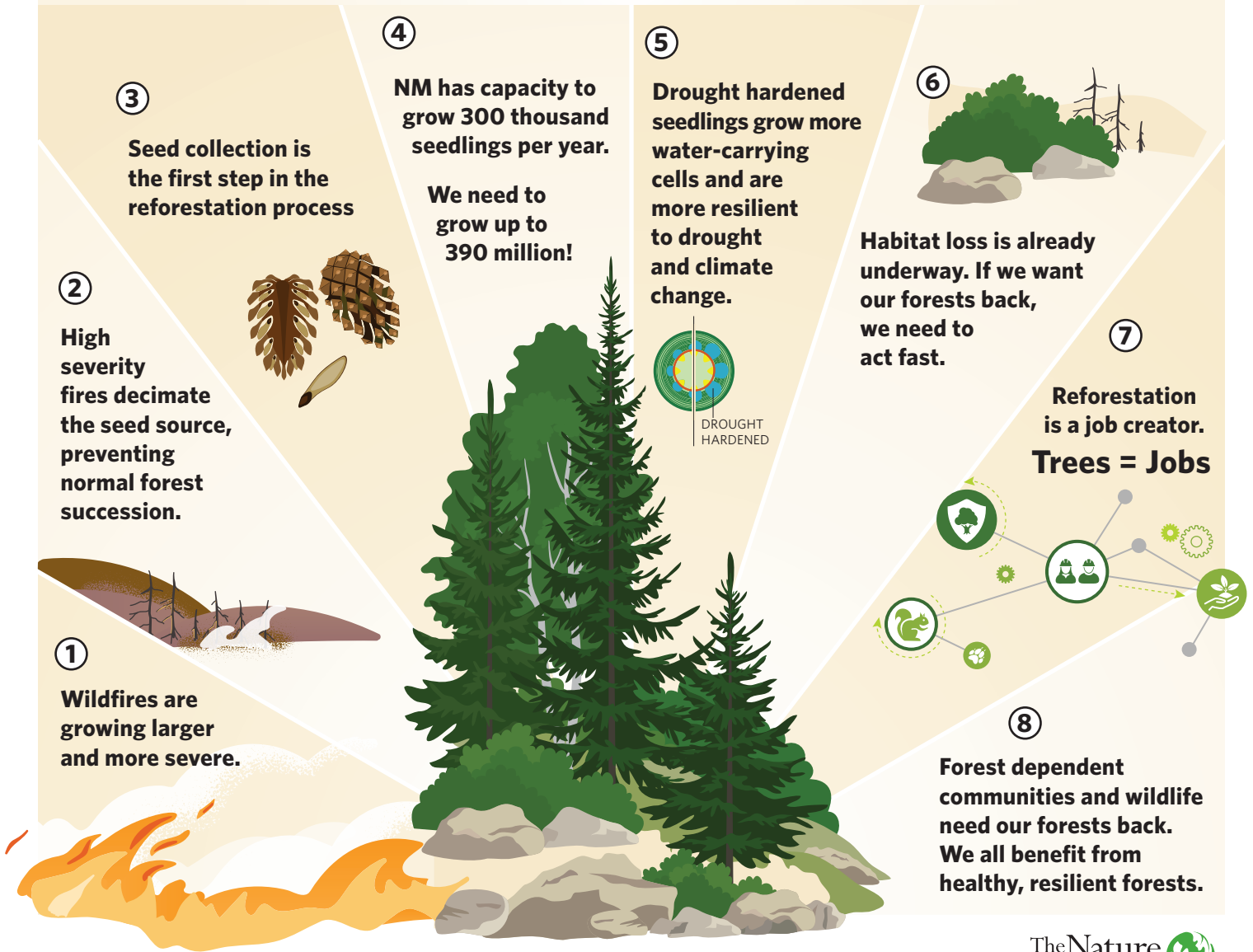
A COMMUNITY OF HEROES

While the Hermit’s Peak/Calf Canyon wildfire raged on the nearby hillside, a heroic effort was underway to rescue tree seeds and seedlings from the John T. Harrington Forestry Research Center in Mora by staff from NM State Forestry, Taos Land Trust, and NM State University. All told, more than 71,000 seedlings were moved in trailers from Mora to a temporary nursery in Santa Fe. Thirty-three thousand of these seedlings would later be planted in the Jemez Mountains, completing an effort by The Nature Conservancy and the Wildlife Conservation Society’s Climate Adaptation Fund to plant 100,000 trees within the Las Conchas wildfire scar using climate adapted siting, planting, and seedling growing methods.

The whole event highlighted how interconnected the forest restoration community is, which is a strength as well as a weakness. There is strength in the collaboration that successfully rescued seedlings; and the collective effort to reforest burned areas in the face of climate change. However, a single fire threatening the entirety of New Mexico’s reforestation efforts highlighted significant systemic weakness. Greater nursery capacity is needed at more than one site. More nurseries, seed storage and growing capacity will increase resilience in the reforestation system creating jobs and economic opportunity.

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Reforestation takes more than just a hole in the ground...



The Nature Conservancy 



FUNDING FOR REFORESTATION

Reforestation must become a shared, and urgent, priority.

We must scale up our efforts in order to meet the need created by recent catastrophic wildfires as well as future fires.

GET OUR FORESTS BACK

Communities impacted by wildfires need us to take action.

Delivering the benefits of wildlife habitat, fuelwood, cultural connections, and livelihoods depend on it.

CREATE JOBS

Trees and jobs grow together. We cannot reforest NM without a workforce to collect and grow the seeds and plant the seedlings. Hundreds of jobs are waiting only for the funding to support their efforts. In communities devastated by wildfire, reforestation provides an economic lifeline.

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