

STATE OF NEW MEXICO

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PRESS RELEASE

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Forestry Division and Corrections Department Partner to Fight Fires

(Santa Fe)- On Friday February 25th to Tuesday March 1st, 2011, The Forestry Division of the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department and inmates from the Central New Mexico Correctional Facility in Los Lunas joined to put out the Dog Canyon Fire in the Guadalupe Mountains fifty miles southwest of Carlsbad. The inmate fire fighters helped to extinguish the 3400-acre blaze that threatened public lands as well as private property. Quick response by fire crews prevented damage to standing structures.

Forestry Division, Capitan District Forester Eddie Tudor praised the work of the inmates on the Dog Canyon Fire, stating, "Because of them, the fire was caught on a piece of private land that was a concern to both me and the landowner. The landowner was very pleased and had nothing but good things to say about the inmates, crew supervisors and our program."

On Saturday, February 26th, fueled by strong winds gusting up to 70 mph, the fire made a run toward the Hughes Brother's Ranch. The inmates were the only fire crews in the immediate area and were able to hold fire lines, preventing the fire from impacting the ranch.

"If the crews hadn't been there working through the night and day, the fire could have burned the whole ranch and no telling how many others," said ranch owner Debbie Hughes. "We are extremely happy with the job they did."

In February, the Forestry Division and inmates from the Central New Mexico Correctional Facility in Los Lunas will completed a fuel reduction project in the city of Rio Rancho, New Mexico to help protect the community and the bosque from wildfire. The coordinated effort reduced the amount of combustible material in the Bosque and will diminish the risk of fires in the community this fire season.

The program for training and using minimum custody inmates to assist the Forestry Division in conducting natural resource projects and fighting wildfires began as a pilot project at Central New Mexico Correctional Facility in 1996 and was incorporated into the prison's community service mission in 1997. There are currently five crews with a total of sixty inmates participating in the program.

For reporters interested in taking video or pictures of the inmate fire crews at work, please call Shannon McReynolds at 505-660-7967 or Dan Ware at 505-690-8210 to schedule a time.

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