

# New Mexico Wildfires Report #14

## August 5, 2022

### **INCIDENT OVERVIEW**

- Due to wildfires throughout the State, including a number over 1,000 acres, the State of New Mexico made a Disaster Declaration on May 3, 2022. The President subsequently approved a federal disaster declaration on May 4, 2022, to provide federal funding to State and eligible local governments and certain private nonprofit organizations. The declaration covers the counties of Colfax, Lincoln, Mora, San Miguel, and Valencia. The President decreased the state cost share from 25% to 0% on June 11, 2022, for a 90-day period from April 5 to July 3, 2022, which was subsequently extended through August 1, 2022.
- On July 28, 2022, an ESF-10 Mission Assignment (MA) for EPA to extend HHW and bulk asbestos assessment and collections was received. The start date for the new MA is August 2, 2022, with the projected end date of September 27, 2022. The ceiling for the new MA is \$1,815,294 with a state cost share of 25%.
- On July 28, 2022, a new ESF-3 MA was received for an EPA Subject Matter Expert (SME) to assist with the rapid assessment for water quality purposes, and other technical assistance for Storrie Lake reservoir in Las Vegas, NM. The start date for the ESF-3 MA was July 26, 2022, with the projected end date of August 25, 2022. The ceiling for the new MA is \$10,000 with a state cost share of 0%.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- On May 11, 2022, EPA received a signed ESF-10 Federal Operational Support (FOS) MA for \$217,000 with a Projected Start Date of May 11, 2022, and Completion Date of July 11, 2022. This MA covers providing appropriate personnel to staff the Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC), Initial Operating Facility (IOF), Joint Field Office (JFO), or other regional, state, tribal, territorial, or local teams, including Rapid Needs Assessment Teams, and/or facilities to include virtual as requested to support disaster operations.
- On May 14th and 15th, 2022, Region 6 mobilized an ESF-10 SME/State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Liaison and EPA Superfund Technical Assistance and Response Team (START) contractor respectively. The ESF-10 SME and START worked with the State of New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (NMDHSEM) and the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) to develop products outlining cleanup needs and applicable laws and

regulations required for property owners who clean up properties on their own.

- On June 15, 2022, EPA received an ESF-10 Direct Federal Assistance (DFA) MA for \$2,000,000 with a Projected Start Date of June 14, 2022, and Completion Date of July 3, 2022. This MA covers oil and hazardous materials response operations including disposal of household hazardous waste (HHW) and bulk asbestos, in support of FEMA disaster operations under ESF-10 of the National Response Framework (NRF).
- On July 1, 2022, EPA received an extension to August 1, 2022, and funding increase of \$1,653,017 for the ESF-10 DFA MA to bring the MA ceiling to \$3,653,017. The extension allows additional time to conduct HHW and bulk asbestos collection, management, and transportation and disposal. This amendment also extends the 0% state cost share.
- On July 7, 2022, EPA received an extension to August 1, 2022, and funding increase of \$31,500 for the ESF-10 FOS MA to bring the MA ceiling to \$248,500. The extension allows additional time to provide personnel to the RRCC, IOF, or JFO, as needed to support disaster operations.
- A pay cap waiver for responders working under the MAs was signed on July 7, 2022. The pay waiver start date is Saturday, June 18, 2022, and end date is Saturday, August 27, 2022.
- On July 26, 2022, EPA received an extension to September 27, 2022, for the ESF-3 FOS MA with no funding increase. MA ceiling remains at \$248,500.
- On July 28, 2022, EPA received a new MA for the ESF-10 DFA MA with a start date of August 2, 2022, and a projected end date of September 27, 2022, with a ceiling of \$1,815,294 and a state cost share of 25%.
- On July 29, 2022, EPA received an ESF-3 FOS MA SME to assist the state of New Mexico and FEMA with technical support and rapid needs assessments pertaining to Storrie Lake reservoir. The start date of the MA was July 26, 2022 with a projected end date of August 25, 2022. The ceiling for the MA is \$10,000 with a 0% state cost share.

## **SIGNIFICANT ACTIONS**

- Collection of HHW and bulk asbestos began in Mora and San Miguel on June 27, 2022. Assessment and collection teams continued operations in Mora and San Miguel Counties, with a focus on the counties prioritized areas of concern for flooding during the upcoming monsoon season. As shown in Map 1 in this Management Report, the priority areas in Mora County are Rio de la Casa Canyon and Holman Hill. The priority areas in San Miguel County are Mineral Hill, Gallinas Canyon, San Ignacio and Cañoncito de Manuelitas.
- On July 18, 2022, NMED secured a staging area for ammunition at the Las Vegas, NM Police Department. EPA will provide pick up and disposal if ammunition is found, however, no ammunition has been found to date.

- Due to lack of ROE forms and cost savings, EPA suspended assessment and collection of HHW and bulk asbestos activities beginning on July 31, 2022, until August 15, 2022. EPA field teams demobilized the site on July 31, 2022. EPA IC stayed in New Mexico for any additional assistance until August 5, 2022. EPA will conduct all response needs virtually until August 15, 2022, when assessment and collection operations will resume in the field.

#### **COORDINATION WITH STATE AND OTHER PARTNERING AGENCIES**

- EPA continues to participate in the Debris Management Task Force (DMTF) which is composed of debris experts from NMED, NMDHSEM, FEMA, and the US Army Corp of Engineers (USACE).
- The City of Las Vegas continues to work Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (NM DHSEM), NMED, New Mexico Finance Authority (NMFA), FEMA, EPA and other state and federal agencies to address their immediate needs. In addition, discussions have occurred regarding the City of Las Vegas to purchase mobile treatment plants to reduce the turbidity of the water to levels treated by the city's current water system. Due to expense of approximately 50% of the city's budget, the city is reluctant to purchasing the mobile treatment plants. Another alternative being discussed is the option to haul water by milk trucks. With the hauled water requiring to be from an approved public water supply, the city may not be able to find water to meet the demand.

#### **EPA RESOURCES**

| <b>EPA Resources (As of August 4, 2022)</b> |            |           |               |          |           |
|---|------------|-----------|---------------|----------|-----------|
| Agency                                      | Remote IMT | REOC      | JFO (virtual) | IMT      | TOTAL     |
| EPA   | 5          | 12        | 1             | 1        | 19        |
| NMED  | 1          | 0         | 0             | 0        | 1         |
| START                                       | 3          | 0         | 0             | 0        | 3         |
| ERRS  | 2          | 0         | 0             | 0        | 2         |
| Total                                       | <b>11</b>  | <b>12</b> | <b>1</b>      | <b>1</b> | <b>25</b> |

## **OPERATIONS**

### *HHW and Bulk Asbestos Task Force (ESF-10)*

On August 1, 2022, due to limited Right of Entry (ROE) forms received and accrued cost waiting on anticipated ROE forms, EPA with agreement from NMED and FEMA demobilize on July 31, 2022, with plans to continue operations on August 15, 2022. Before field teams demobilized, the Incident Command Post (ICP), Staging Area, and waste was secured. The Incident Commander (IC) remained in New Mexico for any additional needs post-demobilization of the field teams. On August 4, 2022, the EPA IC participated in the Debris Management Task Force (DMTF) call, in addition to routine correspondence with New Mexico Environmental Department (NMED) and FEMA. The EPA IC and START received and processed new ROE forms, maintained situational awareness, and provided technical assistance to the State, FEMA, and USACE. A complete list of the ROE status is shown in the “PROGRESS METRICS FOR 2022 NEW MEXICO WILDFIRE HHW COLLECTION” Table, as visually on the graph below. The EPA IC periodically checked the ICP and Staging Pad daily until the IC demobilization on August 5, 2022. The IC position will remain virtual beginning August 5, 2022, until August 15, 2022.

EPA has provided an updated list of ROE forms to the State that are missing information, properties with access issues, and/or properties requiring the State determination of whether the properties are private or commercial. FEMA has indicated that all properties that are not residential (e.g., corporations, non-profits, etc.) are not eligible for the Private Property Debris Removal (PPDR) Program and not covered under Mission Assignment tasking. Properties not eligible should seek assistance under the Public Assistance Program. Multiple ROE forms with properties showing no structures are noted as complete for Phase 1. Safety continues to be an issue with increased rain and flooding.

EPA requested a Department of Transportation (DOT) waiver extension on August 3, 2022. Due to extensions requiring public comment which takes time, EPA will apply for a Special Permit from DOT Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) to allow for transport of HHW and bulk asbestos from the impacted properties to the EPA Staging Pad in La Cueva, New Mexico.

### *Drinking Water Task Force (ESF-3)*

The City of Las Vegas Water Supply System (Las Vegas) has been affected by the Calf Canyon/Hermits Peak Fire due to the Monsoon Rains. Las Vegas supplies drinking water to approximately 13,166 people with a total of 7,117 metered connections. Las Vegas draws water from 3 reservoirs: Peterson Reservoir, Bradner Reservoir and Storrie Lake. Due to high turbidity in Storrie Lake, Las Vegas was using only the Peterson and Bradner Reservoirs.

During the night of July 25th, flooding breached the Peterson Reservoir contaminating the reservoir with ash, debris, and other sediment. The City of Las Vegas took the Peterson Reservoir offline leaving only the Bradner Reservoir as the only available water source for a maximum of 50 to 60 days. In addition, Bradner Reservoir's ground water wells can provide up to ten percent of the city's needs, but the wells can only be utilized for 3-4 months out of the year for a short period of time to avoid impacts to the aquifer.

Under ESF-3 MA, FEMA requested the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to conduct a rapid assessment of the City of Las Vegas Water Supply System following impacts from post-fire debris flow and ash deposition.

EPA Region 6 ESF-3 SME joined the multiagency Federal Emergency Water Task Force (FEWTF) assess the following three approaches:

1. Establish temporary emergency water capability with no more than a one-week supply in or near Las Vegas.
2. As requested by USACE, perform a rapid assessment of the Las Vegas Montezuma Water Treatment Plant to determine the plants current condition and degree of operation to treat existing and expected water quality in near future.
3. Assess the requirements and availability of a temporary water treatment plant.

On July 27, EPA Region 6 ESF-3 SME presented findings of the rapid assessment report which included system overview, availability of water, the quality of water in the area, possible mitigation measures to decrease impact from the wildfires through deposition and runoff as well as providing recommendations for temporary emergency water capability and availability of a temporary water treatment plant.

| <b>PROGRESS METRICS FOR 2022 NEW MEXICO WILDFIRE HHW COLLECTION</b> |          |       |            |       |          |     |
|---|----------|-------|------------|-------|----------|-----|
| Current ROE Status  | Mora     |       | San Miguel |       | Total    |     |
|   | August 4 | Total | August 4   | Total | August 4 | All |
| ROE Received  | 0        | 81    | 0          | 210   | 0        | 291 |
| ROE Withdrawn   | 0        | 0     | 0          | 5     | 0        | 5   |
| ROE Ineligible*   | 0        | 1     | 0          | 11    | 0        | 12  |
| Unable to Access  | 0        | 0     | 0          | 3     | 0        | 3   |
| Phase 1 Complete  | 0        | 62    | 0          | 163   | 0        | 225 |
| Remaining ROEs  | ---      | 18    | ---        | 28    | ---      | 46  |

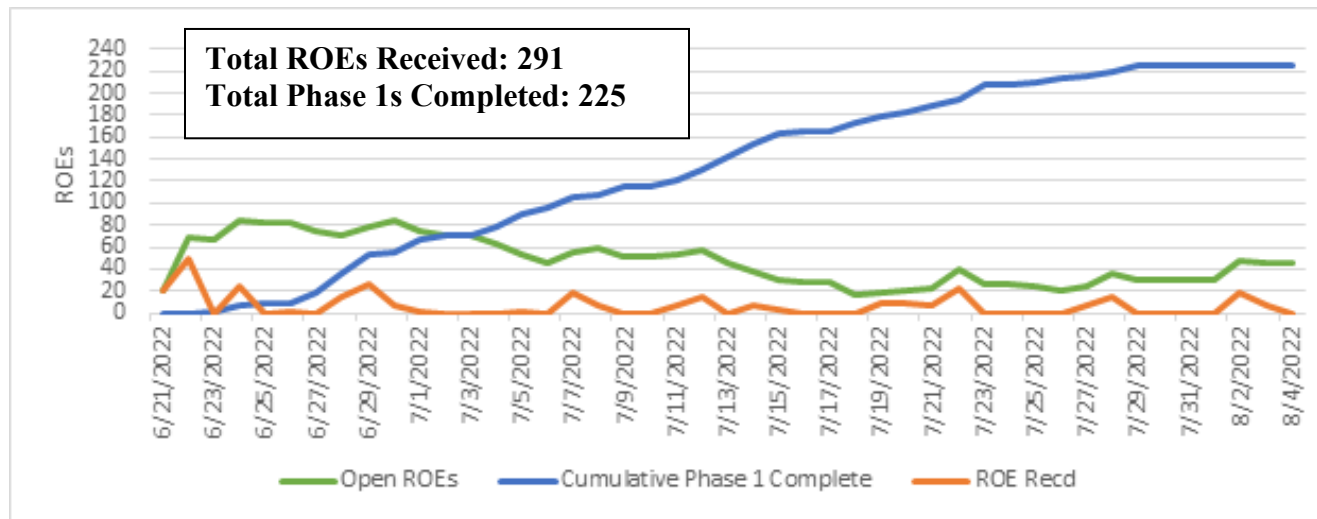
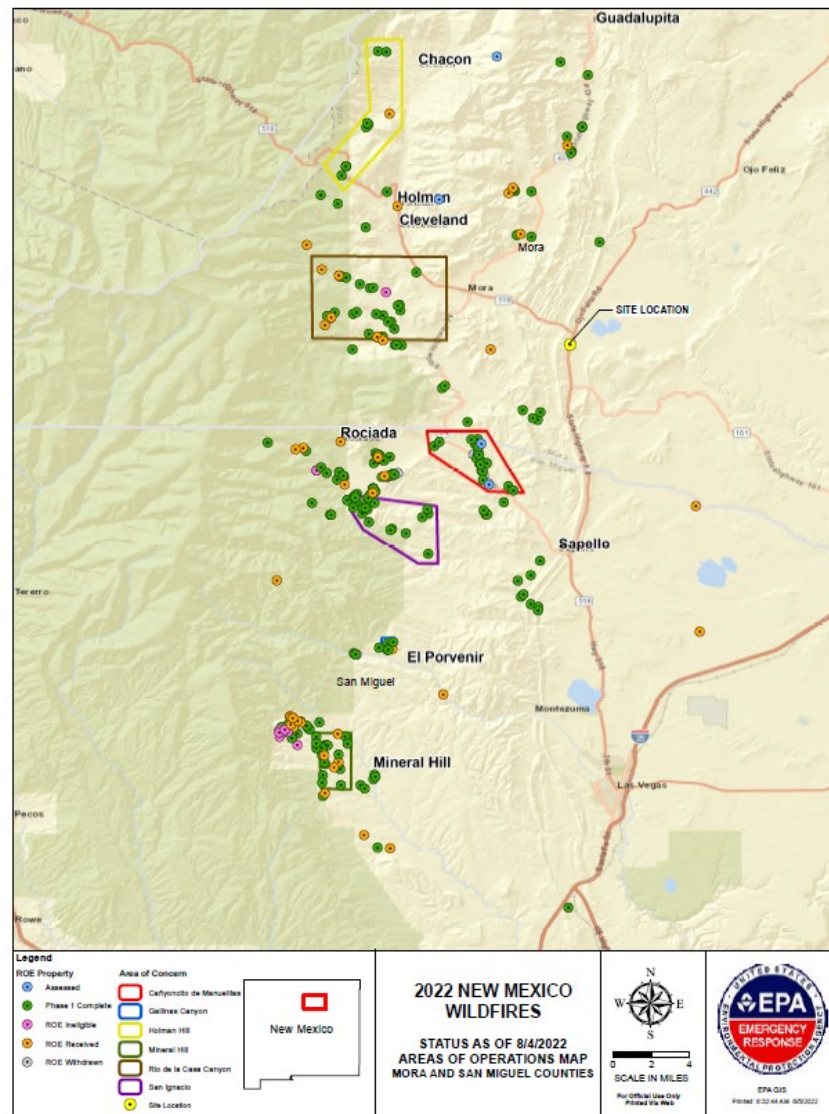


Figure 1: ROE Complete Table

**MAP 1 – AREAS OF OPERATIONS MAP**





## PICTURES



*Picture 1: Staging Pad Waste - August 4, 2022.*



*Picture 2: Staging Pad Waste 2 – August 4, 2022.*



*Picture 3: ICP – August 4, 2022.*