



U.S. Forest Service
Santa Fe National Forest
11 Forest Lane
Santa Fe, NM 87508
505-438-5300
<http://www.fs.usda.gov/santafe/>
Twitter: @SantafeNF

News Release

Media Contact: Julie Anne Overton
505-438-5320
julianneoverton@fs.fed.us



2014 Pino Fire Recognized for Innovative Strategy, Ecosystem Benefits

SANTA FE, NM – March 24, 2015 – For Immediate Release. The Southwest Fire Science Consortium named the Pino Fire on the Santa Fe National Forest the 2014 “Incident of the Year” for lightning-caused fire in the Southwest. The 4,313-acre Pino Fire was cited for the innovative suppression strategy that focused on long-term benefits to the landscape and ecosystem.

The Southwest Fire Science Consortium said the Pino Fire stood out for several reasons, including its proximity to neighborhoods and smoke impact on Albuquerque and Santa Fe. The Incident Management Team was recognized for efforts to “safely maximize beneficial fire on the landscape under challenging conditions.”

On August 13, 2014, lightning started a fire within the perimeter of the Paliza prescribed burn treatment area on the Jemez Ranger District near Ponderosa, NM. The area is also part of the high-profile Southwest Jemez Mountains Collaborative Forest Restoration Project, a 10-year program to encourage science-based ecosystem restoration of 210,000 acres in the Jemez Mountains.

Fire managers decided against full suppression in favor of managing the Pino Fire as part of the long-term strategy to improve the health of the forest and mitigate the risk of future catastrophic fires. Crews established the existing prescribed fire perimeter as the fire boundary and used a combination of hand and aerial ignitions to safely reduce the density of understory trees and surface fuels.

In addition to reducing the risk of large, high-intensity crown fires that pose the greatest threat to firefighter and public safety, the Pino Fire strategy also protected the watershed that serves the area, improved soil nutrients, regenerated native grasses and plants, and provided habitat for birds and small mammals that nest in tree cavities.

Located at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, AZ, the [Southwest Fire Science Consortium](#) brings land managers, scientists and policy makers together to develop scientific information on fire and disseminate it across agency, administrative and state boundaries to benefit firefighters on the ground.

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