

Biographical Statement

Laura McCarthy is Director of Conservation Programs for the Nature Conservancy in New Mexico. She manages the Conservancy's conservation work in the Rio Grande, Gila and San Juan basins. Ms. McCarthy developed the Santa Fe Water Source Protection Fund in 2009 and launched the Rio Grande Water Fund in 2014. She has been with the Conservancy since 2005, where for seven years she was the Conservancy's Senior Policy Advisor for fire and forest restoration. In this capacity she worked on federal legislation, including the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Act and the Interior Appropriations Bills.

Ms. McCarthy's prior work was with the USDA Forest Service, a state forest agency, and a community-based forestry NGO. She worked on five national forests (Green Mountain, White Mountain, Lassen, Eldorado and Idaho Panhandle), mostly in the timber program and in forest planning. She went out on fire assignments in California, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, and Wyoming, including the landmark Yellowstone Fire in 1988. Ms. McCarthy was a planner for two years under the State Forester in New Hampshire, and she also worked for the Forest Guild non-governmental organization.

Ms. McCarthy's professional life was significantly altered by two fires in New Mexico: Cerro Grande in 2000 and Las Conchas in 2011. The first fire was followed by the National Fire Plan to improve forest and fire management, and the second fire revealed that federal efforts might not be accomplishing restoration at a large enough scale. Both fires became her inspiration to work on scaling up forest restoration with a market-based approach to water source protection.

On Earth Day, April 22, 2015, Ms. McCarthy was honor to be selected by Governor Susana Martinez as New Mexico's Environmental Leader of the Year. Ms. McCarthy's prior awards include Neutrogena Naturals Champion of Clean Water in 2011, Society of American Forester's Young Forester Leadership Award in 1998, and USDA Secretary's Honor Award in 1995. Ms, McCarthy has a Master of Forestry from Yale University and a Bachelor of Arts in government and legal studies from Bowdoin College.