




Wildfire mitigation in New Mexico down 53% since Trump took office

Advocacy group report analyzes prescribed burns and other treatments

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 An analysis of U.S. Forest Service data by a wildland firefighter advocacy group shows that wildfire mitigation efforts in New Mexico are down by 53% since President Donald Trump took office in January. (Courtesy U.S. Forest Service)

[An analysis](#) of U.S. Forest Service data by a wildland firefighter advocacy group shows that wildfire mitigation efforts in New Mexico— [including prescribed burns and other hazardous fuel treatments](#)—are down by 53% since President Donald Trump took office in January.

When compared to yearly averages over the Biden Administration, the data shows that the U.S. Forest Service is significantly behind on wildfire mitigation in the country's national forests.

In 2023, for example, the federal government treated just under 203,000 acres of forest for flammable fuels ranging from dead trees and dried up brush to grasses and twigs in New Mexico alone. In 2025, that number dropped to just over 68,000.

“The reason we want to thin and prescribe burn and do the pile burning is because we want a healthy forest, and we want to keep it safe so we don’t lose so when there’s a fire, we don’t lose the entire forest,” said Bobbie Scopa, executive secretary of the advocacy group [Grassroots Wildland Firefighters](#). Scopa also spent 45 years as a firefighter.

Overall, the advocacy group’s data analysis found that the crucial hazardous fuels reduction work done by the Forest Service was down 38% in 2025 compared with the same period over the previous four calendar years.

A crucial part of forest ecosystems, land managers use hazardous fuels reduction such as thinning and controlled burns to curb the severity and intensity of future forest fires that could spread to nearby communities.

[In a letter](#) to Democratic U.S. Senator Ron Wyden of Oregon last month, U.S Forest Service Chief Tom Schultz blamed “operational challenges” for the lack of prescribed burn work, in addition to ongoing wildfires in both Canada and the U.S. as a drain on otherwise available resources.

Scopa told KUNM that there are other reasons for the dip – including the Trump administration’s [aggressive downsizing of executive agencies](#) in tandem with severe [budget cuts](#) and the [ongoing government shutdown](#), which is now the [longest in U.S. history](#).

That makes it highly unlikely that the Forest Service will make up this gap before the end of the year.

“It’s like a chess game, trying to manage to get the work done,” Scopa said.

However, Scopa notes that the current fuels work snafu is adding to an already existing 80 million-acre [backlog of forest management projects](#), compounding a large problem with an increasingly diminishing workforce.

“They’re killing themselves. Literally,” Scopa said. “People are ending up in the hospital, not only from the smoke and ruining their joints from carrying weight up and down mountains, but dying from mental health issues because the pace of the work is unhealthy and unsustainable.”

The past few years have been an uphill battle for federal wildland firefighters, who only just [recently won](#) a yearslong fight for a permanent pay raise amid rampant issues with [agency staffing, low morale, and non-existent protective equipment](#).

Additionally, these findings come as weather officials predict New Mexico might [suffer from a drier and warmer winter](#) as a consequence of the ongoing “weak” La Niña weather pattern, potentially extending this year’s fire season.