

Support SB 161 the Wildfire Mitigation & Liability Act

SPONSORS Senator Pat Woods, Representative Meredith Dixon



The Wildfire Utility Mitigation & Liability Act is an opportunity to address a large concern for rural electric cooperatives in New Mexico. As not-for-profit entities we are one wildfire away from bankruptcy. Insurance agencies are increasing rates exponentially and frequently no longer offer adequate wildfire coverage to utilities.

Not-for-profit electric cooperatives were formed to provide an essential service that is necessary for the health, safety, and welfare of its member-owners in our underserved rural communities. Cooperatives have two main focuses when it comes to safely delivering power: reliability and affordability.

New Mexico's 19 rural electric co-ops serve nearly half a million residents across 80% of the state's landmass, including 13 Tribes and Pueblos and 29 chapters of the Navajo Nation.

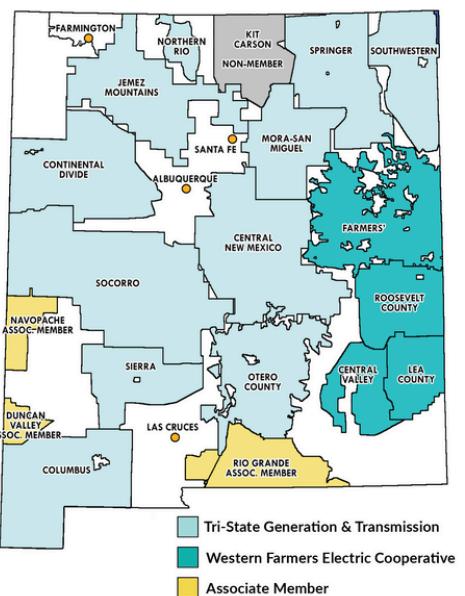
INCREASING WILDFIRE MITIGATION & PROTECTING RURAL RESIDENTS

The Wildfire Utility Mitigation & Liability Act allows electric utilities to create Wildfire Mitigation Plans that will be approved by the Public Regulation Commission (PRC) in consultation with the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department Forestry Division (EMNRD). Less than 10 percent of wildfires in New Mexico can be attributed to utilities, but utilities across the state face billions in liability while insurance companies decrease or limit coverage.

Once an electric utility has developed and implemented their Wildfire Mitigation Plan a rebuttable presumption is created that the electric utility has taken reasonable and prudent preparation and mitigation of wildfire risk, unless there is intentional or malicious disregard. The bill additionally creates clear standards and definitions for recovery. (Continued on back.)

Members of New Mexico Rural Electric Cooperative Assoc.

- Central New Mexico Electric
- Central Valley Electric
- Columbus Electric
- Continental Divide Electric
- Duncan Valley Electric
- Farmers' Electric
- Jemez Mountains Electric
- Lea County Electric
- Mora-San Miguel Electric
- Navopache Electric
- Northern Río Arriba Electric
- Otero County Electric
- Rio Grande Electric
- Roosevelt County Electric
- Sierra Electric
- Socorro Electric
- Southwestern Electric
- Springer Electric



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Last year, the New Mexico Senate unanimously passed Senate Memorial 2, creating the Wildfire Study Group. This bill is directly informed by the work of the Wildfire Study Group and includes provisions of agreement from the final report, including integrating wildfire risk into grid modernization policy, equitable cost recovery for wildfire-related grid upgrade, leveraging public funding, wildfire planning to improve public safety, and landowner access and responsibility.

Additionally, this bill appropriates money to the PRC and EMNRD to implement the act and a one-time \$10 Million appropriation to support not-for-profit co-ops with their ongoing wildfire mitigation work.

Cooperative leadership worked with the Senate Memorial 2 group, New Mexico Forestry Division and the Public Regulation Commission (PRC) to formulate these bills.

We are asking that you support the Wildfire Utility Mitigation & Liability Act. Help protect our state's land and energy grid, while supporting not-for-profit electric cooperatives keeping the lights on for the citizens of rural New Mexico.

Learn how New Mexico Co-ops are facing wildfire head on



Wildfires leave lasting scars on rural communities—something cooperatives know all too well. During the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Fire, Tri-State member Mora-San Miguel Electric Cooperative (MSMEC) sprang into action, exemplifying how cooperatives become vital to emergency response and recovery.



Vegetation management plays a vital role in wildfire mitigation, especially across the rugged landscapes of southern New Mexico. For Tri-State member Otero County Electric Cooperative (OCEC), a pivotal moment came when they acquired both the workforce and equipment from their longtime vegetation management contractor, owned by a former Otero lineworker with deep local knowledge.