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## Firewood Banks Turn Up the Heat

By Sage Faulkner, Chama Peak Land Alliance

According to the Alliance for Green Heat (AGH), firewood “banks” are a growing trend in the United States. Much like a food bank, firewood banks can offer fuel to families facing home heating challenges. In 2016, there were roughly sixty known firewood banks in the nation; today there are about one hundred and fifty!

Caleb Stotts, executive director of Chama Peak Land Alliance (CPLA), says that removing fuel from a forest where it may pose a wildfire risk, and moving it into homes that need heat, is a win-win situation. By partnering with other organizations, CPLA can offer a supplemental firewood program for the elderly and disabled here in the Rio Chama valley.

CPLA was fortunate to receive AGH funding this year, and the good news is that more is available for other partners and communities interested in hosting wood banks. “It would be great to see wood banks in every community,” says Stotts.

In addition to the grant we received from AGH, we are partnering with the National Forestry Foundation’s Wood for Life program. This program has been highly successful in other states and is coming to New Mexico to serve tribal partners and others. The wood from that project is from the Gallina area and will continue to arrive through early 2025, and will then be stored for use the following winter.

The Firewood for the Elderly program that CPLA runs is not yet a full firewood bank, but someday it may be. This year it is limited to a pickup load per household for elderly with financial limitations. The program is first-come first-served and is limited to communities near Tierra Amarilla.

A growing crew of volunteers helps with both homebound deliveries and loading wood. Each year has been a slightly different model as staff members analyze funding opportunities and partners. In speaking of the crew, Stotts says, “The volunteers extend our work in ways that are really helpful and we would not have the impact we do without their efforts.”

For more information on AGH funding visit their website: [forgreenheat.org](http://forgreenheat.org). For local wood program information or to volunteer contact Sage Faulkner during business hours at (505) 490-2822. Ω



Sage Faulkner photos.

Left: All-volunteer bucking crew; below, cords ready for delivery.

