

## SANTA CLARA

POST OFFICE BOX 580  
(505) 753-7330  
(505) 753-5375 Fax



## INDIAN PUEBLO

ESPANOLA, NEW MEXICO  
87532  
OFFICE OF GOVERNOR

### PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
June 30, 2011

Contact: Joe Baca  
(505) 929-7061

### **Las Conchas Fire Burns More Than 6,000 acres of Santa Clara Pueblo Land**

Santa Clara Pueblo, NM - The Las Conchas Fire has charred more than 6,000 acres of the watershed of Santa Clara Pueblo and continues to destroy cultural sites, forest resources, plants and animals that the people of Santa Clara depend upon for their livelihood and culture. Wildfires have burned two-thirds of Santa Clara's forest over the past 13 years, including 8,300 acres burned by the 1998 Oso Complex Fire and the 2000 Cerro Grande Fire. In response, Santa Clara Pueblo Governor Walter Dasheno has issued a Declaration of Emergency.

"We are devastated to witness the destruction of our precious homeland," said Governor Dasheno. "From time immemorial to this day our community has been stewards of this land, have fought to regain portions taken from us and have invested millions of dollars in restoring the forest and resources."

Since the fire began on June 26 Santa Clara officials, staff and community members have attended briefings and given recommendations and data to the Incident Command. Pueblo officials repeatedly asked that adequate resources be devoted to the north end of the fire to keep it from impacting the Pueblo's lands. "We want to reassure our Santa Clara community that we have made every effort to work with the Incident Command to try to keep the fire from reaching Santa Clara," explained Governor Dasheno.

Nevertheless, after two days of extreme fire behavior, the Las Conchas Fire entered Santa Clara Pueblo lands mid-day on June 29. In the last 24 hours the fire has exploded across the western third of the reservation. This includes the area known as "P'opii Khanu," the headwaters of the creek, which the Pueblo regained in 2000 after 140 years of struggle.

"Our canyon is the source of our Santa Clara Creek that we rely upon for irrigation but, more than that, it was a beautiful place of abundance in wildlife, clean water, culturally-significant trees and medicinal plants," said Governor Dasheno. "This is the fourth fire that has impacted our homelands and all of them have begun outside our reservation. Santa Clara alone cannot bear the extreme costs to help Mother Nature restore herself."

Pueblo officials have discussed their immediate concerns with Senator Tom Udall and Congressman Ben Ray Lujan, including stopping the progression of the fire and preventing flooding from impacting homes, public buildings and irrigation systems. Secondly, the Pueblo has stressed that financial and technical assistance will

be needed over the next several years to address the fire's impact. These include: cultural, recreation, and grazing sites; traditional plants and herbs; wildlife and their habitat; air quality monitoring stations; commercial timber; environmental monitoring equipment; cabins; water quality; aquatic life and the fishery programs of the four lakes or ponds in the area.

The Pueblo will have a community meeting tonight at 5:00 pm at the Santa Clara Senior Citizens' Center to appraise the community of the fire and address the medical plans for those who have asthmatic and respiratory conditions.

"We want to commend all of the people who have been assisting with the fire response," said Governor Dasheno. "We appreciate all of the prayers and assistance that have been offered to our community."

# # #