



Southwest Idaho receives federal funding to tackle the Wildfire Crisis Strategy

Southern Idaho has become all too familiar with smoke-filled skies during the summer months. A culmination of diminishing forest conditions and a warming climate has led to an increase in wildfires across the United States, and Idaho is no stranger to the increased risks.

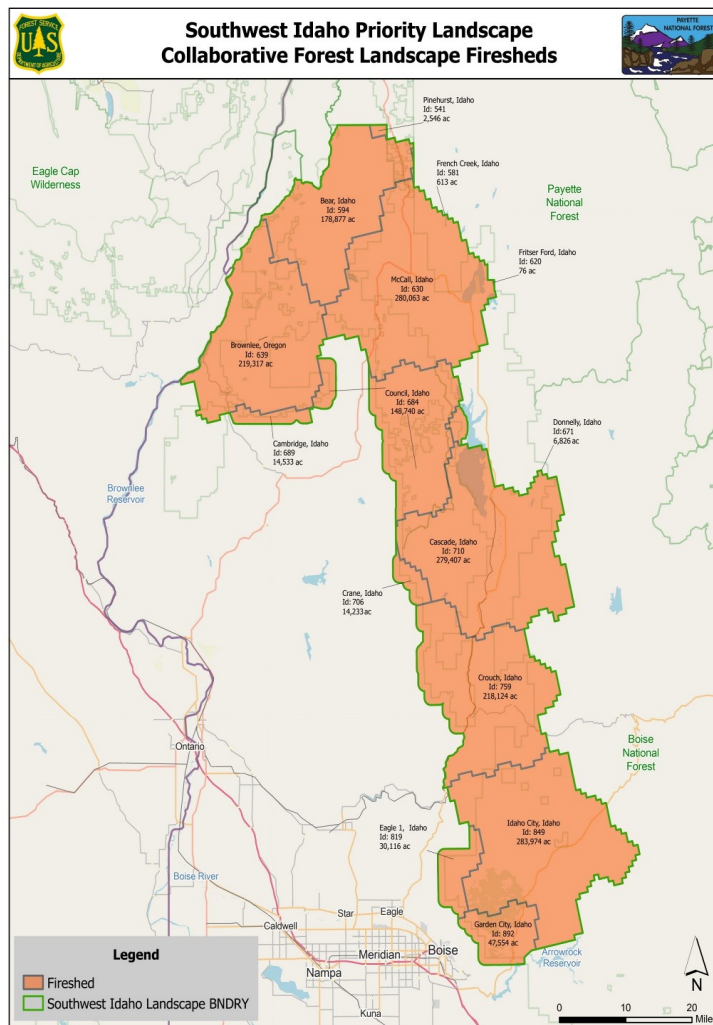
The USDA Forest Service announced in 2022 that it would allocate \$131 million from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to implement a 10-year strategy, known as the [Wildfire Crisis Strategy](#). With a plan to address the national wildfire risk to communities across the west, this strategy is investing in an all-lands approach to target high-risk communities through landscape treatments across multiple jurisdictions. [For an interactive graphic review.](#)

The [Southwest Idaho Wildfire Crisis Landscape Project](#) is leveraging established partnerships and coordinating with new partners with the intent of changing conditions on the ground since being selected as one of the [10-initial landscape](#) projects.

“We have a number of great, long-standing partnerships to help us with this effort,” said David Francomb, Boise National Forest deputy forest supervisor. “The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding will help us expand those existing efforts and allow us to create new partnerships to increase the scope and pace of treatments within the landscape area.”

The cost to suppress wildfires and the annual acres consumed have been steadily increasing, according to data from the [National Interagency Fire Center](#). These increases have prompted the Forest Service to declare a wildfire emergency with a plan to increase the pace of landscape treatments around high-risk fireheds.

The Southwest Idaho Wildfire Crisis Landscape project encompasses approximately 930,000 acres of the Boise and Payette National Forests, and roughly 800,000 acres of state, private, and other federal lands.



Map shows additional smaller areas within the Southwest Idaho Wildfire Crisis Strategy Landscape. Designated for planning purposes to identify projects and a timeline to implement hazardous fuel treatments across the project area.



Residual woody material from a mechanical timber harvest. Certified silviculturists design timber harvests based on the most up-to-date science on ecosystem health. Photo courtesy of the Boise National Forest



The Southwest Idaho Wildfire Crisis Landscape project will utilize both commercial and non-commercial timber harvesting. Waiting until the ground is frozen helps in erosion control and soil disturbance. Photo courtesy of the Payette National Forest



Prescribed fire in a timber stand. Prescribed fire can be used to remove residual woody debris from natural occurrence as well as debris left from mechanical timber harvests. Photo courtesy of the Payette National Forest

Reducing hazardous fuels

The Boise and Payette National Forests plan on reducing hazardous fuels by implementing treatments on more than 230,000 acres of National Forest System (NFS) lands to create a cohesive landscape through partnerships with the Idaho Department of Lands, Tribal, and private landowners.

The treatments on NFS lands will focus on traditional methods for hazardous fuels reduction in coordination with the most up-to-date research in reducing the dangers of wildfires to high-risk areas. This will include elements of timber harvesting, prescribed fire, and reforestation, according to Francomb.

The two forests will continue with existing and planned projects and will introduce new projects to focus on this work over the next 5 to 7 years. Implementation of already planned projects, along with decisions on future planning efforts, will focus on reducing the risk from wildfire to communities and around the landscape project area.

“The Southwest Idaho Wildfire Crisis Landscape project will affect a healthier ecosystem across the landscape as a whole,” said Linda Jackson, Payette National Forest supervisor. “Beyond reducing the risk of wildfire, projects will also target watershed restoration, improved recreational infrastructure, and reforestation to restore resiliency to our forested ecosystems.”

The Boise and Payette National Forests will use all available tools including stewardship contracting, Good Neighbor Authority, timber sales, and shared stewardship agreements to initiate treatments on over 42,000 acres in 2023. This will include more than 18,000 acres through service contracts or stewardship contracts.



It takes all of us

The goal is to improve the conditions of forest lands around high-risk communities as well as the potential for wildfire ignitions within communities. Forested communities not only face risks from wildfires on surrounding lands, but they also face higher risks within the heavily timbered community itself.

Grant opportunities through federal and state funding sources will aid communities and private landowners in creating [Fire Adapted Communities](#). Aspects focusing on reducing residual woody material, increasing open space among trees, and elements in home construction will help in reducing the risks for when a wildfire burns through a community.

“In order for landscape treatments to be fully successful, community members will need to take advantage of grant opportunities to reduce hazardous fuels on their private lands in coordination with treatments by the Forest Service and Idaho Department of Lands,” said Dave Vining, Forest Fire Management officer for the Payette National Forest.

Jackson added that continuity of treatments across the landscape is the aim of the project, with reduced risk to communities and valuable resources.

“Continued collaboration with our partners and community members will be imperative for success,” she added.

More information on obtaining grants for private landowners can be found through the fire grants webpage at Idaho.gov or on the USDA Forest Service [Community Wildfire Defense Grant](#) webpage.

Additional information regarding the Southwest Idaho Wildfire Crisis Strategy Landscape can be found at [Southwest Idaho Wildfire Crisis Strategy Landscape](#).

Graphics below are live links

