



Forest Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

WILDFIRE CRISIS  
strategy

# CENTRAL OREGON

## WILDFIRE CRISIS STRATEGY INVESTMENT LANDSCAPE

Deschutes National Forest & Crooked River National Grassland

Updated: Aug. 8, 2023

The Forest Service will direct up to \$43.1 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) to Central Oregon for work to reduce wildfire risk to forests, communities, and infrastructure during the first two years of implementing the agency's [Wildfire Crisis Strategy](#). Through historic investments in fuels reduction treatments, including vegetation management, mechanical thinning and prescribed fire, the Deschutes National Forest and Crooked River National Grassland and its Tribal, State and local partners expect to treat more than 50,000 acres to reduce wildfire risk by 2024.

The Central Oregon Landscape is comprised of 2.73 million acres, including three fire-sheds (in the top 10 percent of risk to forests, communities, and infrastructure nationally). The landscape includes Forest Service -managed forested areas and grasslands, and other State, county, private and federally-managed lands east of the Central Cascades. This area is experiencing the fastest and most extensive community growth in Oregon with some communities increasing nearly 30% in the past 10 years. Hundreds of thousands of acres of public land are adjacent to homes, subdivisions and valuable private land assets. With human ignitions accounting for nearly 90% of wildfires nationwide, every fire puts our communities at risk.

To implement the Wildfire Crisis Strategy, the Deschutes National Forest and Crooked River National Grassland are pioneering improvements to project planning to increase the pace and scale of wildfire risk reduction in our communities and

across the landscape. We are an area rich in collaborative successes from implementing the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration program and Joint Chief's Projects to executing the National Cohesive Strategy. Additional investments will build upon that success to continue reducing the risk of fire to numerous growing communities and critical infrastructure.

Central Oregon's economy is driven by recreation and tourism. The Deschutes National Forest is the primary destination, setting, and background for this economy. In 2021, in trail trips alone, \$136 million was spent in Deschutes County. Additionally, two popular Oregon State Parks border the Crooked River National Grassland—Smith Rock is internationally recognized as a rock-climbing destination and Lake Billy Chinook is a well-known destination for fishing and water sports. Mitigating wildland fire risks is not only critical for public safety, but it also contributes to a sustainable and robust local economy.



Open stands of ponderosa pine like this represent typical historical conditions in a dry forest ecosystem.

## INITIAL SUCCESSES

During the first two years of work on the Central Oregon Landscape, the Deschutes National Forest and Crooked River National Grassland have focused on securing partnerships to assist in implementation, and hiring more firefighters, environmental planners, wildlife biologists, archaeologists and other personnel needed to plan and implement future projects. Adding this additional capacity is possible through funding support provided by the Wildfire Crisis Strategy via the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (enacted by Congress in Fiscal Year 2022) and the Inflation Reduction Law (enacted by Congress in Fiscal year 2023). While hiring and planning processes are ongoing, the Forest Service has been collaborating with partners to educate our school-aged youth and engage the public on the work that is being done and accomplish more work on the ground.

- *The Deschutes National Forest has entered into an agreement with the Clackamas County Fire District No. 1 through the Wildfire Crisis Strategy. The agreement will provide increased opportunity for both parties to engage in prescribed fire and fuels reduction projects with a large element of cross training while completing important fuels reduction projects in an interagency collaborative environment, further facilitating effective collaboration across organizational and jurisdictional boundaries.*
- *Discover Your Forest, the non-profit partner of the Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests and Crooked River National Grassland, hired a wildland fire education coordinator. This new position plans and hosts community events, develops fire ecology curriculum for local youth and cultivates relationships with local fire education and mitigation specialists for outreaching into Central Oregon communities.*
- *Discover Your Forest is also working to establish a new volunteer group to serve as a conduit for delivering information related to the Wildfire Crisis Strategy at popular trailheads adjacent to areas that have or are currently undergoing landscape treatments. The program, and the newly-hired Forest Stewards*

*coordinator position, are funded in part by the Wildfire Crisis Strategy.*

- *The Crooked River National Grassland (and Ochoco National Forest) has entered into a Good Neighbor Agreement with the Oregon Department of Forestry to assist in planning invasive weed treatments and completing archaeological surveys on the Crooked River National Grassland.*
- *In coordination with the Mt. Hood National Forest, the Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests and Crooked River National Grassland are working with the Klamath Tribes, Burns-Paiute Tribes and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs to share information and resources and to coordinate treatments across boundaries to maximize efficiencies.*

## LOOKING AHEAD

Multiple projects are slated to be implemented in Fiscal Year 2024 and beyond.

These projects include treatments to thin overgrown forests, re-introduce low intensity fire to a fire-adapted ecosystem, improve watershed conditions, remove invasive species and more. We can't do this work alone. We rely on the scientific community and practitioners to help inform and refine our work; we rely on community members and partners to stay informed and involved; and finally, we rely on neighboring land managers and owners to engage in cross-boundary planning and all-lands implementation. Together, we're building a foundation of shared values that include minimizing the risk of wildfire to our homes and communities, as well as protecting private property and public infrastructure.



Crooked River National Grassland, the only National Grassland in the Pacific Northwest, is dominated by sagebrush, perennial grasses, annual invasive grasses and encroaching western juniper. USDA Forest Service photo.