



MT. HOOD

WILDFIRE CRISIS STRATEGY INVESTMENT LANDSCAPE

Reducing wildfire risk on the Mt. Hood National Forest

Updated: Aug. 8, 2023

The Mt. Hood National Forest's Wildfire Crisis Investment landscape is comprised of 1.08 million acres identified for targeted investments during "year two" of the Forest Service's 10-year [Wildfire Crisis Strategy](#).

In 2023, the agency allocated an initial, one-year investment of \$4.5 million to improve forest health and resiliency and decrease wildfire risk to communities within the designated landscape, along with funding for associated initiatives at the regional level.

The landscape includes federal, state, Tribal, and private lands on and around Mt. Hood National Forest, with just over half of the landscape's one million acres on National Forest land.

The project area includes three high-risk fire sheds, several wilderness areas, and the Bull Run watershed – which provides drinking water to nearly a million people in the Portland, Oregon metro. About one-third of all Oregonians depend on water sourced from areas inside the investment landscape. Extensive utility corridors, managed by the Bonneville Power Administration and Portland General Electric, also extend across this landscape.

The area surrounding the landscape is urbanized, with natural resources and tourism as significant economic drivers. Recreation infrastructure includes four ski areas and a resort, along with numerous campgrounds, reservoir lakes, and trails.



Barlow District Ranger Kameron Sam with community member at Wasco County Wildfire Prevention Workshop. USDA Forest Service photo.

Mt. Hood National Forest staff are using historic investments made in support of the agency's Wildfire Crisis Strategy to increase the pace and scale of wildfire risk reduction on the landscape, in close collaboration with the local community. Goals include improving forest health and resiliency, expand outreach to community stakeholders, and improve public understanding of the need for wildfire risk reduction and projects supporting risk reduction on the forest.

WHERE WE ARE

Currently, the Mt. Hood National Forest staff are focused on implementing projects that have been through the NEPA process and are ready for implementation.

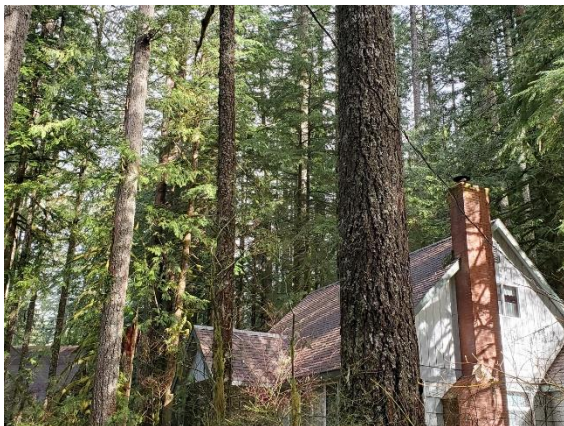
Initial efforts will focus on treating fire sheds east side of the Cascades, while working with counties and local organizations to expand our capacity to complete treatments across the landscape.

The Forest plans to treat 4,400 acres in 2023 and 8,000 acres in 2024, while working closely with adjacent landowners, land managers, and other partners to maximize the effectiveness of this work.

The Forest is creating a community engagement strategy to work in partnership with local communities surrounding the landscape and improve public understanding of landscape management.

This strategy will help the Forest involve broader public audiences in proposed treatments and reach out more effectively to new and existing partners.

Additionally, forest leadership is hiring firefighters, natural resource specialists, and other personnel needed to plan and implement future projects at an increased pace and scale, using funds authorized in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (enacted by Congress in FY 2022) and Inflation Reduction Law (enacted in FY 2023).



Power lines are often attached to trees in the Forest's 549-cabin recreation residence tract. The forest has proposed burying these lines to reduce wildfire risk to the tract and surrounding communities. USDA Forest Service photo.

Early successes

- *A spring, 2023 prescribed fire project reduced fuels in a fire-adapted ecosystem while improving habitat for elk and other wildlife. (This project was also part of a Joint Chiefs landscape restoration partnership on public and private lands in Wasco County).*
- *With the Wasco Forest Collaborative and county, state and federal partners, we brought people together for community information sessions on wildfire mitigation, fuels reduction, and available local, state, and federal resources to better prepare their lands for possible wildfire.*
- *Partners from the Highway 26 Mt. Hood Corridor Wildfire Partnership – a key group of community and government partners – hosted a wildfire preparedness fair at Timberline Lodge, featuring information on home hardening and defensible space, ongoing and future wildfire mitigation, and agency resources available to residents to reduce wildfire risk.*
- *The forest has hired a botanist, forester, archeology technician, project manager, landscape architect, and partnership specialist to directly support wildfire risk reduction projects in close partnership with local communities and organizations.*

WHERE WE'RE GOING

Multiple projects are slated to be implemented in Fiscal Year 2024 and beyond, including treatments to thin over-grown forests, re-introduce low intensity fire to a fire-adapted ecosystem, improve watershed conditions, remove invasive species and more. As the Forest receives more funding, we expect expand work into the Hood River and Zigzag Ranger Districts. This work will be very visible and have immediate and long-range impacts on communities. With partners, the forest seeks to build a foundation of shared values that include minimizing the risk of wildfire to homes and communities and protecting private property and public infrastructure on and around the forest.