



Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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WILDFIRE CRISIS
update

CONFRONTING THE WILDFIRE CRISIS

Update on the National Strategy for Protecting Communities and Improving Resilience in America's Forests

Firefighters monitor the control line during a prescribed burn. The burn was part of landscape-scale forest treatment efforts in southwest Idaho. USDA Forest Service photo by Dave Walsh.

WHERE WE STAND

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service announced a new [Wildfire Crisis Strategy](#) in January 2022. This strategy builds on previous wildfire risk reduction work, including the National Fire Plan and the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy.

The Nation faces a growing wildfire crisis as a result of numerous factors, including accumulating fuels, a warming climate, and expanding development in fire-prone landscapes. To address this crisis, the strategy set a 10-year goal of treating up to an additional 50 million acres on high-risk firesheds—up to 20 million acres on National Forest System (NFS) lands and up to 30 million acres on other ownerships.¹ Since that initial announcement, the agency refined its focus to 250 firesheds on NFS lands in the West that present the highest risk to communities and critical infrastructure.

In April, the agency announced [10 landscapes](#) to receive an investment of \$131 million in fiscal year 2022 from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Passage of the infrastructure law in November 2021 provided an important down payment toward this critical work. The selected landscapes contain 68 high-risk firesheds and 13 million acres where the agency is applying the funds to existing projects.

FIRESHEDS

Firesheds are large forested landscapes and rangelands with a high likelihood that an ignition could expose homes, communities, and infrastructure to wildfire. Firesheds, typically about 250,000 acres in size, are mapped to match the scale of community exposure to wildfire.

1. In recent years, the Forest Service has treated up to 2 million acres per year.





Prescribed burn operations at the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area on the Siuslaw National Forest. USDA Forest Service photo.

A STRATEGY FOR COMBATING THE CRISIS

The Forest Service's 10-year strategy calls for dramatically increasing forest management activities, including forest thinning and the safe and effective use of prescribed fire, to reduce fuels and restore forest health. Under the strategy, the agency is working with partners to focus on fuels and forest health treatments at the scale of the problem, using the best available science as a guide.

Forest Service models were used to identify firesheds at risk and contributed to the fireshed prioritization, planning, and investment effort. Scientific research also guides treatments of firesheds, including mechanical thinning, prescribed burning, and continued maintenance, to reduce risk over time. As a result, the Forest Service estimates that of the high-risk firesheds in the West, between 5.6 and 11.2 million acres of NFS land requires some level of immediate treatment.

Working with partners, the Forest Service is introducing a new land management paradigm that builds on the [National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy](#). The Cohesive Strategy, along with [shared stewardship](#) agreements, establish a framework for treating landscapes collaboratively across ownership boundaries. This foundation blends with the Wildfire Crisis Strategy to help the Forest Service adapt lessons learned from past fuels and forest health treatments.

The Forest Service created a national team that worked with other Federal, State, Tribal, local, and private partners to craft a [10-year implementation plan](#) for the Wildfire Crisis Strategy. The plan is a blueprint for executing the strategy through partnerships, and is based on peer-reviewed research and a framework for collaboration established over the past 20 years.

“The National Association of State Foresters is proud to have worked closely with the USDA Forest Service in developing a long-range plan to protect, conserve, and enhance America’s forested landscapes most threatened by catastrophic wildfire. The 10-year Wildfire Crisis Strategy represents a huge step forward toward safer, more fire-resilient forests and communities in every region of the United States. It provides a phased approach for reducing wildfire risk in our communities, watersheds, and recreational areas nationwide, all while boosting the health and resilience of America’s forested landscapes.”

Kacey KC

National Association of State Foresters President
and Nevada State Forester



WORKING TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE STRATEGIC GOALS

The unprecedented level of wildfire risk facing the Nation, especially in the West, calls for an unprecedented scale of fuels and forest health treatments. The Forest Service is expanding existing relationships and creating new partnerships with Federal, Tribal, State, local, nonprofit, and other groups. Working together, we will have a collective impact through multijurisdictional coalitions and making investments necessary for success that will reduce the wildfire risk to people, communities, and natural resources and restore forest health and resilience.

“Our partnership with the Forest Service is central to our mission. Wild turkeys, as well as other wildlife, rely on healthy habitats and healthy forests for their long-term sustainability. Likewise, hunters rely on the same for a quality and successful hunting experience. Our work focuses on the shared values of water, forests/wildlife habitat, recreation and resilient communities. This partnership enables us to make greater investments at a greater scale to keep forests healthy, water clean and stop critical habitat loss.”

Kurt Dyroff
Co-CEO, National Wild Turkey Federation

Forest Service Chief Randy Moore and other leaders meet with more than a dozen firefighters at the Wildland Firefighters Foundation headquarters in Boise, ID, to hear feedback on many issues. USDA Forest Service photo by Dave Walsh.

ROUNDTABLES

In early 2022, the Forest Service held a series of virtual roundtables to discuss the implementation plan for the Wildfire Crisis Strategy. The purpose of the roundtables was to increase understanding of the wildfire crisis, evaluate options for confronting the crisis, and explore ways of building on the energies and accomplishments of everyone involved. The roundtables focused on a key question: How can the Forest Service and partners move from small-scale, independently managed treatments to strategic, landscape-level treatments that cross boundaries at the actual scale of wildfire risk, starting with the landscapes most at risk?

The Forest Service partnered with the [National Forest Foundation](#) to host a series of roundtables involving Forest Service employees and partners. The Forest Service also partnered with the [Intertribal Timber Council](#) to host separate but complementary conversations with Tribes. Summary reports from each of these roundtables capture discussions, themes, and opportunities for action. The roundtable discussions set the stage for the Forest Service to work with others in carrying out the 10-year strategy.

PARTNERSHIPS

The roundtables highlighted the need and opportunities for continued work with others. For example, the agency recently established an agreement with Forest Trends to coordinate

forest restoration work between government, industry, utilities, and other entities. The Forest Service has also planned a series of industry and forest products roundtables hosted by the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities. Additional agreements with partners are currently being developed to further support fuels work nationwide, including improvements in landscapes and needed workforce development.

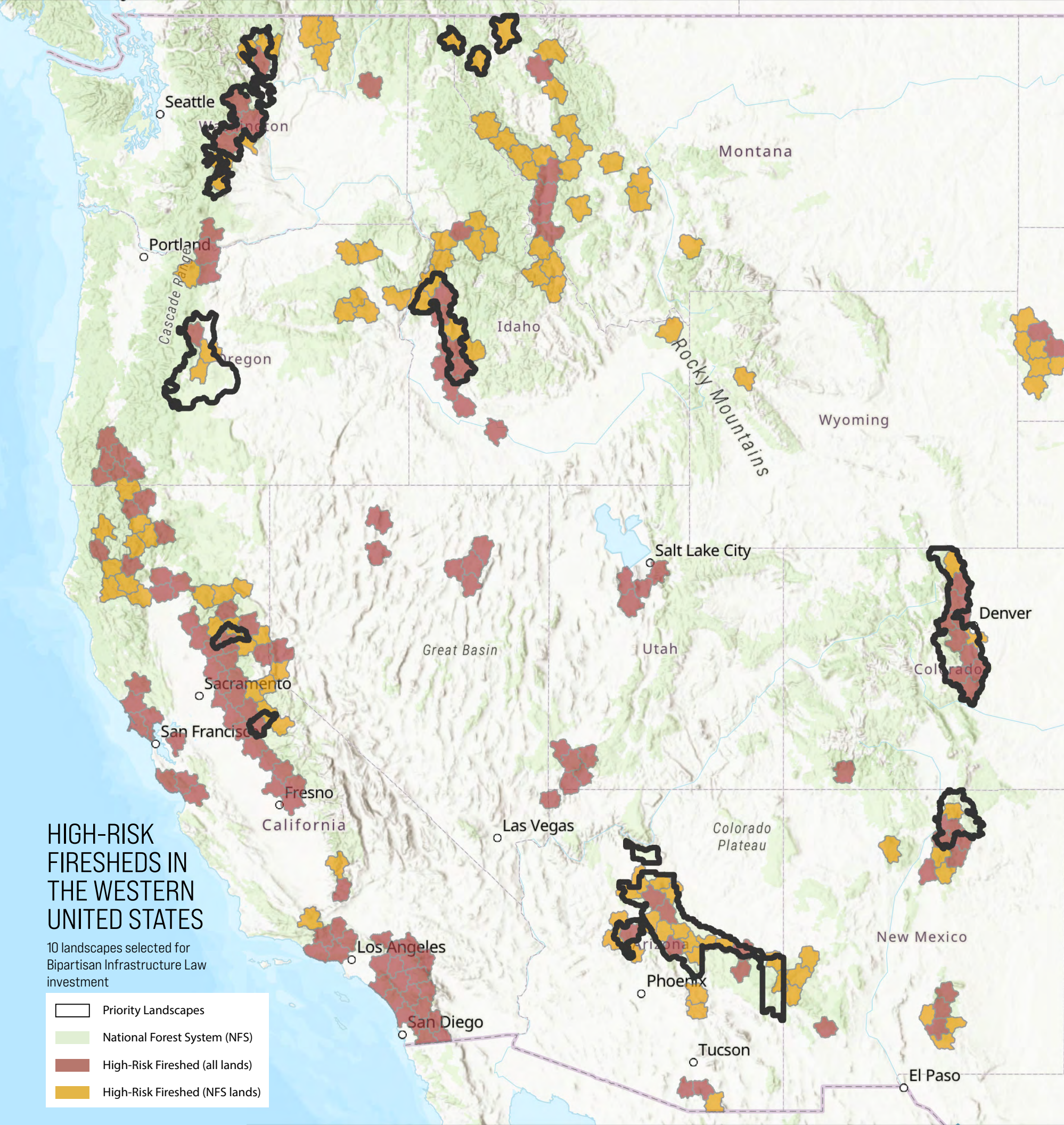
In April the U.S. Department of the Interior—a major Federal Government partner of the USDA Forest Service—released a [5-year monitoring, maintenance, and treatment plan](#) to address wildfire risk. Complementary to the Wildfire Crisis Strategy, these plans facilitate a collaborative, multijurisdictional approach to reduce wildfire risk to communities and natural resources across broad landscapes.

ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP POLICIES

In July, Forest Service Chief Randy Moore issued [interim policy direction](#) that makes it easier for existing and potential partners to work with us to achieve mutually beneficial goals. He directed the agency to: (1) consider a partner’s full value and contribution when determining if partnership agreements meet match requirements; (2) remove the policy requirement for “substantial cash contributions;” and (3) identify a process to reduce, and in some cases waive, match requirements that are not statutorily required.





Forest Service employees and partners at the 2022 interagency wildland fire briefing at Jeffco Airtanker Base in Broomfield, CO. USDA Forest Service photo by William A. Cotton.





HIGH-RISK FIRESHEDS IN THE WESTERN UNITED STATES

10 landscapes selected for Bipartisan Infrastructure Law investment

-  Priority Landscapes
-  National Forest System (NFS)
-  High-Risk Fireshed (all lands)
-  High-Risk Fireshed (NFS lands)

LANDSCAPE INVESTMENTS

Under the implementation plan for the Wildfire Crisis Strategy, the Forest Service engaged partners in identifying the high-risk landscapes for fuels and forest health treatments, with initial funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. At the local level, developing a fuels treatment program is a collaborative effort that involves community buy-in, legal compliance, and cross-boundary actions.

Reducing wildfire risk requires a variety of treatments, including mechanical, biomass removal, and prescribed fire. For an area that is a high-risk fireshed, an average of three treatments often provides enough risk reduction for an area to reach a “maintenance mode.” The landscape can then be maintained as a lower risk fireshed through recurring, and less expensive, treatments.

Criteria for selecting landscapes were based on collaborative and cross-boundary partnerships, alignment with high-risk firesheds, meeting the intent of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, appropriate analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act, agency and partner capacity, and projects that are at scale or can be built out to scale to initiate work in fiscal year 2022.

WILDFIRE CRISIS STRATEGY STORY MAP

This web-based, interactive tool will provide partners, the public, and lawmakers information on the current national priority landscapes. It provides data and visibility on the progress and impacts of our work. The story map shares charts and tables about funding and hazardous fuel activities as well as interactive maps that show where work is being done on Forest Service and nearby U.S. Department of the Interior lands. The story map also highlights the partners the agency is working with. The Forest Service updates the map regularly. See it and more at www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/wildfire-crisis.



WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

Most importantly, threatened communities will be safer through the work in these fireheds and their partnership in developing and implementing their Community Wildfire Protection Plans. Success across these landscapes will mean that these forest ecosystems support natural fire regimes, which in turn ensure diverse populations of native plants and animals and a decreased threat of destructive wildfire. The work will support sustainable forest industries that strengthen local economies while conserving natural resources and aesthetic values. Further, success means there are restoration-based job opportunities and lower fuel treatment costs over the long term. Appropriately scaled business and industry will play a key role in this effort by harvesting, processing, and selling wood products.

Although all 10 of the landscape investments are multijurisdictional, the following updates include accomplishments on NFS lands only. In coordination with other Federal agencies, Tribes, States, and other landowners, the goal remains to treat 20–40 percent of these landscapes.

A map of the 10 landscapes is on the previous page, with descriptions of each on this and following pages.

Acres treated in fiscal year (FY) 2022 are shown by funding source: Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership, Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration (CFLR) program, and regularly appropriated work.

ARIZONA FOUR FOREST RESTORATION INITIATIVE

The landscape contains 9 of Arizona's 10 highest priority areas for reducing wildfire risk. Located in the northern part of the State, the landscape includes non-Federal lands as well as parts of the Tonto, Kaibab, Coconino, and Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.

Project area: 5.97 million acres

Acres treated by funding source:

- BIL: 67,933
- Regular appropriations: 4,607
- CFLR projects: 58,883

Total acres treated, FY 2022: 131,423

Total landscape acreage to be treated, FY 2022–26: 790,000

Acreage to be treated with BIL funds, FY 2022–26: 671,500

Requested funding for FY 2022–26: \$340 million

Outcomes: Reduced fire risk to communities and infrastructure within this landscape, including the cities of Flagstaff and Williams; municipal watersheds; the U.S. Naval Observatory, Flagstaff Station; and the Camp Navajo Military Base.

Partners: Tribal Governments and Navaho Nations, the Center for Biological Diversity, Grand Canyon Trust, Ecological Restoration Institute, National Wild Turkey Federation, Northern Arizona Loggers Association, Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management, and many more

ARIZONA GREATER PRESCOTT AREA WILDFIRE PROTECTION AND RESTORATION

The landscape extends across non-Federal lands and parts of the Prescott National Forest in northern Arizona.

Project area: 543,000 acres

Acres treated by funding source:

- BIL: 13,843
- Regular appropriations: 3,816

Total acres treated, FY 2022: 17,659

Total landscape acreage to be treated, FY 2022–26: 69,000

Acreage to be treated with BIL funds, FY 2022–26: 58,650

Requested funding for FY 2022–26: \$62.39 million

Outcomes: Reduced fire risk for communities, including Prescott, Prescott Valley, Walker, Crown King, Ponderosa Park, Groom Creek, Dewey-Humboldt, Mayer, Jerome, and Tribal lands of the Yavapai-Prescott.

Partners: U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management, Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management, Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe, Yavapai-Apache Nation, and many more

CALIFORNIA NORTH YUBA LANDSCAPE

The landscape spans the North Yuba watershed in the Sierra Nevada, an important water source for farmers and residents in the Sacramento Valley.

Project area: 357,000 acres

Acres treated by funding source:

- Regular appropriations: 267

Total acres treated, FY 2022: 267

Total landscape acreage to be treated, FY 2022–26: 22,000

Acreage to be treated with BIL funds, FY 2022–26: 12,000

Requested funding for FY 2022–26: \$200 million

Outcomes: Reduced fire risk to mining claims, recreation sites, and communities, including Downieville (Sierra County seat), Sierra City, Goodyears Bar, Pike, Allegheny, Forest City, Bassets, Loganville, Camptonville, LaPorte (now depopulated), and Strawberry Valley.

Partners: Sierra County, Blue Forest Conservation, the Yuba Water Agency, Nisenan of the Nevada City Rancheria, and more

CALIFORNIA STANISLAUS

The landscape ranges from the Stanislaus National Forest in the Sierra Nevada down through non-Federal lands in the Sierra foothills.

Project area: 304,000 acres

Acres treated by funding source:

- BIL: 477
- Regular appropriations: 4,972

Total acres treated, FY 2022: 5,449

Total landscape acreage to be treated, FY 2022–26: 50,500

Acreage to be treated with BIL funds, FY 2022–26: 42,250

Requested funding for FY 2022–26: \$97.8 million

Outcomes: Reduced fire risk to communities, including Sonora, Columbia, Cedar Ridge, Twain Harte, Strawberry, Pinecrest, Long Barn; community infrastructure, including Pinecrest Lake, Lyons Reservoir, and the historic wooden flume which provides 90 percent of the water to the local area; and utilities, such as hydropower, power transmission and distribution lines, and communication facilities; and road improvements.

Partners: California Department of Forestry and Fire Prevention (CAL FIRE), the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions collaborative, the American Forest Foundation, the Great Basin Institute, the Institute for Bird Populations, and the Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk

COLORADO COLORADO FRONT RANGE

The landscape extends across the Colorado Front Range, including mostly non-Federal lands in addition to parts of the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests and the Pike and San Isabel National Forests.

Project area: 3.58 million acres

Acres treated by funding source:

- BIL: 7,178
- Regular appropriations: 3,484

Total acres treated, FY 2022: 10,662

Total landscape acreage to be treated, FY 2022–26: 64,000

Acreage to be treated with BIL funds, FY 2022–26: 59,000

Requested funding for FY 2022–26: \$232 million

Outcomes: Reduced fire risk to the communities of Aspen Park, Berthoud, Cascade-Chipita Park, Castle Pines Village, Castle Rock, Coal Creek, Colorado Springs, Estes Park, Evergreen, Fairmount, Florissant, Fort Collins, Fountain, Genesee, Gleneagle, Indian Hills, Ken Caryl, Lazy Acres, Longmont, Loveland, Lyons, Palmer Lake, Perry Park, Pine Brook Hill, Ponderosa Park, Red Feather Lakes, Roxborough Park, Wellington, Williamsburg, Woodland Park, and Woodmoor, among others; watersheds and water delivery infrastructure, including Strontia Springs Reservoir, which supplies 80 percent of Denver's drinking water; transmission lines; and communication sites and facilities.

Partners: Tribal Governments, Denver Water, the City of Boulder, The Nature Conservancy, the Colorado State Forest Service, and many more

IDAHO SOUTHWEST IDAHO

The landscape covers high-risk fireheds across non-Federal lands in southwestern Idaho, including parts of the Payette and Boise National Forests.

Project area: 1.72 million acres

Acres treated by funding source:

- BIL: 8,417
- Regular appropriations: 6,452
- CFLR projects: 5,760

Total acres treated, FY 2022: 20,629

Total landscape acreage to be treated, FY 2022–26: 90,000

Acreage to be treated with BIL funds, FY 2022–26: 90,000

Requested funding for FY 2022–26: \$104 million

Outcomes: Reduced fire risk to communities, including Boise, Horseshoe Bend, Idaho City, Garden Valley, McCall, Cascade, Donnelly, New Meadows, and Council; recreation areas, including ski resorts, mountain biking and snowmobile trails, and campgrounds; habitat for steelhead, chinook salmon, and bull trout populations; and community water sources.

Partners: the State of Idaho, Nez Perce Tribe, the Bureau of Land Management, The Nature Conservancy, the Boise and Payette Forest Coalitions, and other groups

IDAHO/MONTANA KOOTENAI COMPLEX

The landscape includes high-risk fireheds on the Kootenai National Forest and non-Federal lands surrounding the communities of Libby, Troy, Eureka, Stryker, Fortine, and Trego in western Montana.

Project area: 796,000 acres

Acres treated by funding source:

- BIL: 990
- Regular appropriations: 6,789
- CFLR projects: 555

Total acres treated, FY 2022: 8,334

Total landscape acreage to be treated, FY 2022–26: 25,950

Acreage to be treated with BIL funds, FY 2022–26: 6,750

Requested funding for FY 2022–26: \$42.5 million

Outcomes: Reduced fire risk around the communities and critical watersheds of Libby, Troy, Eureka, Stryker, Fortine, and Trego.

Partners: Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, Lincoln County, the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes

NEW MEXICO ENCHANTED CIRCLE

The landscape spans high-risk fireheds on Federal, State, Tribal, and private lands in northern New Mexico, including parts of the Carson National Forest.

Project area: 1.46 million acres

Acres treated by funding source:

- BIL: 6,770
- Regular appropriations: 572

Total acres treated, FY 2022: 7,350

Total landscape acreage to be treated, FY 2022–26: 48,278

Acreage to be treated with BIL funds, FY 2022–26: 41,036

Requested funding for FY 2022–26: \$42.5 million

Outcomes: Reduced fire risk to the Canadian and Rio Grande watersheds, acequias and other water movement infrastructure, communication sites, community water sources, and rangeland management improvements that are critical to the towns, villages, and unincorporated communities within Taos, Rio Arriba, Mora, and Colfax Counties, the Taos and Picuris Pueblos, and numerous community land grants.

Partners: Taos, Picuris, and Sandia Pueblos, the Rio Grande Water Fund, Taos Valley Watershed Coalition, New Mexico Forest Industry Association, New Mexico State Forestry, and more

OREGON CENTRAL OREGON

The landscape covers Federal, State, and private lands on the eastern side of the Cascade Mountains in central Oregon, including parts of the Deschutes National Forest and the Crooked River National Grassland.

Project area: 2.6 million acres

Acres treated by funding source:

- BIL: 3,181
- Regular appropriations: 14,770
- CFLR projects: 8,624
- Joint Chiefs' projects: 3,664

Total acres treated, FY 2022: 30,239

Total landscape acreage to be treated, FY 2022–26: 55,000

Acreage to be treated with BIL funds, FY 2022–26: 55,000

Requested funding for FY 2022–26: \$61 million

Outcomes: Reduced fire risk to the communities of Bend, Crescent, Gilchrist, La Pine, Madras, Redmond and Sisters, as well as the Bridge Creek watershed, Mt. Bachelor ski resort, power line infrastructure, and private residences.

Partners: the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Oregon Department of Forestry, Deschutes Collaborative Forest Project, Central Oregon Shared Stewardship Alliance, Deschutes County, and many more

WASHINGTON CENTRAL WASHINGTON INITIATIVE

The landscape covers Federal, State, and private lands on the eastern side of the Cascade Mountains in central Washington, including parts of the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest.

Project area: 2.44 million acres

Acres treated by funding source:

- BIL: 7,870
- Regular appropriations: 32,618
- CFLR projects: 3,215

Total acres treated, FY 2022: 43,703

Total landscape acreage to be treated, FY 2022–26: 87,400

Acreage to be treated with BIL funds, FY 2022–26: 74,000

Requested funding for FY 2022–26: \$166.6

Outcomes: Reduced wildfire risk to multiple communities, including Leavenworth, Wenatchee, Chelan, and Cashmere.

Partners: the Confederated Tribes of the Yakama Nation, the Washington Department of Natural Resources, the North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative, The Nature Conservancy, the Wilderness Society, and more



CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

While the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and recent passing of the Inflation Reduction Act provide an important down payment, the Forest Service and our partners are still well short of the resources necessary to complete the work called for in the Wildfire Crisis Strategy. The agency will need additional support from Congress and outside stakeholders to address wildfire risk and fully implement the strategy.

Some of the agency's biggest challenges have been hiring to build workforce capacity. These challenges arise from several factors, including the Federal hiring process, the Nation's current labor market, increasing housing costs, and housing availability, especially in rural areas where forest health and restoration work is needed most.

In addition to labor shortages, agency administrators also face challenges such as improving public trust and support, moving efficiently through the National Environmental Policy Act process, and the inherent complexity of prescribed fire in and around the wildland-urban interface.

In facing these challenges, the Forest Service is implementing creative solutions to increase capacity, such as specialized teams and targeted staffing on key landscapes. The Forest Service is also improving how we track accomplishments to better describe and account for the multiple treatments that occur on each treated acre.

A contract crew creates a fuels break—an area designed to stop or slow the spread of a wildfire—near the Mt. Elizabeth lookout tower on the Stanislaus National Forest, CA. The project is the first in a series of landscape-scale actions designed to protect life and property in Cedar Ridge, Twain Harte, and other communities in the wildland-urban interface.





WHAT'S NEXT

The successes and accomplishments across the initial landscapes in 2022 set the stage for future years. Funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will continue to support operations; the Inflation Reduction Act will support additional work at the landscape scale.

In June 2022, USDA released the [Secretary's Memorandum on Climate Resilience and Carbon Stewardship of America's National Forests and Grasslands](#). The Secretary's memo builds on previous actions on climate change, equity, and forest resilience, but provides more specific and time-bound actions to integrate into agency programs. The Forest Service will use the guidance in the Secretary's memo to better inform the selection criteria for projects under the Wildfire Crisis Strategy, including equity, source water protection, community infrastructure, carbon storage, at-risk species, and wildlife corridors.

The Forest Service's work to implement the Wildfire Crisis Strategy would not be possible without our partners. The agency will continue to embrace partnerships as the key to our collective success.

“Addressing the challenges of extreme wildfire requires an all-hands-on-deck, cross-boundary effort rooted in equitable partnerships, Indigenous values and the best available science. The Forest Service's Wildfire Crisis Strategy is critical to this effort. One year into the strategy's implementation, we see important work being done—and, of course, much more to do. This is no easy fix. It requires substantial resources and vision. But with the agency's sustained commitment to working alongside its many partners to strategically confront the complex challenges of wildfire resilience, we can secure safer communities and healthier forests. The Nature Conservancy is grateful for that commitment. We look forward to continued collaboration with the Forest Service and its partners.”

Marek Smith

Director of The Nature Conservancy's North America Fire program

Forest Service employees conduct a prescribed burn on the Yuba River Ranger District of the Tahoe National Forest. This use of low-intensity fire removes hazardous vegetation near communities in the wildland-urban interface. USDA Forest Service photo by Jamie Hinrichs.

Cover photo: An aerial view of the Colorado Front Range priority landscape after mechanical thinning. USDA Forest Service photo.

Page 12 photo: Firefighters complete a prescribed burn to remove fuels and hazardous vegetation near communities in the wildland-urban interface. USDA Forest Service photos by Jamie Hinrichs.

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WILDFIRE CRISIS

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