



Forest Service News Release

Media Contact:

SM.FS.SWpressoffice@usda.gov

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Millions Dedicated to Landscapes in Arizona and New Mexico at High Risk for Wildfire

Albuquerque, NM, April 13, 2022 — With this year's wildfire season already under way in the Southwestern U.S., the critical work to confront the wildfire crisis continues with \$29.7 million in federal funding aimed at three initial landscapes. These investments are designed to reduce wildfire risk to communities and support forest health across six national forests in Arizona and New Mexico.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service announced \$131 million to begin implementation of "Confronting the Wildfire Crisis: A Strategy for Protecting Communities and Improving Resilience in America's Forests." For the Southwestern Region, that means work will begin on three initial landscapes, made possible by the expanded funding that will reduce wildfire exposure to communities.

The two initial landscapes in Arizona are the Four Forest Restoration Initiative (4FRI), which encompasses 2.4 million acres across four forests in northern Arizona, and the Greater Prescott Area Wildfire Protection and Restoration landscape investment on the Prescott National Forest. In northern New Mexico, the Enchanted Circle landscape investment comprises 1.5 million acres on the Carson National Forest. The first of many landscape investments in the Southwestern Region to be announced over the next 10 years, these initial landscapes are a part of a large-scale strategy, backed by science, to have the largest and most immediate effect to reduce catastrophic wildfires.

"This effort to protect our communities and forests from catastrophic wildfire is essential given the scale and urgency of the wildfire risk that we are facing in the Southwest and across the country," said USDA Forest Service Southwestern Regional Forester Michiko Martin. "Wildfire does not stop at boundaries, so our tribal, federal, state and local partners will be crucial as we work together to reduce wildfire risk."

According to an agency assessment less than 10 percent of "firesheds" across the country account for 80 percent of community exposure to wildfire. Firesheds are areas where wildfire starts could possibly spread into communities. They average 250,000 acres in size and are analyzed to develop landscape fuel treatment strategies. These high exposure firesheds were identified as the first to be implemented because of the associated risks to local communities.

Kaibab, Coconino, Apache-Sitgreaves and Tonto national forests: The Four Forest Restoration Initiative (4FRI) is a landscape-level effort to restore the structure, pattern, composition, and health of fire-adapted ponderosa pine ecosystems across 2.4 million acres in northern Arizona. The landscape investment uses a full suite of restoration approaches that are carried out by Forest Service personnel, partners, volunteers, and contractors. The 4FRI vision is to restore forest ecosystems, reduce threats of destructive wildfire to thriving forest communities, support sustainable forest industries that strengthen local economies, protect critical watersheds, conserve natural resources, and maintain aesthetic value, as well as ensure the long-term success of this effort and industry.

Prescott National Forest: The objectives of this landscape investment are to reduce community wildland fire risks while restoring and increasing ecosystem resiliency. Implementation efforts will focus on the top priority fireheds identified in the National Forest Scenario Investment Planning Platform, building upon historic fuels treatments and capitalizing on cross-boundary opportunities to collaborate with public, Tribal, and private-area partners. The forest will utilize a full complement of restoration tools, including but not limited to prescribed fire, mastication, timber thinning and harvest, road improvement, and fuel breaks.

Carson National Forest: The Enchanted Circle will use collaboratively developed prescribed fire and mechanical fuels treatments, as well as timber sales and wetland and stream restoration treatments, across Tribal, private, Federal, and New Mexico State Forest and Land Trusts. Fuels treatment and fuelwood removal work is being completed on private lands within the landscape, similar to work done on Federal lands and with many of the same contractors. Thinning and fuelwood harvesting will continue near the Town of Taos, on the Philmont Scout Ranch, on Land Grant lands managed by the Rio Costilla Cooperative Livestock Association, as well as the Village of Taos Ski Valley, and many of the unincorporated communities across the landscape.

The 10-Year Strategy, “Confronting the Wildfire Crisis: A Strategy for Protecting Communities and Improving Resilience in America’s Forests.” calls for the Forest Service to treat up to an additional 20 million acres on national forests and grasslands and support treatment of up to an additional 30 million acres of other federal, state, tribal, private and family lands.

The Forest Service remains committed to sustaining the health, diversity and productivity of all of America’s forests. Visit the Forest Service website to read the full strategy document. If you would like to partner with the Forest Service, visit the National Partnership Office website at www.fs.usda.gov/working-with-us/partnerships. To find out more about the initial landscape investments, visit www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/WCS-Initial-Landscape-Investments.pdf

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