

USDA Forest Service

Partner with Us A Look at Partnerships Within the USDA Forest Service

San Juan National Forest partnership



*Francis Marion National Forest and
Palmetto Foundation partnership in action*



Canada Forest kids



September 2012



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San Juan Mountains, CO

The U.S. Forest Service, the largest agency within the U.S. Department of Agriculture, has a long and distinguished history of public service and land stewardship. Gifford Pinchot, the first Chief of the Forest Service, said that the agency should always work to provide the greatest good for the greatest number of people in the long run.

As the primary forestry agency in the United States, the Forest Service:

- leads our Nation in natural resource management with 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands;
- works in concert with State and private land owners in the stewardship of more than 500 million acres of non-Federal rural and urban forests;
- serves as the largest natural resource research organization in the world;
- works with partners worldwide to protect global forest resources; and
- employs approximately 30,000 people, many in rural communities.

The needs of the people and of the land have changed in the 21st century and so, too, has the way in which the Forest Service works to achieve its mission. As the complexity surrounding the management of public lands increases, partnerships are becoming an increasingly essential mechanism for achieving social, economic and ecological goals associated with these lands. In fiscal year 2011, partners joined the Forest Service through nearly 8,000 formal grants and agreements with a leveraged value of approximately \$1.3 billion. In addition, Youth Conservation Corps, conservation/public lands corps members, and other volunteers contribute more than 4 million hours annually, valued at nearly \$100 million and equivalent to 2,000 person years on forests and grasslands. Through these strong, enduring partnerships, the agency is able to successfully accomplish more than it could on its own.

The Forest Service works with a fabric of strategic alliances, including our congressionally chartered nonprofit partners—the National Forest Foundation, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and National Environmental Education Foundation. These and other non-government organizations are key to the agency's ability to foster partnerships. Opportunities for partner engagement include not only funding support, but also encouraging significant employee volunteerism across the country in areas where partner and Forest Service interests intersect. Providing wise management of our Nation's water resources; engaging youth in conservation stewardship; promoting healthy, active lifestyles; and serving communities are goals that contribute to a healthy and vibrant America.



Leeward Haleakala Watershed restoration, Maui, HI



The following illustrates a sampling of the thousands of opportunities available to potential partners to share in the stewardship of our Nation’s forests and grasslands—through vibrant relationships in key focal areas, including:

- Water quality and quantity flowing from our national forests, which accounts for about 20% of our country’s water supply;
- Improvements in forest health and resiliency, as more than 80 million acres of our national forests are impacted by a changing climate and at increased risk to catastrophic wildfire;
- Restoration of our ever-popular recreation sites and facilities; and,
- Reaching the next generation—our youth of today and the natural resource managers of tomorrow.



Bridger Wilderness in Wyoming

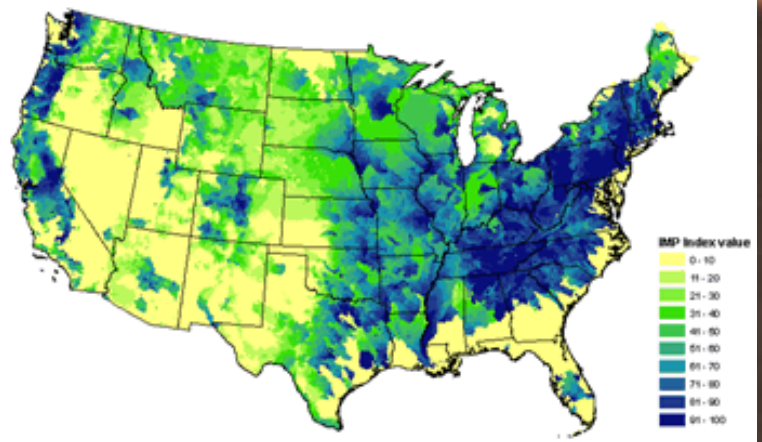
Water

Watershed Condition Framework. The Forest Service and its partners recently finished classifying over 15,000 national forest watersheds through a nationally consistent, comparable, and science-based approach to help prioritize restoration projects. By relying on the resulting product, the [Watershed Condition Framework](#)¹, the agency was able to designate 256 priority watersheds and

then develop 205 watershed restoration action plans. Used to guide restoration efforts, those action plans rely heavily

on partnership engagement—nearly 1,000 partnerships will be formed in order to restore streams, improve road conditions, actively manage forest fuels, and more. Trout Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, the National Forest Foundation, and the National Wild Turkey Federation are all expected to play a major role and participate in numerous projects, while Federal agencies, local governments, watershed councils, tribes, universities, private landowners, and private businesses will also contribute resources. In addition to providing their collaborative insights, partners are expected to contribute \$94 million over five years toward this comprehensive watershed restoration effort.

Forests to Faucet Project. The [Forests to Faucets project](#)² and its findings serve as an education tool for non-profit organizations, State governments, citizens, and many other partners, illustrating the critical link between forests and public water supplies. The project uses a geographic information system to model and map the United States land areas most important to surface drinking water, the role forests play in protecting these areas, and the



Blue indicates U.S. land areas most important to surface drinking water



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extent to which these forests are threatened by development, insects and disease, and wildland fire. The assessment can be used to identify natural areas which should be better protected—providing data to be used in broad-scale environmental planning efforts.

Rocky Mountain Watershed Protection Partnership. Four major river systems and the water supply of over 4 million people on the Front Range of Colorado and southern Wyoming are under duress from climate change and a history of aggressive fire suppression. This partnership, with coordination and support from the National Forest Foundation (NFF), invests public and private funds in the watershed restoration projects necessary to protect these resources. Partner funding and support for this partnership is broad and comes from many sources, such as Denver Water, Aurora Water, Colorado Springs Utilities, Vail Resorts, MillerCoors, Coca-Cola, the Gates Family Foundation, and the Coalition for the Upper South Platte. One example that highlights this support is Denver Water: the utility is matching \$16.5 million in Forest Service contributions with its own contribution of \$16.5 million, through an average residential ratepayer contribution of \$27 over 5 years. In total, partners plan to contribute \$19 million to this endeavor through 2015, and the Forest Service plans to contribute \$21 million.



Salt Lake City, UT

Wasatch Watershed Legacy Partnership. Urban growth, increased recreation use, climate change, and invasive species are threatening the watersheds of the Wasatch Front and the Uinta- Wasatch-Cache (UWC) National Forest. Since these natural systems are the drinking water source for a half-million Salt Lake City residents and a backyard playground for millions more, the UWC believe these ecosystems' restoration is paramount. The UWC and its partners—Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, the Utah Department of Forestry, the Cottonwood Canyons Foundation, the Salt Lake Climber's Alliance, and Utah Conservation Corps—are implementing restoration projects throughout a 50,000 acre area within these

watersheds. Specific projects include the restoration and maintenance of over 200 miles of trail, invasive species management throughout the Front Range, and fuels reduction on several thousand acres.

California Ecological Restoration with Power and Water Utilities Initiative. Half of all surface water in California originates on national forest watersheds, with downstream consumers realizing an estimated value of nearly \$10 billion every year. But there are significant threats to these valuable watersheds. This partnership brings beneficiaries of the watersheds together to overcome resource challenges, forming relationships with major utilities and encouraging restoration work in key ecosystems.



Folchi Creek Watershed in CA

Specific goals are twofold: (1) fund ecological restoration and reduce wildfire threat in critical headwaters and near key utility transmission lines, and (2) maintain and expand



the biomass infrastructure needed to increase the pace and scale of restoration activities in California's forests. The overarching aim is to increase restoration work from the current 250,000 acres/year to 500,000 acres/year in next 15-20 years. The Forest Service's partners in this initiative include the State of California, Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority, Transmission Agency of Northern California, Sierra Nevada Conservancy, Pacific Gas & Electric, and the East Bay Municipal Utility District. Partners have committed \$4.5 million to this collaborative effort, supplementing USFS contribution of \$2.5 million.

Whole Watershed Restoration Initiative. The Whole Watershed Restoration Initiative (WWRI) is a regional partnership focused on integrated, all-lands watershed and salmon habitat restoration in as many as three million acres of priority areas of Oregon, Washington and Idaho. Since 2008, partners have invested almost \$7 million in the WWRI, with the Forest Service contributing nearly half of that total. The partnership has reopened 382 miles of rivers and streams to anadromous fish and restored more than 4,600 acres of important habitat. In addition, whole-watershed restoration will be completed on three watersheds by year's end. The WWRI's guiding philosophy is that, by concentrating and coordinating restoration efforts where there is strong community support, effective collaboration, and high ecological value, measurable and sustainable recovery can be achieved faster than if efforts were spread randomly across the landscape. This partnership includes the Forest Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, and Ecotrust, and it has been functioning for more than 5 years.

Urban Waters Federal Partnership. Many of our Nation's urban rivers, streams, lakes, forests, and wetlands are polluted, degraded or inaccessible. Research demonstrates that a clean, safe, accessible, urban environment—including urban forests, gardens, parks, lakes, aquifers, and rivers—is directly linked to improved public health, stronger local economies, and lower crime rates. Through the Urban Waters Federal Partnership, the Forest Service and 11 other Federal agencies are revitalizing urban waters, supporting local partnerships, restoring forest resources, fostering community engagement in urban watersheds, and transforming overlooked assets into drivers of urban revival at seven pilot locations across the country. Nearly \$1 million has been committed to accomplishing these goals.



Portland, OR, waterfront



Monitoring bull trout habitat

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and Willamette National Forest. Over the last 5 years, the Willamette National Forest received 10 grants totaling approximately \$1 million to support collaborative restoration and education efforts on and off the forest, including activities such as in-stream restoration and monitoring for bull trout and spring Chinook. The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, which awarded these grants, was championed by Oregon's



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Governor Kitzhaber and created in the late 1990s to ensure the availability of financial resources for habitat and watershed restoration. The Oregon Lottery provides the Board with the majority of its grant dollars.



Active fuel treatment in the municipal watershed

Santa Fe Watershed Investment Program. Since 1998, the Santa Fe National Forest and city of Santa Fe have been working collaboratively to reduce fuels in the municipal watershed. Initially, resource professionals worked with the community to outline how active watershed management could be both ecologically and financially beneficial. Project implementation began in 2001, and more than \$5 million of federal funding was used to treat 5,600 acres of the watershed through 2008. This avoided-cost approach has continued since, and crews have been treating about 1,000 acres per year via a \$900,000 agreement between the national forest and the city. The city agreed to match the Forest Service dollar-for-dollar in the management of these fuels, believing that this proactive approach is

economically beneficial because it reduces the likelihood of major fire events that would directly impact the city's water supply. Such events can impose significant costs—a single 7,000 acre fire, for example, could cost the city \$22 million. Collaborative approaches are the foundation on which this program is being implemented, and by working with the Santa Fe Watershed Association, the city, and others, the Santa Fe National Forest and Española Ranger District have gained key community support for continued work in the Santa Fe Watershed.

Watershed Investment Program. Carpe Diem West's Healthy Headwaters Group, a vibrant partnership consisting of leaders from water supply utilities, municipalities, Federal agencies, and the NGO community, is working collaboratively to develop comprehensive watershed investment programs to ensure downstream water supplies. In a [recent report](#)³ outlining these efforts, Carpe Diem West highlights the critical role Forest Service partnerships play in protecting public water supplies across the West and ensuring watershed investment programs and projects are successfully implemented.

Healthy Forests

Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration (CFLR) Program. In 2009, the Secretary of Agriculture articulated his vision for America's Forests, underscoring the importance of forest restoration and pursuing collaborative solutions through landscape-scale operations. Following these announcements, the bipartisan CFLR program was established, with an aim of fostering collaborative, science-based restoration on priority forest landscapes across the United States. Since then, a total of 23 projects have been selected for Federal funding, with substantial partner investment—nearly \$110 million from FY 2012 through FY 2019.

The projects these partner investments help enable are stretched across every corner of the country, and their goals are diverse and worthwhile: reducing mega-fire risk, improving oak and pine regeneration, restoring water channels and jobs, and more.



Escalante Headwaters



Reforestation Collection Agreements. The Forest Service actively works with numerous non-governmental partners—such as NFF, The Arbor Day Foundation, and American Forest Foundation—to ensure robust reforestation efforts. The agency has established collection agreements with our partners and, in FY 2011, they contributed nearly \$3 million toward reforestation initiatives across 15,000 acres of the National Forest System.

Sequestering Carbon by Reforesting National Forests. [This partnership⁴](#) enables organizations to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions through the voluntary marketplace and reforestation efforts. The result will be restored wildlife habitat, improved water quality, and climate change mitigation. Since 2008, NFF has facilitated eight carbon sequestration projects that cover more than 5,000 acres of national forest lands, involve planting 1.3 million seedlings, and are anticipated to offset 700,000 metric tons of carbon. Nearly \$5 million in partner contributions have already been raised to fund this initiative by corporate partners, including Disney, the Southcoast Air Quality Management District in California, El Paso Corporation, and Chevrolet.



Station Fire restoration



Longleaf pine restoration

America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative. The longleaf pine ecosystem once covered approximately 90 million acres in the Southern United States. But by the early 1990s, 97% of this ecosystem had been lost, stressing the nearly 30 threatened and endangered species that live there. Since then, the Forest Service and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) have worked with numerous partners to successfully restore longleaf pine forests throughout the Southeast. The America's Longleaf Restoration Initiative, which engages Federal

and State agencies, non-profit organizations, local collaboratives, universities, private enterprises, and private landowners, will provide support for continuing this critical, cooperative conservation work. In total, it is estimated that \$70 million in federal funding is being contributed to longleaf restoration on both public and private lands.

Treasured Landscapes, Unforgettable Experiences Conservation Campaign. NFF launched this campaign in 2008 to address two critical challenges: millions of forested acres in need of restoration and millions of people unaware of how national forests enrich their lives. Four years later, well over 800,000 acres are now targeted for restoration and community engagement activities through work on fourteen keystone sites, restoring our damaged forests and Americans' connection to these public lands. There are 34 grants open with more than \$4 million dollars of work being actively accomplished through this initiative.



Hayman Fire restoration begins



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Recreation

Recreation Restoration, Adaptation, and Ski Area Campaign. Since 2006, NFF has collaborated with 16 ski areas through the Ski Conservation Fund. Dedicated to conservation and recreation improvement projects on public lands, contributions totaling more than \$3 million have been raised via donations from lodging guests, skiers, snowboarders, ski school participants, and golfers. Work continues to expand the Ski Conservation Fund and its contribution mechanisms to both additional ski areas and other partners, such as outdoor retailers and reservation systems, to ensure that the landscapes that visitors enjoy are restored and maintained.



Juneau cruise ships

Alaska Cruise Line Conservation Campaign. The Forest Service, working with NFF and Alaska Geographic, is leveraging \$200,000 to encourage cruise industry participation in a campaign to support critical community and visitor services, collaborative stewardship projects, and experiences for next generation youth explorers. Nearly one million people visit Alaska via cruises every year, and the majority of opportunities for land excursions are on national forests. This campaign will allow Alaska cruise line customers to voluntarily support stewardship, restoration, recreational improvements, and youth-oriented programs within the landscapes they visit.

Youth

Youth Engagement and Employment Initiative. Empowering youth for active citizenship and preparing them for effective stewardship of our Nation's resources are among America's highest priorities for the 21st century. This new initiative, developed in collaboration with NFWF and the BLM, will support both youth conservation employment opportunities and conservation education and outreach outcomes. The Forest Service is working with a broad array of Federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, and others to support partnerships that build an understanding of conservation and develop service opportunities, quality jobs, and career pathways for America's youth—especially those who are often underserved. Through this initiative, diverse youth will be engaged in meaningful conservation work and programs that not only make a difference on the ground, but also develop work skills and experience for future careers in natural resources. The Forest Service has committed more than \$700,000 to these initiatives, and dedicated partner funds total \$1.4 million.



Hawaii Year of the Forest

Outdoor Nation. In support of America's great outdoors, the Forest Service has partnered with the Outdoor Industry Association and its foundation, The Outdoor Foundation, to launch Outdoor Nation. Youth-led and coalition-supported, Outdoor Nation has the energy, ideas and inspiration to empower a new generation of leaders with the necessary



skills and resources to champion the outdoors. Over the past several years, Outdoor Nation has convened both national and regional youth summits, where youth have tackled local outdoor issues and brainstormed impactful solutions. This past summer alone, in 2012, Outdoor Nation and the Forest Service hosted 10 youth summits in Boston, Minneapolis, San Francisco, and other major cities across the country. In total, Outdoor Nation has engaged 30,000 youth since its formation in 2010.

Children's Grants Programs. In 2011, the agency sustained its national strategic investment of \$1 million, leveraged one-to-one through partnerships in two programs: More Kids in the Woods and Children's Forests. More than 20 More Kids in the Woods projects received funding in FY 2011, initiatives that emphasize hands-on learning and recreational opportunities for children. Funding for the vibrant network of Children's Forests that stretches from coast to coast provides local community children a chance to experience the great outdoors, learn about nature, and build a lasting commitment to conservation and land stewardship.

North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences Partnership. Demystifying research science is necessary to engage teachers and students – and ultimately to inspire a new generation of young scientists. The Forest Service's Southern Research Station (SRS) is an inaugural partner with the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences' new 80,000 square-foot wing, the Nature Research Center (NRC), in Raleigh, NC. SRS is leveraging an initial two-year investment of \$130,000 toward the NRC's more than \$2 million annual budget, into ground-floor access to 21st century technological resources, and integrating scientific exploration to expose and engage more than one million multicultural students to the wonders of forest science. SRS scientists will have several platforms available – including science cafés, distant learning projects, special forestry themes, and the immersive, three-story multimedia Daily Planet hub – to share the research behind contemporary issues and emphasize how forests address societal concerns. SRS and NRC scientific experts will jointly unfold cutting-edge research and technology to bright young minds eager to absorb science in action. And the fun extends beyond the museum's walls! Through special live video feeds and hands-on activities, the wonders of forest science will be potentially broadcast into schools, libraries, senior citizen centers, hospitals, and other community organizations, stimulating an interest in forests and exciting children and adults alike.



Child taste-tests a scorpion at the museum's BugFest event. Credit: WRAL.com

Related Links

¹<http://www.fs.fed.us/publications/watershed/>

²http://www.fs.fed.us/ecosystemservices/FS_Efforts/forests2faucets.shtml

³<http://www.carpediemwest.org/reports/policy-briefs>

⁴<http://www.nationalforests.org/conserve/carbon/carboncapitalfund>

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We invite you to join us in the stewardship of our Nation's forests and grasslands. For ideas and information about collaboration and partnerships, please visit us at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/prc>.