

## The Path Forward

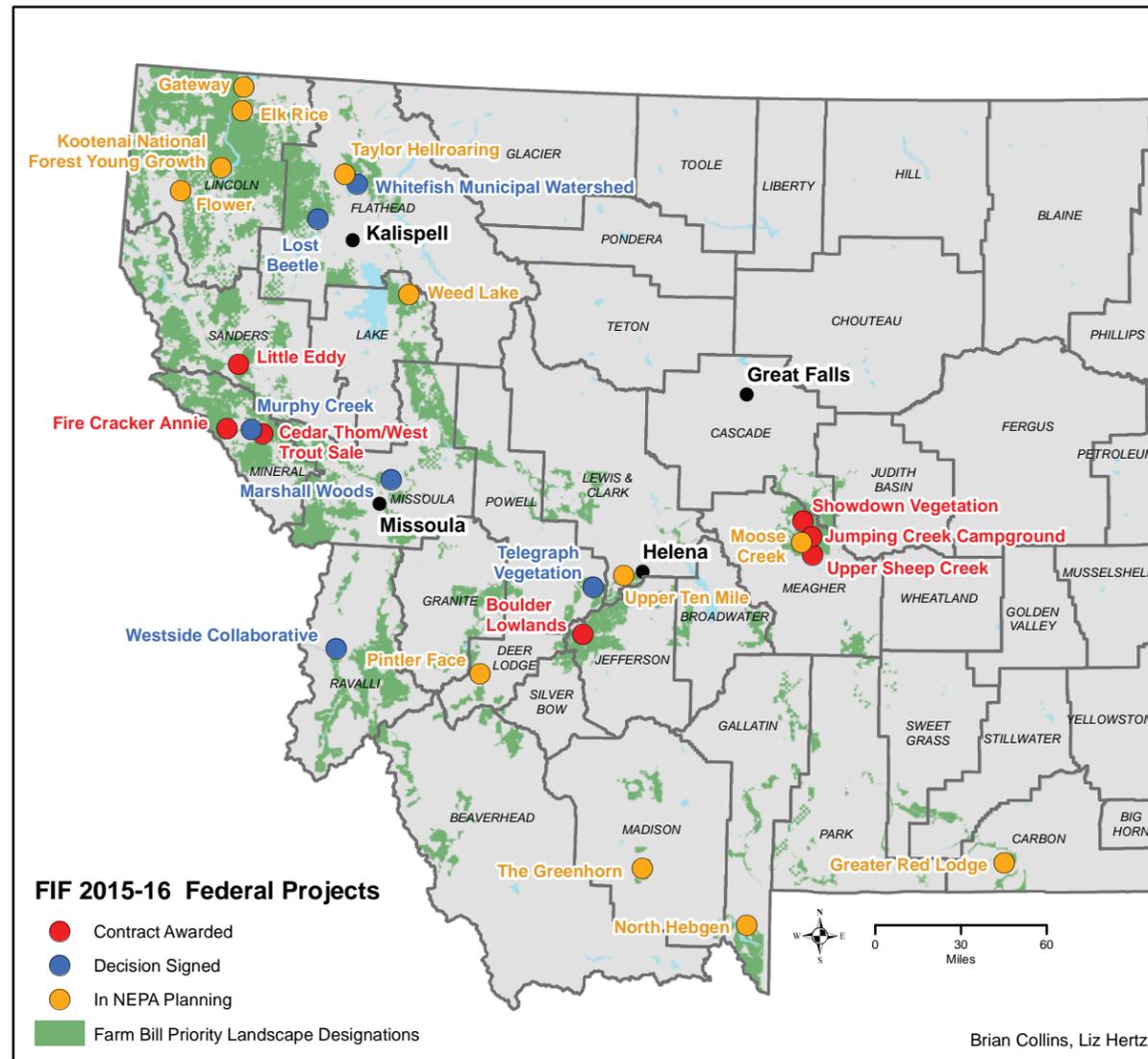
If program staff and funding are reauthorized by the 2017 Legislature, the DNRC will continue to work with local government, collaborative groups and the Forest Service to increase the number of acres treated on the National Forests.

Strategies will include, but are not limited to: Direct financial investments to accelerate projects, working on project implementation using the Good Neighbor Authority, providing technical assistance to local governments and collaborative groups, providing post decision support to the USFS and working to increase inter-governmental cooperation to advance forest restoration outputs.

The Forests in Focus program has been very helpful to our business. Having sales purchased ahead of when we need them is very beneficial to the mill. It allows us to be flexible and efficient with our log inventory. The two FIF sales we purchased are playing a crucial role in our future.

- Angelo Ververis- Resource Manager,  
Tricon Timber, LLC

## FORESTS IN FOCUS PROJECTS



Progress Report by Montana DNRC.  
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2017

## Progress Report

# MONTANA FORESTS IN FOCUS

State Engagement in Federal Land Management



Figure 1: The left photo shows overstocked conditions on national forest lands in the Wildland Urban Interface in Sanders County within the Little Eddy Farm Bill Project boundary. The right photo shows conditions on treated private land adjacent to the Little Eddy project. This project on the Lolo NF is receiving state funding to improve stand resiliency which will have cross boundary benefits.

Federal lands in Montana make up over half of our state's forested landscape. What happens on these lands impacts all landowners. It is therefore imperative that local, state and federal agencies work together to support sustainable forest management statewide to retain all the benefits these lands provide.

Through the Forests in Focus Initiative, the state of Montana is employing a variety of approaches to promote sustainable forest management on all lands, with key strategies targeted to accelerate forest restoration on national forests in Montana.

"Forests In Focus funding to the Custer Gallatin Working Group has been critical in allowing us to directly engage in the North Hebgren Project, leading to better project outcomes. The state Forests In Focus investments and collaborative support helped to leverage an additional \$250,000 of federal funding."

-John Prinkki, Carbon County Commissioner

### Accomplishments at a Glance

- Accelerated planning and implementation of 25 USFS projects
- Invested state funds in USFS projects in 14 counties
- Paid Montana contractors to complete watershed/infrastructure improvements
- Accelerated NEPA Decisions by 1-2 years
- Increased acreage treated on USFS lands
- Provided technical assistance and advice to counties across the state
- Developed a local government federal forest management Tool Kit
- Held 1<sup>st</sup> Montana Counties Forest Summit
- Implemented first Stewardship Contract and GNA Project on Forest Service lands.

## 2014 Farm Bill: Priority Landscapes and Authorities

The 2014 Farm Bill provided an opportunity for the Governors of every state with national forest system lands within their borders to recommend priority areas for treatment due to threats from forest insects and disease. Governor Bullock's nomination resulted in the designation of 5 million acres and includes lands in every national forest in Montana.

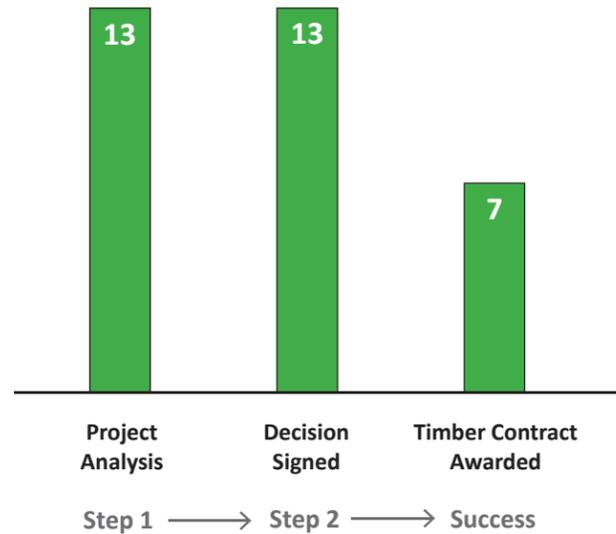
Projects in these priority landscapes can be completed using a new categorical exclusion (CE) or a focused Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to expedite project efficiencies and effectiveness. The new authorities require collaborative engagement by interested stakeholders with diverse interests. The state of Montana is working alongside the Northern Region of the Forest Service to increase restoration outcomes and ensure successful implementation of projects in the Farm Bill priority landscape area.



Figure 2: Culvert installation along a haul route for the Firecracker Annie project in Mineral County. The road work was awarded to two local contractors using Forests In Focus grant funds

- » The state's interest and involvement has encouraged the Northern Region to accelerate implementation of Farm Bill projects.
- » Region 1 is leading the nation in using these authorities in new forest management projects.
- » Over 50 projects using the new authorities are planned or underway in the Farm Bill priority landscape in Montana; more than half of these will use Farm Bill authorities.
- » A new Farm Bill Strike Team was created to accelerate project planning and implementation.

## Federal Forests In Focus Project Status



### Forests in Focus Investments in USFS Projects

Under authority granted by the Legislature, Governor Bullock has made two million dollars available from the state fire suppression account to engage directly with the Forest Service on projects. The State of Montana is investing in 25 Forest Service projects across the state, benefiting each National Forest and 14 counties. These projects are bolstering restoration outcomes on over 200,000 acres of forested land, improving recreational opportunities, providing approximately 161 million board feet of timber to Montana's mills and necessary goods and services to support resource dependent communities.

- » All of the 25 projects receiving funding are within or immediately adjacent to the Farm Bill priority landscape designations.
- » Fourteen of the projects are using Farm Bill Authority; Seven of them will use the Insect and Disease Categorical Exclusion (Farm Bill CE).
- » As of January 2017, thirteen of the projects have decisions signed and seven timber contracts are being awarded to Montana businesses.

## Partnership Approach to On-the-Ground Project Implementation

### Phase 1: Stewardship Authority

In an effort to share resources and partner with the Forest Service on projects of mutual benefit, the Montana DNRC entered into a pilot project under a Stewardship agreement in the 490-acre Red Mountain Flume Chessman Reservoir Project in the Tenmile watershed near Helena. This project includes fuels reduction and forest restoration work aimed at protecting Helena's municipal water supply.

The DNRC administered the contract for harvest and forest work being conducted by Montana businesses. To date, 98% of mechanical and hand treatment has been completed and over 4.2 million board feet of timber has been delivered to R-Y Timber and Marks-Miller Post and Pole.

This project was the first agreement of its kind in the nation, and will ensure a clean and safe water supply for the residents of Helena.



Figure 3: The Chessman Reservoir of the Helena Municipal Water System.

### Forests in Focus Economic Contribution

Investments in the 25 USFS projects are helping sustain **3,000 jobs** (direct, indirect & induced), produce **161 million board feet of timber**, and **60 million dollars in state and federal taxes**.

Our partnership with Governor Bullock and the state DNRC is foundational to our success in Montana. The Forests in Focus Initiative has made a significant contribution to our ability to deliver the goods, services, and experiences that the public and communities expect from their public lands.

- Christine Dawe, US Forest Service

### Phase 2: Good Neighbor Authority

The 2014 Farm Bill and the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014 provide the authority for the Forest Service to enter into sole source contracts and Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) Agreements with state agencies to accomplish restoration service activities on and off federal lands. GNA is providing a new, flexible management tool to enable Montana and federal partners to collaborate more closely in carrying out critical forest, rangeland, and watershed restoration activities, as well as fuels reduction projects across boundaries.

- » The first Good Neighbor Project in Montana was completed in Jumping Creek Campground in July of 2016. The state's resources accelerated the campground opening, leveraged funds, and produced forest products for three MT businesses.
- » Two GNA projects are moving forward on USFS lands in the Pintler and Superior Ranger Districts.



Figure 4: Slash removal at the Jumping Creek Campground, Meagher County conducted by John Jump Trucking out of Kalispell, Montana.