



Montana Forests in Focus Initiative

*Implementation Update
October 2015*

<http://dnrc.mt.gov/forestry/forestsinfocus.asp>

In July, 2014, Governor Bullock announced the Forests in Focus Initiative: A Forest Restoration Strategy for Montana. The four key components of the Initiative are:

Forest Restoration & Industry Retention

Tribal, State & Private Forests

Federal Forest Management

Collaboration & Partnerships

FOREST RESTORATION & INDUSTRY RETENTION

Executive Order to Promote Use of Montana Wood

During the 2014 Montana Forest Products Week, Governor Bullock signed [Executive Order #12-2014 TO PROMOTE USE OF MONTANA WOOD PRODUCTS](#) which included provisions for Montana state agencies to lead by example in the use of Montana wood for construction and energy in our state buildings, and to work together to increase the market for and promotion of Montana wood products.

Building More with Montana Wood

The State of Montana is leading by example in using and promoting Montana wood.

- ✚ The minimum Design Standards criteria for the design, construction and renovation of state buildings has been revised to prioritize the use of Montana wood.
- ✚ Construction of the new Missoula College is underway and the majority of wood in the building will be from Montana mills and forests.
- ✚ Missoula College is developing a new “Advanced Wood Construction” curriculum for diverse audiences.

Wood Energy

Montana DNRC awarded grants for wood installation systems in 2014. Those grants were awarded to Troy Public Schools, Bridger Bowl Ski Resort, and SmartLam Technologies Group. Two of these high efficiency systems have been installed, and one is in the process of being installed.

TRIBAL, STATE & PRIVATE FORESTS

Cost-Share for Forestry Projects

Governor Bullock made two million dollars available to help fund cost-share forest restoration and fuel reduction projects on tribal, state, and private forested lands. Fourteen projects are currently completed or underway, benefitting nine counties and treating over 4,200 acres. These projects are producing over 5 million board feet of timber and nearly 28,000 tons of pulp logs. To date we have accomplished: 1,500 acres of treatment, approximately 1.75 million board feet of sawlogs harvested and sent to mills and roughly 4,000 tons of pulp has been generated. These projects will leverage over \$750,000 in private matching funds.



Active fuels reduction project on the Blackfoot Community Conservation Area utilizing Forest in Focus grant funds.

FEDERAL FOREST MANAGEMENT

2014 Farm Bill

- ✚ In April 2014, Governor Bullock nominated nearly five million acres of national forest system lands for designation as priority landscapes. The recommendations were based on areas with forest health threats and/or risks of catastrophic wildfires. Of these, 4.97 million acres were accepted by the Secretary of Agriculture for designation. The Farm Bill provides several important tools to accelerate forest restoration within these priority landscapes.

State Investments

- ✚ The State of Montana is investing \$1 million dollars in fourteen USFS projects across the state of Montana, benefitting each National Forest and eleven counties. These projects are bolstering restoration outcomes on over 200,000 acres of forested land, improving recreational opportunities and will provide roughly 50 million board feet of timber to Montana's mills.
- ✚ All of these projects are within or immediately adjacent to the Farm Bill priority landscape designations. Seven of the projects are using Farm Bill Authority; 4 of them will use the Insect and Disease Categorical Exclusion (Farm Bill CE). Three of the projects have decisions signed and contracts were awarded to Montana mills. Five other USFS projects receiving state investments will have decisions rendered this year and contracts will be awarded soon after.



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.

Chessman Reservoir Project

- ✚ Under a Master Stewardship Agreement with the U.S. Forest Service, the Montana DNRC and Helena National Forest, are implementing the Red Mountain Flume/Chessman Reservoir Project, which is reducing fuels and improving forest health in Helena's municipal watershed. The DNRC is administering the contract for harvest and forest work is being conducted by Montana vendors. To date, 180 acres of mechanical and hand treatment has been completed. And over 2 million board feet of timber delivered to R-Y Timber. This project, when complete, will be the first agreement of its kind in the nation, and will ensure a clean and safe water supply for the residents of Helena. Complimentary fuels reduction work is occurring on private lands adjacent to the Chessman Reservoir.

Federal/State/County Engagement

- ✚ Last year the DNRC hired a federal forest liaison to work in the USFS Regional Office, providing an important connection between the two agencies regarding national forest system management, representing the state's interests. As the result of legislation the Governor signed in the spring of 2015, the DNRC is in the process of adding another position to our efforts to promote active forest management and collaboration. A new County Forest Advisor will help Montana local governments engage in federal forest management and play an active role in collaboration efforts.

COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIPS

Collaboratives and Building Capacity

- ✚ Through the \$1 million dollars of state investment in USFS projects, two collaborative groups have received direct funding to help them more effectively engage with their local Forest Service Districts on project design, planning and implementation.
- ✚ Collaboration is an important aspect of the Governor's Initiative and it is a requirement when using Farm Bill authorities. The DRNC will continue to work with the USFS and local governments to help ensure that a meaningful collaborative process takes place.