

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation  
Forestry Division



# FORESTS IN FOCUS 2.0: A CROSS-BOUNDARY COLLABORATIVE APPROACH





*Crews plant trees in rehabilitation efforts following the Alice Creek Fire in central Montana, which burned almost 30,000 acres in 2017.*

## Background

In 2014, Montana Governor Steve Bullock launched the Forests in Focus Initiative to address overwhelming forest health and wildland fire risk issues across the state. Since its inception, Forests in Focus investments have supported the treatment of more than 300,000 acres of forest land, production of nearly 190 million board feet of timber, and retention of 3,000 jobs in the forest products sector. Through this initiative, the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) also increased Montana's stake in Forest Plan revisions and federal projects through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and supported local governments and collaborative groups in their efforts to effectively engage with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) on projects important to their constituents and communities. This all-lands, all-hands collaborative approach developed in Montana informed Governor Bullock's National Forest and Rangeland Management Initiative of the Western Governors Association, culminating in the release of bipartisan administrative and legislative recommendations to advance shared learning and best practices for forest restoration and management across the West.

## A Cross-Boundary Collaborative Approach

Forests in Focus 2.0 charts a course for key stakeholders to collaboratively address our most pressing needs in forest health and wildfire risk across Montana. Reflecting upon the past investments of Forests in Focus and the experiences of other states in the West, we have learned how vast our forest health and wildland fire risk issues are but have also developed proven strategies to respond to growing needs as a Montana forest community. Multiple agencies and organizations are working on numerous forested landscapes in Montana. This is good, but it can prove challenging. In some cases, missions and authorities compete, making it difficult for a seamless, collaborative effort to address the state's highest needs in forest health and wildland fire risk. Our efforts are often fragmented or not at a scale that makes meaningful change in and around our communities.

Wildland firefighters have embraced a seamless approach in coordinating across state, local, tribal and federal partners by embodying the saying that “no one cares what color the engine is.” At the end of the day, across land ownerships and missions, a safe and effective fire response requires that partners work together in the service of clear goals and objectives. We need a similar approach when it comes to forest health and wildland fire risk and we need to expand those partnerships beyond government agencies to include other partners who have a stake in the well-being of our forests. Under Forests in Focus 2.0, DNRC will work to unite federal, state, local and tribal governments; industry partners; conservation organizations; collaborative and watershed groups; and other relevant partners around clear goals. Together, we will advance a common mission and strengthen our shared stewardship of Montana's forests by developing a plan of work that addresses capacity and implementation needs and unleashes the creativity of local and regional team members.

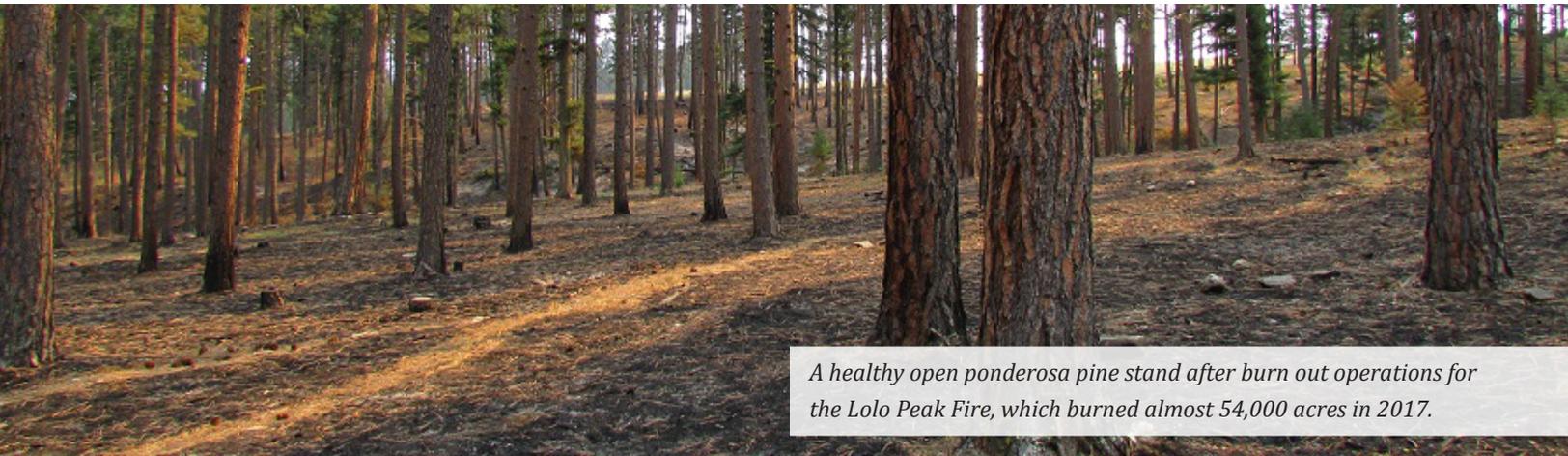
Forests in Focus 2.0 brings partnering organizations together to propose one authoritative plan for the state. It emphasizes better planning, a well-organized statewide collaborative effort, scaling partnerships down to the local level, replicating those partnerships on a community by community basis, and targeting investments that bring capacity where we most need it to get results out on the ground and serve Montana forested communities across the state. Success will be measured in the number of acres treated, the number of communities and watersheds protected, the amount of wildlife habitat benefited, the number of jobs created, and in the endurance of our partnerships.

Specifically, DNRC proposes to:

- Convene key stakeholders around the revision of the State Forest Action Plan to reassess statewide forest conditions, identify priority areas for treatment, and develop a cross-boundary plan to accomplish landscape-scale forest restoration in targeted areas over a defined period of time. The timing of Montana's State Forest Action Plan revision offers a unique opportunity for the state to work with all partners to respond to the USFS Shared Stewardship Strategy, including using new tools and technologies to prioritize outcome-based investments.
- Launch a Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) Program to increase the pace and scale of forest restoration and management on federal lands and across ownership boundaries. The Montana GNA program will develop mutual and measurable annual objectives with USFS

Region One and each National Forest in the state; as appropriate, prioritize treatments identified as important by collaborative groups, watershed groups, and local communities; and emphasize carrying out restoration work either through, or in close partnership with, local affiliates.

- Invest in innovative targeted marketing strategies to exponentially increase stewardship activities on non-industrial private forest lands. Montana ranks second, only to California, in area of private forest land that is critical to public water supply and at high risk of severe impacts from wildland fire. DNRC will expand its partnership with the American Forest Foundation (AFF) and others to increase acres treated on private forest lands – specifically within watersheds of critical importance to adjacent communities.
- Expand investment in local government capacity to contribute to the three tenets of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy, realize the goals and objectives of Community Wildfire Protection Plans, and engage forest land managers in relevant planning and project efforts through funding, technical assistance and shared learning.
- Better serve Indian Country by engaging with all 12 Montana tribes to identify programs of work that address forest health and wildfire risk issues in and around tribal communities.
- Invest in an industry liaison position to better align DNRC’s capabilities to overcome challenges with forest industry stability, growth, and retention. This position will be tasked with tracking, understanding and addressing issues facing the Montana Forest Products Industry to complement existing capacity focused on expanding current and new markets for forest products.
- Invest in watershed and collaborative groups on an annual basis in recognition of their leadership in resolving intractable land management policy and projects. In addition, DNRC commits to regularly engage with the Montana Watershed Coordinating Council and the Montana Forest Collaborative Network on current policy issues and advancements to help shape the State of Montana policy platform for forestry issues.



*A healthy open ponderosa pine stand after burn out operations for the Lolo Peak Fire, which burned almost 54,000 acres in 2017.*



*Critically overstocked forest stands contribute to high fire risk and unhealthy forest conditions.*

## Montana's Forests Need Our Attention

For several generations, Montanans have been watching forest conditions change in unprecedented ways. Large scale fire exclusion over the 1900's led to a massive transition from forest stand conditions that were once dominated by fire-tolerant tree species and moderate fuel loading, to overstocked stands dominated by species that are less fire tolerant and have excessive fuels.

Over the past 10 years, over half of Montana's forests have experienced epidemic proportions of insect and disease outbreaks. Of 23 million acres of forested land in the state, nearly 11 million acres have been affected by forest pests; primarily mountain pine beetle, Douglas-fir beetle, and spruce budworm; while 3 million acres have been impacted by root diseases.

Increased fuel loading, changed forest types, insect epidemics, climate change, and drought are some of the factors increasing wildfire risk in Montana's forests. Today, over 85 percent of Montana's forests are at elevated risk of wildfire. Current conditions of forests are not only creating challenges for reducing fire wildfire risk and meeting the needs of the forest products industry, but also creating challenges for supporting other goals such as wildlife conservation, old growth retention, and watershed health. And according to the 2017 Montana Climate Assessment, trends in climate change may continue to make our forests more susceptible to wildfire and insects and disease.

Similar to other forests throughout the West, our fire seasons are becoming longer and more severe. Increasingly, Montana experiences megafires, those over 100,000 acres, and our average fire season is 40 days longer than it was 30 years ago<sup>1</sup>. The 2017 fire year was our largest on record since 1910 with 1.2 million acres burned statewide and the average number of acres burned per year has increased 15-fold over the past 20 years<sup>2</sup>.

Forest conditions and the consequences of those conditions affect all Montanans regardless of land ownership. Insects and disease, wildfires, smoke, drought and a changing climate do not recognize ownership boundaries.

## Better Statewide Planning

The 2020 Forest Action Plan will serve as Montana's authoritative plan for addressing forest health and wildland fire risk issues across all forested lands in the state. The timing of Montana's State Forest Action Plan revision offers a unique opportunity for the state to work with all partners to respond to the USFS Shared Stewardship Strategy, including using new tools and technologies to prioritize outcome-based investments.

DNRC will launch the revision of its Forest Action Plan in 2019 and convene key statewide stakeholders to reassess statewide forest conditions, identify priority areas for treatment, and develop a cross-boundary plan to accomplish landscape-scale forest restoration in targeted areas over a defined period of time. The revision of the Forest Action Plan will incorporate the following:

- **Montana Forest Action Council** – DNRC will form the Montana Forest Action Council (MFAC), a comprehensive group of stakeholders representing federal, state, local and tribal governments; industry partners; conservation organizations; collaborative and watershed groups; and other relevant partners. MFAC will be charged with the duty advising the development of the 2020 Montana Forest Action Plan. This group will oversee the progress of priorities outlined in the plan, report progress annually to the Governor, and identify recommendations to overcome any obstacles inhibiting progress toward defined targets and outcomes.
- **Statewide Assessment of Forest Resources** – this assessment will be updated to provide an analysis of forest conditions, trends, threats, and opportunities in the state and identify priority areas for active forest restoration and management. This will offer MFAC the opportunity to employ new technical tools and data and invest in best available science to better understand the conditions of the Montana forest environment. This assessment will serve as the authoritative source of information on statewide forest conditions and will offer an opportunity for MFAC to interface with scenario-investment tools and technologies identified in the USFS Shared Stewardship Strategy.
- **Statewide Forest Resource Strategy** – this strategy will outline a 10-year plan of work to address forest health and wildland fire risk in priority areas identified in the Statewide Assessment of Forest Resources. The strategy will also recommend tools and authorities to be utilized by agencies to carry out the priority work, identify resources necessary to carry out the plan, and offer administrative or legislative changes needed to accomplish mutual goals identified in the plan. The strategy will also outline a robust communication initiative to educate Montana's citizens about all components of the Forest Action Plan.

## Partnering with Many - Good Neighbor Authority

Good Neighbor Authority (GNA), authorized under the 2014 Farm Bill, embodies the spirit of partnership and cross-boundary management. It currently offers a significant opportunity to align objectives and resources among partners for increasing the pace and scale of forest restoration and management on federal lands as well as across ownership boundaries.



This authority allows the DNRC to serve as the “agent” of the USFS and use state contracting procedures to conduct forest restoration and management activities on the ground, complementing traditional strategies. Program income can be utilized for a host of activities including treatment of insect and disease infected trees; reduction of hazardous fuels; and restoration and improvement of forest, rangeland, and watershed health, including fish, and wildlife habitat. Program income can also be utilized to fulfill needs such as contracting interdisciplinary team (ID team) specialists, funding seasonal timber or silviculture crews, or purchasing replacement culverts to improve fish passage, as long as those activities contribute to on-the-ground restoration activities.

In close partnership with USFS Region One and all seven National Forests in Montana, DNRC is well on its way to establishing a robust program of work to fully utilize GNA in the state of Montana. By the end of calendar year 2018, the USFS and DNRC will have signed project agreements on all seven National Forests, accompanied by a 3 to 5-year program of work with a particular focus on generating program income to fund future restoration work; and DNRC will have sold two timber sales within the Beaverhead-Deerlodge and Kootenai National Forests. Over the next three to five years, the USFS and DNRC intend to treat 2,500-5,000 acres per year for forest restoration, fuels reduction, and wildlife habitat improvement; and produce various forests products including an estimated 15 to 30 million board feet per year.

This is just the beginning. To best carry out the cross-boundary intent of GNA and to get more and better projects on the ground, DNRC envisions working closely with a spectrum of partners as appropriate. These entities have long served as leaders in identifying priority treatment areas important to local communities and have a long practice of exercising authorities and funding to conduct work across jurisdictional boundaries. Engaging these entities will create capacity beyond the DNRC and the USFS to carry out program-income funded GNA restoration projects in priority areas identified in the Forest Action Plan.

We want to be investing time, money, and energy in tools and authorities that work. In partnership with the USFS, DNRC will track and report annual accomplishments under GNA with the intent of identifying clear recommendations to approve the authority in its application.

## Jumpstarting GNA

Like other states, DNRC does not have the personnel to readily take on the workload associated with GNA. In-kind state investments of existing staff totaling \$330,000 per year, \$553,940 in USFS capacity building funding, and contributions from industry, business, and conservation partners are helping DNRC kick start GNA in Montana. Industry and conservation partners are stepping up to help. Partners committing to date include F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber, Idaho Forest Group, the Montana Logging Association, Pyramid Mountain Lumber, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Stimson Lumber, Artemis Common Ground, Sun Mountain Lumber, The Nature Conservancy, and Weyerhaeuser. Thanks to these investments, DNRC will be able to initiate GNA at a much broader scale, start implementing a comprehensive program of work in partnership with all seven National Forests, and help actualize future priorities identified in the Montana Forest Action Plan.

*“The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) wholeheartedly supports the use of the federal Good Neighbor Authority to expand and expedite forest management across priority forests and watersheds in Montana. One of the primary attributes of the Good Neighbor Authority is that it allows for forest project planning and management across all landownerships. RMEF looks forward to being an active partner in Governor Bullock’s Forest’s in Focus Initiative 2.0 and supporting enhanced forest management activities across Montana.”*

*-Blake Henning, RMEF Chief Conservation Officer*

## Targeted Marketing – Private Forest Land Stewardship

Non-industrial private forest land ownership accounts for nearly 20% of the forest land in Montana. The DNRC Forest Stewardship Program, the principal entity for engaging with private landowners, has a long history of partnering with local organizations to put stewardship dollars in action to meet restoration objectives on private family forests. With two Bureau staff and 16 service foresters in addition to these partnerships, DNRC reaches approximately 5,600 private landowners per year to treat on average 2,000 acres annually.

Recently, DNRC has partnered with the American Forest Foundation (AFF) to pilot a “targeted marketing” approach to increase acres treated on private forest lands – specifically with landowners within watersheds of critical importance to adjacent communities who may not be accustomed to



*Post-fire lodgepole pine regeneration located along Montana’s high Rocky Mountain Front. This land base is part of the Golden Crown Stewardship Initiative, a true example of collaborative forest stewardship.*

active stewardship of their properties. According to a 2015 AFF report<sup>3</sup>, Montana ranks second, only to California, in area of private forest land that is critical to public water supply and at high risk of severe impacts from wildland fire. This initiative is intended to connect landowners to existing services that can help them improve the health and resilience of their forests to wildfire, while simultaneously reducing the threats of wildfire impacts to downstream water users and public water supplies for adjacent communities.

The targeted marketing approach involves using focused marketing techniques with the goal of getting foresters out on the ground to meet with landowners and develop stewardship plans to treat hazardous fuels. In less than one year, AFF assisted DNRC in making 28 forester visits, developing 17 stewardship plans, and identifying 260 acres to be treated for hazardous fuels reduction. By comparison, conventional outreach methods take three to four years to generate the same level of landowner interest and associated results. Given the success, DNRC and AFF are working on targeted outreach efforts in priority watersheds in other communities throughout Montana.

## Adjacency: Marshall Woods

In addition to expanding private landowner outreach to treat more acres, the DNRC Stewardship Program is working closely with the other partners to get stewardship results on private lands adjacent to federal and state projects. Missoula District Ranger Jen Hensiek introduced DNRC staff to a group of landowners interested in wildfire reduction activities on their properties adjacent to the USFS Marshall Woods Restoration Project, near Missoula. DNRC worked with two “idea leaders” among those landowners to target others in the neighborhood with an offer of financial assistance for fuels reduction, with the requirement for matching contributions waived if more than 10 landowners signed up to participate. As a result, 39 local landowners expressed their support for treatments on private land, and 17 projects were initiated to complete wildfire risk reduction activities. In the end, approximately 70 acres were treated in a neighborhood surrounded on 3-sides by national forest, and landowners there displayed a better understanding of and support for the work on the adjacent national forest.

## Emphasis on Local Government

Local governments have a complex stake in the management of forested lands – principally the management of federal lands. Not only do these entities rely on active restoration and management to provide for the safety, health, well-being, and economic prosperity of their citizens, but they also rely, in part, on shared revenues from federal forest lands to provide public services and infrastructure to local communities. In many cases throughout Montana, local government may not have the expertise or capacity to fully engage on forest management issues as they pertain to their respective communities. Given our experience over the past few years, DNRC will continue to build upon those successes to support local government.

DNRC will be asking the 2019 Legislature to make the Local Government Forest Advisor position permanent to offer ongoing support to local government on issues critical to their communities.

This position will be focused on supporting local government in the following ways:

- providing technical advice to local government officials on USFS projects, Forest Plans, and federal processes and authorities as they pertain to the management of federal forests;
- helping the Coalition of Forest Counties become more effective at using their influence to advocate for their interests;
- developing tools and training for officials to offer constructive input and support for active management on federal forest lands;
- offering financial and technical support to collaborative groups that have local government representation; and
- offering financial and technical support to local governments for involvement in pre- and post-decision engagement on federal forest projects.

DNRC is also working to help improve local government capacity to contribute to the three tenets of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy and to realize the goals and objectives of Community Wildfire Protection Plans. The Fire Adapted Communities tenet of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy represents a strategic priority for the DNRC Fire Protection Program. We are part of the Fire Adapted Community Learning Network and are working collaboratively with both federal and local government partners to create an associated sub-network in Montana with the intent of energizing the fire-adapted community concept in Montana and enhancing our ability to collectively inform and educate the public about how to make their communities fire-adapted.

## Serving Tribal Nations

DNRC wants to better serve Indian Country when it comes to forest health and wildland fire risk in and around tribal communities. Montana is home to 12 tribes on seven reservations, all having diverse forested landscapes within and adjacent to reservation boundaries. At DNRC we respect the tribal sovereignty of the nations and want to better understand their priorities. Our intention moving forward would be to find ways to meaningfully engage each nation to understand their respective priorities for their communities when it comes to forest health and wildland fire risk and find ways to partner with them to address those concerns.

By the end of 2019, the Montana State Forester and staff commit to meeting with interested members of Tribal Councils and natural resource officials from each tribal nation to identify opportunities for partnership surrounding forest health and wildland fire risk issues. Additionally, MFAC will engage with each tribal nation in the development of the Montana Forest Action Plan to formalize identified opportunities into the plan's program of work.



*Timber harvesting operations in fall in Northwest Montana. The state recognizes the importance of wood products industry for both healthy forests and the economy.*

## Intentional Industry Engagement

We need to do a better job making the connection between healthy forests and a vibrant forest products industry. Most Montanans realize the need for more active forest management and restoration to improve forest health, enhance recreational opportunities, improve wildlife habitat, reduce excessive fuel loads, and protect watersheds. To accomplish our mutual objectives, we need people who know how to work in the woods and in wood products facilities, safely, effectively, and with stewardship sensibilities. Montana has a long history of people making their living taking wood from forest to market and creating stand conditions that continue to provide a multitude of benefits to our communities. Without the forest industry workforce, we simply would not be able to get the critical work of forest restoration done. It's therefore incumbent upon us to create conditions in which industry partners can make a productive living and continue to help others understand the critical role they play.

Since 1990, nearly two-thirds of our large sawmills and small wood products facilities have closed<sup>4</sup>. There are a variety of factors that have influenced industry contraction, including the substantial decline in the amount of timber harvested from National Forest System Lands and private lands, and shifting market demands attributed to the great recession, trade relationships and production in other regions of the country. We are proud of the perseverance shown by the remaining facilities and contractors, especially those who continue to invest in adapting operations and seeking new market opportunities. However, we need to pay careful attention to current market conditions and what they mean to Montana's remaining wood products industry. The Montana wood products industry recovery from the 2009 recession has been very slow despite rebounding market conditions out of state. Although new home construction has doubled since the recession, Montana lumber production is up only 20 percent and wood products sales are down 10 to 15 percent<sup>5</sup>. If we are truly serious about managing for resilient forests, then we need to put our partners in the wood products industry to work helping us accomplish the goals and objectives that are important to our communities.

At DNRC, we are creating an Industry Liaison position to place intentional capacity toward tracking, understanding, and addressing issues facing our forest industry. This position will be charged with engaging with industry to identify measurable ways the State of Montana can assist them in overcoming forest industry stability, growth, and retention challenges. This position will complement our Wood Products and Biomass Program which supports market and business developments and innovations for forest products, biomass, and wood energy in Montana.

## What We Have In Common

Watershed and collaborative groups represent our communities' greatest avenues for resolving long-standing conflict over land-management issues by developing proactive, consensus-driven means to achieving mutual objectives across ownership boundaries. Since 1992, Montana watershed groups have been working hard to bring landowners, affected agencies, and communities together to find solutions to and have better coordination over watershed issues facing the state. The Montana Watershed Coordination Council (MWCC) serves as the voice of Montana watershed groups, connecting people and ideas across Big Sky Country and works with state, federal, and private partners to support more than 50 watershed groups throughout Montana to ensure clean, plentiful water and healthy landscapes.

Collaborative groups have been active for much of the past two decades in finding solutions to long-standing issues surrounding the management of National Forest System Lands. In 2006, a group of people from the timber industry, the conservation community, the USFS, and the State of Montana formed the Montana Forest Restoration Committee to carry out some of the initial collaborative work within the state through forest-level groups. Since then, the Montana Forest Collaborative Network (MFCN) was established to assist collaborative groups working on forest and rangeland, conservation and utilization issues. MFCN provides services and information to 22 collaborative groups across the state.

Watershed and collaborative groups have done the hard work over the years to rise above differences and find common solutions to intractable issues. In recognition of this work, DNRC will commit resources on an annual basis to fund workshops, facilitation, training needs, and travel. In addition, DNRC commits to regularly engaging with the Montana Watershed Coordinating Council and the Montana Forest Collaborative Network on current policy issues and advancements to help shape the State of Montana policy platform for forestry issues.

## Prioritizing Policy Engagement

At DNRC, we don't want to just assist with management on the ground, we want to support good policy, analyses, and decisions that make sustainable forest restoration and management possible. While Montana regularly engages with state and local policy, federal policy seems to present the most intractable issues. And because of this, DNRC has assigned resources to engage in multiple efforts at various levels to advance policies and authorities that promote healthy and resilient forested landscapes.

**Western Governors' National Forest and Rangeland Management Initiative:** Montana has provided a leading voice when it comes to federal forest policy. Building upon the successes of the Forests in Focus Initiative, and as chair of the Western Governors' Association (WGA), Governor Bullock led the development of the National Forest and Rangeland Management Initiative to bring together western land management leaders to identify concrete recommendations to increase forest and rangeland health. Through bipartisan leadership from Governors across the West, many of these recommendations have been implemented in recent legislation including the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018 (Omnibus Bill) that offers solutions to long-standing wildfire funding issues, delivers new fuels reduction tools, and provides a fix to GNA that will allow many more acres to be treated under that authority. Montana will continue to advance shared policy goals identified by the Governors by working closely with WGA and the Council of Western State Foresters.

**Forest Plans, Projects, and New Authorities:** DNRC represents the state’s interest in federal forest management planning and on individual projects developed under respective Forest Plans. First and foremost, DNRC advocates for sustainable forest management that promotes forest health, fuels reduction, watershed protection, improved fish and wildlife habitat, and a viable forest and wood products industry. DNRC’s participation during the scoping, draft comment, and objections phases of these plans and projects helps bolster the USFS administrative record, hopefully increasing the likelihood of good management coming to fruition. DNRC will continue to encourage and actively support the use of new authorities granted by the 2014 Farm Bill and the 2018 Omnibus Bill to increase the pace and scale on federal forest lands.

**Post-Decision Support:** The State of Montana and DNRC respect a citizen’s right to challenge its government, but DNRC does not shy away from supporting and defending projects in District Court and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals – particularly those projects that are supported by collaborative groups and local government, and that responsibly utilize new authorities to increase the pace and scale of much needed forest restoration around communities.

## The Smith Shields Example

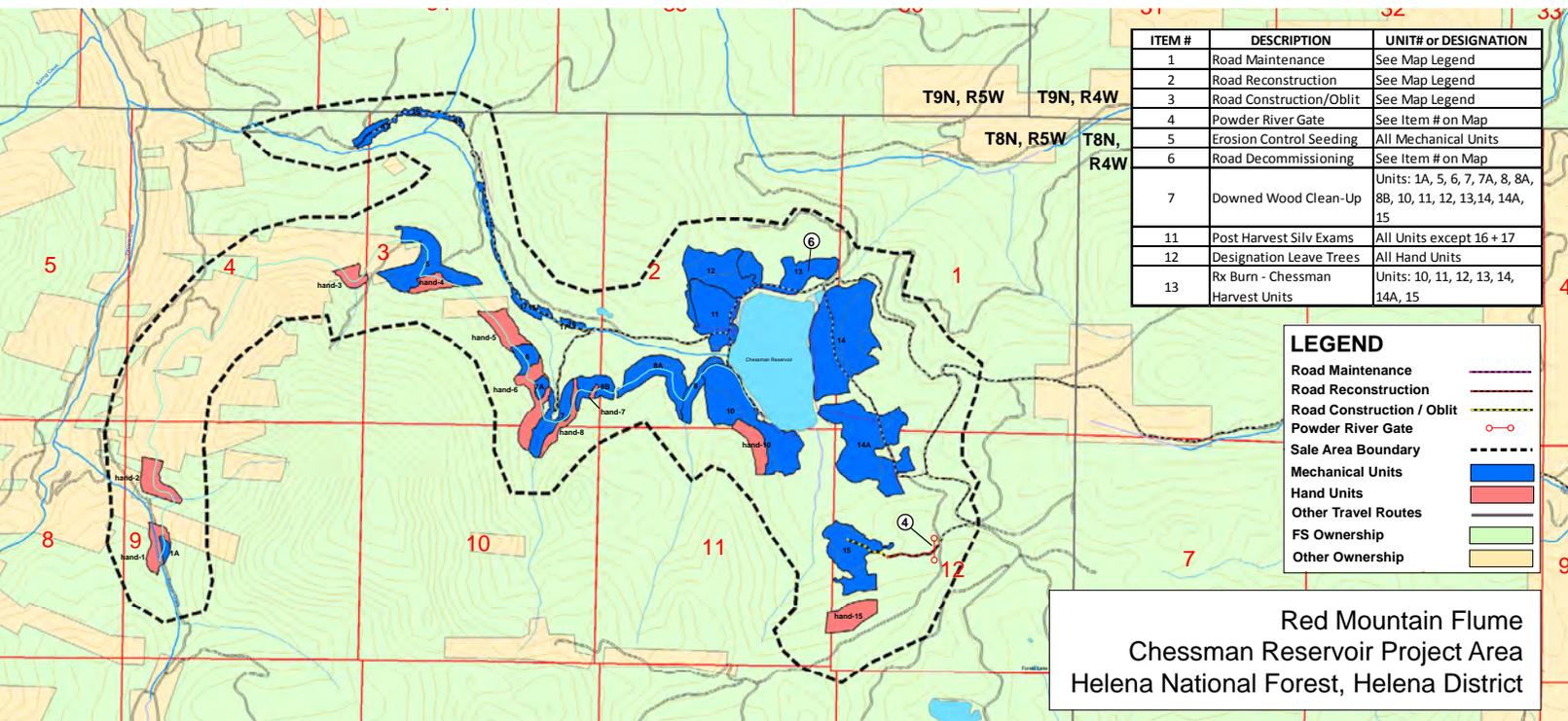
The Smith Shields project was developed under the forest health categorical exclusion authority granted in the 2014 Farm Bill and is designed to significantly reduce fuel loading by treating 1,660 acres all within the wildland urban interface and improve the ingress and egress from the Smith Creek Community. It straddles the Park County - Meagher County line and is strategically located in areas identified by the counties as in need of treatment to protect the health and welfare of their citizens including their volunteer fire fighters. The project is particularly important to the Smith Creek Community which is immediately adjacent to portions of the project. Many of the landowners in Smith Creek have reduced forest fuels on their private property and the work allowed them to be recognized as a Firewise Community. The project has the support of the Custer Gallatin working group and Park and Meagher Counties which have all also supported the project in District Court and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. This relatively small project will remove dead, downed and dying trees in the wildland urban interface. It is exactly the kind of project that needs to be done to foster fire-adapted communities. For all of the reasons listed above, DNRC invested resources in the Smith Shields Project with an Amicus Brief and a declaration from the State Forester and intends to continue this investment in future court proceedings.



*Wildland firefighters and equipment positioned to manage and control a human-caused fire. Almost half of the fires occurring in the state each year are human-caused.*

## Montana Forests in Focus Accomplishments to Date:

- Under the authority granted by the 2014 Farm Bill, Governor Bullock identified five million acres across all seven national forests within the state in need of priority treatment due to threats from insects and disease.
- Investment of over \$2 million of state funds in 25 USFS forest restoration projects directly adjacent to or within priority landscapes, which is bringing these projects online more quickly. All told, the investments are expected to treat more than 300,000 acres and produce 165 million board feet of timber. Investment of over \$5.5 million in more than 34 projects on state, tribal, and private lands to treat approximately 10,000 acres, and produce 22 million board feet and 71,000 tons of pulp logs. Investments in federal, state, and private lands have sustained over 3,000 forest industry jobs.
- The creation of a DNRC - Forest Service Liaison position in 2014 that has proven instrumental in providing clear communication and coordination to support state investments in priority federal projects, to advance new tools under the 2014 Farm Bill, including the Good Neighbor Authority and to ensure state equities are reflected in forest plan revisions.
- The creation of a Local Government Forest Advisor intended to provide assistance to local government officials concerning federal forest projects. This position has helped bring county commissioners and USFS leadership together to improve dialogue and coordination on federal forest planning and management. DNRC has engaged with over 70 local government officials across 34 forested counties to provide them capacity and information on engaging with the federal government on forest management issues of critical importance to their communities.
- Hosted two County Forest Summits to facilitate dialogue between federal, state, and local officials around forest management issues.
- Granting of more than \$150,000 over the last three years to support counties in filing amicus briefs and declarations in support of seven USFS projects, to support collaborative groups that have county commissioner representation, and to hire consultants to facilitate more effective engagement between county commissioners and the USFS.
- Montana was the first state in the nation to implement a stewardship contract on national forest system lands. Helena residents' drinking water comes from the Chessman Reservoir, surrounded by USFS land 6,000 feet above the city, before traveling through a partially wooden flume down to a treatment plant in the valley below. Designed to help protect the Helena water supply, this 490-acre project on the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest was administered by DNRC. Mostly completed in late 2016, this project reduced hazardous fuels on approximately 500 acres of dead and dying forests adjacent to the reservoir. The project involved difficult hand thinning and fuel removal along the length of the water conveyance flume. About four million board feet of wood products were also generated by the project, helping to underwrite the cost of the fuel reduction treatments.



## DNRC – The Binding Agent

According to Montana Code Annotated 76-13,701(5), it is the policy of the State of Montana “to promote the sustainable use of all public forests within the state through sound management and collaboration with local, state, and federal entities.” At DNRC, we take this role very seriously. Montanans depend on us to be the leader on forestry and wildland fire issues within the state – linking all partners together in promoting sustainable management across boundaries. While we may have somewhat different missions than our partners, we have a lot in common and our communities expect us to work together to accomplish our mutual goals.

<sup>1</sup>Freeborn, P. H., W. M. Jolly, and M. A. Cochrane (2016), Impacts of changing fire weather conditions on reconstructed trends in U.S. wildland fire activity from 1979 to 2014, J. Geophys. Res. Biogeosci., 121, doi:10.1002/2016JG003617.

<sup>2</sup>According to the Northern Rockies Coordination Center, from 1998-2007, an average of 22,828 acres burned per year in Montana. From 1998-2007, an average of 349,598 acres burned per year.

<sup>3</sup>American Forest Foundation. 2015. Western Water Threatened by Wildfire: It’s Not Just a Public Land Issue. 27 p. <https://www.forestfoundation.org/western-water-forests-report>.

<sup>4</sup>Morgan, T.A. 2017. Montana Timber-Processing Facilities by Size Class. ppt

<sup>5</sup>Morgan, T.A.; Niccolucci, M.J.; Polzin, P.E. 2018. Montana’s Timber Harvest and Forest Industry Employment Trends: Declining Volumes and Increasing Productivity. Missoula, MT: Bureau of Business and Economic Research.

Front cover photo: A landscape of the Golden Crown Stewardship Initiative, courtesy of the Wide Eyed Traveler.

Back cover photo: Timber harvest operations in the fall in northwest Montana.



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