

Landscape Scale Restoration Project Report



Project Name: Wood River Valley Collaborative Forest Enhancements

Funding Year: 2020

Stakeholders

Forest Service Region: USDA Forest Service - R1

Sponsoring Organization: Idaho Dept. of Lands

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Participating Organizations:

Grantee: Idaho Dept. of Lands

Project Funding

Agreement(s): 20-DG-11010000-021

Project Design

Landscape Scale Restoration Project Report



Project Purpose

The Wood River Valley (WRV) Collaborative Forest Enhancements (CFE) Project is in Blaine County, Idaho (population less than 23,000). WRV is a FAP defined Priority Landscape Area (PLA). WRV CFE restores 50 acres of riparian area to improve water quality and habitat, treats 50 acres of community forest lands to reduce wildfire risk and improve forest health, and plants 800 trees to improve watershed function.

WRV CFE establishes: a community forest collaborative Wood River Community Forest Collaborative (WRCFC) consisting of key stakeholders; completes a regional Tree Canopy Assessment (TCA) to measure ecological and economic benefits of trees to human health, stormwater retention, and air quality; develops 5 forest management plans and enhances outreach and education. Project will use \$300,000 in federal funds to support a highly collaborative investment of federal, state and private financial resources totaling over \$1.4 million.

Resource Objective

Primary Objective

- Improve important forest ecosystems

Secondary Objective(s)

- Maintain or improve water quality and watershed function

Landscape Scale Restoration Project Report



Strategic Issues

The CFE project is in the WRV, a FAP Priority Landscape Area (PLA), and meets several FAP Goals by addressing high priority issues (Threats: forest health, wildfire, development/recreation pressure; and Benefits: wildlife, water quality, air quality), all while helping connect people to forests. Over the past decade the WRV has seen a significant increase in development and recreation pressure, declining forest health, wildfire threat in the interface with communities and impacts to wildlife. All of these impacts pose a threat to the health and safety and economic vitality of one of Idaho's most important regions for outdoor recreation, wildlife habitat and water quality. The WRV is unique in its makeup of large tracts of Federal land (USFS and BLM) that interface with State land and several small communities that directly benefit from the vast resources of the public land (recreation, wildlife, clean air and water), but are also threatened by the issues that plague an unhealthy forest (wildfire, forest health, declining air and water quality and development impacts to wildlife habitat). The WRV CFE Project will address the threats posed in the WRV by gathering critical data to inform collaborative planning that will result in strategic management actions and together have a collective positive impact on forest health, human health and economic stability for several small communities.

GOAL

Gather critical land use and habitat condition data, employ strategic and collaborative planning, introduce strategic forest management treatments to manage wildland fire, forest health and development threats to improve air and water quality and wildlife habitat on state and private lands.

OBJECTIVES

Gather critical geospatial data to inform strategic and effective management actions on the ground DATA COLLECTION

Develop collaborative community forest management plans to guide effective wildland fire, forest health treatments and conservation practices COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

Implement forest management activities by planting approximately 800 trees and treating 100 acres to address highest priority areas of risk and need STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Through a collaborative approach with key stakeholders (public, private, non-profit) provide education and outreach to people within the WRV and key organizations and decision-makers throughout the WRV, Idaho and the West. COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Landscape Scale Restoration Project Report



Collaboration & Partners

Strong interagency and community partnerships in the WRV CFE project will leverage federal investment through effective project delivery, integrated regional planning and increased local investments (public and private). WRCFC partners have been meeting and engaged in development of the WRV CFE project for over 2 years in addition to investing in other high priority community projects focused on addressing FAP Goals and high priority issues, including:

****Collaborative community tree inventory efforts, development of a regional tree selection guide, riparian restoration and water quality goals for the regions waterways.**

****Collaborative development of the WRV CFE project, including municipal funding support for over 70% of the project area for the TCA (\$43,000 leveraged).**

****Cross-collaboration on local wildland fire mitigation projects identified in the Blaine County CWPP ensuring effective project implementation and effective awareness of benefits of these projects (\$240,000 leveraged)**

****Collaboration in the 17,000 acre Bald Mountain Stewardship Project, a high-priority forest health improvement and wildfire resiliency project lead by USFS and NFF. This project is preparing treatment of USFS, BLM, State and private lands directly adjacent to the WRV CFE project in a highly visible recreation area in the viewshed of the WRV. (over \$200,000 leveraged).**

The WRCFC is fully invested in the WRV CFE proposal and poised to use the additional funding resources from the federal investment of the LSR grant program to launch into a bright future of collaboration, that promises:

****Enhanced regional sharing of GIS planning tools, staff and resources**

****A professional & collaborative forest management plan that guides strategic investment of WRV CFE project**

****Partner funding resources to support highest priority FAP Goals and issues, including wildland fire, forest health, air and water quality, all while connecting their communities to the benefits of their forests.**

Landscape Scale Restoration Project Report



Integrated Delivery

The WR PLA (~750 square miles) extends within Blaine County from north of Ketchum to south of Bellevue, Idaho, and is a valuable tourist destination and economic center for Idaho. The PLA encompasses roughly 75% of Blaine County and includes portions of the Big and Little Wood Rivers, and Silver Creek, which are major trout fishing destinations vital to the area's economy. WR PLA includes significant USFS and BLM land, directly adjacent to communities. These communities and adjacent public and private lands are faced with significant areas of high wildland fire risk and a forest that is faced with significant increases in insect and disease over the last decade.

WRV CFE project forest management activities focus on ~50 square miles of the WR, primarily within and adjacent to the four communities. Strategic investments will occur adjacent to public land, and will be collaboratively derived with Federal and State land managers. WRCFC partners (public, private and non-profit) are engaged in collaborative planning and management of not only the project area, but also the adjacent public lands. This collaborative approach prioritizes areas of highest risk and opportunity through partnerships and data-driven planning tools (WRCFC). The resultant data and management plans and tools provide a significant return on investment by leveraging additional public and private financial resources and planning efforts to address FAP-defined threats throughout the entire PLA.

Influence on Positive Change

WRV is a classic example of a high-value recreation destination in the West that is faced with very real and important issues surrounding health of their adjacent State and Federal forest lands and how that interfaces with their riparian forests and communities. Action is needed now to preserve and enhance the environment and human health in this important region in Idaho. The growing population and declining health of the region's forest creates an urgent need for strategic investment in forest management to enhance forest health, reduce wildfire risk and enhance air/water quality and wildlife habitat. In addition to the clear need for forest health improvements, collaboration and collective community education is critical to ensure community members are connected to the value of their forests and clearly understand the need for active forest management.

The WRV CFE and its support for the growth of the WRCFC is a visionary and forward-looking partnership that builds on decades of trust and innovation among community leaders to support strategic investment in forest resources for years into the future. Public, private and non-profit partners are invested in this project, not only as exhibited by the significant leverage of funds, but also in the evidence of their enthusiasm to use the strategic management tools and educational resources to build a culture of collaboration and bring in vast financial resources to support future investment in forest health improvements over the next decade. Some of the exciting cross collaborations include: Shared GIS resources among staff, communities and agencies; collective leverage of strategic funding and treatments for: riparian restoration, wildland fire planning, forest health planning and wildlife habitat enhancements; and sharing of success stories and lessons learned. The WRCFC is poised to catalyze long-term sustainable forest management in the WRV, while developing a model of collaboration for similar small communities across the West.

Landscape Scale Restoration Project Report



Accomplishments

Deliverables

*WR TCA Baseline GIS Data (raster and feature) describes extent, structure (deciduous/coniferous) and forest attributes: 12 class land cover, classified tree canopy, planting locations, city, land use, census tract and parcel canopy percent

*Dynamic geospatial tools analyze cost/benefit of management for fire mitigation, forest health, water quality, wildlife habitat

*5 Community forest management plans:

- Canopy cover and forest treatment goals for land uses including residential, commercial and open space
- Targets established for water and air quality improvement from tree canopy increase
- Strategic planting of 800 trees focused on water (riparian) and air (street) quality improvement, wildlife habitat and forest health
- Attainable targets for fire mitigation and forest health, in collaboration with goals of adjacent landowners
- 100 acres forest health treatment & riparian restoration
- Time-bound summary results distributed at 4 facilitated workshops with government leadership, civic groups and partner agencies and distributed through partner networks

Accomplishments to Date

2021: MOU executed between IDL and cooperator

Wood River Valley Tree Canopy Assessment & Analysis Report completed

2022: Initial drafting of 4 Community Forest Management Plans

2023: Partner and cooperator meetings. Development/drafting of Community Forest Management Plans (Blaine County, Ketchum, Sun Valley, and South Valley - Hailey/Bellevue)

2024: 5 community plans complete

Quantities to Date

- Stewardship / Forest Management Planning - 10,000 Acres under new forest management plans

Deliverables in Progress

2021: initial partner meeting

2022: Four Community Forest Management Plans, informed by stakeholder involvement, are in the process of being developed, with emphasis being placed on: urban and community forestry, riparian forest management, and improving forest health within the communities.

2023: Community Forest Management Plans, drafted working towards finalization of plans.

2024: Implementation of completed plan projects in communities, anticipate 7-11 projects to be completed - By agreement the \$300,000 originally awarded to the FY20 ID/CB Seed Orchard project was reallocated to this project.

Landscape Scale Restoration Project Report



Challenges

2021: COVID proved to be a significant hurdle from MOU development to partner engagement.

2022: changes in IDL caused a small delay in the plans development.

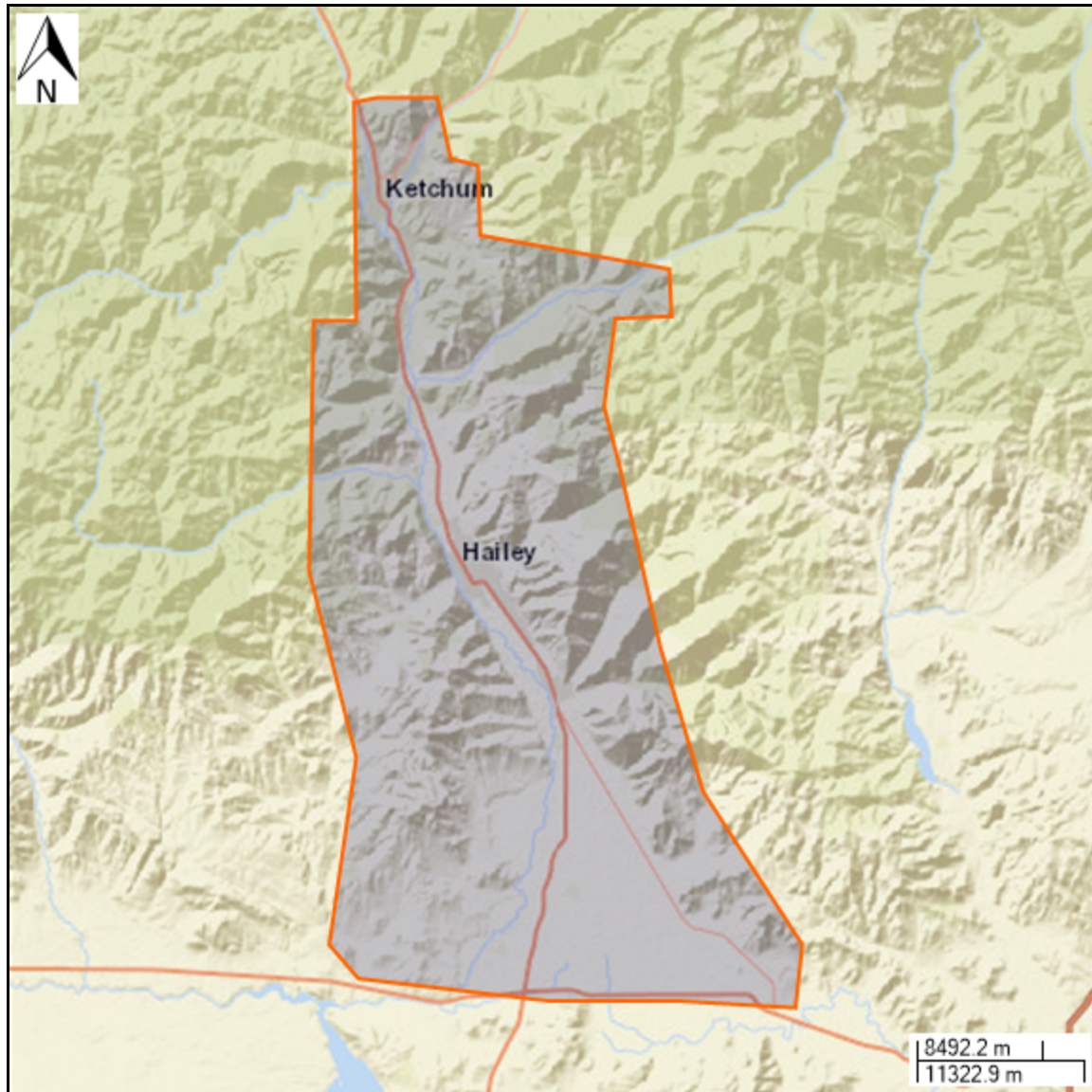
2023: Implementation of plans will be challenging due to the amount of time it is taking to finalize the plans.

2024: With funds being added from Seed Orchard project and a shortened time to implement there is stressors on systems that are coming to bear in getting work completed before seasonal changes make implementation impractical.

Landscape Scale Restoration Project Report



Impact Area



Information Last Updated
11/14/2024