

Landscape Scale Restoration Project Report



Project Name: Silver Valley Ecological Restoration and Economic Development

Funding Year: 2009

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): 10-DG-11010000-010

Funding Sources

Project Design

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Project Purpose

The Silver Valley Ecological Restoration and Development Project is a multi-agency and landowner effort to improve forest health, expand wildfire protection zones and increase local workforce capacity.

The project area is located along a 40-mile section of Interstate 90 in northern Idaho and includes 7 cities and several towns. Within this area, several communities were devastated by the 1910 wildfire. Up until about 30 years ago, mining, smelting, and timber harvest were mainstays of the area's economy. The closure of many mines and smelter, the declaration of a Super Fund site around the former smelter, and the decrease in timber harvest from nearby national forests has led local elected officials to search for a new economic foundation. This project supports the local collaborative effort to address forest health issues and wildfire threats and supports biomass utilization and economic development.

This project will:

- 1) Unite organizations to build economies with USFS stewardship contracts. Included in this part of the project will be the use of a professional facilitator to bring together local working groups and partners to develop a collaborative community forest resource coalition focused on building broad stakeholder consensus to improve forest health and ensure a sustainable supply of biomass from federal forests.
- 2) Stimulate new business opportunities for logging operators and entrepreneurs. A field demonstration will be sponsored to examine economically feasible biomass delivery methods. This model will be both replicable and last beyond the life of this project.
- 3) Provide educational opportunities depicting benefits of forest health improvement and WUI activities. Educational activities will include signage, information posted on websites and workshops for educators through the Project Learning Tree program to increase knowledge of forest growth on contaminated soils.

National Themes & Outcomes

Conserving and Managing Working Forest Landscapes

Protect Forests from Threats

Enhance Public Benefits from Private Forests

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Strategic Issues

This project ties to larger strategic issues identified in Idaho's Forest Action Plan that includes protecting communities and ecosystems from the insects, disease and the threat of wildfire, and, ensuring forest-based markets are vibrant and sustainable.

Eighty-seven percent of Shoshone County's land area is forested, most of this federally owned. Managing federal lands will enable the county to address forest health and wildfire threats, high unemployment and loss of revenue from federal forestlands.

Collaboration & Partners

Shoshone County is the primary partner in this project. Guided by Sustainable Northwest, the county engaged members from the US Forest Service, Idaho Department of Lands, Bureau of Land Management, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, Idaho Fish and Game, forest industries, soil conservation districts, resource conservation districts, consultants, environmental groups, economic development, legislative representatives and concerned citizens to participate in a collaborative process to reduce forest resource threats. In addition, the University of Idaho and Idaho Forest Owners Association will provide education and outreach related to forest health improvement and biomass utilization.

Accomplishments

Deliverables

Shoshone County will establish a collaborative group focused on improving forest health, reducing wildfire threats and rebuilding a forest economy. The group will advise federal, state and private partners on management of forestlands, utilization of forest resources and opportunities to strengthen local communities. Outcomes include viable forest management projects that restore forest health, protect communities from harm and improve local economies.

Information and education forums will be provided to forest landowners and organizations to encourage long-term sustainable forest management and biomass utilization. Methods will include workshops, field trips and an interpretive site showing benefits of forest health improvement and hazard fuel reduction treatments. The Department of Lands will work with partners to host a field demonstration highlighting biomass delivery methods.

Accomplishments to Date

The Idaho Department of Lands awarded funds to Shoshone County to support facilitation of the Shoshone Forest Health Collaborative (SFHC), create a demonstration site displaying hazard fuel and forest improvement practices, and develop a Forest Products Campus Feasibility Study.

Collaborative Outcomes

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September 2010, thirty-four stakeholders signed a Declaration of Commitment to advance the mission of the SFHC. To guide group processes, the SFHC developed an Operations Manual. Established are two working groups: the forest health group focuses on identifying and developing projects to promote forest health and reduce wildfire threats; and, the biomass-working group focuses on economic development and biomass utilization.

Working with federal, state and local organizations, the forest health group identified eight potential projects that will reduce wildfire threats and improve forest health, water quality and economic benefits of the forest. The first project has been submitted which will reduce fire threats to City of Mullan and Lucky Friday Mine infrastructure.

The biomass-working group utilized funds from The US Department of Energy and USFS to quantify biomass supply from private lands within the project area. This inventory allowed the SFHC to conduct a business study titled Feasibility Study: Shoshone County Forest Products Campus. The results of the study support the viability of a Forest Products Campus to increase employment opportunities and utilize woody biomass by creating a variety of value-added products that can be produced at a single site. In addition, a survey determining landowner attitudes toward biomass utilization was conducted. Survey results indicate over 90% of forest landowners within Shoshone County favor building a biomass utilization facility and are willing to thin their trees.

Education Outcomes

In cooperation with IDL and USFS, the UI Extension developed, organized and held a Small-Scale Energy from Forest Biomass workshop. Experts presented to over 60 participants and provided information on small-scale technologies to generate energy from local sources of forest biomass. In addition, 19 landowners attended a UI Forestry Extension workshop and learned to thin and prune trees.

A Cooperative Agreement was developed with the Idaho Forest Owners Association to host a Shoshone County Forest Landowner Field Day. Experts presented to over 150 forest landowners and provided information on forest stewardship planning, forest health improvement, hazard fuel reduction, regulations and biomass utilization.

Shoshone County, through an agreement with IDL, developed a demonstration site along the Shoshone Medical Center Wellness Trail. To improve forest health and reduce fire risk, contractors thinned five acres surrounding Kellogg High School and Shoshone Medical Center's wellness hiking trail. Kellogg High School English, graphic arts and shop students developed three interpretive signs explaining the forest's history and improvement practices. Shoshone County installed the signs.

At the end of 2012, County management of the SFHC was transferred to the Silver Valley Economic Development Corporation.

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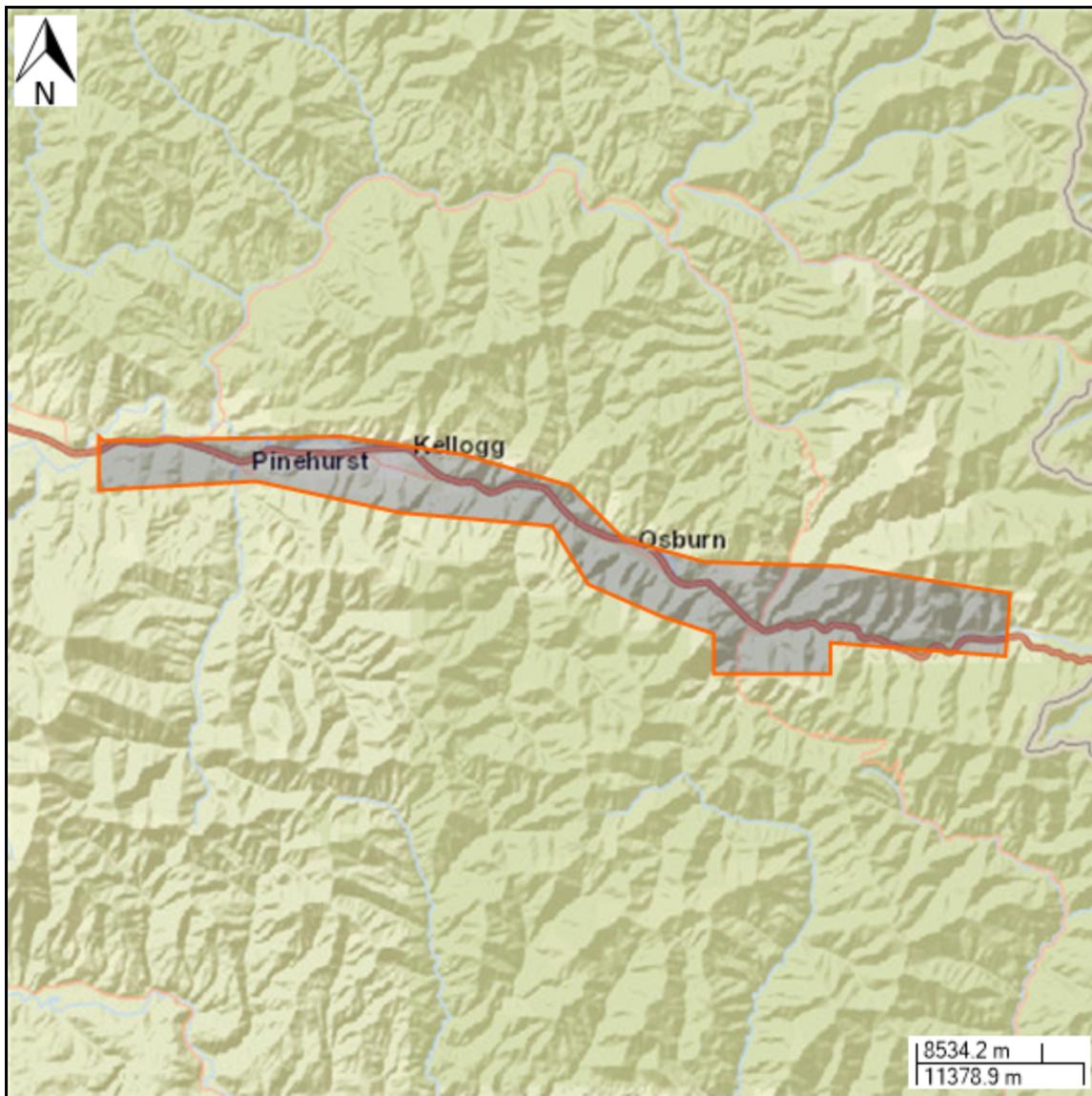
Deliverables in Progress

This project is complete.

Challenges

None

Impact Area



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Information Last Updated
3/31/2015

