



State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet Alaska 2025



Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2024 Final
Community Forests and Open Space	\$0
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management	\$546,690
Forest Legacy	\$0
Forest Stewardship	\$252,052
Landscape Scale Restoration	\$0
State Fire Assistance	\$1,233,990
Urban and Community Forestry	\$364,864
Volunteer Fire Assistance	\$261,550
Total	\$2,659,146

NOTE: This funding is for all entities within the state, not just the State Forester's office.

Program Goals

- Support forest science and new technology and methods to better understand and manage Alaska's forests
- Increase cost-effectiveness through the use of partnerships in delivery.
- Increase values through sustained productivity of urban and rural forests.
- Utilize voluntary and non-regulatory approaches.
- Obtain better forest and fire related information
- Increase fire and forest management capacity
- Educate and involve people regarding forest threats, benefits, and opportunities

Key Issues

- Wildland fire continues to present significant threat to Alaskan forests, communities, and infrastructure, particularly surrounding the WUI. Spruce beetle has magnified this threat in South-central Alaska by increasing the mortality rate causing available dead and downed trees to pose substantial risk. The Division has made significant investments to monitor and educate the public regarding these issues.
- Climate change-related forest health problems have already been documented in Alaska (i.e., spruce beetle outbreaks, yellow-cedar decline, and record wildfire seasons). More applied research on climate change is needed so forest managers can develop strategies to help Alaskans adapt and prepare.
- A spruce beetle outbreak occurring in Southcentral Alaska has affected over 2.2 million acres since 2016. The outbreak has impacted the Matanuska-Susitna, Kenai Peninsula, and Denali Boroughs, as well as the Municipality of Anchorage. The resulting multitude of dead trees on the landscape is affecting infrastructure, recreation, tourism, public safety, and fire behavior. Mitigation efforts include hazard tree removals and hazard fuels reduction in high priority areas.
- Invasive and exotic species are a growing threat to Alaska's forested ecosystems and many invasive species are established in the state. Partnerships increase our ability to detect and respond to new infestations. Collaborative partnerships and grant programs focus on efforts to remove invasive chokecherry trees, *Prunus padus* and *Prunus virginiana*, as well as to monitor the state for invasive forest insects and manage those invasive species already established.
- As communities expand so does the need to manage their natural resources. However, Alaska communities lack public and private sector arborists and urban foresters to manage public trees and forests. Providing technical and financial assistance helps communities maximize the environmental,

social, and economic benefits of trees, including clean air and water, stormwater treatment, enhanced aesthetics and property values, and habitat for wildlife.

Forest Facts and Accomplishments

Selected Facts	Value	FY 2024 Accomplishments	Value
Population	733,391	Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	163
Acres of Forest Land	128,735,000	Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	1,302,260
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	11,050,267	Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans	31,341
Number of NIPF Landowners	42,062	Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	38
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	88,700,000	State Fire Communities Assisted	85
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	1,250,452	Coop Forest Health Acres Protected	200
Number of Rural Fire Departments	242	Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	0
Cities and Towns	149	Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	8
Forest Based Employment	2,000	Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	375,370
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	5	Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	2,506
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	67,992,200		

Program Highlights

Community Wildfire Defense Grants

The state has chosen to be an opt-in state for the CWDG program. Due to our efforts, we have increased the amount of awards and dollars funded to the state for CWDG projects. In CY24, Homer Electric Association received a \$2.6 million dollar grant to conduct right of way clearing along power lines covering a total of 430 miles of fuels reduction. DOF was awarded \$500K to contract the writing of two CWPP's for the rural communities of Tok and Delta. In addition, there were three awards granted to Tribes for development of CWPP's.

Congressionally Designated Funding

DOF received \$3.5 million for SFAP activities and split between our UAS program, technology upgrades, state park fuels reduction, and prevention and education projects.

Conservation Education

Project Learning Tree (PLT), an initiative of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), provides natural resource and conservation education to enhance understanding of forests. The Forest Stewardship Program began supporting PLT in 2019, which led to the hiring of a state PLT Coordinator through a partnership with the Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). Continued funding in 2024 from the Alaska Forest Stewardship Program, the Inflation Reduction Act, and other sources expanded the program across Alaska.

In 2024, PLT reached over 100 educators and numerous community members, students, and natural resource professionals through workshops, events, and direct student engagement. AK PLT hosted facilitator training, certifying educators, camp directors, and foresters to lead workshops in their communities. Teachers earned continuing education credits through in-person workshops and online classes developed with partner organizations. PLT also extended to Haines, Klukwan, and Skagway schools, where teachers explored watershed education from Indigenous perspectives. This initiative was supported by a U.S. EPA grant in partnership with the Takshanuk Watershed Council.

With funding from a Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) grant, AK PLT emphasizes fire education. In 2024, it participated in the grand opening of the Yankovich Wildfire Interpretive Trail, offering fire education

resources. The program also taught "Chugach Forest Explorers" field studies for 5th graders and facilitated a workshop for teachers.

Through strong partnerships with natural resource professionals, educators, and communities, AK PLT continues to bring forest-related learning across the state, promoting environmental education and fostering a deeper connection to Alaska's natural resources.

Cooperative Fire Protection

The Alaska Division of Forestry & Fire Protection (DOF) protects the majority of the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) and road-accessible land in the state, roughly 40% of forested lands. The USFS provides DOF assistance through State Fire Capacity (SFC) and Volunteer Fire Capacity (VFC). Funds were allocated to help hire, train, and equip around 1,500 firefighters for statewide and national deployments, allowing us to train up to and meet national response level standards. SFC funds fire prevention/education programs, and fire management focusing on partnerships and interagency coordination and cooperation. Ongoing projects from previous WUI awards are continuing the goal of educating residents of WUI dangers and creating public education wildland fire curricula. Statewide, SFC program dollars funded prevention/education programs for schools, civic groups, youth organizations, etc. administered by DOF prevention and outreach education staff. DOF updated Community Wildfire Protection Plans, conducted consultations and/or fire risk assessments, and conducted follow-up home inspections. VFC funds are used to increase wildland firefighting safety, improve firefighting capabilities of rural fire departments, and enhance protection in the WUI. Addressing the needs of local VFD's allows us to ensure the response level and service to socially disadvantaged areas are adequate in the event of a wildland fire. VFC funds provided \$306,292 directly to 33 rural fire departments, serving 89 rural communities. 708 volunteer firefighters received training from DOF in equipment use and wildland fire response. The Federal Excess Property Program (FEPP) and Firefighter Property Program (FFP) continues to provide excess property toward the DOF's efforts in fire suppression statewide. The FEPP/FFP program has enabled the re-utilization of Federal surplus to the tune of over \$3 million through the FEPP program and over \$2 million through FFP.

Disaster Relief Response

Much of this funding is directed towards increasing qualification for DOF and local government staff. During the CY of 24 DOF was able to send highly qualified staff to assist in disaster response both in state and out of state. Events included the North Carolina wildfire suppression and forest management operations during the month of November. DOF was active during the western Alaska winter storms in October assisting with dewatering operations, home clean up, debris removal, and other recovery efforts. Crews also assisted in clearing roads of fallen trees during the Fairbanks winter storm in early 2024.

Economic Action

Lumber markets have been volatile in recent years and in 2022 wood prices, on average, increased the price of a single-family home by \$36,000 nationwide. The volatility of the market mixed with recent supply chain issues have made home construction difficult in Alaska particularly off the road system. Despite high demand for locally sourced dimensional lumber, Alaskan sawmills often cannot sell construction materials for housing. Building codes require lumber to be quality graded and stamped, and Alaska sawmill operators often do not have the financial resources to pay for lumber grading. Most of the wood used for construction in Alaska is sourced from the Lower 48 or Canada. Following the passage of SB87/HB93 (Local Use Lumber Grading), the Division of Forestry & Fire Protection established a working relationship with the University of Alaska Fairbanks – Cooperative Extension Service (UAF-CES) through a Reimbursable Services Agreement (RSA). That agreement allowed DOF to pass state general funds to the university for the implementation of the Alaska Lumber Grading program. The University hired a Forest Products Specialist to administer the program and provide the training. The Forest Products Specialist finalized the training handbook and developed an Alaska Lumber Grading website (<https://www.uaf.edu/ces/sustainable-resources/lumber/>). In 2024, 109 individuals have been trained and certified to visually grade the lumber they have produced through this program. Classes have been provided in Klawock, Sitka, Haines, Palmer, Soldotna, Aniak, and two in Fairbanks.

Forest Health Protection

The Alaska Division of Forestry & Fire Protection Forest Health Program (DOF FH) provides a wide range of assistance to forest landowners, resource managers, and others, and is a primary source of forest health expertise in the state. The program focuses on monitoring native and invasive forest pests, pest

management, technology development, technical assistance, and outreach. DOF FH staff provided forest health outreach or assistance to around 320 individuals in 2024. Outreach events and requests for forest health information generally fluctuate year to year relative to the populations of major forest pests. The dominant outreach topic continues to be spruce beetle.

In a typical year, the main way Alaska's forests are monitored is through cooperative DOF FH and USDA Forest Service Forest Health Protection (FHP) aerial pest detection surveys. In 2024, aerial surveyors from DOF and FHP surveyed roughly 20 million acres and mapped over 446,000 acres with forest insect, disease, or abiotic damage. Spruce beetle activity was down considerably from previous years, with only about 35,000 impacted acres mapped. Roughly 92% of these acres were associated with the ongoing spruce beetle outbreak in Southcentral, which has now impacted over 2.25 million cumulative acres since its initial detection in 2016. In 2024, DOF FH was involved in numerous spruce beetle-related field projects including pheromone-based tree protection trials, spruce beetle overwinter mortality assessments, and decay assessments in beetle-killed trees. These efforts involved FHP, USFS Research, and other DOF programs.

The DOF FH-administered Western Bark Beetle Initiative (WBBI) cost-share program awardees continued their bark beetle prevention, suppression, and restoration efforts. An estimated 22.5 acres of bark beetle mitigation or restoration treatments were completed in 2024 through the Western Bark Beetle Initiative.

Forest Health Protection – Invasive Plants

The FHP invasive plant program provided IIJA project funding for the 3rd consecutive year and collaborated with SP&TF Urban and Community Forestry to support the momentum that non-profits, tribes, and local governments across the state have built. The \$536,000 awarded in 2024 is important to successful implementation of invasive plant work on non-federal lands. In FY24, Soil and Water Conservation Districts bolstered their Weed-Free Forage and Gravel programs and their ability to detect and respond to new infestations; Municipalities created or expanded invasive plant management plans; the Copper River Watershed Project successfully awarded mini-grant funding, and citizen science and outreach events are reaching the public as invasive plant reports jumped. These same funding sources supported outreach, education and technical support through the university system: the Cooperative Extension Service office fielded 1,129 requests for technical assistance, reached 2,213 individuals through presentations and events, coordinated the Alaska Invasive Species Partnership annual workshop, and actively engaged in the Alaska Community Forest Council with an eye toward insect and pathogen introductions and supporting control of *Prunus padus* and *Prunus virginiana*; the University of Alaska Anchorage engaged students in survey and inventory of *Prunus* spp. within 22 Municipality of Anchorage public parks.

Forest Legacy

The Forest Legacy Program continued to evaluate ways in which the program can contribute to the Division of Forestry & Fire Protection's mission. No new Forest Legacy Program projects were proposed in 2024 and baseline monitoring of previous projects continued. Alaska participated in tri-state FLP meetings and training sessions in 2024. In 2025, the Forest Stewardship Committee will work on an updated Assessment of Need for the Forest Legacy Program as part of the 5-year State Forest Action Plan review process.

Forest Stewardship

The Forest Stewardship Program, delivered by the Alaska Division of Forestry & Fire Protection, uses funding from the USFS to provide technical forestry assistance to landowners in Alaska. The program aims to enhance the economic and environmental benefits of forest lands, reduce fire risks in the wildland-urban interface, support energy independence in remote communities through bioenergy, and restore degraded or damaged forests. Forest Stewardship Plans may also qualify landowners for funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for implementing management practices.

The program serves both private individual landowners and Alaska Native corporations, the largest landowners in the state. In FY2024, 3 individual landowners received plans for 177 acres. Staffing challenges contributed to lower outreach numbers, but with the addition of 3 new staff members since June 2024 and another expected in April 2025, the program is positioned to reach a significantly higher number of landowners in FY2025.

Since 1992, the program has supported the sustainable management of over 7.8 million acres of forest land in AK. In 2024, the program administered wildfire defensible space sub-grants through the CWSF program, resulting in 15 home safety improvements (including spruce thinning and removal) and 15 home wildfire defensible space assessments. These grants enable Stewardship foresters to expand outreach to homeowners, focusing on wildfire prevention through forest management. Connecting landowners with NRCS cost-share programs provides additional funding opportunities for forest management practices, and this partnership is expected to grow in 2025.

Currently, Forest Stewardship Plans for four Alaska Native corporations are in progress, covering 1,336,078 acres. An additional 920,000 acres of Native land are undergoing stewardship plan development, with initiation expected by 2026. These large landscape plans typically take 1-3 years to complete.

Improving Forest Landowner Education

In 2024, work began on a project to develop a series of video modules aligned with segments of Forest Stewardship Plans and the Division of Forestry's Stewardship Self-Study Guide. These professionally produced resources, including the video modules and revised Self-Study Guide, will support DOF staff in educating the public about forest management techniques that reduce wildfire risk and improve forest health and economic value. Topics will cover thinning and managing forests for wildfire defensible space in the wildland-urban interface (WUI), proper pruning techniques, and tree planting. The video library is expected to be published in the fall of 2025.

Increasing Alaska Native Seed Supply

In response to increased impacts from spruce beetle outbreaks in Alaskan communities over the last decade, the Forest Stewardship Program is emphasizing program support of reforestation on private forest land in the wildland-urban interface. 2024 was the second of a 5-year project to increase State of Alaska supply of seed for native tree species. Birch seed was collected from seed zones in the Fairbanks North Star Borough. This seed has been processed and is now in cold storage at the Alaska Division of Agriculture Plant Materials Center. 2024 seed collection was funded by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) to complement an upcoming IIJA-funded program to distribute seedlings to landowners.

Landowner Assistance

Non-industrial private forest landowners across Alaska received technical forestry assistance, including property visits from foresters, telephone consultations, website resources, and cost-share grant opportunities aimed at improving forest health and reducing wildfire risk. Landowners in the Fairbanks North Star, Matanuska-Susitna, and Kenai Peninsula Boroughs were provided with Firewise defensible space home assessments by Stewardship foresters. Forest health program staff also assisted landowners with concerns about forest health, offering guidance to help them make informed management decisions to promote resilient forests.

Landscape Scale Restoration

The Kuskokwim Corporation continued work on their Tribal Landscape Scale Restoration project, completing timber harvester training in Red Devil and layout of the first harvest unit. The Kuskokwim Corporation's work will include forest health monitoring and reforestation, forest inventory analyses for sustainable harvest, protecting subsistence resources, mitigating fire and insect damage, and investing in local workforce training and jobs. Kenaitze Indian Community began planning their Tribal Landscape Scale Restoration project, which will mitigate spruce beetle impacts, reduce fuels, and provide firewood to elders.

Supporting Private Landowner Reforestation

In response to the growing impact of spruce beetle outbreaks on Alaskan communities over the past decade, the Forest Stewardship Program is prioritizing reforestation support on private forest land in the wildland-urban interface. 2024 marked the first year of a multi-year initiative to provide native spruce seedlings to private landowners in the Kenai Peninsula, South-Central, and Interior Regions. A total of 19,100 white spruce seedlings were distributed, strengthening reforestation efforts and promoting the long-term health of Alaska's forests for future generations.

To support this project, a nursery in Canada was contracted to grow the seedlings using regionally specific Alaskan seed stock. The seedlings were then shipped back to Alaska for distribution. Although the State of Alaska does not have a nursery capable of producing large quantities of tree seedlings, it maintains a seed cache in a walk-in freezer at the Division of Agriculture's Plant Materials Center (PMC), where periodic germination testing is conducted by agronomists. Seed lots are collected statewide, with the appropriate seed source selected for each planting location. This capacity to collect, process, and store seed statewide ensures the highest possible seed viability for reforestation projects.

Urban and Community Forestry

The mission of the Alaska Community Forestry Program (CFP) is to help communities build effective, self-sustaining community forestry programs with strong local support. CFP is the only agency in Alaska that exists to provide training, technical assistance, and financial support to communities with the goal of developing and supporting local community forestry programs. In 2024, CFP staff provided grants, technical assistance and/or training to local governments, agencies, organizations, businesses, and individuals in 28 communities. CFP awarded over \$400,000 in pass through grant funding for community forestry projects across the state. Project goals included invasive tree control, streambank restoration, and phytoremediation. CFP provided training and continuing education opportunities for tree industry workers and the public. In cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service and University of Alaska Cooperative Extension Service, CFP hosted an Alaska Forest Insect and Disease Workshop in Anchorage. Staff presented a webinar to potential grant applicants that discussed available and upcoming CFP grant opportunities and provided guidance on the CFP grant application process as well as technical assistance for grant proposals. Staff attended a Wildland Fire Risk Reduction Qualification Train-the-Trainer course offered by the Pacific Northwest Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture. This course was the first step towards being able to offer training and testing for the qualification in Alaska. CFP continued efforts to increase public awareness regarding invasive chokecherries and funded regional radio PSA's voiced by prominent community members throughout the state. The advertisements aired a total of 13,649 times and were valued at \$244,274. The Arbor Day Foundation recognized seven Alaska communities, three military bases, three utilities, two universities, and one K-12 school for their efforts to protect and enhance community forests.

Urban and Community Forestry FY24 Investments

Project implementation is underway from new investments to four grantees plus the Alaska Division of Forestry & Fire Protection. Metlakatla Indian Community is expanding a community food forest on Annette Islands Reserve that will enhance their existing forestry program and increase food forest opportunities. Alaska Village Initiatives is providing community forestry subawards to villages and rural communities. The Anchorage Park Foundation, in partnership with the Municipality of Anchorage, is planting trees for enhanced tree canopy coverage, conducting riparian area restoration, managing forested areas devastated by spruce beetle, and controlling invasive species. RurAL CAP is providing subawards to communities to establish or expand community orchards, gardens and food forests.

Wood Innovation Programs

\$2.6 million was granted to partners throughout the state to implement wood innovation programming for various projects in 2024. An additional \$5.9 million was granted to partners to support the implementation of the temporary bridge program across the state.

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