



State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet Colorado 2025



Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2024 Final
Community Forests and Open Space	\$0
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management	\$831,334
Forest Legacy	\$75,500
Forest Stewardship	\$476,693
Landscape Scale Restoration	\$0
State Fire Assistance	\$3,012,166
Urban and Community Forestry	\$653,034
Volunteer Fire Assistance	\$676,440
Total	\$5,725,167

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

The mission of the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) is to achieve stewardship of Colorado's diverse forest environments for the benefit of present and future generations.

Cooperative programs are administered and implemented through a partnership between the State of Colorado, USDA Forest Service and many other private and government entities. These programs promote the health, protection and productivity of Colorado's forestlands and rural economies, emphasizing reduction of risk to people, property and resources, management for timber and other forest products, wildlife, water resources, and conservation practices.

Program Goals

- Maintain and improve the health of Colorado's urban and rural forests and related economies
- Increase cost effectiveness and efficiencies through the use of partnerships in delivery
- Increase values through sustained productivity of forests
- Deliver programs that are voluntary using non-regulatory approaches

Key Issues

- Fragmentation of forest landscapes
- Loss of forest products manufacturing capacity
- Unprecedented levels of forest insect and disease activity
- Threat of wildfire in the wildland-urban interface
- Threat of wildfire outside the wildland-urban interface
- Community forests at risk to invasive insects and disease
- Risk of diminished forest resiliency and adaptability due to changing conditions
- Declining forest watershed health
- Declining riparian ecosystems
- Air quality issues associated with forest conditions

Forest Facts and Accomplishments

Selected Facts	Value	FY 2024 Accomplishments	Value
Population	5,773,714	Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	1,750
Acres of Forest Land	22,758,929	Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	3,532
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	4,763,563	Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans	2,974
Number of NIPF Landowners	52,614	Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	100
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	24,240,000	State Fire Communities Assisted	235
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	41,432,979	Coop Forest Health Acres Protected	100
Number of Rural Fire Departments	424	Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	0
Cities and Towns	272	Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	102
Forest Based Employment	4,000	Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	3,916,399
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	0	Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	13,752
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	36,254,000		

Program Highlights

Colorado Forest Action Plan

The CSFS completed the Colorado Forest Action Plan (CFAP) in 2020. Since that time, data, maps, and reports are hosted in the Forest Action Plan web application of the Colorado Forest Atlas (CFA). The CFA had 4,044 unique users in 2024, based on Google Analytics. Additionally, the CSFS supported 691 unique external user requests regarding the data in 2024. Both the CSFS and our partners continue to use the composite priority map to evaluate optimal landscapes for achieving improved forest conditions, watershed protection and reduction in wildfire risk to communities. Goals, strategies and approaches from the CFAP are incorporated into forest management plans by foresters, used to evaluate state grant applications such as the Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation grant that is administered by the CSFS, and used to develop an internal outcome-based framework for work planning. The CFAP is guiding the development of the CSFS Forest Monitoring and Forest Health programs at the CSFS. In 2024, the CFAP informed other statewide prioritization and planning efforts including the Colorado Carbon Management Roadmap. Additionally, a major need identified in the CFAP was a forest carbon accounting framework for the state. In 2024, this framework was completed in partnership with CalFire and the USFS PNWRS.

Conservation Education

The CSFS partners with the Colorado Alliance of Environmental Education (CAEE) to coordinate the Colorado Project Learning Tree (PLT) program. This program uses trees and forests as windows on the world to teach young learners how to think, not what to think, about complex environmental issues. In 2024, 17 facilitators from across the state volunteered 500 hours in training. These facilitators and PLT staff offered professional development to 467 educators. These educators come from a variety of formal classroom teaching, non-formal education, and natural resource professional backgrounds and reach thousands of youth with important forest literacy education. PLT trainings were offered in partnership with six colleges/universities, three outdoor education centers, two high schools, the Society of American Foresters Alpha chapter, CAEE Annual professional development conference, Pueblo Boys and Girls Club, Colorado Science Teacher's Conference, and CAEE Southeast Regional Council. CSFS staff also conducted internal PLT trainings to increase forester tools for conservation ed. In 2024 Colorado PLT received a grant from the Sustainable Forestry Initiative which enabled the program to cultivate PLT facilitator networks, grow PLT's reach and excellence for educators, and strengthen PLT programs. Initiatives from this included developing an online Green Schools E course; sharing school district outreach toolkits containing PLT instructional materials and training; hosting in-person volunteer gatherings for program updates, training, and networking; and collaborating with facilitators teaching at colleges that serve the community. The CSFS continues to be engaged in this important program that

develops the public's awareness, appreciation, and stewardship of Colorado's trees and forests.

Cooperative Fire Protection

The CSFS role is to provide statewide service in fire ecology, natural resource management, wildfire risk assessment, community protection planning, and fuels mitigation. The CSFS has the responsibility for forestry and fuels mitigation while the Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC) has the responsibility of wildland fire preparedness and response. Together the CSFS and DFPC provide a complete package of wildland fire management programs to the state.

CSFS staff interactions with landowners, communities and local governments have yielded 274 Community Wildfire Protection Plans and 246 Firewise USA® recognized sites, 3rd among states in the nation that have an active Firewise USA® program. Cooperative Fire Funding received by CSFS is instrumental to: achieve stewardship and resiliency of diverse forest environments, mitigate the negative effects of fire across landscapes, and protect people and property through assessment, collaboration, planning, and implementation for individuals and communities. In 2024, Community Assistance Funds Adjacent to National Forest Lands (CAFA) were awarded to two projects in Western Colorado to treat 608 total acres. State Fire Assistance WUI Competitive Funds were awarded to three projects affecting the Front Range region with 197 acres planned for treatment.

With an interagency prescribed fire state agreement coupled with federal funding, the CSFS continues to expand its trained and experienced workforce to support planning and implementation of prescribed fire. The agency is co-leading development of a statewide prescribed fire strategic plan. The CSFS continues to deliver the NFPA ASIP course around the state to promote the Fire Adapted Communities tenet of the Cohesive Strategy. The agency has played an integral role contributing information, expertise, and resources to the Wildfire Resiliency Code Board which is developing a statewide wildland-urban interface code that will be implemented in 2025.

Economic Action

The CSFS added a new wood utilization and marketing specialist in 2024 to increase support for our timber harvesting, wood products manufacturing, and wildfire mitigation industries. Lending activity from our Wildfire Risk Mitigation Revolving Loan Fund decreased in 2024 due to industry concern over declines in demand and uncertainty related to the election cycle. Inquiries to the loan fund remained active from wildfire mitigation startups.

The CSFS worked on a Statewide Biomass Assessment (scheduled for release in 2025) and provided biomass utilization guidance in support of the CSFS Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation state-funded grant program. The CSFS also provided ongoing technical assistance and guidance to small businesses as well as several counties engaging in strategic biomass supply and utilization planning. Support to the USDA Wood Innovations Grant and Hazardous Fuels Transportation Assistance Programs resulted in over \$2 million in awards to Colorado's forest products businesses and organizations. In several cases, CSFS financial support allowed these USDA grant recipients to meet match requirements.

The Workforce Development Grant was rolled out in 2024 and supported the onboarding of new employees in 10 fire mitigation, logging, and wood products businesses. The CSFS also applied to the USDA Temporary Bridge program to allow the CSFS to purchase and provide temporary bridge structures to forestry contractors and improve wood utilization and Best Management Practices (BMP) compliance.

Additional efforts include collaborative participation with the Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI), the Colorado Timber Industry Association, leadership Team of the Forest Products Committee of the Council of Western State Foresters, San Juan National Forest Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program, and the Colorado Mass Timber Coalition.

Forest Health Protection

Insects and disease populations are strongly correlated with changing conditions. From Oct 2023 to Sept 2024 (Water Year, WY), Colorado temperatures were tied for the sixth warmest on record dating back 130 years (tied with 2022), according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Colorado was much warmer and also slightly drier than normal. Statewide precipitation for the 2024 WY was slightly below average at 17.75" compared to the 100-year average of 18.10".

The CSFS, with the USFS, conducts annual aerial detection surveys to map and quantify insect and disease activity in forested areas of Colorado. Western spruce budworm was again the most damaging forest pest across the State, with nearly 217,000 acres affected. This caterpillar and moth increased by 15,000 acres in 2024. The Mountain pine beetle is resurging along the Front Range, in Gunnison County, and throughout the southwestern corner of Colorado. Pine mortality is now just over 5,300 acres. Western balsam bark beetle-caused mortality in drought-stricken, predisposed subalpine fir has continued to affect approx. 27,000 acres, similar to last year's. The ongoing spruce beetle epidemic has declined to just under 11,000 acres in high-elevation Englemann spruce-fir forests. Douglas-fir beetles continue to cause significant mortality, predominately in lower-elevation mixed-conifer forests in the central and southern forests. Groups of trees killed by the Douglas-fir beetle totaled just over 21,200 acres this past year. Protections against Douglas-fir beetles are predominately targeted using semiochemicals and direct removals. The CSFS continues to implement semiochemical use, direct removals, and management activities on private lands to reduce bark beetle outbreak levels. The CSFS treated 7,615 acres of semiochemicals in 2024 and assisted 242 landowners regarding forest health concerns. In 2024, the non-native emerald ash borer was detected in Fort Collins, Loveland, Lakewood and Centennial.

Forest Legacy

The Forest Legacy Program continues to expand its goals of preserving working forests and creating new parks. Having already preserved over 37,000 acres across Colorado, in 2025 FLP expects to close two more projects, adding an additional 7,300 in Delta and Huerfano Counties. One project submitted in 2024 is currently under consideration for national LWCA and assistance funding, which, if funded, would add 9,300 acres of open space in El Paso County. Monitoring was completed for the eight current Conservation Easements (37,723 acres) during the summer of 2024.

To support program expansion the CSFS hired a full-time Forest Legacy Program Specialist and activated administrative funding for programmatic expansion in 2024. This increased capacity has allowed CSFS to expand outreach and technical training, engaging new organizations and strengthening current partnerships. The CSFS has engaged multiple stakeholders to support an update to the state FLP application which will streamline the process and provide more clarity across project timelines.

In 2025 the Forest Legacy Program will support the Forest Action Plan and State Assessment of Need updates to allow for more partnerships and strategic land acquisition.

Forest Stewardship

The Forest Stewardship Program provides landowners with technical assistance in developing and implementing comprehensive resource management plans. In 2024, the CSFS assisted and educated 1,750 landowners and developed/revised plans covering 3,532 acres. Of those plans, 2,974 acres are in high-priority areas.

The Colorado State Forest Action Plan continues to guide the priority of fuels and forest health treatments. The Forest Action Plan along with the Forest Stewardship Priority area map are used extensively to help identify future outreach and education efforts on private lands.

The Restoring Colorado's Forest Fund awarded 8,200 seedlings to landowners in 2024 to help restore private forestlands affected by natural disasters.

The Forest Stewardship Program Specialist will continue to engage landowners and partners through Forest Ag Newsletters. These newsletters are distributed to landowners, consulting foresters and partners twice a year to keep them informed of program updates, forest health issues and forest management assistance opportunities.

The Colorado Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee continues to meet and provide guidance on State and private forestry issues and provides input on Forest Legacy applications.

Through funding the CSFS hired 4 lead Stewardship Foresters to provide support on private land initiatives including landowner outreach & education, plan writing, modernization of the Colorado Forest Ag program and development of Landscape Scale Management Plans. These efforts are ongoing.

Good Neighbor Authority

The Good Neighbor Authority (GNA), established by the Farm Bill, allows federal agencies to partner with states, counties, and tribes for restoration work on federal lands. GNA leverages federal, state, and third-party resources, streamlines processes, and accelerates cross-boundary restoration, particularly in response to the wildfire crisis in the Western U.S. First piloted in Colorado in the early 2000s, GNA became permanent in the 2014 Farm Bill.

CSFS All-Time GNA Accomplishments:

12,000+ federal acres and 15,000+ total acres (including state and private) treated.

180,000+ CCF of USFS timber volume delivered to industry.

\$1.7M+ in USFS revenue retained for future restoration.

In July 2024, a wildfire ignited near a 250-home neighborhood in Breckenridge, CO. A recently completed GNA fuel break, created in partnership with CSFS, White River National Forest, Summit County Open Space, and the Town of Breckenridge, helped crews contain the fire, preventing disaster.

Additionally, in 2024, CSFS:

Began investing the \$2M of state funding allocated in 2023 for additional GNA capacity.

Hired a new GNA forester out of Leadville, funded primarily by Colorado Springs Utilities for work on the Pike-San Isabel National Forest.

Developed 2 new SPAs and modified 5 existing SPAs for \$1.7M, significantly less than \$9M USFS investment in 2023. CSFS currently manages 24 active SPAs statewide.

Developed a new statewide BLM GNA Agreement for capacity, timber sales, and fuels reduction.

Joined the Council of Western State Foresters GNA Leadership Committee.

At the national level, in 2024, GNA was expanded to include the National Park Service and US Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as recreation services, reflecting the program's nationwide success.

Landscape Scale Restoration

The CSFS submitted one application for funding to the 2024 Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) Competitive Program with a goal of growing, tracking and developing a market for newly discovered weather-resilient trees of high quality and low cost to support rural community forests and shelterbelts throughout NE, CO, & WY.

In 2024, since the Colorado Tree View (COTV) update has concluded, CSFS urban and community forestry (UCF) staff have conducted multiple trainings for forest managers/advocates/volunteers on using COTV to collect data. Four tree inventories have been completed using the new system. This year CSFS UCF will be focused on inventories for six additional communities in rural areas of Colorado which will also include management plans and disease and insect analysis/tracking.

Urban and Community Forestry

The CSFS Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) Program provided financial and technical assistance to 104 communities in

Federal FY 2024, reaching a total of 3,047,684 people, or 69 percent of the state's population. In partnership with the Colorado Tree Coalition (CTC), the CSFS awarded community grants totaling \$1.67 million. These grants are funded by the USFS, CSFS, Xcel Energy, Xcel Energy Foundation, Colorado Public Radio, and private donors. Ninety-six communities and eight college campuses were recognized by the CSFS and the Arbor Day Foundation through the Tree City USA, Tree Campus Higher Education, and Tree Line USA programs. Of the 96 TCUSA communities, 32 received Growth Awards for additions and improvements to their community forestry programs. Altogether, the 96 communities planted 14,248 trees and invested more than \$35.3 million toward the care of their tree resources. Colorado's statewide urban tree inventory tool, Colorado Tree View, contains 619,794 trees managed by 176 local government agencies, HOAs, colleges, and other collections. We continue to offer this tool as a free community resource, which was introduced to Colorado as a forest inventory tool in 2022 and continues to play a key role in shaping and coordinating UCF efforts along the Front Range and across the state.

Watershed Initiatives

The CSFS participates in collaborative efforts to protect our state's forested watersheds. Threats include uncharacteristic wildfire, insect and disease outbreaks and an increase in population resulting in

additional demands on limited water resources.

The From Forests to Faucets program is a partnership between Denver Water, USFS, NRCS, Colorado Forest Restoration Institute and the CSFS focused on treating public and private land to mitigate the potentially negative effect of large-scale disturbance on Denver Water reservoirs and infrastructure. The CSFS identified, planned and implemented treatment on approximately 4,500 acres of non-federal land within Denver Water's Zones of Concern through the Forests to Faucets 2 Program, which was completed in 2024. A new agreement was signed in 2024 (Forests to Faucets 3) and treatment on ~1,600 acres will begin in 2025.

Since 1987, the CSFS has partnered with Colorado Springs Utilities to implement the Pikes Peak Watershed Management Plan, which guides forest management in the 13,000-acre watershed. Under our MOU, the USFS, Colorado Springs Utilities and the CSFS will facilitate work across boundaries through the use of the GNA. In 2024, the CSFS completed 300 acres of treatment on the South Slope of Pikes Peak with 180 acres in progress and 700 acres planned for treatment in 2025.

Northern Water and the CSFS renewed their ongoing partnership with a multi-year agreement to fund proactive forest health initiatives to reduce the severity and impacts of future wildfires in the region. The CSFS recently signed an agreement with Aurora Water for funding to establish and maintain a website for the Upper South Platte Partnership and contribute to forest thinning and restoration projects. The CSFS also signed an MOU with the USFS and Denver Metro Area communities for Clear Creek Watershed and Forest Health Partnership. Finally, the CSFS continues engagement in post-fire recovery and local restoration efforts.

Contact Information



Colorado State Forest Service

Matt McCombs
State Forester and Director
Colorado State University
Foothills Campus - 1050
Fort Collins, CO 80523-5060
970-491-7290
matthew.mccombs@colostate.edu

US Forest Service Rocky Mountain Region

Kevin Khung
Director, State, Private, and Tribal Forestry
USDA Forest Service
1617 Cole Boulevard, Building 17
Lakewood, CO 80401-3305
303-275-5750
kevin.khung@usda.gov
