Arizona Forest Resource Fact Sheet 2026

Thomas Torres, *State Forester/Director*
Phone: 602-771-1400
http://dffm.az.gov/
Email: ttorres@dffm.az.gov

Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2025 Final
Cooperative Fire Protection	$2,407,500
Cooperative Forestry	$355,785
Forest Health Management	$412,000
Forest Legacy and Community Forest Programs	$2,240,000
Total	**$5,415,285**

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

Key Issues

- Encouraging fire adapted communities, promoting wildland ecosystems where appropriate fire regimes maintain health and resiliency of natural vegetation, and improving wildland fire management capacity across the state.
- Pursuing economic development potential of sustainable forest products and bioenergy, protecting areas of economic potential, and promoting the recognition of economic impacts of protected healthy natural systems. Developing uses and markets for small diameter trees while increasing utilization capacity for existing businesses - increasing the amount of hazardous fuels that can be treated and removed from the urban interface.
- Improving ecosystem health by promoting resilient and diverse forest ecosystem structures, processes, and functions - and making progress toward landscape scale outcomes, restoration of unhealthy ecosystems, and enhanced sustainability.
- Connecting people with trees and forests to allow maximum benefits, while minimizing negative human impacts. Addressing watershed health, forest health and fire safety issues in populated wildland/urban interface areas.
- Improving communications across a culturally diverse state - with emphasis on improved collaboration with Native American Tribes. Sharing resources and information about varying perspectives and beliefs related to forests, trees, and other natural resources.
- Maintaining or improving water quality and quantity from forested watersheds - and improving health and resiliency of forested aquatic systems.
- Improving air quality through specific management activities and increased public understanding of the importance and effects of fire on Arizona's air quality.
- Increasing resilience of Arizona ecosystems to climate change - preparing for and mitigating potential impacts- and reducing the potential rate of future climate change through maximized carbon sequestration in Arizona forests and trees.

Forest Facts and Accomplishments

Selected Facts	Value
Population	7,151,502
Acres of Forest Land	19,092,940
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	7,216,408
Number of NIPF Landowners	22,452
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	0
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	22,100,000
Number of Rural Fire Departments	226
Cities and Towns	91
Forest Based Employment	984
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	13
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	80,693,182

FY 2025 Accomplishments	Value
Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	338
Total Acres of all New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	35
Acres of New or Revised Stewardship Plans within Federal Investment Areas	30
Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	25
State Fire Communities Assisted	3
Forest Health Non-Federal Acres Protected	300
Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	0
Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	57
Population of Communities Receiving Urban Forestry Program Assistance	5,376,483
Labor Value of Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	275,606

Program Highlights

Disaster Recovery and Restoration

In 2025, the Forest Health Program Manager worked closely with the Coconino National Forest Silviculturalist and Verde Earth Technologies regarding hazard tree work within the Pipeline and Tunnel Fire Scars on the Coconino NF. Due to an increase in hazard tree numbers in 2025, the Forest Health Program manager asked for funding to be moved from invasive plant survey work to hazard tree removal funds. This allowed an additional campground and two trail heads to be cleared of hazard trees that were killed in the Pipeline and Tunnel Fires. To date, all funds for the hazard tree removal work have been utilized.

Economic and Public Benefits of Trees — Urban and Community Forestry

Arizona's Urban and Community Forestry Program (UCF) provides information and technical assistance to Arizona cities and towns. The program employs Certified Arborists and Urban Foresters to answer tree-related questions and help communities maintain, restore, and improve urban forest ecosystems. The UCF Program includes oversight and management of the Community Challenge Grant Program; promotion and management of the Arizona Tree City USA, Tree Line USA, and Tree Campus USA programs; the Arizona Magnificent Tree Program; and planning and implementing the Arizona Arbor Day celebrations. The UCF Program supports tree inventory and canopy development programs, tree-planting projects, local and state policy development, and local outreach and education programs. The UCF Advisory Committee consists of urban forestry and arboriculture professionals across the state and assists with strategic UCF planning, tree care education, and Community Challenge Grant selection. The UCF Program Manager provides technical and administrative support to the ACTC Advisory Council to achieve common urban forestry goals. In 2025, the UCF Program awarded $230,000 in Community Challenge Grants focused on heat mitigation. Recipients included universities, municipalities, and non-governmental organizations that launched urban forestry projects, including tree inventories and valuations, urban riparian restoration, tree-planting projects, arboriculture education and training, and rainwater-harvesting workshops. The UCF Program also supports community outreach and education events. In 2025, staff tabled at 24 events and conducted 20 presentations, reaching over 6,800 residents across the state.

Good Neighbor Authority

Implementation work continued on four National Forests and one BLM District in 2025. Fourteen (14) projects either started or continued on the Coconino, Coronado, and Tonto National Forests and the BLM Gila District to complete 8,579 acres of treatments with the following breakdowns by treatment objective: Hazardous fuels reduction: 2,527 acres; Watershed restoration: 4,686 acres; and Wildlife habitat improvement: 1,366 acres. Work to plan timber sales on all 4FRI forests continued, with 10,089 acres marked. The impact of the timber removal projects includes 3,297 loads and 94,945 tons of timber removed, and 1,256 loads and 30,654 tons of biomass removed from federal lands. In total, $5.1M was paid to the private sector.

Healthy Forests — Forest Health Protection

Arizona's Forest Health (FH) Program is a cooperative forestry program partially funded by the USDA Forest Service through state and private forestry to assist state and private forest and woodland landowners. These funds support our Invasive Plant Coordinator and Forest Health Specialist positions. Arizona's Forest Health Program provides technical assistance for forestland and urban properties, including prevention, detection, control, and monitoring of native, non-native, and invasive insects, diseases, and plants. The program develops and provides forest health education tools, workshops, and training opportunities, and contributes to the creation of new forest health technologies. Forest health-related publications, workshops, and training sessions are developed and offered annually to interested state and private groups and individuals. The Forest Health Program Manager and Specialist oversee the Western Bark Beetle Initiative Grant Program, which focuses on improving tree health and reducing adverse bark beetle impacts. The AZ DFFM FH Program uses these funds to support our Bark Beetle Reduction Cost Share (BBRCS) Program, which helps offset the cost of removing actively infested bark beetle trees during the fall and winter. Additionally, the Forest Health Program supports the USDA Forest Health Program team with ground survey work and the annual Aerial Detection Survey (ADS) of millions of acres, providing land managers and the public with information about landscape-level insect and disease conditions. An annual Forest Health Conditions Report is created by our Forest Health Program each year, highlighting the ADS results for each Agency District.

Landscape Scale Restoration

Borderlands Restoration Network (BRN) engaged the local and visiting community through multiple educational hikes and six volunteer days, reaching over 70 participants--including birders, college students, gap-year youth, and local volunteers--by providing guided hikes, restoration talks, and hands-on erosion control and native plant work that strengthened stewardship of USFS and adjacent lands. BRN improved native ecology and climate resilience by removing ~150 invasive Johnsongrass plants, installing 550 native plants with irrigation, distributing over 20 pounds of native seed, and establishing 20 monitoring photo points to track habitat recovery, soil stability, and vegetation change across BWP. BRN improved fire preparedness within the Patagonia community and maintained interagency relationships throughout the project. Overall, Johnsongrass is difficult to remove because its extensive rhizome system allows regrowth from even small root fragments, so BRN used targeted manual pulling at Dragonfly Pond and Little Casa Blanca Wash, where infestations were small and manageable, avoiding the need for repeated chemical treatments. Following a poor monsoon season and dry conditions, funds were reallocated from additional plantings to install irrigation at Jaguar Pond to improve native plant survival, with future plans to adapt by growing plants at the BRN Nursery for seed collection in low-rainfall years.

Lower Gila River Initiative

Lower Gila Initiative work in 2025 included partnerships with AZGFD, Maricopa County Parks, and a private property owner. A total of six projects removed 316 acres of tamarisk followed by native species restoration. Arlington, Athel Patch, and Robbins Butte/Boat Ramp all included mechanical removal and hauling of tamarisk off the site. Gladden and Estrella Phase II involved cutting of tamarisk followed by herbicide application to the stump. Estrella Phase II was primarily a maintenance treatment of tamarisk removed in a prior year.

Maintenance treatments are an important aspect of all native vegetation recovery projects on the Lower Gila River. Without multiple years of monitoring and maintenance treatments, tamarisk will reinvade the sites.

The Arlington project stretched over two years. Work the first year uprooted the tamarisk, leaving the material to dry over the summer. Year 2 efforts in 2025 involved grinding and then removing dead tamarisk from the site. The Athel Patch project included

cutting, uprooting, and removing a dense patch of Athel tamarisk. This challenging project removed 810 tons of material.

Robbins Butte and Boat Ramp were on the same footprint, with respective projects being mechanical removal and hand cutting near the edge of the Gila River. All material was ground and removed off-site. Over 3,000 trees were then planted on the Robbins Butte Wildlife Area. Watering of these trees continued through November 2025.

Future efforts on the Lower Gila River are planned for continued monitoring and maintenance of past projects, and additional tamarisk removal and restoration on over 600 acres.

Markets — Wood Innovation

In FFY25 three Arizona based Wood Innovations Grant applicants received funding: Arizona State University for researching pollution remediation utilizing biochar granules in open surface paving. The Center for Alternative Building Studies for development of new building block materials made from forest biomass and geopolymers, and White Mountain Lumber LLC to expand into firewood processing to utilize undervalued material. All three of these projects have the potential to explore and create markets for low value timber, as well as remove liability biomass from the landscape. Additionally, Arizona was the host state for the CWSF Ponderosa Pine Utilization Summit in November 2025 after planning began in FFY24. This summit met its stated goals of engaging players from all facets of forest products harvesting, manufacturing, and marketing from all the western states and a report of the summit's results and an action plan for industry will be published in early 2026.

Private Working Forest Lands — Forest Stewardship

FSP staff developed or revised one comprehensive Forest Stewardship Plans totaling 35 acres, including 30 acres in a federal investment area. Staff also developed and approved 9 new or revised practice plans totaling 1,320 acres including 110 acres in federal investment areas. FSP staff provided technical assistance to 43 non-industrialized private forest landowners, and provided education to 295 landowners. Staff also spent 152 person-hours conducting outreach to landowners and related partners.

This year, FSP focused on improving communication with landowners. Staff updated the DFFM FSP webpage to provide an accurate summary of the program. Additionally, staff created and posted on the webpage a Landowner Information Request Form that went live on June 26, 2025. Over the remainder of the federal fiscal year, four landowners reached out via the form, and FSP staff worked with other DFFM programs as appropriate to deliver education and technical assistance to those landowners. In a related effort, FSP began the process of updating DFFM's FSP brochure, which includes information about the Forest Legacy Program.

State Forest Action Plan Implementation

Forest Health IIJA: IIJA Forest Action Plan funds were used to support a sub-award that paid for an entomologist contractor to help sort through invasive insect trapping samples, as well as bark beetle samples from our Push-Pull projects. Additionally, lures were purchased for use in push-pull projects deployed across the Phoenix metro area. Funds were also used to support DFFM internal GIS staff in the development of our invasive plant project directory tool.

UCF IIJA: IIJA Forest Action Plans were used to support a subaward that focuses on workforce development and sustainable urban forest planning. In 2025, this project successfully delivered a two-day certified arborist training program for Spanish-language learners, two municipal training programs for Spanish-language learners, produced an 8-page informative Condensate Harvesting handout, and hosted two Women in Arboriculture training sessions. This project will conclude in 2026 with an additional Women in Arboriculture training and a Tree Steward curriculum participant companion guide.

State Fire Assistance IIJA: DFFM Prevention completed 21 Firewise Home Ignition Zone Assessor courses with a total of 346 students trained. In 2025 Arizona welcomed 35 (#1 in the southwest region) new Firewise communities bringing the total up to 215 communities. The renewal rate for these communities jumped to 97% highlighting the work of Prevention staff. There were a total of 232 events held in 2025 up from 180 the previous year. There were 5 major events held in 2025 reaching an estimated 2,800 individuals.

Stewardship IIJA: The Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) has used grant funds to hire a contractor to host and co-facilitate 11 landowner listening sessions (10 in-person, 1 virtual) with DFFM staff in the spring of 2026. These meetings are key deliverables, and the insights gained from landowners will inform regional analyses of landowner priorities and needs.

Wildland Fire — Cooperative Fire Protection

State and Volunteer Fire Assistance programs are used to enhance the State of Arizona and local fire department firefighting efforts and capacity by providing necessary training and support in areas that are in the greatest need. This is provided through a variety of programs designed and based around the common goals of health and safety. Through these cooperative fire programs, hazardous fuel mitigation practices are pursued on non-federal lands in areas of greatest concern to prevent the loss of life and property, and lessen environmental and economic impacts. Prevention and educational programs such as FIREWISE USA are administered to teach property owners proper mitigation techniques and land users the role of wildfire in the ecosystem, how to prevent fires from occurring and how to act when a fire is in their area. State Fire and Volunteer Fire Assistance is also utilized to purchase needed equipment, such as personal protective equipment, for fire departments to better respond to active wildfires, and funds aid in modifying excess federal equipment to support fire response throughout the state. Community wildfire education is focused on the wildland-urban interface and forest health education issues as well as educational resource development. DFFM provides

assistance in Firewise and Community Wildfire Protection Planning to increase awareness of the hazards and responsibilities of people who live in and near forest ecosystems.

Working Lands — Forest Legacy, Community Forest and Open Space Conservation

The Forest Legacy Program (FLP) in Arizona, administered by the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management (DFFM) in partnership with the USDA Forest Service, continues to expand its portfolio of conservation projects and strengthen program infrastructure through active administration and outreach.

As of FY2025, Arizona is managing four active Forest Legacy conservation projects, totaling more than 2,100 acres protected and approximately $7 million in federal and $3 million in non-federal investments:

Date Creek Bosque – 647-acre mesquite bosque and riparian corridor in Yavapai County. Funded in FY24 with $1.1 million through FLP.

Bull Basin Forest – 156-acre ponderosa pine inholding within the Kaibab National Forest, Coconino County. Funded in FY23 for $1.9 million.

Cochise Stronghold Woodlands – 552-acre Madrean oak woodland property in the Sky Islands of southeastern Arizona. Funded in FY23 for $1.7 million.

Sonoita Creek Wildlife Corridors – Phase 3 – 756-acre wildlife and riparian corridor in Santa Cruz County. Funded in summer 2025 with $2.2 million in FLP Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF).

Recent FLP proposals submitted include Flagstaff Arboretum, Wood Canyon (Morin Ranch), and Sonoita Creek Wildlife Corridors – Phase 4, all aligned with Arizona's Forest Action Plan and priority conservation landscapes.

DFFM continues to focus on outreach and partnership development for the Community Forest Program (CFP). While no CFP projects have been added, progress is being made on communication and potential project planning. CFP information is being shared with existing groups, such as the newsletter list and FLP contacts, who help distribute details to their networks.

Through its growing portfolio of active projects and administrative leadership, Arizona's Forest Legacy Program is playing a pivotal role in protecting working forests, cultural values, and ecological integrity across the state.

Alicia San Gil, *Director - Forest Management, Forest Health, Cooperative Forestry*

Phone: 505-842-3242

http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/spf/index.shtml

Email: alicia.sangil@usda.gov
