State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet
Montana 2023

Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>FY 2022 Final</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Forestry and Open Space</td>
<td>$610,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forest Legacy</td>
<td>$20,056,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forest Stewardship</td>
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<td>Landscape Scale Restoration</td>
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<td>State Fire Assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban and Community Forestry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteer Fire Assistance</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$25,890,693</strong></td>
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NOTE: This funding is for all entities within the state, not just the State Forester's office.

The mission of the Forestry Division of the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) is to ensure sustainability of Montana forests, rural lands and communities through cooperative wildland fire protection, sound forest management practices and by promoting a viable forest-based economy.

Cooperative Forestry and Wildland Fire programs are integral to fulfilling this mission. The programs provide critical assistance to Montana landowners, communities, forest-based industries and others. These programs are administered and implemented through partnerships between DNRC, USDA Forest Service (USFS) and other private, non-profit and government entities to create resilient forests, and build sustainable economies and vibrant communities.

Program Goals

- Use the Montana Forest Action Plan to improve forest health and reduce wildfire risk to communities, while increasing the pace and scale of coordinated landscape level forest management in Montana. [https://www.montanaforestactionplan.org/](https://www.montanaforestactionplan.org/)
  
  To accelerate this effort the State of Montana appropriated $4.5 million above base funding again this year and the Forest Service provided and additional $728,000 in BIL funding.

- Increase acres treated for fuels reduction and forest health on state, private and federal lands through partnerships with the Forest Service, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Bureau of Land Management, Farm Service Agency, MT Fish Wildlife and Parks, DNRC Trust Lands, American Forests and Montana communities.

- Guide forest owners, managers and communities in stewardship objectives and promote the benefits of engaged active forest management. Increase the ability of landowners, natural resource managers and communities to meet management objectives by providing financial, technical and logistical support.

- Promote responsible, active forest management that ensures ecological conditions meet the needs of future generations for clean water, wildlife habitat, sustainable timber supply and recreation opportunities.

- Actively promote stewardship of Montana's urban and community forests.

- Promote Montana wood products, support the development of wood energy infrastructure and encourage the production of new and innovative wood products applications. Retain and bolster Montana's forest industry so that forests can be managed in an ecologically and economically practical manner.

- Assist state, private and other non-federal resource managers in identifying and managing forest insects and diseases. Participate in interagency efforts to prevent and manage non-native invasive forest pests in Montana.
- Provide a well-rounded fire protection program incorporating, as critical components, safe and effective fire response; training, professional development and organizational learning; community preparedness, homeowner risk reduction and fire prevention; as well as prescribed fire and hazardous fuels reduction.
- Modernize the State/County Coop (County Coop) Fire Protection arrangement to include needed legislation, resources required to achieve program guidance and performance objectives reflecting strategic direction and priorities.
- Convene an internal collaborative effort to both craft the direction on implementing the National Cohesive Fire Management Strategy and coordinate the activities of Fire Protection, Forestry Assistance and Trust Lands Management programs to achieve mutually beneficial goals, focusing on internal cohesion.
- Complete workforce analysis and plan for workforce configuration at unit, land office, and bureau levels, with eye toward enabling capacity to necessarily align the scope of the program with the strategic vision. Develop a recruitment and retention strategy aligned with improved HR policies (temporary details, position/pay matrix, etc.) supporting the workforce development objectives of this goal.
- Understand and have defined our wildland fire information technology (WFIT) business needs and have identified how to meet those business needs in a timely and cost-effective manner. Enable us to have adequate data capture, storage and analysis systems that inform financial, strategic and programmatic decision making.
- Complete aviation strategy that includes a plan for transitioning from our current aircraft to our next generation aircraft over time and have begun the process of preparing the Legislature for the necessary future capital expenditures to make that transition.
- Control 95% of the fires occurring on DNRC direct protection at 10 acres or less because as fires grow larger, firefighting costs rise exponentially.
- Maintain stable, adequate purchasing power in the Fire Protection Program preparedness budget and a stable fire suppression account that enables our ability to sustain our program delivery.
- Support and fund a prescribed fire council coordinator to facilitate the development of a statewide prescribed fire council in Montana.

**Key Issues**

- Our agency is working to educate Montana landowners, homeowners and the public about the concepts and benefits of fire adapted communities and resilient landscapes. The Forest Action Plan is our base platform to communicate these concepts and convince people to make the investments necessary to create fire adapted communities and resilient landscapes.
- The environment in which the DNRC Fire Protection program operates has shifted dramatically. Fire seasons are longer, fire conditions have become more severe, fires are getting larger, and "big" fire seasons occur more frequently. Forest conditions are out of balance in forest types that cover large areas of Montana where fire is no longer playing its natural role.
- The State County Cooperative Fire (County Coop) Program is enormously important to our success and provides an estimated annual economic value of $45 million to Montana taxpayers (vs. providing direct protection on 45 million acres). However, not only is the County Coop Program based on a 50-year-old model, it faces significant challenges, including a severely declining volunteer workforce. DNRC is in the process of adding a few key staff to strengthen the program.
- More than 85% of our partnering local government fire departments are staffed solely by volunteer firefighters. Like fire departments across the nation, the fire services in Montana struggle to recruit and retain volunteers. Consequently, many volunteer fire departments in the state have much smaller memberships than they've had in the past and the average age of the members they do have is growing. In addition, volunteer firefighters are not as available as they used to be.
- Many small communities in Montana struggle with the capacity to manage their community forests, even with DNRC assistance. The inevitable detection of the Emerald Ash Borer will compound this problem. The Forest Service has increased base funding for Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) and the DNRC is in the process of hiring two dedicated UCF Service Foresters to support small and medium-sized communities with their needs.
- Educating the public about best management practices for tree care continues to be a challenge.
Many people don't understand how much water urban trees need in our semi-arid climate.

- It is difficult to convince potential users that the upfront cost of wood energy installations is worth the effort when compared to fossil fuels. Not having funding to cover construction compounds this problem.
- Small, stagnant and/or shrinking budgets make it difficult to maintain adequate personnel to manage programs.
- In addition to increasingly severe fire conditions, Montana has a wildland-urban interface (WUI) problem that demands more fire protection resources, mitigation services and assistance in community preparedness. Over the past 17 years, the number of homes in high wildfire hazard areas in Montana nearly doubled. Increasing human habitation at the WUI requires more fire prevention, mitigation, community preparedness and fire suppression resources to enable the DNRC to redeem its responsibilities.
- DNRC has identified a need to emphasize fire investigation and billing.
- Over time, repeated budget reductions and rising operating costs have eroded the purchasing power of the Fire and Aviation Management Program budget, and a continuation of these trends will challenge the fiscal sustainability of our current approach to program delivery.
- Taking an interagency approach improves efficiency, enables more cost-effective services to Montana taxpayers and strengthens the overall effectiveness of Montana’s wildland fire service. However, interagency coordination and cooperation also requires staffing for interagency dispatch and coordination centers, inter-operable radio communication, equipment and training that meet interagency standards and other fire protection preparedness costs that make interagency operations possible.
- We need to develop our workforce of the future today to assure that we have a motivated, productive and engaged workforce, guided by well-prepared leaders. However, we face challenges when it comes to recruiting, developing and retaining the workforce the DNRC will need to remain effective in the future.
- Montana has lost wood products milling infrastructure like most western states in the past 40 plus years resulting in less competitive prices for logs and higher transportation costs for public and private timber. We need to do everything we can to support our remaining mills and other wood processing facilities.
- Out-of-state visitors are drawn to Montana for the abundant recreation and camping opportunities, oftentimes bringing firewood when they camp, hunt and RV. Transporting firewood long distances can be a critical pathway for spreading tree pests into new forests. Montana has limited restrictions on firewood import and is vulnerable to the influx of out-of-state, potentially infested material.

### Forest Facts and Accomplishments

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<tr>
<th>Selected Facts</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>1,084,225</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acres of Forest Land</td>
<td>26,311,251</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land</td>
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<td>Number of NIPF Landowners</td>
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<td>Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection</td>
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<td>Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection</td>
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<td>Number of Rural Fire Departments</td>
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<td>Cities and Towns</td>
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<td>Forest Based Employment</td>
<td>6,530</td>
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<td>Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>State Forestry Budget (All Sources)</td>
<td>14,422,960</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FY 2022 Accomplishments</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance</td>
<td>1,595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans</td>
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<td>Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans</td>
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<td>Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted</td>
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<td>State Fire Communities Assisted</td>
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<td>Coop Forest Health Acres Protected</td>
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<td>Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions</td>
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<td>Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance</td>
<td>529,398</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance</td>
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Program Highlights

Community Forestry and Open Space
In 2022 Five Valleys Land Trust was awarded $600,000 to help fund the purchase of the 1,040 acre Mount Dean Stone Community Forest (MDSCF) and Montana DNRC was awarded $10,000 to provide technical assistance in the form of a forest management plan. The MDSCF consists of 1,040 acres of timberland along the southern edge of Missoula, Montana. The property is currently owned by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and is under contract for purchase by Five Valleys Land Trust. The project area is situated between City of Missoula Conservation Lands, Montana State Land, the Pattee Canyon National Recreation Area within the Missoula Ranger District of the Lolo National Forest – all immediately adjacent to one of the fastest growing cities in Montana. An additional 1,500 acres that is also currently owned by TNC extends to the south of the MDSCF and provides a connection to Miller Creek and two additional trailheads, and may be a potential future Community Forest expansion. The MDSCF is one part of the community-led effort to protect and provide access to Mount Dean Stone. So far the "Mount Dean Stone Project" has protected 580 acres of open space with over a dozen landowners, created 12+ miles of multi-user trail, and has engaged hundreds of diverse community supporters and volunteers.

Conservation Education
Montana DNRC was pleased to offer financial support to the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) for natural resource education and educator training. More than 100 schoolteachers and educators received training at 10 events in Montana. NWF staff partnered with Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, Project Learning Tree, the US Forest Service, MT State University Extension offices, Project WET (Water Education for Teachers), and local non-profits to host these workshops. 37 schools or child-learning institutions were represented.

Conservation Education funding supported "walk in the woods" field trips during Montana Forest Products Week with students from the towns of Seeley Lake, Anaconda, and Deer Lodge where they spent a day learning about forest ecology and the forest products industry. These events provided an inside perspective for the public to learn about how wood products are manufactured and the renewable resources that sustain them.

Additionally, funding was provided to the Tri County Fire Safe Working Group who is partnering with The Montana City Fire Department to establish a wildfire resilient landscaping demonstration project. Educational kiosks and a learning partnership with the school district supports long-term awareness of the opportunities to improve home and community wildfire resilience.

Cooperative Fire Protection
The Western States WUI Grant Program supports the goals of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy by focusing on protecting communities within the WUI through outcome-driven, cross-boundary, innovative projects that align with priority areas identified in the Forest Action Plan and Montana Wildfire Risk Assessment. WUI funds completed fuels treatment on 1,383 acres of non-federal land, completed 280 home/property assessments; supported 46 landowner educational initiatives.

The program also supports Fire Adapted Community Coordinators to raise awareness, educate and encourage Montanans to take action to manage their risk, as well as update Community Wildfire Protection Plans that are 10+ years old.

The Hazardous Fuels Reduction Program minimizes the potential for catastrophic losses to private property as the result of a wildland fire encroaching from adjacent public lands, which is accomplished through cost-share programs directly administered by DNRC personnel and in partnership with conservation organizations. The program treated 413 acres of non-federal land; completed 69 home/property assessments; supported 22 landowner educational initiatives.
The DNRC provided technical assistance to the USFS for the rollout of the Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG) program. These efforts included educating potential applicants (counties, communities, and other qualifying entities) about the program, and assisting with applicant access to the web portal. The state acted as the applicant on behalf of 12 projects with local community partners. Additionally, 2 applications were submitted directly to the program by applicants, for a total of 14 CWDG applications in Montana.

**Economic Action**

The grant funds that DNRC awards from USDA State and Private Forestry and state of Montana sources not only help manage portions of the landscape that would not be feasible otherwise, these funds also help to maintain Montana's forest products and logging infrastructure. Maintaining this infrastructure significantly reduces the cost of forest management in the state because wood products of all types can be sold to offset costs. Despite the loss of some milling infrastructure, Montana's remaining mills are making investments in technology and increasing their production providing a functional and integrated industry across most of the state. In 2020 the forest products industry in Montana employed 6,973 people and contributed $869 million to the state’s economy.

**Forest Health Protection**

The Forest Pest Management (FPM) Program continued to provide identification, surveillance and management of forest pests on State, municipal, county and private lands throughout the state. More than 50 diagnostics and management recommendations were made via site visits, phone calls and email correspondence. Over 350 professional foresters, park managers, NRCS agents, and private landowners were trained to identify and manage forest insects and diseases. Field surveys were conducted for invasive pests including balsam woolly adelgid and spongy moth. FPM partnered with the Montana Invasive Species Council to host a science advisory panel focused on firewood transport into the state. Experts and stakeholders convened to focus on threats posed by out-of-state firewood and the potential impacts of non-native invasive tree pests. Western Bark Beetle Initiative funds supported projects on non-federal public lands managed by Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Trust Lands, Sanders County, City of Missoula, and City of Helena. Annual conditions were published in Forest Health Highlights.

**Forest Legacy**

Montana's Forest Legacy Program is administered by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks in consultation with the Montana Forest Action Committee (and formerly by the Montana Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee), which serves in an advisory role to recommend projects for submission and to provide feedback on applications.

FY2022 funding supports the Montana Great Outdoors Project, which protects productive, working forestland around the Thompson Chain of Lakes between Kalispell and Libby. The conservation easement will prevent residential and commercial development protecting the land, water, wildlife, open space, and scenic values of this incredible landscape.

This project will ensure continued sustainable timber management guided by a Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks approved management plan, provide wood-product jobs, protect wildlife habitat and key landscape connectivity, and provide free, permanent, year-round public recreation access to extraordinary recreation land.

**Forest Stewardship**

DNRC's partnership with Montana State University Extension Forestry provided 5 Forest Stewardship Workshops to a total of 134 participants (91 ownerships), resulting in 62 new Forest Stewardship Plans developed, and 42 plans monitored for continued commitment to forest stewardship practices. This represents more than 13,600 forested acres in Montana.

**Landowner Assistance**

The DNRC provided technical assistance to 2625 landowners and provided education to 597 individuals. This work was accomplished by DNRC service foresters, DNRC Forestry Assistance staff and through partnerships with the Montana Tree Farm Program, the Montana Forest Stewardship Foundation and numerous other federal, state and non-profit partners.
Through targeted and effective landowner outreach, the DNRC Stewardship Program continues to increase landowner engagement and participation in technical, education and financial assistance programs.

Technical assistance to non-industrial private forest owners and more than 50 forest management plans were developed through partnerships with both the Natural Resource Conservation Service and the American Forest Foundation to qualify landowners to receive assistance through EQIP. This work was accomplished by DNRC service foresters.

**Landscape Scale Restoration**

The DNRC has eight active Landscape Scale Restoration projects accomplishing a variety of activities, including: erosion mitigation and post-wildfire restoration, improving forest health and increasing resiliency to wildfire, tree canopy establishment and related benefits in Montana's tribal communities, forest improvements and public education in a community forest and community protection through education and hazardous fuels reduction. These projects are administering $2.1M of State & Private Forestry investments and leveraging an additional $2.8M of match and non-match contributions to complete more than 4,000 acres of treatment.

**Urban and Community Forestry**

The Urban and Community Forestry program had many notable accomplishments this year:
- City of Hamilton Canopy Cover Analysis that focused on local needs, land uses, etc. identifying available planting areas to increase canopy cover. Will use as template for expanding to other communities in Montana. Continued progress on UCF-WUI project that combines Stewardship and Urban Forestry, examining goals, management for species and cover in urban interface areas. Agreements in place with cities of Helena, Kalispell, and Missoula to implement the Sustainable Urban Forest Resilience grant, with municipal nursery establishment, tree procurement, and collaborative planning.
- First program in Forestry Division to fully utilize new grant management system, successfully awarding approximately 50 grants to communities for tree planting and program development projects. Also utilizing new outreach methods using the state email subscription system.
- Significant work in tribal assistance, holding training for urban wood utilization, tree planting events and ceremonies, community college collaborations for curriculum and landscapes, functional tree planting for walking trails, shelterbelts, restoration, food forests, watering systems, and bringing tribal partners to the national Arbor Day Foundation’s conference in Seattle.
- Sponsor and support for educational and training events with partners such as Montana Urban & Community Forestry Association, Montana League of Cities and Towns, Parks and Recreation Association, Montana Nursery & Landscape Association, Association of Montana Turf Ornamental and Pests Professionals.
- Entered into contract with DNRC nursery for serviceberry and tree seedling stock to assist communities in available plant materials, improved urban forestry assistance to eastern communities using a local professional contractor, conducted 4 public tree inventories across the state.
- Creating 2 new dedicated UCF Service Forester positions.

**Contact Information**

**Montana Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation**

Shawn Thomas  
*Administrator, Forestry & Trust Lands Division*  
2705 Spurgin Road  
Missoula, MT 59804  
406-444-4978  
sthomas@mt.gov

**US Forest Service**

Tim Garcia  
*Director, State & Private Forestry*  
USDA Forest Service  
200 East Broadway  
Missoula, MT 59807  
406-329-3250  
timothy.p.garcia@usda.gov