



# State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet

## Utah 2024



### Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2023 Estimate
Community Forests and Open Space	\$0
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management	\$276,995
Forest Legacy	\$150,000
Forest Stewardship	\$149,180
Landscape Scale Restoration	\$661,720
State Fire Assistance	\$1,682,478
Urban and Community Forestry	\$488,233
Volunteer Fire Assistance	\$357,800
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,766,406</b>

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

Cooperative Forestry and Fire Programs are administered and implemented through partnerships between Utah Division of Forestry, Fire & State Lands (FFSL), USDA Forest Service (USFS), USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) private organizations, and local governments. These programs promote the protection, health and productivity of Utah's forests, communities, watersheds, and related economies. We emphasize wildfire risk reduction, forest restoration, forest products, wildlife habitat, water resources, rural economies, and conservation practices.

### Program Goals

- Increase active, outcome-based management on all forests through strong partnerships, with emphasis on NIPF (Non-Industrial Private Forest) lands;
- Enhance public benefits through focused efforts to protect and sustain healthy forests, watersheds, and landscapes; and
- Promote voluntary and non-regulatory approaches.

### Key Issues

- Growing risk of catastrophic wildfire, especially in Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas;
- Increased age and density of forests and decreased diversity of forest age-classes on federal lands;
- Protection and rehabilitation of water quality and riparian areas;
- Threat of invasive, exotic species to native biodiversity;
- Economic and social well-being of forest dependent communities; and
- Rapid development and demand for urban forestry support.

## Forest Facts and Accomplishments

Selected Facts	Value	FY 2023 Accomplishments	Value
Population	3,271,616	Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	105
Acres of Forest Land	18,123,661	Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	15,876
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	2,583,819	Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans	14,179
Number of NIPF Landowners	14,194	Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	70
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	0	State Fire Communities Assisted	141
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	15,593,893	Coop Forest Health Acres Protected	2,000
Number of Rural Fire Departments	254	Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	0
Cities and Towns	249	Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	76
Forest Based Employment	150	Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	2,157,722
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	2	Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	24,296
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	82,046,866		

## Program Highlights

### ***BIL Community Wildfire Defense Grant***

FFSL received \$5,086,617 of BIL funding through two Community Wildfire Defense Grants (CWDG). North Tooele Fire District was sub awarded one grant for \$381,250 to increase capacity by hiring a full-time grant coordinator and additional part-time firefighters to perform home WUI assessments, training, supplies and equipment for fuels reduction and public education. FFSL Central Area received \$4,705,367 to increase capacity through additional personnel, supplies for their education and outreach program, chipping hazardous fuel reduction in coordination with WUI landowners, and implementation of the Hazard Mitigation Methodology (HMM) for community hazard reduction.

### ***BIL Forest Action Plan***

FFSL was awarded funds through the BIL State Forest Action Plan (FAP) \$537,000 in 2022 and \$582,000 in 2023. The FAP award enabled FFSL to build its capacity to both implement FAP strategies and administer programs and projects toward achieving FAP goals.

These funds substantially increased the support of 4 programs through several opportunities, including State Fire Assistance (National Fire Capacity), Urban & Community Forestry, Forest Stewardship, and Forest Health Management. FFSL was able to designate a Grant Coordinator for the Forestry and Fire Programs and full-time Forest Stewardship Coordinator. Fund training and capacity-building of our Area Foresters as they work with the two new NRCS-FFSL Foresters. Support increasing responsibilities of the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) staff with wildfire risk reduction efforts. Support Area Foresters to develop and implement forest health and fuels reduction projects on non-industrial private forest (NIPF) lands and work with our GIS team to collect better data and create maps for projects. These efforts have increased FFSL's ability to successfully access additional project funding through other programs. All of these efforts have helped to advance the goals of Utah's Forest Action Plan.

### ***BIL State Fire Assistance***

FFSL received critical funding through the BIL State Fire Assistance (SFA) Program in 2022 and 2023 to address increasing wildfire challenges and the need to build capacity to meet those challenges. BIL SFA funding in the amount of \$307K in 2022 and \$358K in 2023 were received and used to build staff capacity by supporting the salaries of an Aviation Officer, a Deputy State Fire Management Officer dedicated to hazardous fuels reduction, 6 Fire Management Officers, 2 Prevention Technicians and 6 Area Administrative Assistants. These positions play a crucial role in overseeing the Division's wildfire management and suppression initiatives. Consequently, Utah witnessed a decline in human-caused wildfires, dropping from 50% in 2021 to 49% in 2022 and further down to 42% in 2023. Utah also

experienced an improvement in catching wildfires before they grew to large incidents with only 51 fires surpassing 10 acres in 2022 and a further reduction to just 30 such fires in 2023.

### **Central Utah Water Conservancy District Watershed Protection Project**

Central Utah Water Conservancy District (CUWCD) requested collaboration from FFSL after significant infrastructure damage from sedimentation delivery during a rain event in a previously burned area. Together, CUWCD and FFSL are working through the Shared Stewardship Coordinating Committee to implement a landscape scale project to improve forest health, protect local watersheds, mitigate the risk of catastrophic wildfire and prevent future damage to infrastructure.

This project is funded through USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Strategic Funding Pools, leveraged by a CUWCD dedicated Forest Management Fund and applicable BIL/IRA federal grants designed to promote forest health on Non-Industrial Private Forestland.

### **Cooperative Fire Protection**

FFSL received 75 Fire Department Grant requests totaling \$723,676.10 and awarded \$297,157.52 of Forest Service VFA funds and \$297,423.73 of Utah State fire cost recovery funds to 67 fire departments. Activities include training costs and purchase of personal protective equipment. We also received the BIL funds of \$70,250.00 that supported 7 additional departments. FFSL certified approximately 4,333 Utah structural firefighters to fight wildland fire, as well as placed 2 firefighting apparatuses with fire departments through FEPP.

FFSL's WUI program received \$722,880 for 3 wildfire risk reduction projects from the Council of Western State Forester's State Fire Assistance WUI grant. With these funds, FFSL will provide education, conduct a minimum of 450 lot assessments, attend 24 community events and host 15 community education presentations. Hazardous fuels will be reduced on approximately 450 acres through 186 community chipping events targeting 47 communities at risk.

### **Economic Action**

The Utah Forest Products & Businesses Program (FP&B) engages entrepreneurs, businesses and local communities to stimulate economic capacity and new market opportunities in coordination with Utah's Shared Stewardship initiative and the USDA Forest Service R4 Wood Innovations Program. FP&B is planning and facilitating meetings, conferences, workshops, field tours and other events to heighten public awareness, connect businesses to funding opportunities and increase workforce development and training opportunities in the forestry sector through public education and apprenticeships.

### **Forest Health Protection**

Declining forest health in Utah can be attributed to many factors, including overgrown forests, single tree species over expansive areas and ongoing drought among other challenges. These factors lead to poor forest health making these forests more susceptible to insect and disease outbreaks. For 30 years, spruce beetles have infested and killed millions of Engelmann spruce. Douglas-fir beetle, mountain pine beetle, and pinyon engraver beetle are currently prominent in large areas within Utah. Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) has not yet been detected in Utah: however, FFSL has partnered with the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food to monitor urban areas with detection traps where ash is a prominent species and EAB may be introduced. Balsam Woolly Adelgid (BWA), an exotic and invasive insect, has been established in the United States for over 100 years and Idaho since 1983. BWA was confirmed in Utah on September 6th, 2017 and documented in Box Elder, Cache, Rich, Weber, Davis, Morgan, Salt Lake, Summit and Utah counties as of 2023. FFSL, USFS Forest Health Protection, USDA APHIS PPQ, Utah State University, and Utah Department of Agriculture and Food are collaborating to address the impacts of the current infestation. This group is addressing concerns in regards to snowpack retention, watershed health, fuel loading, aesthetics and economic impacts.

### **Forest Legacy**

In 2023, the Utah Forest Legacy Program (FLP) was awarded IRA funding for 2 projects. The Coldwater Phase 2 (15,623 acres, Cache County) project presents a rare opportunity for landscape-level conservation, tying together an expanse of Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest, Hardware Ranch State Wildlife Management Area, and a neighboring FLP project, and will protect a major elk migration corridor. The Bear River Mountains Connectivity/Goring Forest (2,725 acres, Rich/Cache Counties) project is a

private forest inholding surrounded by USFS and protects a critical interstate wildlife corridor and water resources in the rapidly developing area of Bear Lake, with Bear River Land Conservancy as a partner. Once completed, these projects will increase the amount of protected land through the FLP by almost 22%, contributing to a total of 102,207 acres of private forest land that is protected throughout Utah with FLP conservation easements.

The Zion Connectivity project(766 acres) was submitted to the national ranking committee for funding consideration in September. This strategically important project is surrounded by existing FLP easements, contains habitat for federally endangered California condors and Mexican spotted owl, and neighbors Zion National Park. FFSL participated in a USFS pilot program to conduct annual monitoring of FLP projects using remote sensing on 13 properties. Working closely with our land trust partners, duties included review of monitoring visit observations and proposed activity requests/projects to ensure compliance with the FLP, and education of new property managers on existing FLP properties. The FLP Coordinator participated on the Forest Legacy FY24 project national ranking panel in Washington, DC.

### **Forest Stewardship**

The Utah Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) enables private forest landowners to better manage their lands to provide valuable public, economic, and environmental benefits. Across Utah's landscape, approximately 3 million acres(16%) of Utah's forests are held in private ownership. In 2023, FFSL completed six Forest Stewardship Management plans covering 16,036 acres. These plans enable landowners to manage their forest resources to meet their objectives and to improve landscape-scale benefits. Utah currently has 105 active plans covering 317,030 acres.

FFSL has renewed our efforts to promote forestry program accomplishments and tell our story via social media. Working with FFSL's PIO, we have reached a wider audience and promoted education and involvement. FFSL's foresters secured funding through NRCS' Environmental Quality Improvement Program and Utah's Watershed Restoration Initiative to assist landowners with implementation of recommended forest practices outlined in these plans. The Division continues to update procedures in line with the changes due to the modernization of the FSP.

### **Landowner Assistance**

FFSL's foresters provide expertise and guidance to improve forest health conditions and encourage active forest management. FFSL's forestry staff provided 392 technical assists with private forest landowners and land managers, along with providing education to 19 Utah citizens. The Division's project to better capture private forest landowner assistance using Survey123 has been largely successful. This involved the forestry program coordinators and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) staff designing a Routine Technical Assist form which has streamlined the annual federal reporting requirements. Grant funding awarded from various federal and state programs allowed forestry staff to assist private landowners with implementing recommended forest practices. This included a variety of on-the-ground projects, such as post-wildfire tree planting, aspen regeneration projects and invasive weed treatments.

### **Landscape Scale Restoration**

In 2023, FFSL submitted three grant applications to the Western States competitive grants program. Two of the applications were fully funded and one was partially funded after reaching the funding allocation cap for each state.

- 1.Wasatch Plateau Restoration: (Received partial funding) The project goals are forest stand improvement via thinning, invasive weeds treatment and planting spruce seedlings to restore stands.
- 2.Grassy Trails Watershed Fuel Break: This grant will create shaded fuel breaks and utilize prescribed fire for forest stand improvement.
- 3.Escalante River: Restore riparian habitat on private lands along the Escalante River near the towns of Escalante and Boulder through the treatment of woody invasive species and restoring native trees.

### **Active Project Summaries:**

- 1.Virgin River: Restore riparian forests/habitats in the priority landscapes with partners. 144 acres of woody invasive trees were removed on 50 properties, 112 people were engaged and 700 willows were planted.
- 2.Aspen Resilience in Priority Watersheds of Southeastern Utah: Restore aspen forests, reduce wildfire risk, and improve habitat. 4,500 acres of forest lands were inventoried to write 8 Forest Stewardship

Plans and 1,046 acres of invasive weeds were sprayed in Finn Canyon.

3. Mill and Pack Creeks Watershed Restoration: Reduce hazardous fuels and improve wildlife habitat in the Creeks Corridor. 97 acres of Russian olive and other invasive trees were removed.

4. Little Bear Forest Resilience Project: Improve important forest ecosystems and reduce the risk of uncharacteristic wildfires. 915 acres was silvicultural treated, 2 million board feet was harvested, collection of conifer cones for their seeds, planted 17,800 seedlings, 40 acres of fuel reduction and 165 acres treated for wildlife habitat improvement.

### **Urban and Community Forestry**

Urban forests provide essential benefits to Utah's quality of life and economy such as reductions in energy use, storm water runoff, and reduction of air pollutants. FFSL promotes healthy urban forests by encouraging communities to participate in Tree City USA with 72 communities having achieved this designation. Additionally, 6 universities were designated with TreeCampus Higher Education credentials. FFSL also promotes volunteer support for urban forestry efforts with volunteers working 24,296 hours to keep their cities green and vibrant in 2023. FFSL provided technical or financial support to 84 communities, which are actively developing or managing their urban forests and maximizing community value in 2023. FFSL coordinated 12 sub-award grants to communities in 2023, utilizing both state and federal funding sources. Six of these grants were directly funded by the Inflation Reduction Act funds, specifically for projects in disadvantaged communities. In addition, FFSL continues to support the installation of an urban forest trail in South Jordan City, estimated for completion in April 2024. Urban and Community Forestry continued to coordinate with Forest Health Protection and Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) to strategically place more EAB traps. The purpose of additional traps is to increase the probability of early detection of EAB. To date, no EAB has been detected.

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