



News Release

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USDA Invests More than \$46 Million to Protect Communities from Wildfires, Restore Forest Ecosystems and Improve Drinking Water

Albuquerque N.M., April 6, 2021 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will invest more than \$46 million this year through the [Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership](#) for projects that mitigate wildfire risk, improve water quality, and restore healthy forest ecosystems on public and private lands and one of those new projects will be *The Sierra Blanca Restoration Partnership* in New Mexico. Funding for 37 projects includes \$13 million for eight new projects and \$33.3 million to complete work on 29 projects previously selected in 2019 and 2020. Through the projects, USDA's Forest Service (FS) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are working hand-in-hand with agricultural producers, forest landowners, and National Forest System lands to improve forest health using available Farm Bill conservation programs and other authorities.

The Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership enables NRCS and FS to collaborate with agricultural producers and forest landowners to invest in conservation and restoration at a big enough scale to make a difference. Working in partnership, and at this scale, helps reduce wildfire threats, protect water quality and supply, and improve wildlife habitat for at-risk species.

The Sierra Blanca Restoration Partnership is one of eight new projects.

Total FY21 Funding Request: \$567,612 (NRCS \$238,112 and USFS \$329,500)

NRCS Application Deadline: April 30, 2021

NRCS Ranking Deadline: June 25, 2021

NRCS Obligation deadline: July 30, 2021

Project description: Located near the picturesque Sierra Blanca Mountain, this project sits in the southern half of Lincoln County and the northern portion of Otero County. Heavy fuel loadings of Pinon-Juniper, Ponderosa Pine, and Mixed Conifer forest contribute to high risk of uncharacteristic wildfire and significant threat to local communities, infrastructure, two adjacent wilderness areas, source water for community water supplies, as well as the congressionally designated Snowy River Cave System. This project will provide for treatment on a combination of private, Tribal, municipal, Federal lands, as well as New Mexico state lands. Project activities will focus on mechanical fuels reduction, prescribed burning, riparian area restoration, to include mastication in Pinon-Juniper areas with minimal understory. Desired landscape outcomes are improved resilience of firesheds and watersheds, and increased water quality and supply. Ancillary benefits of these outcomes will be enhanced wildlife habitat for several threatened and endangered (T&E) species, and ability to reintroduce native Cutthroat Trout into the local watersheds. Benefits to the community include lowered risk for wildfire, efficiencies and strategic security for water quality/supply, and stimulation of the local economy via enhanced tourism opportunities.

[Natural Resources Conservation Service](#)

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The other seven projects are:

- Alabama and Florida: Sustaining Gains in Longleaf Pine Restoration Through Coordinated Cogongrass Control
- Alaska: Prince of Wales Landscape Restoration Partnership
- Idaho: North Fork Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project
- Oregon: Buttes to Basins - All Lands Forest Resiliency Project
- Oregon: Lake County All Lands Restoration Initiative
- Puerto Rico: Ecosystem Resilience Through Conservation Practices
- Tennessee: East Tennessee Aquatic Habitat for At Risk Species

Through the new three-year projects, landowners will work with local USDA experts and partners to apply targeted forestry management practices on their land, such as thinning, hazardous fuel treatments, fire breaks, and other systems to meet unique forestry challenges in their area.

For full project descriptions and information on completed projects, visit the [Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership website](#).

Successful Partnerships

USDA has invested more than \$247 million over seven years in Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership projects, which focus on areas where public forests and grasslands intersect with privately-owned lands. This year's selections bring the total number of projects to 93. Since 2014, these projects have delivered important forest and rangeland funding.

More Information

Agricultural producers and forest landowners interested in a project to mitigate wildfire risk should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#) to learn if their land is eligible.

All USDA Service Centers are open for business, including those that restrict in-person visits or require appointments. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with FSA, NRCS, or any other Service Center agency should call ahead and schedule an appointment. Service Centers that are open for appointments will pre-screen visitors based on health concerns or recent travel, and visitors must adhere to social distancing guidelines. Visitors are also required to wear a face covering during their appointment. Our program delivery staff will continue to work with our producers by phone, email, and using online tools. More information can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

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