

NEWS RELEASE

Pacific Northwest Region - Colville National Forest
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Under Secretary Announces \$1.5 Million for Restoration Projects in Northeastern Washington

*Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service Partnership Continues
Conservation Work Nationwide*

BOISE, Idaho, February 19, 2015 – The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced today nearly \$37 million in investments to mitigate wildfire threats to landowners and communities. This is the second year of a partnership between the U.S. Forest Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to help improve the health and resiliency of forest ecosystems where public and private lands meet.

Joined by partners at an event in Idaho, Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment Robert Bonnie unveiled the 15 [Chiefs' Joint Landscape Restoration Partnership](#) projects for 2015. Located across the country from Washington to Vermont and Arizona to Ohio, NRCS and Forest Service will invest \$10 million in new projects to improve conditions on public and private lands.

As part of the Northeast Washington Initiative, the Colville National Forest in partnership with Washington Department of Natural Resources; Bureau of Land Management; Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife; NE Washington Forestry Coalition; Conservation Northwest; Avista; Boise Cascade; Vaagen Bros Lumber Inc. were successful in securing \$1.5 million dollars for restoration work that will reduce and mitigate wildfire threats to Colville National Forest land and adjacent private property in Ferry, Stevens and Pend Oreille counties. Accomplishing this work will also protect water quality and supply for communities and industry and protect habitat quality.

“By leveraging the technical and financial resources of both agencies, this coordinated effort is helping to restore lands across large landscapes regardless of whether they are on public or private lands,” Bonnie said. “Our successes from the 2014 projects demonstrate that these partnerships make a difference on the ground and we are grateful for the cooperation of several partners.” Bonnie noted that in some cases [these new projects](#) build on last year’s efforts. The partnership [made investments in 2014](#) that will result in conservation improvements to over 266,000 acres. NRCS and Forest Service will provide an additional \$27 million to continue work on 2014 projects.

In addition to NRCS and Forest Service investments, partners are contributing more than \$5 million in the 2015 projects over three years in financial, technical and in-kind services. These 15 new projects, coupled with the 13 announced last year, will help mitigate wildfire threats to communities and landowners, protect water quality and supply, and improve wildlife habitat for at-risk species in high priority landscapes across the US.

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For example, USDA support in 2014 enabled Tim Fisher of the Oregon East Face of the Elkhorn Mountains Partnership, to open up the tree canopy on 232 acres of private land which will reduce the risk for wildfire, help with soil erosion, and allow the trees to grow taller and stronger making them more marketable.

“Our agencies are being proactive to make sure conservation work flows seamlessly from private to public lands, ensuring crucial wildfire and water concerns are addressed and allowing people, like Fisher, to preserve their family lands,” NRCS Chief Jason Weller said.

“Strategic investments across landscapes help create resilient forests, grasslands and watersheds while sustaining communities,” said Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell. “Treating lands to reduce wildfire threats is a smart investment that will protect vast areas of land and potentially save of millions of taxpayer dollars.”

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The mission of the US Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. Recreational activities on our lands contribute \$14.5 billion annually to the U.S. economy. The agency manages 193 million acres of public land, provides assistance to state and private landowners, and maintains the largest forestry research organization in the world.



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