

NEWS RELEASE

Ashland Forest Health Project Expands with New State and Federal Funding

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ashland, Or—The Ashland Forest Resiliency (AFR) Partnership, a collaborative effort to restore Ashland area forests and protect key habitat, water quality and our community from effects of severe wildfires, was recently awarded a total of \$5,643,800 from State and federal sources.

Originally tasked with 7,600 acres of federal land forest restoration in 2010, the AFR partnership has developed a detailed analysis/plan and brought in new partners to include private lands east and west of Ashland. The larger Ashland Forest All-Lands Restoration (AFAR) project now incorporates 58,000 acres centered on the City's municipal watershed.

The USDA Department of Agriculture announced the 2016 Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership Awards, which granted a total of \$3,000,000 to the AFAR project. This is the second year that the AFAR is benefitting from this award, which joins the funding of two USDA agencies—the U.S. Forest Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service—to improve the health and resiliency of forest ecosystems where federal and private lands meet. Work taking place now as a result of 2015 Joint Chiefs' funds includes helicopter thinning, controlled burns, and local forestry crews working on over 1,100 acres of private land.

“The Joint Chiefs' Partnership is one of the many ways that USDA is working with local partners (such as AFAR) to help meet the increasing challenge of protecting communities, watersheds, forests and woodlands from the devastating and increasingly expensive impacts of wildfire and other threats,” said USDA Under Secretary Robert Bonnie.

The State of Oregon's Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) awarded \$1,543,800 as part of a new OWEB Focused Investment Partnership initiative that supports landscape-scale habitat improvements and protections for native fish and wildlife. The OWEB award will support forest resilience and the potential for returning “good fire” to the landscape in the form of low-intensity burns, a goal common to the entire project area. The OWEB award is one of six across the state derived from Oregon Lottery and Federal Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery funds.



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“Our new Focused Investment Partnership program will help local partnerships scale their work strategically with multi-year, multi-million dollar investments in natural resource conservation and restoration work. Ashland Forest All-Lands Restoration (AFAR) is an excellent example of this scale of work,” said Meta Loftsgaarden, OWEB’s Executive Director.

The AFAR Partnership is bringing additional matching funds to the table through financial and in-kind contributions. The Joint Chiefs’ and OWEB state dollars are jointly leveraged with the City of Ashland’s annual contribution of \$175,000 plus external funding marshaled by The Nature Conservancy and Lomakatsi.

An additional \$1.1 million was also recently earmarked by the Pacific Northwest Region of the U.S. Forest Service for reducing wildfire hazard on federal land within the AFAR footprint.

The AFAR partnership now consists of five core groups, including the City of Ashland, the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, Lomakatsi Restoration Project, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and The Nature Conservancy. Additional partners contributing funds and expertise include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District, the Oregon Department of Forestry and Jackson County Fire District #5.

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