



Office of the Under Secretary
for Farm Production and Conservation
Washington, D.C. 20250

September 29, 2025

THE HONORABLE MIKE SIMPSON
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
2007 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Simpson:

This letter transmits the U.S. Department of Agriculture report pursuant to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (P.L. 117-58), Section 40808(g). Enclosed are the fiscal year 2022 and 2023 status of projects reports for the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership. I am responding on behalf of the Department.

After 45 days from the date of this letter, this report will be posted to the Forest Service Website at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/budget-performance>.

If you have any questions, please have a member of your staff contact the Office of Congressional Relations at (202) 720-7095. We will send a similar letter to Ranking Member Chellie Pingree.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "BSA", is positioned above the printed name of the signatory.

BROOKE S. APPLETON
Deputy Under Secretary

Enclosures



Office of the Under Secretary
for Farm Production and Conservation
Washington, D.C. 20250

September 29, 2025

THE HONORABLE CHELLIE PINGREE
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Ranking Member Pingree:

This letter transmits the U.S. Department of Agriculture report pursuant to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (P.L. 117-58), Section 40808(g). Enclosed are the fiscal year 2022 and 2023 status of projects reports for the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership. I am responding on behalf of the Department.

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BROOKE S. APPLETON
Deputy Under Secretary

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Washington, D.C. 20250

September 29, 2025

THE HONORABLE LISA MURKOWSKI
Chair
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Murkowski:

This letter transmits the U.S. Department of Agriculture report pursuant to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (P.L. 117-58), Section 40808(g). Enclosed are the fiscal year 2022 and 2023 status of projects reports for the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership. I am responding on behalf of the Department.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "BSA", is positioned above the printed name of the Deputy Under Secretary.

BROOKE S. APPLETON
Deputy Under Secretary

Enclosures



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Washington, D.C. 20250

September 29, 2025

THE HONORABLE JEFF MERKLEY
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Ranking Member Merkley:

This letter transmits the U.S. Department of Agriculture report pursuant to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (P.L. 117-58), Section 40808(g). Enclosed are the fiscal year 2022 and 2023 status of projects reports for the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership. I am responding on behalf of the Department.

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If you have any questions, please have a member of your staff contact the Office of Congressional Relations at (202) 720-7095. We will send a similar letter to Chair Lisa Murkowski.

Sincerely,

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BROOKES APPLETON
Deputy Under Secretary

Enclosures



Office of the Under Secretary
for Farm Production and Conservation
Washington, D.C. 20250

September 29, 2025

THE HONORABLE JOHN BOOZMAN
Chairman
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
United States Senate
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Boozman:

This letter transmits the U.S. Department of Agriculture report pursuant to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (P.L. 117-58), Section 40808(g). Enclosed are the fiscal year 2022 and 2023 status of projects reports for the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership. I am responding on behalf of the Department.

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If you have any questions, please have a member of your staff contact the Office of Congressional Relations at (202) 720-7095. We will send a similar letter to Ranking Member Amy Klobuchar.

Sincerely,

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BROOKE S. APPLETON
Deputy Under Secretary

Enclosures



Office of the Under Secretary
for Farm Production and Conservation
Washington, D.C. 20250

September 29, 2025

THE HONORABLE AMY KLOBUCHAR
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
United States Senate
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Ranking Member Klobuchar:

This letter transmits the U.S. Department of Agriculture report pursuant to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (P.L. 117-58), Section 40808(g). Enclosed are the fiscal year 2022 and 2023 status of projects reports for the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership. I am responding on behalf of the Department.

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If you have any questions, please have a member of your staff contact the Office of Congressional Relations at (202) 720-7095. We will send a similar letter to Chairman John Boozman.

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BROOKE S. APPLETON
Deputy Under Secretary

Enclosures



Office of the Under Secretary
for Farm Production and Conservation
Washington, D.C. 20250

September 29, 2025

THE HONORABLE GLENN "GT" THOMPSON
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Thompson:

This letter transmits the U.S. Department of Agriculture report pursuant to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (P.L. 117-58), Section 40808(g). Enclosed are the fiscal year 2022 and 2023 status of projects reports for the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership. I am responding on behalf of the Department.

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Sincerely,

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BROOKE S. APPLETON
Deputy Under Secretary

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Washington, D.C. 20250

September 29, 2025

THE HONORABLE ANGIE CRAIG
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
1010 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Ranking Member Craig:

This letter transmits the U.S. Department of Agriculture report pursuant to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (P.L. 117-58), Section 40808(g). Enclosed are the fiscal year 2022 and 2023 status of projects reports for the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership. I am responding on behalf of the Department.

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If you have any questions, please have a member of your staff contact the Office of Congressional Relations at (202) 720-7095. We will send a similar letter to Chairman Glen "GT" Thompson.

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BROOKE S. APPLETON
Deputy Under Secretary

Enclosures



Report to Congress on FY 2022 Accomplishments of the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law
Section 40808
December 2024



FOREST SERVICE &
NATURAL RESOURCES
CONSERVATION SERVICE

Contents

Executive Summary	2
Program Objectives	3
Report Objectives	3
Status of Joint Chiefs projects in FY 2022	3
Funding.....	3
Program Objective Outcomes	4
Reducing the Risk of Uncharacteristic Wildfire.....	4
Improving Habitat Conditions for At-Risk Species	5
Protecting Water Quality and Supply	5
Work with Tribal Nations.....	6
Additional project accomplishments	6
Appendix A: New and Ongoing Joint Chiefs Projects Funded in FY 2022	9

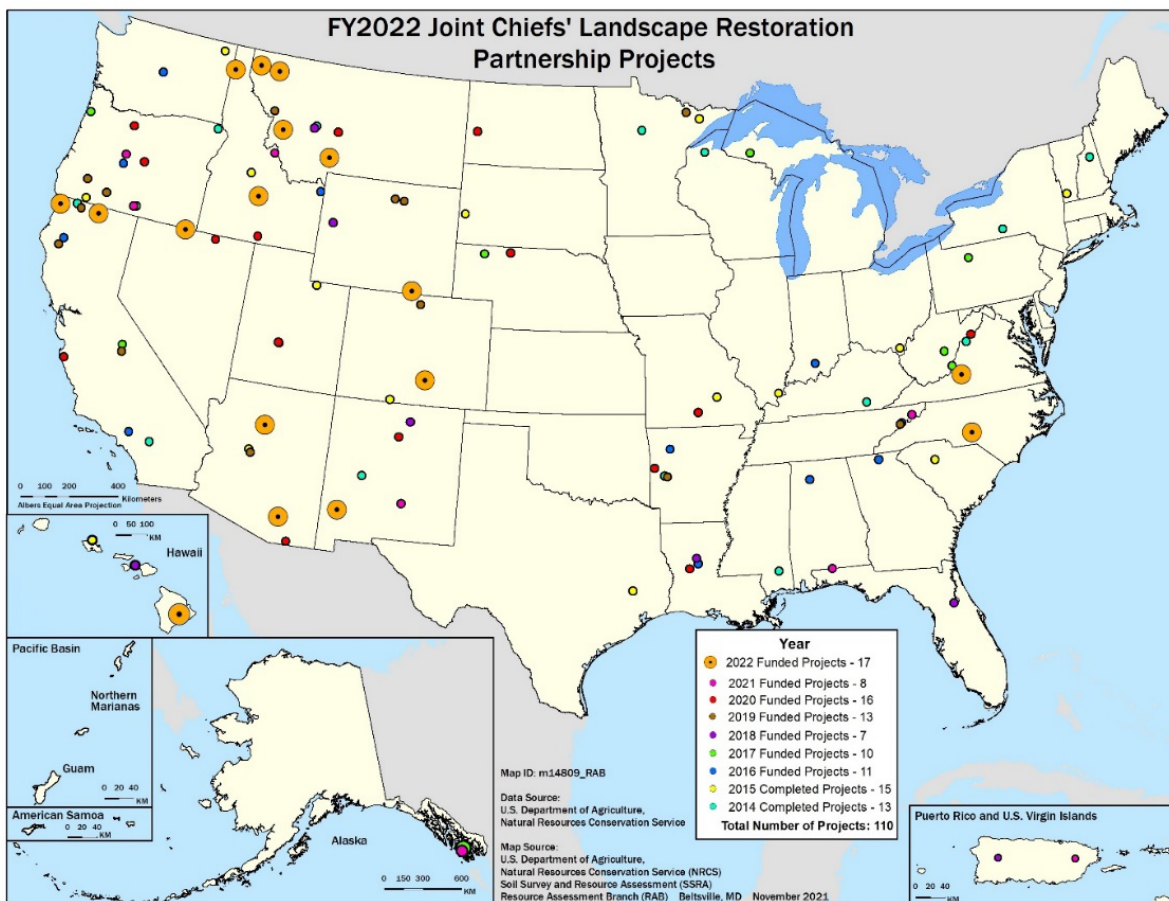
Cover Photo: Prescribed fire completed in Fiscal Year 2022 as part of the Monroe Mountain Ecosystems Restoration project, a Joint Chiefs project in Utah.

Executive Summary

The Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership (Joint Chiefs) program is a collaboration between the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to improve the health and resilience of forest landscapes across all lands. The program aims to reduce wildfire threats to communities and landowners, protect water quality and supply, and improve wildlife habitat for at-risk species across national forest system lands and state, tribal, and private lands. By leveraging the technical and financial resources of both NRCS and the Forest Service, as well as a diverse group of partners, this coordinated effort of implementing 3-year projects has led to a strong 10-year history of promoting critical management work across boundaries.

In fiscal year (FY) 2022, the NRCS and the Forest Service allocated \$48.9 million to fund 41 projects across the nation to benefit forest health and help protect communities (see figure 1). This investment allowed Joint Chiefs projects to restore forest health and reduce hazardous fuels on more than 380,000 acres of public, private, and tribal lands. Targeted investments from the program have been the key to jumpstarting new collaborative organizations that sustain and advance forest restoration objectives throughout the country.

Figure 1: Map of Joint Chiefs Funded Project Locations From 2014 through 2022



Program Objectives

The objectives of the Joint Chiefs program are to (1) reduce the risk of wildfire; (2) protect water quality and supply; and (3) improve wildlife habitat for at-risk species. A project may include one, two, or all three objectives. New projects are solicited and selected annually and are funded for up to 3 years.

Collectively, the Joint Chiefs projects are investing in coordinated conservation and restoration activities at a large enough scale to make a positive impact on the landscape. The targeted, landscape-scale approach of the Joint Chiefs program is increasing the pace and scale of hazardous fuels reduction and forest restoration treatments. These projects are achieving multiple additional benefits, such as protecting water quality and supply, advancing equity, improving habitat, and supporting jobs, industry, and infrastructure.

Report Objectives

The Joint Chiefs program began as a discretionary initiative between the Chiefs of NRCS and the Forest Service in FY 2014. The Joint Chiefs program was codified upon enactment of the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Pub. L. No. 117-58), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL).

The BIL states the following:

For each of fiscal years 2022 and 2023, the Chiefs shall submit to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate and the Committee on Agriculture and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives a report describing projects for which funding is provided under the Program, including the status and outcomes of those projects.

Status of Joint Chiefs projects in FY 2022

During FY 2022, 41 new or ongoing projects were funded across 21 states and the territory of Puerto Rico (see appendix A). FY 2022 marked the 110th Joint Chiefs' project since 2014. Total USDA funding was \$48.9 million (\$18.7 million in NRCS funds and \$30.3 million in Forest Service funds). The Joint Chiefs program helped reduce the risk of community exposure to catastrophic wildfires across 218,000 acres of public and private lands in the wildland-urban interface, and it restored more than 165,000 acres of wildlife habitat for at-risk species.

Funding

NRCS funds Joint Chiefs project contracts with producers on private lands through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). In FY 2022, NRCS allocated \$18.7 million and obligated \$17.8 million in 327 contracts (see figure 2). These contracts treated 170,676 acres (cumulatively, including multiple conservation practices on the same acre in some cases) across 21 states and the territory of Puerto Rico. The BIL authorized \$90 million for the Joint Chiefs project in FY 2022 and the same amount for FY 2023, of which not less than 40 percent was to

be allocated to NRCS. However, a separate appropriation to the NRCS for the Joint Chiefs program has not been made. Until these authorized funds are appropriated by Congress, NRCS will continue to use EQIP funds to implement the program.

The Forest Service allocated \$30.3 million to Joint Chiefs projects in FY 2022. The Forest Service allocates annual appropriations in hazardous fuels and other national forest system authorities to fund restoration work limited to national forest system lands. When available, prior year funding from State, Private, and Tribal Forestry is also used to complete Joint Chiefs work on state, tribal, and private lands for the expenses associated with cooperative efforts and for providing technical and financial assistance. The BIL authorized \$90 million for the Joint Chiefs project in FY 2022 and the same amount for 2023, of which not less than 40 percent was to be allocated to the Forest Service. However, a separate appropriation to the Forest Service for the Joint Chief's program has not been made. Until these authorized funds are appropriated by Congress, the Forest Service will continue to use discretionary appropriations to implement the program.

Additional funding for Joint Chiefs projects comes from independent financial or in-kind contributions from project partners. In FY 2022, partners contributed more than \$7.2 million to Joint Chiefs projects.

Figure 2: Funding allocated to Joint Chiefs projects in fiscal year 2022

	17 new projects	24 ongoing projects	Total 41 projects
NRCS	\$7 million	\$11.6 million	\$18.6 million
Forest Service	\$8.9 million	\$21.4 million	\$30.3 million
Partner contributions	\$2.5 million	\$4.7 million	\$7.2 million
Total funding	\$18.4 million	\$37.7 million	\$56.1 million

Program Objective Outcomes

Reducing the Risk of Uncharacteristic Wildfire

Reducing the risk of wildfire involves a coordinated approach that uses different conservation practices and treatments across the forest landscape. In particular, treatments for fuels reduction are commonly used in Joint Chiefs projects. These treatments protect communities, municipal watersheds, and water supplies, while providing wood products and jobs to local economies.

Through strategic and collaborative treatment of hazardous fuels, the Joint Chiefs program helped to reduce the risk of community exposure to catastrophic wildfires on 218,000 acres in FY 2022, including more than 177,000 acres of Federal lands. Treatments are prioritized in high or very high fire risk areas through analysis of firesheds,¹ quantitative wildfire risk assessments, community wildfire protection plans, or state forest action plans.

¹ For more information see the [Forest Service Firesheds and the Fireshed Registry webpage](#).

NRCS contracts with producers on private lands to help reduce the risk of wildfire. In FY 2022, NRCS contracted 17,621 acres of brush management; 8,579 acres of prescribed burning; 5,850 acres of woody residue treatment; 503,888 linear feet of firebreak; and 5,438 acres of forest stand improvement.

Improving Habitat Conditions for At-Risk Species

Improving habitat conditions for at-risk species is a complex undertaking that varies across the country depending on the target species and site conditions. Many times, this objective complements the other two program objectives. For example, reducing streambank erosion protects water quality and improves habitat conditions for at-risk fishes. Wildlife that benefits from this objective includes big game (such as deer and elk), federally listed birds (such as the red-cockaded woodpecker), as well as other species (such as Canadian lynx).

NRCS contracts with producers on private lands to improve conditions for at-risk species. In FY 2022, NRCS contracted 677 acres of tree/shrub establishment, 25 acres of wildlife habitat planting, 382 acres of restoration of rare or declining natural communities, 545 acres of upland wildlife habitat management, and 51 structures for wildlife, as well as implemented multiple aquatic organism passage projects that benefited more than 3.5 miles of waterways. Other supporting conservation practices were also implemented to support these species-specific practices, such as fences, site prep, and herbaceous weed treatment.

Protecting Water Quality and Supply

Protecting water quality and supply often involves both in-stream and upland treatments to achieve the project goals. In combination with treatments for reducing fuels to protect watersheds from catastrophic wildfires, Joint Chiefs treatments have helped maintain water quality and supply for downstream communities of fish, such as salmon and trout.

In FY 2022, 301 miles of streambank and shoreline were protected on national forests through activities such as hardscaping, riprap installation, and erosion reduction measures.

NRCS contracts with producers on private lands to protect water quality and supply. In FY 2022, NRCS contracted 4,604 linear feet of streambank and shoreline stabilization, 11 stream crossings, and 3 structures for water control, as well as 348 linear feet of channel bed stabilization, 4 grade stabilization structures, 9 acres of riparian buffer, and 70 feet of lined waterway or outlets. Several projects also contracted upland practices, such as livestock pipeline and watering facilities to and protect the water quality by keeping animals out of waterways. In addition, 37,713 acres of Prescribed Grazing was contracted to improve the management in watersheds.

Figure 3: Summary of key accomplishments for Joint Chiefs projects in FY 2022 across various land management types

	Hazardous fuels reduction (acres)	Wildlife habitat improved or created (acres)	Streambank improved (miles)
National Forest	177,428	134,010	301
Private	37,608	28,038	13
State	1,681	408	n/a
Tribal	1,426	n/a	3
Total	218,143	162,456	317

Work with Tribal Nations

Joint Chiefs projects partnered with tribes to build relationships and collaborate on cross-boundary forest health restoration treatments. Below are some examples of success stories in FY 2022.

- The Greater Santa Fe Fireshed Project in New Mexico partnered with the Tesuque Pueblo tribe to treat Pueblo lands adjacent to national forest lands. This work helped to reduce the risk of fire and improve wildlife habitat on both national forest and tribal lands.
- The Sierra Blanca Project in New Mexico partnered with the Mescalero Apache Tribe to treat more than 100 acres of tribal lands in the wildland-urban interface adjacent to a high priority fireshed.
- The Los Padres Strategic Community Fuelbreak Project in California partnered with the Esselen tribe of Monterey County to develop a cooperative forest management plan and identify fuelbreak locations. This partnership helped to reduce hazardous fuels across national forest and tribal lands.

Additional project accomplishments

As previously described, each Joint Chiefs project includes a range of conservation practices and treatments designed to achieve the project goals. The following is a selection of project accomplishments related to fire risk reduction, partnership building, and community benefits that build off the individual treatments. The selected accomplishments were chosen to demonstrate the variety of on-the-ground successes that restore forest health across public and private lands.

California

- NRCS staff leading three projects throughout Northern California worked with partners (including private industry) to thin several thousand acres of dense forest across public and private lands. This work had many benefits including: (1) helping to reduce the risk of wildfire to communities (including in the wildland-urban interface); (2) creating and maintaining more than 40 miles of strategically placed fuels breaks and other control features across public and private lands (which will help protect homes and infrastructure from potential future wildfires); (3) improving access and egress routes in and around rural communities to protect primary escape routes and to improve firefighter access in the event of a wildfire; and (4) helping to install and maintain

infrastructure (including bridges and culverts) to reduce the risk of flooding while improving water quality and wildlife habitat.

- By working with partners, the Forest Service and NRCS have been able to build relationships with communities, private industry, state agencies, and other groups. These relationships have resulted in a variety of agreements that work across boundaries to continue to reduce the risk of wildfire to communities.

Missouri

- The Central Ozark Glade, Woodland, and Native Diversity Restoration Project in Missouri conducted forest thinning and numerous prescribed fires, often using the Wyden Authority² to work across public and private boundaries. These treatments are strategically located to reduce the risk of wildfire in the wildland-urban interface. Treatments completed through this project have already helped suppress several wildfires between 2020 and 2022 by moderating fire behavior and providing control features that improved the safety and effectiveness of firefighting efforts.

North Dakota

- The Badlands Restoration Project in North Dakota worked with private landowners to expand grassland restoration, allowing for more productive ranchlands while reducing the risk of wildfire transmission from adjacent national grasslands.

Nebraska

- Fuels reduction treatments completed by the Northwest Landscape Restoration Project in Nebraska helped to mitigate and suppress several wildfires across the Nebraska National Forest, including the Whitetail fire and the 201 fire in 2022. Treatments reduced fire spread and improved the effectiveness and safety of fire suppression efforts. In addition, treatments to remove invasive species helped to reduce the total number of fires that were started by lightning strikes.

Oregon

- Four Joint Chiefs projects in Oregon worked with the timber industry to thin overstocked forests on both public and private lands. These projects created and sustained jobs in the local timber industry and helped the Forest Service and NRCS strengthen their relationships with private landowners. The projects provided beginning farmers and ranchers (landowners who have owned their property for not more than 10 years) the opportunity to implement conservation and fuels reduction activities that they might not have otherwise done without the technical and financial assistance that the Joint Chiefs projects provided. These projects were often completed using youth crews, which provided both work experience and conservation education.
- These Joint Chiefs projects allowed agency personnel to work with landowners to plan and implement prescribed burns across public and private lands, thereby reducing the risk of wildfire to several communities. The projects also funded post-fire recovery on

² The Wyden Authority allows the Forest Service to conduct restoration work (through cooperative agreements) on non-Federal lands if the work provides tangible benefits to watersheds on public lands. Projects must advance agency goals and objectives, and should include protection, restoration, and enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat and other resources, reduction of risk for natural disaster where public safety is threatened, or both.

private lands, including reseeding of steep slopes to improve wildlife habitat, prevent water quality issues, and reduce the risk of flooding downstream.

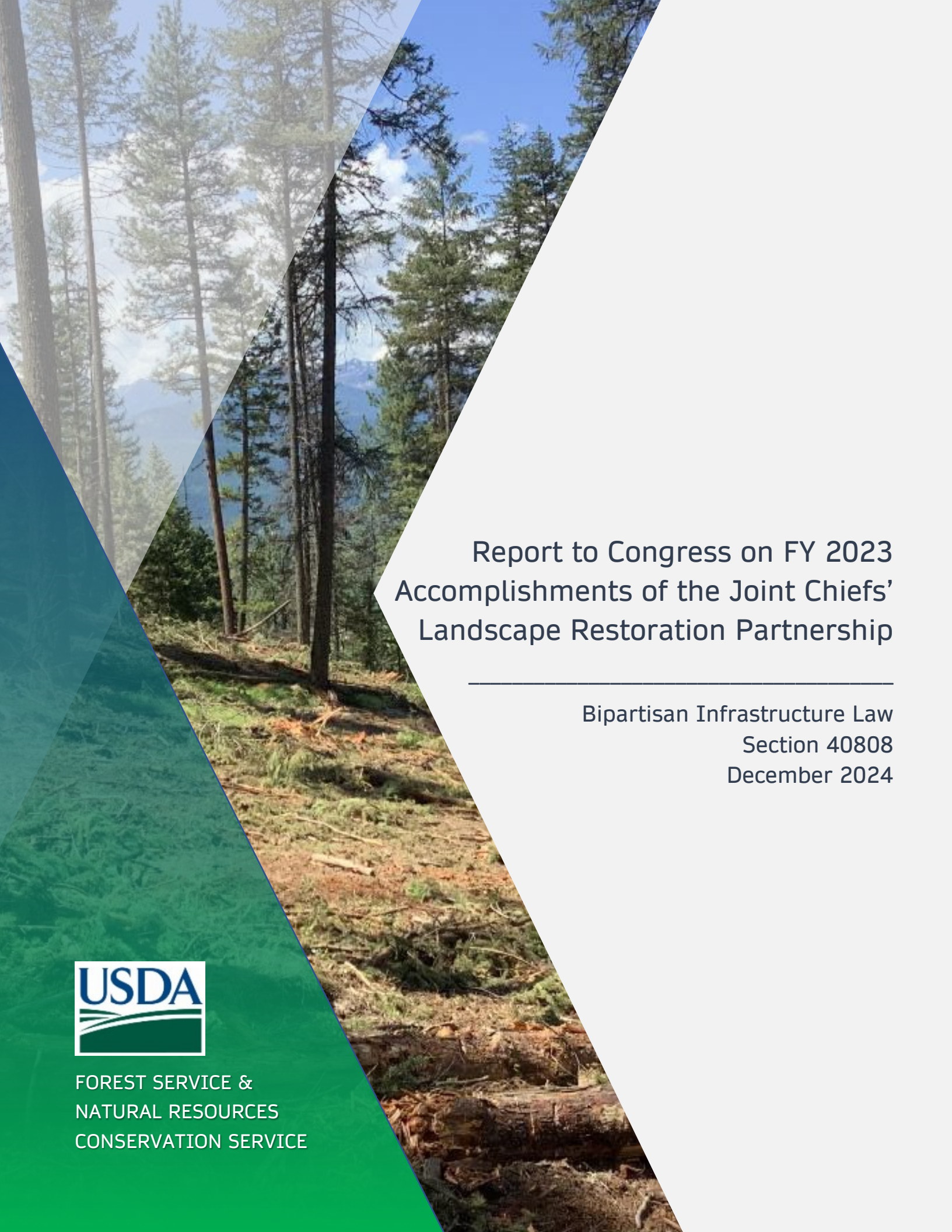
Puerto Rico

- The Ecosystem Resilience Through Conservation Practices Project in Puerto Rico helped kickstart several collaborative partnerships. This Joint Chiefs project provided technical assistance to private landowners and enabled non-profit organization partners to work with landowners to improve the resilience of forested landscapes on private lands. This work helped to retain and improve the working functions of these private lands by reducing erosion and the risk of wildfire. In addition, this project is helping to propagate endangered native plant species on national forest lands and on private lands, which helps to prevent erosion and mitigate the risk of wildland fire.

Appendix A: New and Ongoing Joint Chiefs Projects Funded in FY 2022

Fiscal Year Initiated	State	Project Name	National Forest
2020	Arizona	Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape Restoration	Coronado National Forest
2020	Arkansas and Oklahoma	Building Resilient Watersheds to Improve Drinking Water	Ozark St. Francis and Ouachita National Forests
2020	California	Little Jones Creek project	Six Rivers National Forest
2020	California	Los Padres Strategic Community Fuelbreak	Los Padres National Forest
2020	Idaho	Goose Creek Interagency Sage Grouse Habitat Restoration Project	Sawtooth National Forest
2020	Louisiana	Healthy Ecosystem of Longleaf Pine Partnership	Kisatchie National Forest
2020	Missouri	Central Ozark Glade, Woodland, and Native Diversity Restoration	Mark Twain National Forest
2020	Montana	Castle Mountains Restoration	Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest
2020	Nebraska	Nebraska Northwest Landscape Restoration	Nebraska National Forest
2020	Nevada	South Sugarloaf Fire Rehabilitation	Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
2020	New Mexico	Greater Santa Fe Fireshed	Santa Fe National Forest
2020	North Dakota	Badlands Restoration	Dakota Prairie National Forest
2020	Oregon	Upper Crooked River Restoration	Ochoco National Forest
2020	Oregon	Central Wasco County All Lands	Mt Hood National Forest
2020	Utah	Monroe Mountain Ecosystems Restoration Project Phase 2	Fishlake National Forest
2020	Virginia	North Shenandoah Mountain Restoration	George Washington and Jefferson National Forest
2021	Alabama and Florida	Sustaining Gains in Longleaf Pine Restoration Through Coordinated Cogongrass Control	Conecuh National Forest
2021	Alaska	Prince of Wales Landscape Restoration Partnership	Tongass National Forest
2021	Idaho	North Fork Hazardous Fuels Reduction	Salmon-Challis National Forest
2021	New Mexico	Sierra Blanca Restoration Partnership	Lincoln National Forest
2021	Oregon	Buttes to Basins - All Lands Forest Resiliency	Deschutes National Forest
2021	Oregon	Lake County All Lands Restoration Initiative	Fremont-Winema National Forest
2021	Puerto Rico	Ecosystem Resilience Through Conservation Practices	El Yunque National Forest
2021	Tennessee	East Tennessee Aquatic Habitat for At-Risk Species	Cherokee National Forest

Fiscal Year Initiated	State	Project Name	National Forest
2022	Arizona	Catalina-Rincon Restoration and Fuels Mitigation	Coronado National Forest
2022	Arizona	Northern Arizona Habitat Restoration and Wildfire Risk Reduction	Kaibab National Forest
2022	California	Big Flat Community Protection	Six Rivers National Forest
2022	California	Butte Valley South Landscape Restoration	Klamath National Forest
2022	Colorado	Southern Front Range Watershed	Pike-San Isabel National Forest
2022	Hawaii	Hawaii Island Wildfire Mitigation and Support	N/A
2022	Idaho	Scattered Lands Hazardous Fuels	Idaho-Panhandle National Forest
2022	Idaho	Wood River Valley Forest Health and Wildfire Resilience	Sawtooth National Forest
2022	Montana	Gallatin Valley Resiliency and Watershed Health	Custer-Gallatin National Forest
2022	Montana	Libby Surround Stewardship	Kootenai National Forest
2022	Montana	Fire Adapted Bitterroot	Bitterroot National Forest
2022	Montana	Connecting Fuels Treatments in the Salish Mountains and Whitefish Range	Flathead National Forest
2022	Nevada	Santa Rosa-Paradise Restoration	Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
2022	New Mexico	Bear Creek to Signal Peak	Gila National Forest
2022	North Carolina	Uwharries to Sandhills Landscape Collaborative	National Forests in North Carolina
2022	Virginia	Eastern Divide Restoration	George Washington and Jefferson National Forest
2022	Wyoming	Valleys and Headwaters Restoration	Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest



Report to Congress on FY 2023 Accomplishments of the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law
Section 40808
December 2024



FOREST SERVICE &
NATURAL RESOURCES
CONSERVATION SERVICE

Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
Program Objectives.....	4
Report Objectives.....	4
Status of Joint Chiefs projects in FY 2023	4
Funding.....	4
Program Objective Outcomes.....	5
Reducing the Risk of Uncharacteristic Wildfire.....	5
Improving Habitat Conditions for At-Risk Species	6
Protecting Water Quality and Supply	6
Work with Tribal Nations	7
Additional Project Accomplishments	8
Appendix A: List of Joint Chiefs Projects Funded in FY 2023	11

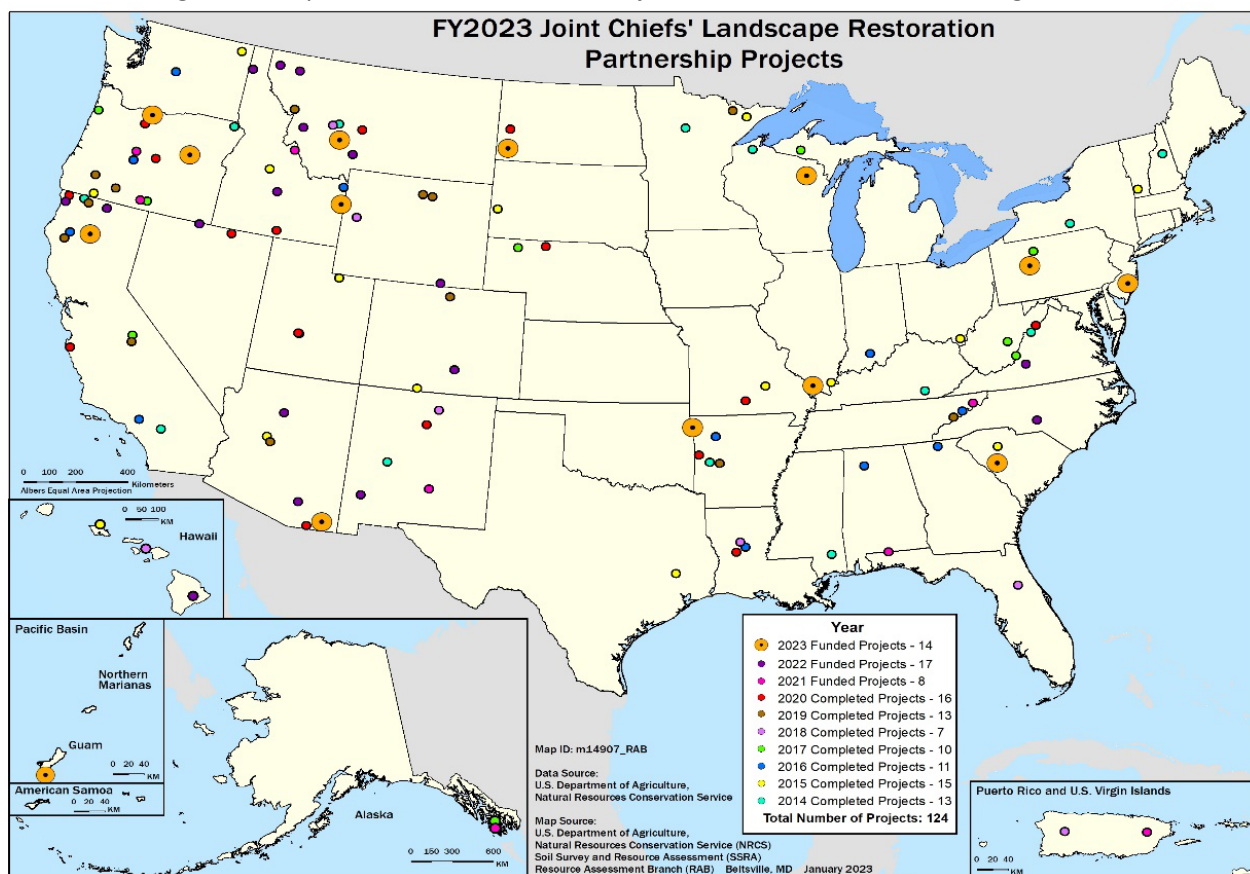
Cover Photo: Forest thinning on private lands completed in Fiscal Year 2023 as part of the Libby Surround Stewardship project, a Joint Chiefs project in Montana.

Executive Summary

The Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership (Joint Chiefs) program is a collaboration between the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to improve the health and resilience of forest landscapes across all lands. The program aims to reduce wildfire threats to communities and landowners, protect water quality and supply, and improve wildlife habitat for at-risk species across national forest system lands and state, tribal, and private lands. By leveraging the technical and financial resources of both NRCS and the Forest Service, as well as a diverse group of partners, this coordinated effort of implementing 3-year projects has led to a strong 11-year history of promoting critical management work across boundaries.

In fiscal year (FY) 2023, the NRCS and the Forest Service allocated \$49.4 million to fund 39 projects across the nation to benefit forest health and help protect communities (see figure 1). This investment allowed Joint Chiefs projects to restore forest health and reduce hazardous fuels on more than 146,000 acres of public, private, and tribal lands. Targeted investments from the program have been the key to jumpstarting new collaborative organizations that sustain and advance forest restoration objectives throughout the country.

Figure 1: Map of Joint Chiefs Funded Project Locations From 2014 through 2023



Program Objectives

The objectives of the Joint Chiefs program are to (1) reduce the risk of wildfire; (2) protect water quality and supply; and (3) improve wildlife habitat for at-risk species. A project may include one, two, or all three objectives. New projects are solicited and selected annually and are funded for up to 3 years.

Collectively, the Joint Chiefs projects are investing in coordinated conservation and restoration activities at a large enough scale to make a positive impact on the landscape. The targeted, landscape-scale approach of the Joint Chiefs program is increasing the pace and scale of hazardous fuels reduction and forest restoration treatments. These projects are achieving multiple additional benefits, such as protecting water quality and supply, advancing equity, improving habitat, and supporting jobs, industry, and infrastructure.

Report Objectives

The Joint Chiefs program began as a discretionary initiative between the Chiefs of NRCS and the Forest Service in FY 2014. The Joint Chiefs program was codified upon enactment of the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Pub. L. No. 117-58), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL).

The BIL states the following:

For each of fiscal years 2022 and 2023, the Chiefs shall submit to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate and the Committee on Agriculture and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives a report describing projects for which funding is provided under the Program, including the status and outcomes of those projects.

Status of Joint Chiefs projects in FY 2023

During FY 2023, 39 projects were funded across 24 states and the territories of Guam and Puerto Rico (see appendix A). FY 2023 marked the 124th Joint Chiefs' project since 2014. Total USDA funding was \$49.4 million (\$18.3 million in NRCS funds and \$31.1 million in Forest Service funds). The Joint Chiefs program helped reduce the risk of community exposure to catastrophic wildfires across 117,000 acres of public and private lands, and it restored more than 29,000 acres of wildlife habitat for at-risk species.

Funding

NRCS funds Joint Chiefs project contracts with producers on private lands through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). In fiscal year 2023, NRCS allocated \$18.3 million and obligated \$16.0 million in 366 contracts (see figure 2). These contracts enrolled 95,063 acres (cumulatively, including multiple conservation practices on the same acre in some cases) across 24 states and the territories of Guam and Puerto Rico. The BIL authorized \$90 million for the Joint Chiefs project in FY 2022 and the same amount for FY 2023, of which

not less than 40 percent was to be allocated to NRCS. However, a separate appropriation to the NRCS for the Joint Chiefs program has not been made. Until these authorized funds are appropriated by Congress, NRCS will continue to use EQIP funds to implement the program.

The Forest Service allocated \$31.1 million to Joint Chiefs projects in fiscal year 2023. The Forest Service allocates annual appropriations in hazardous fuels and other national forest system authorities to fund restoration work limited to national forest system lands. When available prior year funding from State, Private, and Tribal Forestry can be used to complete Joint Chiefs work on state, private, and tribal lands for expenses associated with cooperative efforts and for providing technical and financial assistance. The BIL authorized \$90 million to the Joint Chiefs program in FY 2022 and the same amount for 2023, of which not less than 40 percent was to be allocated to the Forest Service. However, a separate appropriation to the Forest Service for the Joint Chiefs program has not been made. Until these authorized funds are appropriated by Congress, the Forest Service will continue to use discretionary appropriations to implement the program.

Additional funding for Joint Chiefs projects come from independent financial or in-kind contributions from project partners. In FY 2023, partners contributed more than \$6.8 million to Joint Chiefs projects.

Figure 2: Funding allocated to Joint Chiefs projects in fiscal year 2023

	14 new projects	25 ongoing projects	Total 39 projects
NRCS	\$5 million	\$13.3 million	\$18.3 million
Forest Service	\$12.7 million	\$18.4 million	\$31.1 million
Partner contributions	\$2.9 million	\$3.8 million	\$6.7 million
Total funding	\$20.6 million	\$35.5 million	\$56.1 million

Program Objective Outcomes

Reducing the Risk of Uncharacteristic Wildfire

Reducing the risk of wildfire involves a coordinated approach that uses different conservation practices and treatments across the forest landscape. In particular, treatments for fuels reduction are commonly used in Joint Chiefs projects. These treatments protect communities, municipal watersheds, and water supplies, while providing wood products and jobs to local economies.

Through strategic and collaborative treatment of hazardous fuels, the Joint Chiefs program helped to reduce the risk of community exposure to catastrophic wildfires on 117,000 acres in FY 2023, including more than 78,000 acres of Federal lands. Treatments are prioritized in high or very high fire risk areas through analysis of firesheds,¹ quantitative wildfire risk assessments, community wildfire protection plans, or state forest action plans.

¹ For more information see the [Forest Service Firesheds and the Fireshed Registry webpage](#).

NRCS contracts with producers on private lands to help reduce the risk of wildfire. In FY 2023, NRCS contracted 1,104 acres of brush management; 2,531 acres of prescribed burning; 832 acres of woody residue treatment; 105,238 linear feet of firebreak; 144 acres of fuel break; and 1,421 acres of forest stand improvement.

Improving Habitat Conditions for At-Risk Species

Improving habitat conditions for at-risk species is a complex undertaking that varies across the country depending on the target species and site conditions. Many times, this objective complements the other two program objectives. For example, reducing streambank erosion protects water quality and improves habitat conditions for at-risk fishes. Wildlife that benefits from this objective include big game (such as deer and elk), federally listed birds (such as the red-cockaded woodpecker, and other species (such as Canadian lynx).

NRCS contracts with producers on private lands to improve conditions for at-risk species. In FY 2023, NRCS contracted 167 acres of tree/shrub establishment and 9 structures for wildlife, as well as implemented multiple instream obstruction removal projects that benefited more than 2,498 linear feet of waterways. Other supporting conservation practices were also implemented to support these species-specific practices, such as fences, site prep, and herbaceous weed treatment.

Protecting Water Quality and Supply

Protecting water quality and supply often involves both in-stream and upland treatments to achieve the project goals. In combination treatments for reducing fuels to protect watersheds from catastrophic wildfires, Joint Chiefs treatments have helped maintain water quality and supply for downstream communities of fish, such as salmon and trout.

In FY 2023, 1,100 miles of streambank and shoreline were protected on national forests through activities such as hardscaping, riprap installation, and erosion reduction measures.

NRCS contracts with producers on private lands to protect water quality and supply. In FY 2023, NRCS contracted 315 linear feet of streambank and shoreline stabilization; 2 structures for water control; 1,476 acres of heavy use area protection; 5 water wells, 4 pumping plants, and 3 improved stream crossings. Several projects also contracted upland practices, such as livestock pipeline and watering facilities to protect water quality by keeping animals out of waterways.

Figure 3: Summary of key accomplishments for Joint Chiefs projects in FY 2023 across various land management types

	Hazardous fuels reduction (acres)	Wildlife habitat improved or created (acres)	Streambank improved (miles)
National Forest	78,206	20,267	52
Private	21,847	4,738	1,110
State	13,685	2,939	2
Tribal	3,721	1,200	0
Total	117,459	29,144	1,164

Work with Tribal Nations

Joint Chiefs projects partnered with tribes to build relationships and collaborate on cross-boundary forest health restoration treatments. Below are some examples of success stories in FY 2023.

Alaska

- The Prince of Wales Landscape Restoration Project provided a great opportunity for the NRCS and Tongass National Forest to work with Alaska Native corporations and various other partners to restore watershed health and improve wildlife habitat. This project treated 2,472 acres of slash in dense forest, benefitting the overall forest health. This work supported workforce development and increased food security for tribal members.

Arizona

- The Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape Project, in conjunction with the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Reserved Treaty Right Lands (RTRL) Program, allowed the Coronado National Forest and NRCS to work on thinning and prescribed fire projects with members of the Fort Apache Fuels Crew of the Fort Apache Agency. This not only provided jobs, but also allowed tribal members to be a part of restoring their ancestral lands while improving the resiliency of priority natural resources against uncharacteristically severe wildland fires.

Idaho

- The Wood River Valley Forest Health and Wildfire Resilience Project allowed Sawtooth National Forest and NRCS to thin more than 450 acres of public and private forestlands to reduce the risk of uncharacteristically severe wildfires. The resulting small-diameter timber was delivered to the Shoshone Paiute and Shoshone Bannock tribes through the Wood for Life Program to be used as fuel to heat homes during the winter.

Nevada

- The Santa Rosa-Paradise Landscape Restoration Project in the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest funded more than 750 acres of treatments for fuels reduction, including 15 acres of fuel breaks on lands held in trust for the Fort McDermitt Paiute and Shoshone tribes. This project is also developing additional restoration projects and outreach for tribal members to help them leverage funding opportunities for fuel treatments.

Wisconsin

- The Northeast Wisconsin Forestry and Wildlife Partnership Project in the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest partnered with the Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council to reduce wildfire risk on tribal lands within the project area.

Additional Project Accomplishments

As previously described, each Joint Chiefs' project includes a range of conservation practices and treatments designed to achieve the project goals. The following is a selection of project accomplishments related to fire risk reduction, partnership building, and community benefits that build off the individual treatments. The selected accomplishments were chosen to demonstrate the variety of on-the-ground successes that restore forest health across public and private lands.

Alabama and Florida

- The Sustaining Gains in Longleaf Pine Restoration Project allowed NRCS and the national forests in Alabama and Florida to work with the states and other partners to reduce the risk of wildfire to rural communities. By eliminating cogongrass with herbicide, the project helped the forest understory to transition back to native grass species. In addition, this project helped restore longleaf pine forests while mitigating potential wildfire risk to forest resources and surrounding communities. This project provided education and assistance to historically underserved landowners to help them more effectively manage their lands.

California

- The Forest Health and Fire Resilient Rural Communities Project allowed the Shasta-Trinity National Forest and Six Rivers National Forest and NRCS to collaborate with Native Health in Native Hands (a local non-profit organization led by indigenous peoples). One component of the project included having indigenous youth reconnect with traditional land practices and form cultural burn crews to steward low-intensity prescribed fires. In 2023, this organization assisted Forest Service personnel in constructing wooden barriers to protect a priority watershed within the Mount Lassen Wilderness. This project also conducted a suite of activities to reduce wildfire risk across public and private lands, including the Trinity Forest Health Wildfire Crisis Strategy Landscape and six priority fireheds. The activities included more than 1,200 acres of fuels reduction and almost 40 miles of fuel breaks. In 2023, these fuel breaks helped firefighters protect at least one community from wildfire.

Idaho

- The North Fork Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project allowed the Salmon-Challis National Forest and NRCS to work with the Mule Deer Foundation and other partners to reduce fire risk across more than 21,000 acres of public and private lands in one priority fireshed. This work helped protect rural communities from wildfire while improving pollinator habitat and rehabilitating big game winter range. In addition, this project supported local jobs in the forest restoration industry and provided education opportunities to private landowners on how to manage their lands using unmanned aerial vehicles.

Montana

- Through the Fire Adapted Bitterroot Project, the Bitterroot National Forest and NRCS treated more than 3,800 acres of forest to reduce wildfire risk across public and private lands in the wildland-urban interface and in five priority firesheds. NRCS and the Forest Service worked with local volunteer fire departments, the State of Montana, and local soil and water resource conservation districts to deliver conservation programs to an area that had not previously participated in Farm Bill programs. Other project partners include underserved landowners, Pheasants Forever, and the National Wild Turkey Federation.
- The Gallatin Valley Forest Resiliency and Watershed Health project allowed the Custer-Gallatin National Forest and NRCS to reduce fire risk within a key watershed for the city of Bozeman. The project improved forest health and wildlife habitat in a priority fireshed and, in doing so, created 35 jobs.

North Dakota

- The North Dakota Badlands Project is strengthening relationships between the Dakota Prairie National Grassland, NRCS, and private landowners to increase the scale of restoration to benefit ranchers and wildlife habitat. Work occurred across public and private lands, including lands owned by disadvantaged and veteran farmers and ranchers.

Oregon

- As part of the Buttes to Basins Project, the Deschutes National Forest and NRCS worked with partners, state and local government, and more than 40 private landowners to reduce the risk of wildfire in the wildland-urban interface, including lands within the Central Oregon Wildfire Crisis Strategy Landscape and three priority firesheds. More than 25,000 acres were treated to reduce hazardous fuels. As a result, these treatments helped to protect the Oregon communities of Bend, Metolius, and Sisters, from five wildfires between 2021 and 2023.
- As part of the Lake County All Lands Restoration Project, NRCS and the Fremont-Winema National Forest worked with a local collaborative group to create a process to help landowners implement prescribed fire on their lands. This process is allowing landowners to better understand prescribed fire as a management tool in reducing the risk of wildfire on their lands. The Lake County All Lands Restoration Project accomplished more than 7,500 acres of wildfire risk reduction treatment, including pile burning and thinning across public and private lands. These accomplishments not only benefitted the land, but also sustained jobs in the local community. This has also helped to strengthen relationships between agencies and the local community.
- The North Wasco project on the Mt. Hood National Forest treated lands within the Mt. Hood Forest Health and Fire-Resilient Communities Wildfire Crisis Strategy Landscape. These treatments restored the forest landscape and reduced the risk of uncharacteristically severe wildfire across public and private lands.

Puerto Rico

- Through the Landscape-Scale Restoration Initiative Project in Puerto Rico, NRCS and the Forest Service developed an extensive network of collaborations across public, private, and non-profit entities to restore lands in a wholistic approach. The project has provided technical assistance, conservation, and forest planning to 65 private landowners, thereby helping working lands remain healthy and productive. This project is also propagating endangered endemic plant species to assist in forest restoration, erosion control, and post-hurricane landscape restoration across public and private lands..

Tennessee

- The East Tennessee Aquatic Habitat Project restored watershed health for more than 46 miles of streams, which benefited endangered plants and animals like native hellbenders and Southern Appalachian brook trout. This project also improved water quality for downstream communities, injected more than \$144,000 into the local economy, and created 20 new jobs.

Wyoming

- The Valleys and Headwaters Landscape Restoration project allowed the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest and NRCS to work together to reduce wildfire risk and improve wildlife habitat across more than 23,000 acres of public, private, and state lands. This work restored previously burned lands, improved water quality and supply, and reduced the risk of uncharacteristically severe wildfire. It also improved grazing conditions for big game and cattle. In addition, this project helped strengthen relationships between Federal and state agencies and private landowners.

Appendix A: List of Joint Chiefs Projects Funded in FY 2023

Fiscal Year Initiated	State	Project Name	National Forest
2021	Alabama and Florida	Sustaining Gains in Longleaf Pine Restoration Through Coordinated Cogongrass Control	Conecuh National Forest
2021	Alaska	Prince of Wales Landscape Restoration Partnership	Tongass National Forest
2021	Idaho	North Fork Hazardous Fuels Reduction	Salmon-Challis National Forest
2021	New Mexico	Sierra Blanca Restoration Partnership	Lincoln National Forest
2021	Oregon	Buttes to Basins - All Lands Forest Resiliency	Deschutes National Forest
2021	Oregon	Lake County All Lands Restoration Initiative	Fremont-Winema National Forest
2021	Puerto Rico	Ecosystem Resilience Through Conservation Practices	El Yunque National Forest
2021	Tennessee	East Tennessee Aquatic Habitat for At Risk Species	Cherokee National Forest
2022	Arizona	Catalina-Rincon Restoration and Fuels Mitigation	Coronado National Forest
2022	Arizona	Northern Arizona Habitat Restoration and Wildfire Risk Reduction	Kaibab National Forest
2022	California	Big Flat Community Protection	Six Rivers National Forest
2022	California	Butte Valley South Landscape Restoration	Klamath National Forest
2022	Colorado	Southern Front Range Watershed	Pike-San Isabel National Forest
2022	Hawaii	Hawaii Island Wildfire Mitigation and Support	N/A
2022	Idaho	Scattered Lands Hazardous Fuels	Idaho-Panhandle National Forest
2022	Idaho	Wood River Valley Forest Health and Wildfire Resilience	Sawtooth National Forest
2022	Montana	Gallatin Valley Resiliency and Watershed Health	Custer-Gallatin National Forest
2022	Montana	Libby Surround Stewardship	Kootenai National Forest
2022	Montana	Fire Adapted Bitterroot (FAB)	Bitterroot National Forest
2022	Montana	Connecting Fuels Treatments in the Salish Mountains and Whitefish Range	Flathead National Forest
2022	Nevada	Santa Rosa-Paradise Restoration	Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
2022	New Mexico	Bear Creek to Signal Peak	Gila National Forest

Fiscal Year Initiated	State	Project Name	National Forest
2022	North Carolina	Uwharries to Sandhills Landscape Collaborative	National Forests in North Carolina
2022	Virginia	Eastern Divide Restoration	George Washington and Jefferson National Forest
2022	Wyoming	Valleys and Headwaters Restoration	Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest
2023	Arizona	Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape, Phase Two	Coronado National Forest
2023	Arkansas and Oklahoma	Arklahoma Ozark Watershed Restoration	Ozark-St. Francis National Forest
2023	California	Forest Health and Fire Resilient Rural Communities, Phase Three	Shasta-Trinity and Six Rivers National Forests
2023	Guam	Making Southern Guam Firewise and Wildfire Resistant	n/a
2023	Idaho	South Teton Valley Hazardous Fuels Removal	Caribou-Targhee National Forest
2023	Illinois	Cross-Boundary Upland Oak Restoration	Shawnee National Forest
2023	Montana	Elkhorn Cooperative Management Area	Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest
2023	New Jersey	New Jersey Pine Barrens Restoration	n/a
2023	North Dakota	Badlands Restoration, Phase Two	Dakota Prairie Grasslands
2023	Oregon	North Wasco All Lands	Mt. Hood National Forest
2023	Oregon	Southern Blues Restoration	Malheur National Forest
2023	Pennsylvania	Allegheny Plateau Habitat Restoration	Allegheny National Forest
2023	South Carolina	Piedmont Watershed Restoration	Francis Marion and Sumter National Forest
2023	Wisconsin	Northeast Wisconsin Forestry and Wildlife Partnership	Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest