



Figure 1. Young conifers growing within an old burn scar on the Salmon-Challis National Forest. Photo by Tiffany Shelton, SVS.

Big Reforestation Partnerships in Small Town Idaho

Decades of working together on the Salmon-Challis National Forest have led to a new and innovative Reforestation Partnership

The Salmon-Challis National Forest is no stranger to wildfire. A large percentage of its rugged and remote 4.3 million acres have burned in the last few decades, leading to a growing backlog of reforestation surveys and tree planting for the Forest's short-staffed silviculture crew.

As it turns out, recent years have been the right time and right place for a new Reforestation Partnership to bloom between the Salmon-Challis and local non-profit Salmon Valley Stewardship. With a growing list of reforestation needs, this new partnership is helping turn big lifts into big accomplishments.



Figure 2 A SVS seasonal technician recording data. Photo by SVS.

To fulfill the requirements of the REPLANT Act, signed into law as part of the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the US Forest Service has implemented a new National Reforestation Strategy. This Strategy sets into motion a plan to build more resilient forest landscapes, including building a robust framework to increase the pace and scale of reforestation, addressing existing needs, and anticipating future events.

On the Salmon-Challis National Forest, the innovative partnership created to support this effort is already showing impressive accomplishments: from thousands of surveyed acres and new local jobs to a National Forest better poised to address future reforestation needs.

History of Collaboration

For more than 15 years, Salmon Valley Stewardship (SVS) has led community-based conservation in Lemhi County, Idaho centered around forest health and landscape resiliency. With a county land mass of over 4,500 square miles, but a population of less than 10,000, Lemhi County communities rely heavily on surrounding natural resources. With SVS's track record of coordinating community involvement on public lands projects, enhancing the environment and economic

opportunities, the new Reforestation Partnership fit the mutual goals of the organization and the National Forest.

Years One and Two

Teaming up to examine how fire can play a natural role in reforestation, and where uncharacteristically severe fire may lead to changes on the landscape that warrant interventions like tree planting, SVS and the Salmon-Challis National Forest are now through the first few years of an agreement that showcases the importance of community-based reforestation partnerships.

Notable Partnership Accomplishments

- New jobs created through the agreement include a permanent, full-time Reforestation Partnership Coordinator and multiple seasonal technicians.
- SVS was involved in surveying over 50,000 acres alongside SCNF staff including pre-treatment exams for reforestation, stocking, and certification of natural regeneration.
- Participated in thinning treatments to support the health of whitebark pine stands, a keystone species, on over 1,200 acres.
- Planted seedling trees in the Wallace Lake campground that burned in the 2022 Moose Fire.
- Despite multiple years of low cone crops, SVS helped collect enough Ponderosa pine seeds to plant mosaic patterns on 3,700 acres.
- In total, SVS helped prepare roughly 4,000 acres of thinning unit layout between 2022 and 2023.



Figure 3 A recently burned lodgepole pine stand. Photo by SVS.

A Network of Support

Community-based partnerships like the one between SVS and the Salmon-Challis NF are made possible through broad funding support.

A 2022 Central Idaho Resource Advisory Committee grant kickstarted the agreement with \$30,000 in Secure Rural Schools funds, which was complemented by



Figure 4 A large whitebark pine tree within a burn scar. Photo by SVS.

additional funding support from the National Forest Foundation.

“We are extremely proud of the partnership with the Salmon-Challis National Forest and Salmon Valley Stewardship,” said Mindy Crowell, Reforestation Partnership Director with the National Forest Foundation.

“This project is imperative in helping us achieve our goals because it’s a win across three fronts. There are environmental benefits of tackling critical replanting and revegetation work on 40,000 acres, the economic benefits of rural workforce development, and the social benefits of bringing together local organizations and stakeholders. Salmon Valley Stewardship has sowed the seeds for successful reforestation and forest resilience, and I look forward to continuing this growth in coming years,” Crowell added.

Sustaining the momentum of the first few years, SVS and the Salmon-Challis are building off this funding support to keep the partnership moving forward and delivering measurable outcomes.

What’s Next?

With the added capacity brought to the table by the Reforestation Partnership, the Salmon-Challis and SVS are well positioned to continue tackling reforestation goals and building skillsets within the community of Salmon’s local workforce.

And while it can be difficult to know what additional needs will arise down the road, planning for the future is made easier alongside dedicated partners.