



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture



# USDA Forest Service Intermountain Region Strategic Framework

FY 2017-2020

Caring for the Land and Serving People



/ Forest Service

/ Intermountain  
Region

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# Message from the Regional Forester



**NORA RASURE**  
Regional Forester

## WELCOME!

As we look to the next 100 years of conservation and our work to improve lives through the management of forests and rangelands throughout the Intermountain Region, we must continue to assess, plan, and act with consideration of:

- our impact on the natural world;
- the social, economic and environmental well-being of local communities; and
- the delicate balance between society's current and future needs and the sustainability of the natural resource on which our society is dependent.

Together, we—as employees, partners, volunteers, and stakeholders—apply our diverse skills, expertise, and passions to care for these lands and serve people at every turn. The resulting accomplishments are equally diverse and generate relevant and lasting benefits. We have much to be proud of as we reflect on our collective achievements.

We are experiencing changes in the social, political, economic, and environmental arenas in which we work. Much like climate change, these shifts happen in small but steady increments. However, we can overcome these challenges by realizing the opportunities.

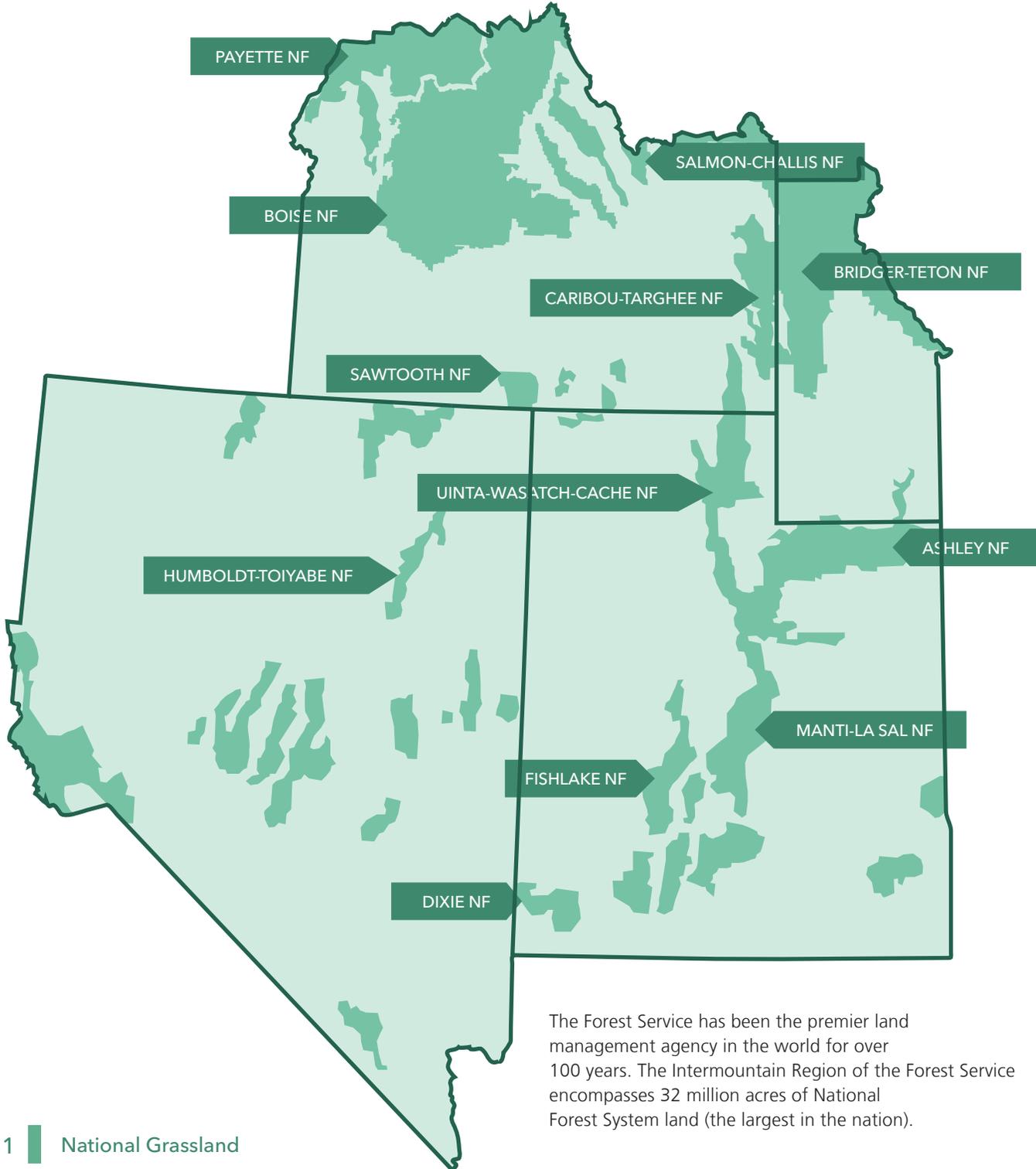
The establishment of our 2017-2020 Strategic Framework creates an opportunity for us to explore and question how we are adapting to the dynamic conditions that influence our work. There are tremendous opportunities and challenges ahead of us. What can we do now—in the coming four-year period—to further the mission of the Forest Service and the Intermountain Region in the near and long-term is to: Strategically Collaborate, Engage, Debate, Evaluate, and Act.

We will successfully address the challenges that rise and build on the opportunities that emerge. We will succeed by embracing an inclusive culture that promotes collaboration with each other, our partners, and stakeholders, and we will integrate evolving natural and social science knowledge to shape our decision processes and actions.

Thank you—each of you—for the contributions you make to promoting and practicing innovative, efficient, and effective sustainable natural resource management throughout the Intermountain Region.

*Nora*

# The Intermountain Region



The Forest Service has been the premier land management agency in the world for over 100 years. The Intermountain Region of the Forest Service encompasses 32 million acres of National Forest System land (the largest in the nation).

- 1 National Grassland
- 12 National Forests
- 44 Wilderness Areas

# Overview: 2017-2020 Intermountain Region's Strategic Framework

## VALUE OF THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The 32,000,000-plus acres within the Intermountain Region represent nearly 17% of all National Forest System lands managed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service.

To understand and respond to the ever-changing social, economic, technological, political, and physical environment, the Intermountain Region embarked on a strategic planning effort. The goal of this effort is to understand key issues, challenges, influences, and opportunities facing the Intermountain Region in order to set Regional direction for the next four years.

The output of that effort resulted in our 2017-2020 Strategic Framework.

The Intermountain Region's Strategic Framework is well aligned with the USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan: FY 2015–2020. Our Strategic Framework considers the Region's core strengths and identifies our unique role in addressing the national goals and objectives. Our strengths include:

- a knowledgeable and committed workforce;
- strong relationships and collaboration with partners; and
- expertise to identify emerging needs and provide local, forest, and regional public land management leadership.

By capitalizing on our strengths and connecting our unique Regional strategies with the national plan, we are better positioned to proactively address the current and future challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Our Strategic Framework will be amended annually to include our Regional Priorities, which will be created with input from Regional Leadership Team members and reflected in the annual performance elements.



# Mission, Vision & Guiding Principles

## THE MISSION

The mission of the Forest Service is based on the relationship between the American people and their natural resource heritage:

*To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of America's Forests and Grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.*

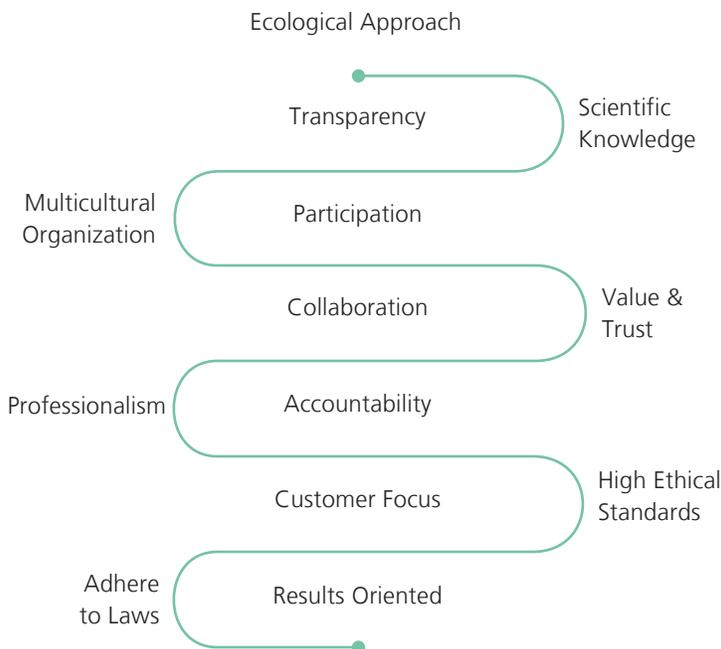
## THE VISION

The vision demonstrates our commitment toward a collaborative future as stewards, those we serve and our natural resources:

*We lead the way in caring for the land and serving people. Our employees work in a nurturing environment with shared leadership and a focus on achieving our mission with excellence. The American people can count on the Forest Service to perform.*

## THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

To realize our mission and vision, we follow these guiding principles:



We manage over 32 million acres of National Forests



We treated and restored over 420,000 acres in 2015



There are over 30,000 miles of trails within the Region



We have 1,904 developed recreation sites



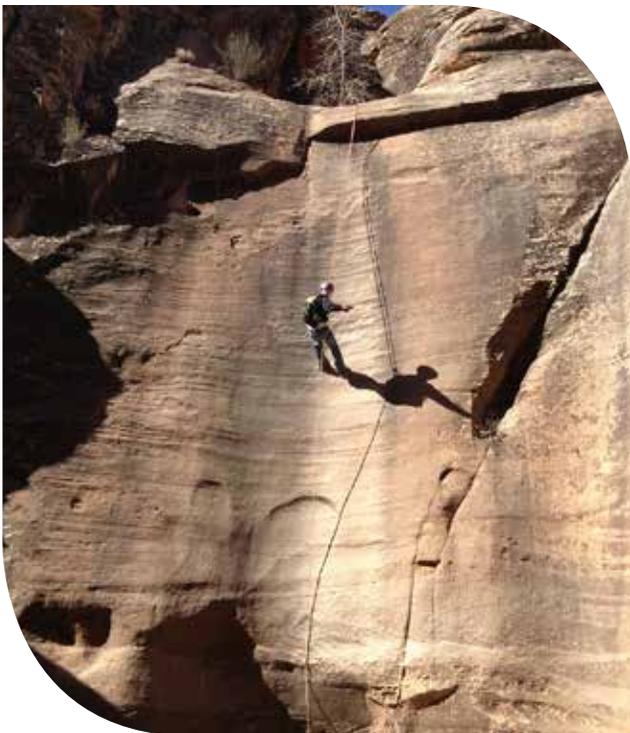
Annual Visitors over 21 million people

# The Journey Ahead: Opportunities & Challenges Facing the Intermountain Region

Employees of the Intermountain Region work to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of our diverse Forest and Grassland ecosystems in seven states. We face the reality of today's economy, resource demands of a diverse and growing population, and existing and future impacts of climate change. Fortunately, our workforce and many partners are passionately committed to making strategic long-term investments to meet the needs of present and future generations.

## CELEBRATE TRADITION TO BOLSTER OUR FUTURE

For over 100 years, the Forest Service has been the premier land management agency in the world with a foundation of dedicated and loyal employees. As such, connecting people with the land and expanding our knowledge and skills are increasingly important to achieving our mission in the future; we must use the strength of our proud tradition and history to adapt.



## INVEST IN THE EVOLUTION OF OUR WORKFORCE

We are committed to advancing the development of diverse skill sets in our current workforce, recruiting for diverse expertise and perspectives in our future workforce, and ensuring that the workplace is inclusive and productive. The investment we make in our employees and volunteers translates to an investment in the communities of place and interests and in the quality of future public land management discussions and decisions.

## PRACTICE THOUGHTFUL FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Region's fiscal year allocation must support over 32 million acres—the largest region within the Forest Service—yet the value of the dollar available per acre is decreasing. We must continue the work that began in FY 2016 to adapt our allocation processes to provide for funding flexibility, accomplish priority work, and be accountable for work goals and productivity.

## NAVIGATE THE SOCIAL & POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

States within the Intermountain Region have the highest percentage of Federal land ownership in the Lower 48, each with diverse landscapes, economies, and political viewpoints. Engaging with partners to demonstrate the economic, environmental, and social relevancy and benefits of the presence of these lands and the work that we do will contribute to thoughtful debates about the merits of such large tracts of federally managed public lands.

## CONNECT AND COLLABORATE WITH THE PUBLIC

The Region must develop and deploy an always-on communications approach in both traditional and digital channels to drive ambassadorship, engagement, and understanding. We will expand the “It’s All Yours” campaign to tell the story of Forest Service contributions and to encourage people to take advantage of the natural wonders available throughout the Region.

## ADAPT WITH OUR RAPIDLY CHANGING PLANET

Rising temperatures and fluctuating patterns of precipitation will have a definitive effect on wildlife habitat, water quantity and flows, forest and grassland productivity and resiliency, and even recreational opportunities. Fires burn longer, larger, and hotter than at any point in recorded history. We must consider new

management approaches, technologies, and societal demands and continually expand with whom and how we collaborate in order to utilize the best science and diverse perspectives of employees and stakeholders in our land management decisions.

**As we move forward, we must utilize all available resources toward the continued accomplishment of our Agency’s mission. We must be creative, effective, and efficient in all management decisions and actions. We must be unstoppable in pursuit of our mission and in caring for the land and serving the people throughout the majestic National Forests and Grasslands of the Intermountain Region.**



# Agency Goal 1: Sustain Our Nation's Forests and Grasslands

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Forest and Grassland ecosystems are resilient and adaptive in a changing environment.

## Objective A: Foster Resilient, Adaptive Ecosystems to Mitigate Climate Change

Our Forests and Grasslands provide enormous environmental, social, and economic benefits: wildlife habitat, clean air and water, wood products and livestock grazing, minerals and energy, and recreation for our communities. We pursue bold, innovative projects to improve the resiliency and productivity of these lands, integrating support for regional economies and societal needs. Our forests, rangelands, and grasslands are in or moving toward a healthy ecological state, and the work that we do is widely recognized on a national level.

### REGIONAL STRATEGIES:

- Expand collaboration across jurisdictions, ownerships, and landscapes; use diverse authorities to accomplish our work and engage stakeholders in discussions that affect the social, economic, and environmental viability of local ecosystems.
- Integrate scientific knowledge into public discussions and management decisions, with an emphasis on climate change vulnerability, by strengthening relationships with research organizations such as the Rocky Mountain Research Station.
- Prioritize restoration work across the Region, with balanced emphasis on rangelands, grasslands, and forests, to maximize funding efficiencies and ensure long-term resiliency.
- Update Forest Plans to provide a framework for adaptive management of National Forests and Grasslands.



## Objective B: Mitigate Wildfire Risk

Wildland fires are a natural component of the ecosystems we manage, and many components of these ecosystems are dependent on fire for resiliency and sustainability. Managing fire becomes complicated when communities and other components of the ecosystem valued by society are threatened. The Region partners with States and other volunteers to follow the tenets of the Cohesive Strategy: to respond to wildland fire aggressively and safely while also using fire as a tool when and where appropriate to reduce risks and impacts of catastrophic wildfires, protect communities, and enhance resiliency of the Region's Forests and Grasslands.

### REGIONAL STRATEGIES:

- Utilize the Cohesive Strategy Framework to enhance partnerships and stakeholders' support. Prioritize and pursue our collective interests around sustainable landscapes, fire-adapted communities, and safe and effective emergency response.
- Restore fire-adapted ecosystems to reduce risks of catastrophic wildland fire and impacts of disturbance factors such as insects, disease, drought, and changing climatic conditions.
- Ensure that fire response strategies reduce risk exposure and provide for the safety of fire responders and the public, and effectively communicate this commitment to partners, stakeholders, and the public.
- Develop a campaign to communicate the benefits of prescribed burns on the landscape and associated safety measures. "The right fire, at the right place, at the right time."
- Build on the public's fascination with fire, to articulate the relevancy of managing public resources for public benefit.

## Objective C: Conserve Open Space



Forest loss and fragmentation reduce ecological benefits and renders remaining forests more vulnerable to threats. We need to maintain the National Forests within a broader landscape context. We actively support and encourage quality land stewardship, conservation easements, and other avenues for protecting open spaces and important ecosystem connectivity traits across all ownerships.

### REGIONAL STRATEGIES:

- Proactively market and utilize programs within State and Private Forestry to encourage and support landowners' and partners' efforts to conserve priority open spaces.
- Manage National Forests and Grasslands with consideration for economic and environmental implications on neighboring open spaces.

*Did you know? The Intermountain Region manages approximately 4,500 "land" uses at any given time. Region 4 restores over 315,000 acres of watershed per year.*

# Agency Goal 2: Deliver Benefits to the Public

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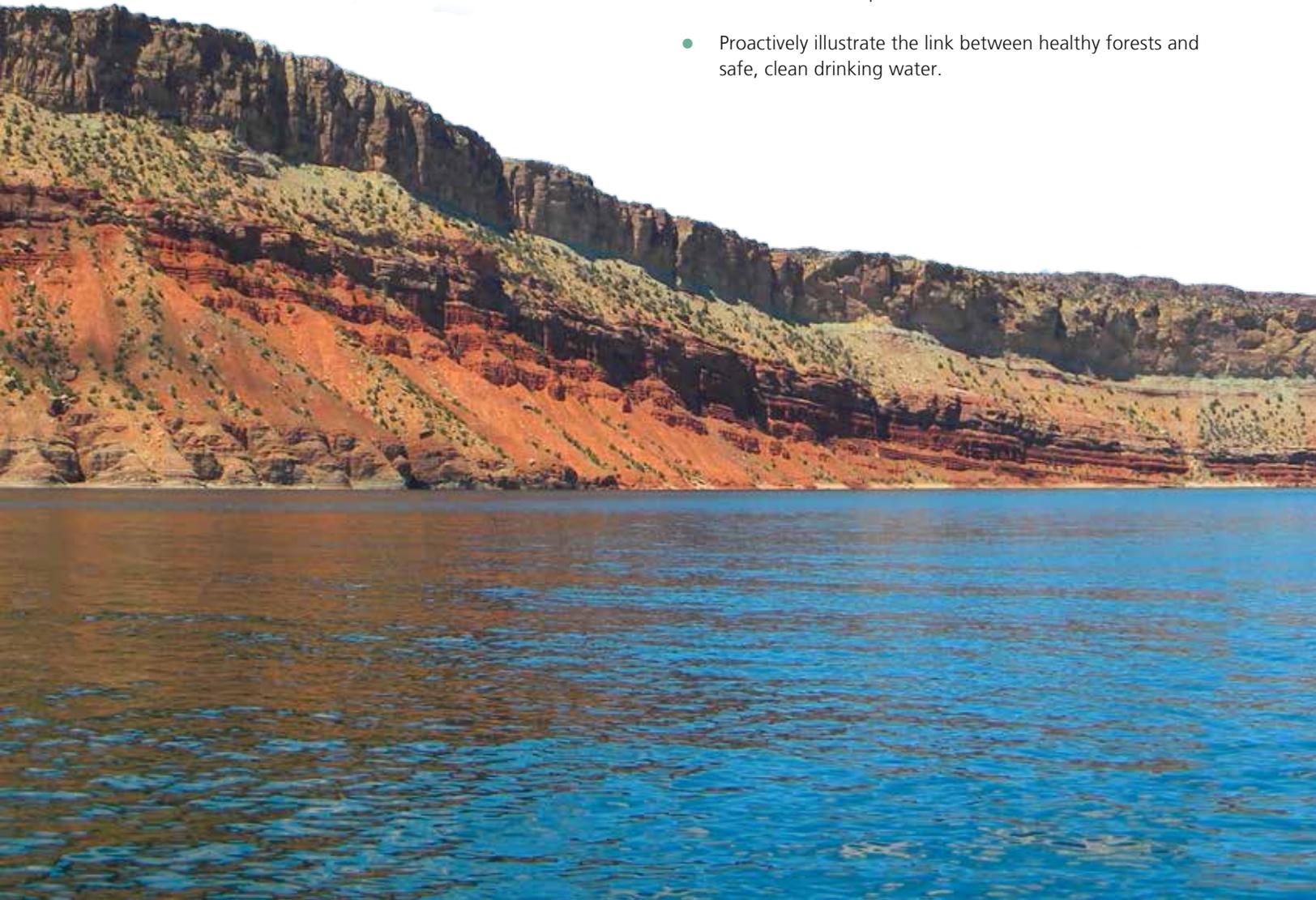
Social, economic, and environmental benefits flow from Forest and Grassland resources.

## Objective D: Provide Abundant Clean Water

Water is life. It is one of the most critical resources in the Intermountain West. Healthy Forests and Rangelands help maintain and improve water quality in both urban and rural areas and help regulate the timing of water flows. The Intermountain Region has restored 316,000 acres of watersheds annually over the past five years. We will implement sustainable operations to manage water use, and we will work to increase stewardship capacity with our partners.

### REGIONAL STRATEGIES:

- Deliver the knowledge, tools, and technology to restore, sustain, and enhance watersheds in a dynamic environment exposed to changing climate and evolving social demands.
- Prioritize and implement restoration projects to maximize funding and resources to achieve watershed restoration work on the ground.
- Facilitate partnerships that foster water conservation and citizen stewardship.
- Proactively illustrate the link between healthy forests and safe, clean drinking water.



## Objective E: Strengthen Communities

Communities throughout the Intermountain Region rely on the resources of National Forests for commodities such as water, recreation, grazing, minerals, and timber. Collaborating with State, local, and Tribal partners across all ownership boundaries, will connect people to the land and contribute to the social, economic, and environmental well-being of our neighboring communities.

### REGIONAL STRATEGIES:

- Expand collaboration using the Forest Plan Revision process to enhance shared understanding of needs, expectations, opportunities, and limitations.
- Avoid being too traditional in Forest Plan Revision intent. Use this process to explore what society needs from National Forests in the next several decades.
- Within our large-scale ecological restoration work, consider social, ecological, and economic factors.
- Develop and implement youth engagement strategies using conservation education programs and youth hiring programs to expose K-12 students to careers in the Forest Service.
- Strengthen working relationships with tribes.



## Objective F: Connect People to The Outdoors; Nurture the Next Generation of Conservationists

Outdoor recreation is by far the single greatest use of the Forests in the Intermountain Region. These recreational activities encourage and foster citizen stewardship of National Forest lands, contribute to local and regional economies, and make a positive difference in the quality of life for area residents and visitors. The number of recreational visits to the Intermountain Region rose from 2.5 million in the 1930s to 20.3 million today. Within the past year, the Intermountain Region joined the National “It’s All Yours” campaign, which encourages even greater recreational use of National Forests by inviting people to “GO PLAY”. As people connect to the land, they are vested in its management, increasing volunteerism, partnerships, and champions for our mission.

### REGIONAL STRATEGIES:

- Continue the Region-wide “It’s All Yours” campaign to communicate the importance of connecting people to the outdoors.
- Develop innovative approaches to fund recreation, conservation education, and youth employment opportunities.
- Utilize new and emerging technologies and techniques to reach nontraditional and diverse audiences in order to share recreational opportunities throughout the Region.
- Expand engagement with partner organizations and industries that can help with outreach and delivery of quality, sustainable, appropriate recreation, conservation education, youth employment, and citizen stewardship opportunities.
- Engage with partners and stakeholders to instigate and support a Region-wide conversation about the value of these public lands and services to communities of place and of interest. Tell the story of these projects to broader and more diverse communities of potential visitors and advocates.

*Did you know? The Intermountain Region has approximately 21,000 miles of fishable streams and 167,000 acres of lakes on National Forest system (NFS) land. This mileage constitutes about 16% of the estimated 128,000 stream miles on NFS lands nationally. The lake acreage represents about 8% of lake acres on NFS land nationally.*

# Agency Goal 3: Apply Knowledge Globally

Natural resource decision-making is improved through the use of reliable information and applications.

## Objective G: Advance Knowledge

The Region supports continuous learning for all employees. By sharing information with our partners, we will continue to evolve our knowledge, skills, and activities to benefit forest, watershed, and grassland management. The public benefits from learning about innovations through local collaborations and dialogue.

The Intermountain Region advocates for the long-term health and sustainability of natural resources and of communities which are dependent upon these natural resources. Our NEPA projects are efficient and effective in getting well-designed work done on the ground. We adapt and utilize new authorities to expand our capacity. We work with current partners while seeking ideas and involvement from new partners. Our work in climate change vulnerability assessments is viewed as a model for others throughout North America, and the knowledge summarized is visibly applied in future decisions. We are collaborative, focused, adaptive, and quick to identify and address emerging issues.

### REGIONAL STRATEGIES:

- Coordinate and collaborate with partners to advance the cross-pollination of ideas and scientific knowledge across all lands.

- Enhance communications with the public and stakeholders through expanded use of new technologies, digital channels, and management improvements and engagement with scientists and managers.
- Use the Facilitated Learning Analysis process to learn and adapt from outcomes of innovative approaches to and new authorities for managing National Forests.
- Identify and act on opportunities to leverage resources across organizational and geographic boundaries; address shared information and technology needs with partners and stakeholders.
- Explore best ways to streamline NEPA processes to increase efficiencies while retaining quality decisions.
- Proactively engage employees, collaborators, and stakeholders in findings of the Intermountain Adaptation Partnership's Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment to ensure that discussions, decisions, and actions incorporate this emerging new knowledge.



## Objective H: Transfer Technology & Applications

Intermountain Region employees make significant contributions to the development and transfer of new technologies and applications that help the Forest Service and our partners. We face and solve complex problems as natural resource managers, communicators, and business/operations professionals. We contribute to research and development efforts by providing design input, testing prototypes, and generating new tools. We collaborate with other natural resource experts and leaders in Natural Resource Management to share best practices at the local-to-global scale.

### REGIONAL STRATEGIES:

- Update the Intermountain Region's and Forests' websites regularly and provide timely and useful information to the public.
- Further expand our use of technology to accomplish our work, manage our information, and share our evolving knowledge.
- Utilize information management to interpret Forest Plan Revision and Vulnerability Assessment processes to facilitate expanded conversations and engagement.



## Objective I: Exchange Natural Resource Expertise



The Intermountain Region collaborates with a broad range of local, regional, and international organizations. We exchange innovative technologies, address cross-boundary challenges, and identify new opportunities to improve our skills. Through the Forest Service's International Programs, Intermountain Region employees share their natural resource expertise across the globe. As the health and resiliency of our natural resources increases, so does the social and economic health of the communities that depend on these natural resources.

### REGIONAL STRATEGIES:

- Promote cross-forest, region, and ownership boundary collaboration on landscape level projects.
- Utilize Forest Plan Revision and Communities of Place processes to fully explore future societies' needs and how we can respond.
- Increase coordination with the Rocky Mountain Research Station and other scientific organizations to obtain and apply the most up-to-date information pertaining to natural resource management.
- Increase the visibility of our successful projects by sharing with targeted audiences and the general public.
- Seek professional opportunities to learn and to share knowledge via field trips, professional society activities, webinars, and service trips.

*Did you know? The Intermountain Region's world class aquatic resources on NFS lands provide 3,701,850 angler days with total expenditures associated with those angler days valued at nearly \$300,000,000.*

# Agency Goal 4: Excel as a High Performing Agency

Exemplary public service realizes customer-focused results.

## Objective J: Recruit a Diverse Workforce

To succeed in 2020 and beyond, our workforce needs to reflect the diversity of cultures, races, perspectives, and interests found in the society that we serve. We will leverage the strengths of our core values to help fulfill our mission and continue to serve our stakeholders. We are a multicultural inclusive workforce with a broad spectrum of skill sets, and we foster an environment of dignity and respect for all cultures. Within four years we have expanded the diversity of our workforce and are proactively recruiting for new talent. We focus on developing our diverse talent through leadership, mentoring, and partner programs. Through these efforts, we are expanding our knowledge, expertise, perspectives, and collaboration with innovative and strategic thinking. The Forest Service embraces the diversity of the lands and communities we serve, and we reflect that in our commitment to our people.

### REGIONAL STRATEGIES

- Develop and implement an outreach, recruitment, and retention strategy for the Intermountain Region that is strategically designed to further diversify our workforce.
- Expand use of hiring authorities and special hiring events.
- Help both new and existing employees develop professionally and progress in their careers.
- Explore additional opportunities to expand our hiring of student interns.



## Objective K: Promote an Inclusive Culture

Just as the Intermountain Region seeks to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the National Forests and Grasslands, we also strive to enhance and maintain the health, diversity, productivity, and safety of our employees. Promoting an inclusive mindset enables us to create a meaningful work environment where employees feel welcome and empowered to be and do their best. The Region's inclusive work environment supports and encourages our people to maximize their potential and bring their A game to work every day. By supporting our employees' professional development—the opportunity to learn, change, and grow throughout their careers—we are investing in an inclusive workforce that is better equipped to care for the land and serve people into the future.



### REGIONAL STRATEGIES:

- Use the Region's Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) to gather employees' perspectives of the Intermountain Region workplace and engage employees to address high-priority concerns and solutions, and implement programs to facilitate desired outcomes.
- Use the Communities of Place Learning Labs model as one tool for employees and leadership to explore ways to enhance a sense of inclusivity for all partners and stakeholders.
- Ensure that leaders model and visibly support inclusivity.
- Develop programs that help employees understand the value of an inclusive environment and help them develop skills and practices that will promote inclusiveness within the Region.

## Objective L: Attract & Retain Top Employees



The Intermountain Region fosters programs that attract and retain exceptional talent, bolstering opportunities for our diverse workforce today and into the future. The Intermountain Region continues to inspire our employees to lead, innovate, and respect the incredible landscapes in which we work and play. We do so by cultivating meaningful work and an inclusive culture, and we monitor the success of our efforts through results of the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey.

### REGIONAL STRATEGIES:

- Encourage innovation and creativity. Engage employees in helping us identify steps we can take to attract and retain new employees.
- Provide ongoing professional development opportunities for employees at all levels of the organization.
- Implement a Regional mentoring program. Monitor the program's success over a four-year period.
- Recruit for and select innovative, visionary leaders who model traits we want to expand in the rest of our workforce.

## Objective M: Safety & Risk Management

Valuing the contributions of all of our employees is intrinsic to the Forest Service, and the loss of even one—whether temporarily due to injury, or permanently due to serious injury or fatality—is unacceptable. A permanent absence creates a void in the Forest Service family. We seek ways to mitigate the risks of our jobs and to ensure the safety of our employees. The safer we are, the more successful we are. Simply put, we want to increase the likelihood that all of our employees come home safely at the end of their shifts.



### REGIONAL STRATEGIES:

- Expand campaigns to communicate the importance of safety via impromptu conversations, genuine attention to safety tools such as job hazard analyses and tailgate safety sessions, leader-led discussions, and colleague-modeled best practices behavior.
- Utilize facilitated discussions of safety and risk management, such as the National Safety Journey and the 2016 Life First! Fire Engagements with all employees.

## Objective N: Budgeting & Alignment



An accelerated timeline for budget direction will give us better results in planning and meeting Regional goals, accomplishing priority work, and building better relationships with our partners. We deliver appropriate initial budget direction so that Units throughout the Intermountain Region can plan their annual programs of work early in the fiscal year.

### REGIONAL STRATEGIES:

- Deliver initial budget direction to Forest Units prior to the new fiscal year by developing a forecasting model, thus accelerating an annual program of work planning at the Forest level.
- Utilize work finance principles to fund projects, while following accounting law principles.
- Utilize an innovative and consistent approach throughout the Region to develop yearly work plans. Strive to significantly reduce the number of work plans within the Region.

*Did you know? In the last 3 years, Region 4 has treated over 500,000 acres of hazardous fuels on National Forest lands.*

# Putting Our Strategic Plan into Action (Thinking Ahead)

As we think about the next 100 years of conservation, we will think of how our actions in 2017-2020 affect the lives of people for decades to come. We will identify and explore the key opportunities and challenges that will shape our work. We will use the goals and objectives from the National Strategy to articulate specific strategies that will guide our strategic priorities on an annual basis.

Common themes woven throughout our Strategic Framework include:

- Expanding collaboration and partnerships, nurturing people and relationships.
- Setting and focusing on priorities.
- Applying innovative, new technologies to support our work, to communicate with stakeholders, and to market accomplishments and opportunities to all who are interested.
- Investing in our internal workforce and partners to ensure safety, productivity, inclusivity, and business integrity.

## MONITORING PROGRESS:

Annually, this Framework will be amended to include the Region's annual priority performance elements, which will be designed to support these goals, objectives, and Regional strategies. We will monitor, share, and learn from progress and accomplishments.

## PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE:

Along the way, we must take time to understand what we accomplish and the relative significance of those accomplishments. We will identify and explore the key opportunities and challenges that will shape our work over the next four years. We will use the goals and objectives from the National Strategy to articulate specific strategies that will guide our strategic priorities on an annual basis. As we carry out the strategies in this plan, we will also evaluate and assess progress throughout the 4-year period, adapting our actions as needed to achieve our goals.

## CELEBRATING TODAY:

Lastly, we must also take time to appreciate and celebrate with colleagues and partners all that we are accomplishing. The work of the Intermountain Region, supported by employees and partners, generates tremendous benefits for the natural resources we manage and the people we serve. Amidst the constant pressures of what's next, we will take time to honor the great good that is being done.

And we need to take our own advice. After your workday is done, save time to Go Play. It's all (y)ours, too.



