



# News Release

Five Years of Accomplishment

*Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program Benefits Land and People*

Kooskia, ID, February 26, 2015: Six years ago a fledgling Collaborative and representatives from the Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forests were discussing an opportunity to tap into a new national program designed to accelerate restoration work and reduce the costs of fighting fire in forests that had a scientific strategy for restoring the landscape.

Title IV of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 established the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program. The legislation provided funding authority for the Secretary of Agriculture to request up to \$40 million annually from fiscal years 2009-2019 to implement and monitor ecological restoration treatments on national forest system lands.

A major requirement of the legislation was that proposals be developed collaboratively. Dale Harris and Alex Irby, co-chairs of the Clearwater Basin Collaborative, enthusiastically embraced the program. "The Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program was a vehicle for the Collaborative to meet the needs of many of the members at the collaborative table," they explained.

The Clearwater Basin Collaborative, formally convened by Idaho Senator Mike Crapo in 2008, is a group of individuals with diverse interests who work primarily with the Forest Service to develop solutions to complex natural resource issues in north-central Idaho.

The Nez Perce and Clearwater Forests also recognized the opportunity to transition to a new approach to land management. Together the Forests and the Collaborative, with assistance from other partners, penned a proposal to restore conditions within the 1.4-million-acre Selway-Middle Fork ecosystem. The proposal was comprehensive and unique because it included a landscape that swept across areas of intensive management into the vast, wild Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness.

The Selway-Middle Fork project was one of ten selected nationally and, from fiscal years 2010-2014, has received more than \$16 million to implement restoration activities. Matching contributions of nearly \$13.2 million have been generated in the form of money, products and in-kind services over the same period.

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Moose Creek District Ranger Joe Hudson who oversees management of the District making up much of the CFLR area, said the program has been essential to accomplishing mission-critical work in an era of shrinking agency budgets.

Hudson also emphasized that the program is multi-faceted and benefits many types of Forest users. "Motorized enthusiasts, hikers, anglers, hunters, private landowners, youth and woods workers have all benefited from restoration activities associated with this program," he emphasized, offering the following highlights.

Through the first five years of implementation (fiscal years 2010-2014), nearly 17,000 acres of weeds have been treated using a variety of methods. Many of these treatments occurred at trailheads or along trails that access the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, implementing the ambitious Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Invasive Plants Project approved in November 2009.

A strong partnership with the Nez Perce Tribe yielded many watershed improvements including more than 63 miles of stream improvements, the replacement of 15 culverts that were undersized and/or prevented fish passage, and decommissioning of more than 66 miles of unneeded roads.

Roads and trails can contribute sediment to area streams if they are not properly designed and maintained. Through the CFLR program 47 miles of roads have been improved and 729 miles maintained. Additionally, more than 3500 miles of trail have been maintained and improved since 2010.

Private landowners have benefitted from the reduction of fuels that would sustain wildfire, particularly in the vicinity of the communities of Lowell and Syringa where several projects have been implemented to reduce fuels in the wildland-urban interface. In all, more than 65,000 acres have been treated, reducing the likelihood of intense wildfires within treatment areas.

Vegetative restoration treatments also result in commercial forest products that can benefit local communities. So far, more than 48 MMBF (million board feet) of commercial timber have been sold within the CFLR area, and more than 16.5 MMBF harvested. Smaller diameter materials and biomass have been removed whenever possible and used by a number of local businesses to produce commercial products such as posts, pellets and paper products.

The program has also had real, tangible results for people. The project supported the Clearwater Basin Youth Conservation Corps, providing employment and natural resource on-the-job training for six young people in 2013 and another 20 in 2014. Plans are underway to continue and possibly expand the program in 2015.

All this activity has also created jobs, peaking in 2013 when more than 70 local jobs were created or maintained related to commercial forest product activities. Another 80 jobs were created or maintained in association with other restoration activities. These numbers are expected to increase as larger-scale vegetative restoration activities are approved and implemented.

As required by the CFLR program, restoration activities are being monitored to ensure the work yields desired results. This effort is being overseen by a 60-person monitoring advisory group comprised of citizens, academia, interest groups, agencies and the Nez Perce Tribe.

What do the next five years hold for CFLR? According to Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest Supervisor Cheryl Probert, there will be many more positive benefits for the land and people as the Forests transition from smaller NEPA-cleared projects to larger landscape-scale projects such as the recently completed Clear Creek Integrated Restoration Project.

"The Clearwater Basin Collaborative has been a valued partner in developing and implementing CFLR projects," Probert stated. "They have brought diverse viewpoints together and created an environment where learning can occur and informed, creative solutions can be developed."

Probert credited the Collaborative with helping the Forests develop integrated projects that restore vegetative and aquatic conditions while preserving the economic and social fabric of the area. "This truly demonstrates the power of collaboration," she added.

Individuals with an interest in the CFLR project can access either a 2-page summary of CFLR accomplishments or a comprehensive 32-page report from the Clearwater Basin Collaborative website at [www.clearwaterbasincollaborative.org](http://www.clearwaterbasincollaborative.org).

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Attachment: Summary of Accomplishments Fiscal Years 2010-2014

Resources for additional information:

[www.clearwaterbasincollaborative.org](http://www.clearwaterbasincollaborative.org)  
[www.fs.usda.gov/nezperceclearwater](http://www.fs.usda.gov/nezperceclearwater)  
[http://50.22.146.10/flexviewer\\_CBC/](http://50.22.146.10/flexviewer_CBC/)  
[www.fs.fedus/restoration/CFLRP](http://www.fs.fedus/restoration/CFLRP)

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CFLR Coordinator Mike Ward, 208-926-6413

<http://www.clearwaterbasincollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/5-Year-Report-of-Accomplishments-FINAL-Feb-5-2015.pdf>

All inquiries regarding jobs and labor income should be directed to Regional Economist Krista Gebert, 406-329-3696