

Selway-Middle Fork Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Project

Background

The Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 created the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP). Through it the Secretary of Agriculture can request up to \$40 million annually to fund science-based restoration projects on high priority landscapes.

The Clearwater Basin Collaborative and the Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forests collaborated to produce a comprehensive restoration strategy for the 1.4-million-acre Selway-Middle Fork ecosystem in north-central Idaho. It was selected as one of the top projects in the Northern Region and forwarded to the national level.

A national Resource Advisory Committee evaluated 31 projects and recommended ten for funding to the Secretary of Agriculture.

The Selway-Middle Fork proposal was deemed one of the top ten in the country and is eligible to receive up to \$4 million annually for ten years.

Up to two projects per region and ten projects nationally can be funded on a national basis.

For additional information regarding the program go to: www.fs.fed.us/restoration/CFLR/.

For information about this specific project, go to <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/nezperce/planning> then navigate by selecting "Other Plans and Area Analyses"

What Makes the Selway-Middle Fork Project Special?

The Scope of the Proposal

The proposal was recommended by a national Resource Advisory Committee as one of the top ten in the country and selected by the Secretary of Agriculture for funding.

To compete well, the proposal had to be a science-based ecosystem restoration proposal for a priority landscape that:

- (1) encouraged ecological, economic and social sustainability;
- (2) leveraged local resources with national and private resources;
- (3) re-established natural fire regimes and reduced wildfire management costs;
- (4) achieved ecological and watershed health objectives; and
- (5) promoted the use of forest restoration byproducts.

The Place

The Selway-Middle Fork project area has it all—name recognition, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Wilderness, Research Natural Areas, pristine waters, anadromous and resident fisheries, and valued big-game species. While some of the lands have been intensely managed, there are large tracts of "wild" unmanaged lands.

The Scale

The project area is massive—1.4 million acres. Why so large? One of the goals of the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Act is to make an impact at the landscape scale.

The Need

Past management, fire suppression, the invasion of exotic species and increasing human settlement in the wildland urban interface have altered the landscape, threatening the unique ecological values of the area.

The Benefits

Proposed treatments will: (1) reduce the risk of high severity fire; (2) result in vegetation that is resilient to insects, disease and wildfire; (3) improve water quality; (4) improve big-game habitat; (5) provide for fish passage and connectivity; (6) reduce non-native species and promote the growth of native species; (7) enhance recreation opportunities; (8) promote opportunities for emerging technologies such as biomass; (9) improve trust and cooperation between partners; and (10) create jobs, enhancing the local economic situation.

The Collaboration

The Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forests and Clearwater Basin Collaborative recognized the uniqueness of this landscape, the critical restoration needs and the special opportunity presented by the Collaborative Forest Restoration Act to bring critical financial resources to the area. The Forests and the Collaborative, in partnership with other interested parties, penned the proposal. This is an unprecedented collaborative effort in north-central Idaho that galvanized many diverse interests into a shared effort to restore the land while providing jobs in an area with chronically high unemployment rates.





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finding solutions

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Working to enhance and protect the ecological and economic health of the forests, rivers and communities within the Clearwater Basin by working across a diversity of interests.

2010 Accomplishments

In September 2010 the project received \$1 million in Collaborative Forest Landscape Program matching funds which were disbursed for the following activities:

- \$375,000 to the Nez Perce Tribe for road inventories and weed treatments (through 2014)
- \$25,000 to for contract survey and design in preparation for restoration work on the Fog Mountain Road
- \$600,000 for weed treatments split between the Idaho County Weed Management program, Nez Perce Tribe Biocontrol Center and Montana Conservation Corps strike teams (through 2014)

All projects contribute to restoration efforts identified in the CFLRP proposal.

Projects Planned for 2011

At this writing, the Forest is scheduled to receive \$431,000 for planning purposes, and \$3.4 million in Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program matching funds.

A variety of restoration projects have been identified for the Selway-Middle Fork Area in fiscal year 2011 (October 1, 2010 to September 30, 2011) including:

- 80,000 acres of weed inventory within the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness
- 1000 acres of weed treatment with herbicides
- 135 releases of “biocontrol agents”—insects that feed upon noxious weeds
- Continued monitoring of results obtained by the introduction of weed-eating insects
- Ten miles of road decommissioning
- 125 miles of road maintenance and improvements to stabilize roads and reduce sediment
- Three culvert replacements to improve water quality and facilitate fish passage
- 100 miles of trail maintenance to improve drainage and clear snags, primarily in areas affected by past fires
- 2000 acres of prescribed fire to restore forested areas where fire has been excluded
- 1000 acres of wildlife habitat improvements—brush cutting to improve elk winter range in steep break lands that cannot be burned due to shallow soils
- 25 acres of watershed improvements in conjunction with the O’Hara Native Species Restoration Project. Contractors will complete preparation work necessary to plant native trees and shrubs in streamside areas where invasive grasses have crowded out native vegetation. Actual planting will occur in fiscal year 2012.
- 10,000 acres of “stand exams” to collect baseline data about forest vegetation
- Pre-commercial thinning of 600-700 acres of plantations to reduce fuels and improve the vigor of the stands
- One timber sale, Interface Fuels, will be sold in fiscal year 11. The project will result in the harvest of trees on approximately 1100 forested acres within the wildland urban interface.
- One decision is expected this summer which could result in commercial thinning on approximately 800-1000 acres of overstocked plantations within the Lodge Point project area. The project will improve forest conditions and reduce fuels within the wildland urban interface.

The fiscal year 2010 annual accomplishment report projected activities associated with the Selway-Middle Fork projects would maintain/create 60 direct jobs and 68 indirect jobs annually.