



**AGREEMENT FOR SHARED STEWARDSHIP**  
Between  
**THE STATE OF UTAH**  
And the  
**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

This agreement for Shared Stewardship is hereby made and entered into by and between the State of Utah (State) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

#### **Introduction**

In May 2019, the State and USDA signed an agreement for Shared Stewardship outlining mutual commitments to advance Shared Stewardship in Utah. These mutual commitments, which are specific to Utah's unique conditions and environment, have allowed the State and USDA to build relationships and coalitions needed to confront the wildfire crisis. At the state level, implementation of this agreement has primarily occurred through the Utah Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands and the Governor's Public Lands Policy Coordinating Office (PLPCO). At the federal level, implementation has occurred through USDA's Forest Service, and more recently, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Among other accomplishments, over the past three years, the State and USDA have strengthened partnerships and substantially increased fuels and forest health treatments in places where wildfire presents an immediate risk to communities and critical water resources.

This agreement extends the State and USDA's commitment to Shared Stewardship and is amended to include NRCS as a primary partner. This document does not serve as an authorizing tool. The State, Forest Service, and NRCS will rely on all available authorities and tools to implement priority projects (including, but not limited to, Good Neighbor Authority, Farm Bill Authorities, Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act, and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act). Specific authorities for actions will be identified prior to project implementation and development.

#### **Background**

In August 2018, the Forest Service released a document outlining a new strategy for land management called *Toward Shared Stewardship Across Landscapes: An Outcome-Based Investment Strategy*. This strategy was developed in response to the urgent and growing challenges faced by managers and owners of forests across the Nation and encouraged the Forest Service to work closely with States to set landscape-scale priorities for targeted treatments in areas with the highest risk. The State of Utah was the third state to develop an agreement and has been a leader in Shared Stewardship implementation.

Nationally the concept of Shared Stewardship has three core elements:

1. *Determine management needs on a state level.* The States and the Forest Service will set priorities together and combine mutual skills and assets to achieve desired cross-boundary outcomes. States will take lead roles in convening stakeholders to discuss issues, priorities, and strategies. State Forest Action Plans can provide guidelines for coordinating activities across jurisdictional boundaries.
2. *Doing the right work in the right places at the right scale.* The States and the Forest Service will use new mapping and decision tools to identify the highest priority areas for treatment.
3. *Using all available tools for active management.* The States and the Forest Service will use every available authority and tool to do more work on the ground, including timber sales, mechanical treatments, prescribed fire, hazardous fuels reduction, long-term stewardship contracts, innovative wood-product utilization, carefully managing fire, and working with partners.

Despite progress that has been made through Shared Stewardship and other initiatives, Utah, along with other states in the West, continues to be impacted by the wildfire crisis. Forest health and wildfire risk have been significantly affected by intensifying drought conditions. Utah's current severe and extreme drought conditions, which began in 2020, are the most concerning in the State's history.

In response to ongoing drought and elevating concern regarding the wildfire crisis, in July 2022, the Forest Service released a new strategy: *Confronting the Wildfire Crisis*, which builds upon previous strategies including Shared Stewardship and the National Cohesive Fire Management Strategy. Under this new strategy, the Forest Service, tribal entities, states, and partners will continue to treat the highest risk areas and accelerate treatments over the next 10 years in a way that will significantly change the trajectory of wildfire risk and create resilient landscapes.

#### **Mutual Commitments for Shared Stewardship in addressing the Wildfire Crisis in Utah**

The State, Forest Service, and NRCS have a long history of cooperation across the State's public and private lands to address forest management and conservation issues, such as managing wildland fire, reducing community wildfire risks, protecting and restoring watersheds, improving wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities, and stimulating forest-based economic development. Extending Utah's agreement for Shared Stewardship allows the State, Forest Service, and NRCS to continue building partnerships to advance landscape-scale efforts.

The six mutual commitments previously developed by the State and Forest Service, with minor modifications, will continue to guide immediate efforts and long-term strategies for implementing Shared Stewardship on priority landscapes across all forestlands in the State.

The State, Forest Service, and NRCS make the following mutual commitments to advance Shared Stewardship in Utah:

**1. We are committed to existing partnerships, programs, and initiatives that have been successful in Utah. (past and ongoing)**

Utah's framework for Shared Stewardship is built on years of cooperation between the State, Forest Service, and NRCS through a variety of programs, several unique to the State. These partnerships and programs provide a strong basis for the continued implementation and advancement of Shared Stewardship and the Wildfire Crisis Strategy in Utah:

State Initiatives Including:

- Utah's Catastrophic Wildfire Reduction Strategy (CatFire);
- The Utah Department of Natural Resource's Watershed Restoration Initiative (WRI);
- The Utah Division of Forestry, Fire & State Lands' Utah Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal (UWRAP), Wildland Urban Interface Program, and Cooperative Wildfire Management System.

Forest Service Initiatives Including:

- Forest Stewardship, Landscape-Scale Restoration, Forest Legacy, Forest Health, Urban & Community Forestry, Volunteer Fire Assistance, State Fire Assistance including Hazardous Fuels Reduction, Wildland Fire Prevention, All-Lands coordination meetings, Joint Chief's Landscape Restoration Partnership Initiative, National Fire Plan, and the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy.

NRCS Initiatives Including:

- Joint Chief's Landscape Restoration Partnership Initiative, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Watershed Rehabilitation Program, Watershed Protection and Flood Program, Emergency Watershed Program, and Conservation Stewardship Program.

**2. We are committed to working together to identify and map shared priorities for protecting at-risk communities and watersheds across all lands. (present and ongoing)**

The State, Forest Service, and NRCS have and will continue to share technical tools and data to map priority landscapes for wildfire risk reduction and watershed restoration treatments. We are identifying risks and trade-offs using all tools available including fireshed plans, the State Forest Action Plan, UWRAP, surface and drinking water information from the Utah Division of Drinking Water, Quantitative Wildfire Risk Assessments, and Potential (wildland fire) Operational Delineations. Our key objectives are to continue to identify the highest risk communities and water sources and set priorities for treatment state-wide using the best available information.

**3. We are committed to making joint decisions and sharing resources for immediate and ongoing work in priority areas. (present and ongoing)**

The State, Forest Service, and NRCS are working together to determine where and how to use new legal authorities and management tools, share financial resources, and leverage those resources to the greatest extent possible to accomplish work in priority areas. Of note, the Utah Legislature has appropriated funding from 2020-2023

specifically to be used to enhance forest management on National Forest System lands in Utah. In addition, the U.S. Congress has authorized significant additional federal funding for FY2022-FY2026 to address the wildfire crisis through fuels and forest health treatments.

- 4. We are committed to engaging tribal entities, state and federal agencies, local governments, private landowners, water districts, utilities, businesses, and partners in dialogue and learning about active management and desired landscape-scale outcomes, including capacity building and economic development opportunities. (present and ongoing)**

The State, Forest Service, and NRCS will seek to unify groups and efforts across the state so that we are all working together towards our shared goals and priorities. We agree to engage tribal entities, state and federal agencies, local governments, private landowners, water districts, utilities, businesses, and partners in Shared Stewardship. Strategies will aim to include others in planning and decision-making as well as addressing broader goals, such as supporting fire adapted community development. The State, NRCS, and Forest Service will also prioritize developing capacity for forest work and utilizing wood products for innovative businesses and economic development in cooperation with the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity.

- 5. We are committed to shared planning efforts, including the integration of Utah's Forest Action Plan and the Forest Service's 5-Year Vegetation Management Plans. (future)**

The State, Forest Service, and NRCS are developing strategic, cross-boundary, landscape-scale vegetation management plans for all forestlands in Utah. The purpose of this approach is to leverage resources across landscapes to address the threats and risks at a strategic, meaningful level that will ultimately protect communities, restore watersheds, and improve forest health.

- 6. We are committed to co-managing wildfire risks and supporting each other in decisions that we have made together. (future)**

The State and Forest Service recognize that fire is an integral part of the landscape and ecosystem. There are opportunities to use prescribed fire and manage wildfire on the landscape in the right place at the right time. We are committed to supporting each other when using prescribed fire and managed wildfire as tools to reduce hazardous fuels and create a safer working environment for our firefighters.

#### **Modifications and Periodic Review of Agreement**

The State and USDA to periodically review this agreement every 5 years or earlier to evaluate the mutual commitments identified and make necessary adjustments as appropriate.

**Authorized Representatives**

By signing below, each party certifies that the individuals listed in this document as representatives of the individual parties are authorized to act in their respective areas for matters related to this agreement for shared stewardship.

In witness whereof, the parties hereto have executed this agreement as of the last date written below.

State of Utah

Date: 5/5/22



Spencer J. Cox  
Governor  
State of Utah

United States Department of Agriculture

Date: MAY 5, 2022



Thomas J. Vilsack  
Secretary  
United States Department of Agriculture