

Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership Project FY 2020 Final Report



Montana, Capital 360 (Phase 2)

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Keri Bilbo, Assistant State Conservationist
 USDA-NRCS Bozeman Area Office
 10 E. Babcock Street Rm 443, Bozeman MT 59715
 406-587-6810
keri.bilbo@usda.gov

Melinda Gauthier, Assistant State Conservationist
 USDA-NRCS Missoula Area Office
 3550 Mullan Rd. Ste. 106
 Missoula, MT 59808
 406-303-3451
melinda.gauthier@usda.gov

Project Point of Contact

Justin Meissner, District Conservationist
 USDA-NRCS Townsend Field Office
 406-404-0166
justin.meissner@usda.gov

United States Forest Service

William Avey, Forest Supervisor
 USDA-FS Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest
 2880 Skyway Drive, Helena MT 59602
 406-495-3708
william.avey@usda.gov

Project Point of Contact

David E. Nunn, Fire Management Officer
 USDA-FS Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest, Helena/Townsend Ranger Districts
 406-495-3931
david.nunn@usda.gov

Funds Obligated

	FY20	FY18-20
NRCS - EQIP Financial & Technical Assistance	\$788,675 (FA) \$70,980 (TA)*	\$1,337,877 (FA) \$120,409 (TA)*
NRCS - Additional Funds	\$504,103 (FA)** \$45,369 (TA)*	\$671,662 (FA)** \$60,449 (TA)*
FS - National Forest System (NFTM)	\$453,000	
FS - Hazardous Fuels (NFHF)	\$1,942,000	\$5,237,600
FS - State and Private Forestry		
FS - Non JCLRP Funds		
Other (partner investments)	See Partner Support and Involvement Section.	
Total		

- * For EQIP TA, assume TA at a rate of 9% of FA, across years, unless additional funding was invested (e.g., through partner agreements).
- ** NRCS Additional Funds (Elkhorn Cooperative Management Area Range Health & Conifer Encroachment-Targeted Implementation Plan (ECMA-TIP and Tri County Fuels Reduction – (Tri Co-TIP)) expanded the Joint Chiefs Landscape Restoration – Capital 360 benefits)

Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership Project FY 2020 Final Report



Conservation Outcomes

Describe the conservation outcomes that resulted from activities performed as part of your project (FY18-20). This should include measurable outcomes that mitigated wildfire threats, protected water quality and supply, and/or improved habitat for at-risk species and other wildlife.

Our highlights include:

- *Fuels reduction on National Forest System Lands, private inholdings and City of Helena owned lands have allowed for additional protection of the City of Helena, key infrastructure in the I-15 corridor as well as wildlife habitat improvements.*
- *Fuels reduction on private lands have reduced overall fire hazards for homes throughout the focus areas.*
- *Approximately 7,700 acres of fuel reduction was completed on private lands to reduce wildfire risk while improving forest and range health using Joint Chiefs Capital 360 and Montana Focused Conservation – ECMA-TIP & Tri-Co TIP. This effort improved wildlife habitat on 9,000 private land acres within the Elkhorn Wildlife Management Area.*
- *Improved forest health and enhanced resiliency across the project area providing multiple benefits to residents and visitors throughout the capital city region. Reduced risk of large-scale wildfires that have the potential to impact homes, community infrastructure and urban/rural recreation areas.*
 - *Reduced probability of high-severity wildfire impacts to soils, and mitigated effects of post-fire erosion and sediment to the Tenmile (City of Helena) and McClellan (City of East Helena) Municipal Watershed through hazardous fuels treatments.*
 - *Implementation of prescribed fire treatments; reduction of surface fuel loadings, improved forest health and increased productivity of forage for wildlife.*
 - *Includes post prescribed fire rehabilitation efforts; raking and seeding of burn piles within Tenmile and adjacent watersheds and treatment of noxious weeds (chemical and bio-control).*
 - *Improved conditions for fire management operations within and adjacent to the Capital City of Helena and surrounding communities. Creating a mosaic of vegetation and fuel structure more resilient to disturbance which will provide safer locations from which firefighters can initiate future fire management actions (protection of values, suppression, managed fire, and prescribed burning) and improve public safety.*
 - *Implementation of mechanical rearrangement of fuels; removal of standing dead hazard trees and reduction of surface fuel loading along the Continental Divide. Hazard tree mitigation (access/egress) along evacuation routes.*
 - *Cutting and decking mountain pine beetle killed lodgepole pine along evacuation routes and offering it as free firewood, with a permit, resulting in 5,300 tons of firewood being made available to local communities.*
 - *Commercial fuels reduction within Tenmile-South Helena Project. Awarded and implementing within three timber sales that target the removal of dead overstory, surface fuels and thin forest canopies. Treatments include the decking of non-saw (small diameter) mountain pine beetle killed lodgepole pine along open routes that made available to local communities for firewood.*
 - *Scott Reservoir (Scotty) Timber Sale: 240 acres (5,479 CCF), sale value with road improvements \$84,905.*
 - *Upper Tenmile Timber Sale: 740 acres (20,621 CCF), sale value with road improvements \$303,466.*
 - *South Helena Timber Sale: 952 acres (24,629 CCF), sale value with road improvements \$328,775.*
 - *Brooklyn-Bridge GNA: 516 acres, (12,335 CCF), sale value with road improvement – \$85,544.*

Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership Project FY 2020 Final Report



- *Shaded fuel break treatments on FS lands directly adjacent to private land boundaries (Private Land Buffer treatments identified under Tenmile –South Helena Project). Treatments increase tree canopy spacing and altered fuel profile and removed standing dead and downed fuels within mountain pine beetle caused mortality impacted areas.*

Community Benefits

Briefly describe benefits to local communities achieved through this project and partnership (FY18-20). This could include: employment opportunities, education, outreach, or coordination. *Our highlights include:*

- *The public is very knowledgeable regarding the potential impacts to their community as a result of a wildfire. Several public lectures have been held in Helena and the surrounding communities designed to continue to provide the broad spectrum of topics associated with living in a wildland urban interface. We will continue to provide opportunities to engage the public in local tours, public meetings and site visits and to share the collective vision of the benefit of fuels reduction treatments regardless of ownership.*
- *Generated opportunities and funding for forestry related employment both in the federal and private sector.*
 - *Employment opportunities created: 200 – 225 jobs (includes in-woods and support services)*
- *Educational opportunities provided: 40-50 (includes public open houses, public field trips and wildfire/ fire management seminars). Several public lectures were held in Helena and the surrounding communities designed to continue to provide the broad spectrum of topics associated with living in a wildland urban interface. Also, the forest has conducted a high amount of fuels reduction along the South Hills (South Helena) Trail System allowing users to directly see the effects and benefits daily.*
 - *Installed three interpretive signs to explain the ongoing vegetation/fuels work. So not only do they see the work, but given the “why” behind it.*

Photos, News Articles, and Press Releases

Please share any photos that show the implementation of the project (e.g., field work, outreach events) and the results (e.g., before-and-after photos of a restored site). Please share any news articles and press releases that have been issued. *(See attachments)*

Partner Support and Involvement

1. Please list partners and stakeholders that were involved in this project (e.g., NRCS field offices, FS units, schools or community organizations, NGOs). Describe the contributions (e.g., FTEs, funding, materials) from these partners. For the table below, value hours and equipment according to partner organization standards.
 - *Long-standing partnerships in this area serve as the implementation mechanism for landscape-scale projects and contribute to the continued success of forest restoration, hazardous fuels reduction, and wildfire risk reduction projects conducted by a variety of entities. Partner contributions to the Capital 360 include; MT Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation, Bureau of Land Management, City of Helena, Fire Districts - Lewis and Clark & Jefferson Fire Council, Lewis and Clark County, Jefferson County, Broadwater County, and Private landowners. Through the Montana Discovery Foundation, Capital High School and Youth Forest Monitoring Program assisted with data collection for forest health monitoring.*

Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership Project FY 2020 Final Report



Partner	Dollars	In-Kind Labor	In-Kind Other	Total FY18–20
Montana DNRC (<i>include in-kind support of personnel to USFS prescribed fire operations</i>)	\$294,000	\$98,000		\$392,000
BLM	\$864,500	\$129,500	\$0	\$994,000
City of Helena (<i>Open Lands & Upper Tenmile Watershed</i>)	\$1,026,000 (<i>\$276,500 Upper Tenmile, \$749,500 Open Space</i>)			\$1,026,000
Tri-County FireSafe Working Group (grants & other contributions)	\$464,726	\$60,421	\$187,713	\$712,860
Project Totals	\$2,649,226	\$287,921	\$187,713	\$3,177,860

2. Concisely describe how these partnerships were formed.

- The jurisdictional mix of private, city, county, state, and federal lands within the Capital 360 focal area presents a unique opportunity to maximize treatment and activity connectivity and efficiency and effectiveness across boundaries. This area is located within three counties (Broadwater, Jefferson, and Lewis & Clark County). It consists of a broad spectrum of stakeholders and partners, which has a strong foundation of partnerships dating back to 1984 with the Tri-County FireSafe Working Group's development. Capital 360 is committed to working together across all lands to implement forest management and wildfire risk reduction projects across the greater Helena area. Through shared stewardship and a collaborative cross-boundary approach, Capital 360 strives to create resilient communities and landscapes. Implementing the Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy's three priorities of restoring and maintaining resilient landscapes, creating fire-adapted communities, and improving effective wildfire response is our success approach. To have maximum benefits, Capital 360 has taken a systematic approach in using the best science, resources, and tools available. These treatment efforts were a direct result of the locally led collaboration of multiple community outreach activities, listening sessions, and local working group meeting to identify the areas of highest priority for private landowners, partner organizations, and federal agency to focus technical and financial resources.*

3. Concisely describe how this project enabled you to achieve higher quality or more effective outcomes than could have been accomplished by a single agency. Concisely describe a unique or significant way your partnership was able to leverage technical, financial, or social resources through coordination of activities.

- This project was built on the successful implementation of past smaller-scale fuels reduction projects by various entities in the project area. The goal that we set out to achieve was to further integrate and coordinate resource management across all administrative boundaries through the strategic placement of fuels reduction treatments across the landscape, and we succeeded. Through multiple partnership agreements (i.e., NRCS, DNRC, Tri-County FireSafe Working Group, City of Helena, BLM, and USFS) under the Capital 360 Umbrella, we were able to conduct numerous large-scale commercial and non-commercial fuels treatment across property boundaries. These partnerships reduced the overall cost per acre and increased efficiency by sharing contractors, crews, and equipment*

Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership Project FY 2020 Final Report



and reduced mobilization costs. Through the coordination and partnership agreements, prescribed fire operations were conducted across ownership boundaries, further reducing implementation costs, reducing prescribed fire holding efforts, and improving conditions for future fire suppression effectiveness and firefighter and public safety in the area in the event of a wildfire.

- *We have and will continue to take full advantage of opportunities to be more effective and efficient with resources. Leveraging partnerships are crucial and continue to prove beneficial in securing funding like the JCLRP and getting more on-the-ground work done.*
- *The Broadwater and Jefferson County Conservation Districts and Local Working Groups have identified conifer encroachment on range land and forest health as two of the top resource concerns in their counties. The JCLRP-Capital 360 demonstrated how a locally led, collaborative, cross boundary approach to natural resource conservation and management can have landscape scale results. This is evident by the increased interest throughout the Elkhorn Mountain Cooperative Management Area for increased forest and range management activities on both private, state, and federal lands.*

Project Accomplishments:

1. Enter your FY20 accomplishments on National Forests in FACTS.

2. In the following tables, report total project accomplishments for FY20 and for the entirety of the project period (FY18-20).

Federal Lands

Activity/Treatment	FY20	FY18-20
Total acres of HF Treatment (e.g., prescribed fire, hand & mechanical treatment of fuels, and thinning/TSI)	5,286 acres	11,524 acres
Timber Products	516 acres, 12,335 CCF	2,448, 63,064 CCF
Watershed Improvement (acres of burn pile rehab/miles of sedimentation and erosion control)	86 acres/4.5 miles	211 acres/30 miles
Noxious Weed Treatment	563 acres	2,275 acres
Total acres of wildlife habitat improved	5,286 acres	8,092 acres

Private Lands

Activity/Treatment	FY20	FY18-20
For example:		
Total acres of fuels treatment	2,241 acres	7,700 acres
Total miles of streambank improved	NA	NA
Total acres of wildlife habitat improved/created	1,300 acres	9,000 acres

Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership Project FY 2020 Final Report



Lessons Learned

Please share the one biggest lesson learned after completing this project. This could include recommendations for future partnerships, project planning improvements, implementation of best practices, new approaches to conservation, better ways to collaborate with partners, etc.

Landscape-scale public and private land conservation implementation is often dependent on community support. After early adopters' complete projects like fuel breaks, forest stand improvement, and brush management, neighboring landowners could see the benefits and wanted similar results. Due to the high cost of forestry-related practices, it can take several years to achieve this type of community buy-in. Having multiple years of Joint Chiefs' treatments spark increased interest in private land forestry conservation in the three participating counties and increased acres treated. Soil and Water Conservation Districts and non-governmental organizations are further fostering community understanding through field tours highlighting landscape-scale, cross-boundary conservation, and the reliance of this collaborative approach on both public and private land managers. With the commitment of funds over the past two JCLRP funding cycles for the Capital 360 and related increase in pace and scale, the public and community support has increased in what has recently become known as a collaborative 'working forest.'

Signatures

X

Keri Bilbo
Assistant State Conservationist: Bozeman Area

X

William Avey
Forest Supervisor

X

Melinda Gauthier
Assistant State Conservationist: Missoula Area