



# Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program

## 15-year Report to Congress

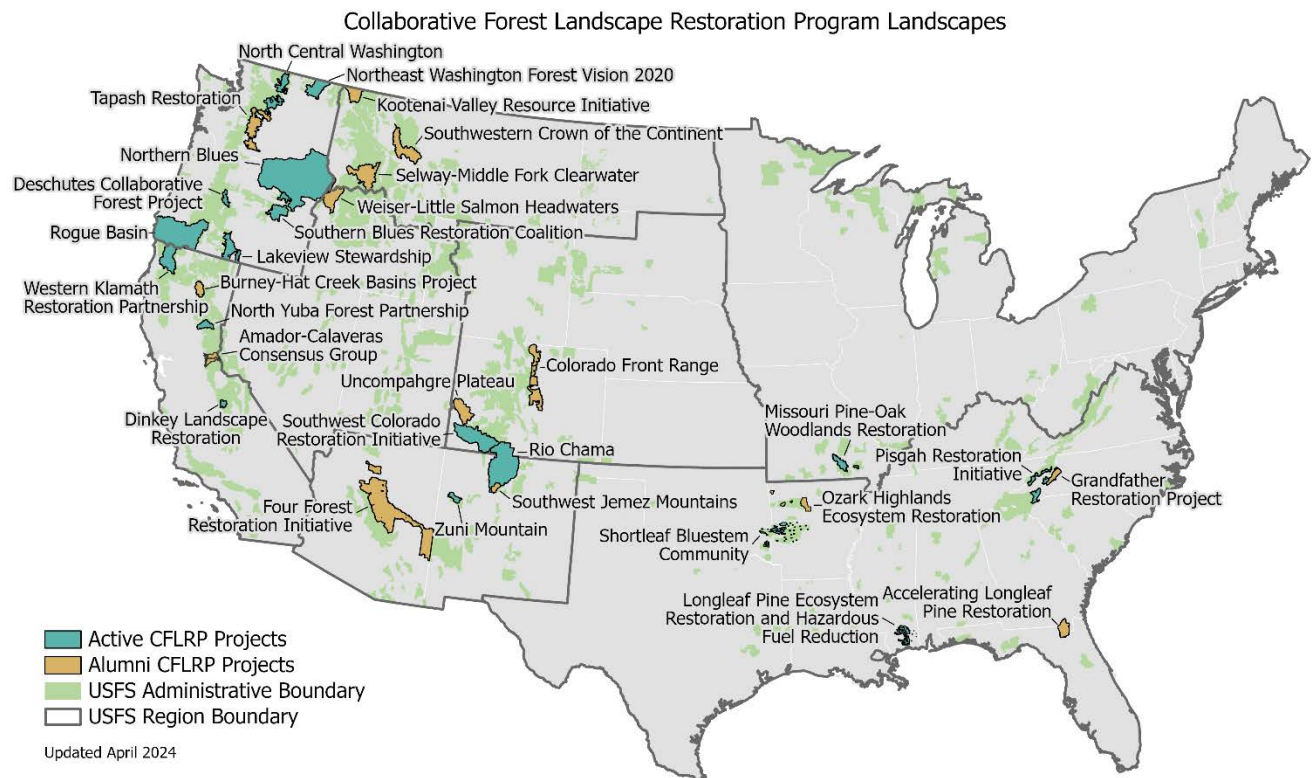
The Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (Public Law 111-11) and reauthorized in the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-334) included the following language on the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program:

*Not later than 5 years after the first fiscal year in which funding is made available to carry out ecological restoration projects under the program, and every 5 years thereafter, the Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior, shall submit a report on the program, including an assessment of whether, and to what extent, the program is fulfilling the purposes of this title, to: 1) the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate; 2) the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate; 3) the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives; and 4) the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives.*

### Introduction

The Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) was first authorized by Congress in 2009 to advance collaborative, landscape-scale approaches to restoration for multiple outcomes – reducing wildfire risk, enhancing forest and watershed health, and providing benefits to local communities. Congress reauthorized the Program in the 2018 Farm Bill and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act provided additional funding. CFLRP Project Landscapes are selected by the Secretary of Agriculture through a competitive process for 10 years of funding with the possibility of a one-time extension. There have been 31 CFLRP landscapes funded to date; 17 are currently active. Current landscapes range from about 130,000 to 10 million acres and include a mix of ownerships and cross-boundary needs, though CFLRP funds can only be spent on National Forest System (NFS) lands. In the 2018 Farm Bill, Congress reauthorized CFLRP through FY 2023 and the Program is up for reauthorization. In addition to the 17 current CFLRP landscapes, there are seven project proposals with Secretarial approval for onboarding pending funding availability.

CFLRP continues to demonstrate the impact of investing in and encouraging collaborative approaches and the value of place-based, multi-year funding in achieving results on the ground and in community. Over the life of the Program, CFLRP has advanced integrated restoration treatments across 6.7 million acres, an area the size of Massachusetts, from fuels reduction to tree planting, trail maintenance to stream restoration, and invasive plant treatments to fish passage. These treatments are translating into outcomes. For example, when wildfires have interacted with areas previously treated to reduce wildfire risk on CFLRP landscapes, the treatments helped to control or moderate fire behavior 83 percent of the time (2017-2023 data). Investments in the local economy have helped support an annual average of \$213 million in local labor income and 4,900 full and part-time jobs since 2011. CFLRP opportunities have brought together more than 720 organizations engaged in local collaboratives. Over the life of the Program, for every dollar of CFLRP funding spent, partners contributed \$1.66 in funding and in-kind contributions, including work on Tribal, State, and private lands.



The last five years have marked a transition in the Program. In that time, 14 landscapes offboarded, 9 were extended, and 8 new landscapes started implementation. The latest cohort of CFLRP landscapes are larger in scale and more-cross boundary than the first cohorts. One third of the 2020 CFLRP proposals included work on Tribal Lands within the CFLRP boundaries using partner or other funding. Most initial CFLRP landscapes included engagement with one collaborative group, now one-quarter of the proposals involve multiple collaboratives working together<sup>i</sup>.

As one of the first national efforts to encourage collaborative restoration at the landscape scale, CFLRP successes and challenges offer innovations and insights to inform collaborative, landscape-scale management activities across the country. The Program continues to benefit from long-term learning in terms of collaboration practice, wildfire risk reduction, planning at scale, multi-party monitoring, and leveraging resources. Proactively identifying and sharing lessons learned leads to a productive cycle of adaptive management for the Program, as discussed in this report.

## **Restoring ecological function and resilience**

Restoration is central to the CFLRP legislation, which emphasizes forest resilience and reestablishing natural fire regimes, improving fish and wildlife habitat, and supporting water quality and watershed function. Through CFLRP, restoration is being accomplished across scales and ecosystems, from bog and meadow restoration to fish passage and aquatic habitat enhancement, in addition to the hundreds of thousands of acres treated every year on CFLRP landscapes. These restoration activities help to maintain, and enhance, the many benefits healthy ecosystems provide, from clean water to recreation opportunities, to reduced risk from disturbances such as uncharacteristic wildfires.

### **CFLRP Landscapes are a high priority for restoration.**

CFLRP proposals must establish a strong case for restoration, and the Program is intended to focus on high priority landscapes for restoration outcomes. Across CFLRP landscapes, climate

change will continue to drive increases in temperatures, changes in precipitation patterns, and associated ecological effects. For example, the Rio Chama landscape in Northern New Mexico is projected to see 12 to 14 more high fire danger days by the middle of this century when compared to the second half of the 20th century.

### **CFLRP advances the scale and integration of treatments, increasing forest health and resilience.**

To address landscape-scale challenges such as wildfire risk and invasive species that cross ownerships and other boundaries, CFLRP emphasizes treatments at scale. For example:

- CFLRP landscapes have reduced hazardous fuels on about 5 million acres,
- enhanced wildlife habitat across 4.5 million acres,
- restored 2,147 miles of stream habitat,
- and treated more than 300,000 acres for invasive species to date.

CFLRP landscapes contributed 13 percent of the Agency's total hazardous fuels treatments on NFS lands in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), 14 percent of the prescribed fire treatments, 11 percent of the timber volume sold, and 12 percent of terrestrial wildlife habitat enhanced, while comprising an average of 7 percent of Agency restoration-related spending. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, NFS lands within the CFLRP project boundaries accounted for 24 percent of the improved, maintained, and recovering acres across all NFS lands, while only accounting for 13 percent of the total area.

In recent surveys of nearly 400 CFLRP participants across 15 landscapes conducted by the Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes, a majority of respondents perceived moderate to substantial progress on various ecological goals through the program, including reducing fuels hazard (83 percent), improving or maintaining restoration pace and scale (75 percent), improving or maintaining watershed function (72 percent), improving fire use (65 percent), improving habitat (66 percent), restoring old growth (62 percent), and invasive species treatment or control (60 percent)<sup>ii</sup>.

In addition to a focus on landscape-scale work, CFLRP landscapes provide a wide range of benefits through integrated outcomes, as illustrated by the following examples:

#### **Creating and maintaining wildlife habitat:**

- Wildlife habitat improvement work on the **Shortleaf Bluestem Community** in Arkansas and Oklahoma has led to an upward trend in red-cockaded woodpecker activity – including the very first successful red-cockaded woodpecker nesting attempts in Oklahoma.
- The **Dinkey Landscape** in California is reducing hazardous fuels in California spotted owl and northern goshawk habitat, tailoring treatments specifically in each area for important habitat elements and hand-thinning to minimize disturbance to wildlife.

#### **Bolstering the resilience of forests to a range of threats:**

- Long term monitoring with partners on the **Missouri Pine Oak Woodlands** project demonstrates that treatments of fire and fire plus thinning are moving forest stands towards more functional ecosystems. As a result of CFLRP treatments, focal bird and bee species are responding positively, ground cover of native plants has increased, and shortleaf pine and white oak species are growing with less competition, increasing drought and climate change resilience.

### **Advancing watershed and aquatic habitat restoration:**

- The **Western Klamath Restoration Partnership** landscape in California completed fish passage improvements along 43 streams, making 201 miles accessible to salmon. They collaborated with the Karuk Tribe and Mid Klamath Watershed Council, two main partners in the Western Klamath Restoration Partnership, to restore floodplain connectivity and enhance critical habitat for salmon and other species.
- The **Zuni Mountains** landscape in New Mexico is working with the Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps to restore three springs that provide habitat for populations of rare native fish, including the Rio Grande sucker and Rio Grande chub.

### **Addressing invasive species:**

- **Southwest Colorado** treated 177 acres and 10.4 miles of trails for invasive Canada and musk thistle, improving rangeland condition, big game winter range habitat, and recreation experiences.
- Within the **Rio Chama** landscape in New Mexico, the USDA Forest Service worked with the Bureau of Land Management to treat noxious weeds, reducing the spread of invasives by focusing treatments along roadways.

### **Preserving mature and old growth trees:**

- Restoration activities on the **Zuni Mountains** project in New Mexico lay the groundwork for a return to a historical fire regime while preparing for the impacts of climate change. The effort has implemented a large and old tree retention strategy, which retains the underrepresented older trees on the landscape while work continues to reduce tree density and the risk of uncharacteristic crown fire and increase resilience to drought, pests, and disease.

Building on lessons learned in the first 10 years of CFLRP, landscapes are now implementing a new common monitoring strategy that provides nationally standardized questions to help track progress across all CFLRP goals. By addressing ecological monitoring questions on landscape resiliency, wildlife habitat, watershed health, and invasive species, we will enhance our understanding of long-term treatment effectiveness in future years.

## **Wildfire Risk Reduction**

Re-establishing natural fire regimes and reducing the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire are key purposes of CFLRP. The Program has seen successes in increasing the scale of treatment across the landscape and reducing the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire through collaborative, partnership-based approaches that expand capacity, scale, and all-lands focus for our work. These treatments reduce risk to communities, protect wildlife habitat and water supply, maintain desired conditions, and increase firefighter safety.

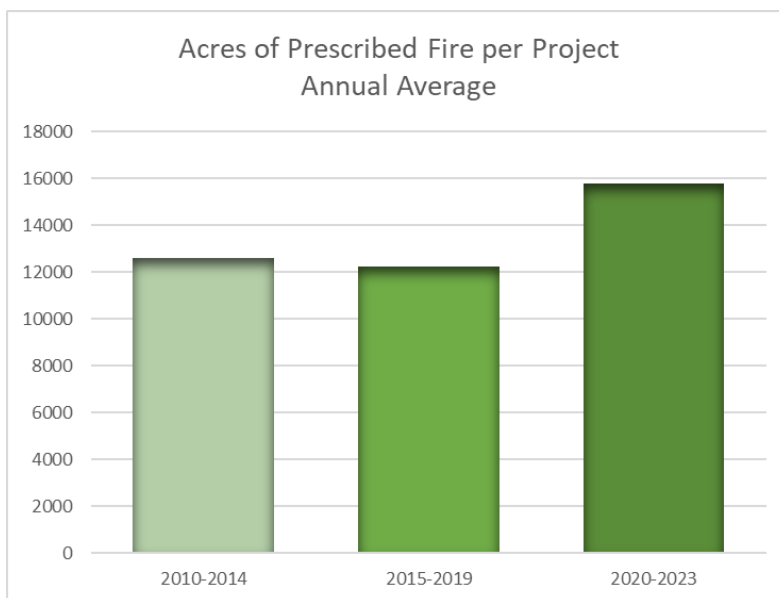
### **Focus and scale of impact**

Seventy-five percent of landscapes have more than half of their area in moderate, high, or very high wildfire hazard potential. 14 of the past or present CFLRP landscapes have some degree of overlap with one or more of the 21 Wildfire Crisis Strategy Landscapes<sup>iii</sup>. CFLRP landscapes are selected, in part, because they are high priority areas for treatments to reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire.

As noted in the previous section since the inception of the program, CFLRP landscapes advanced treatments to reduce wildfire risk across 5 million acres. Over 3 million acres of these treatments

have been in the WUI. CFLRP projects continue to prioritize wildfire risk reduction by placing about two-thirds of their hazardous fuels treatments in the WUI.

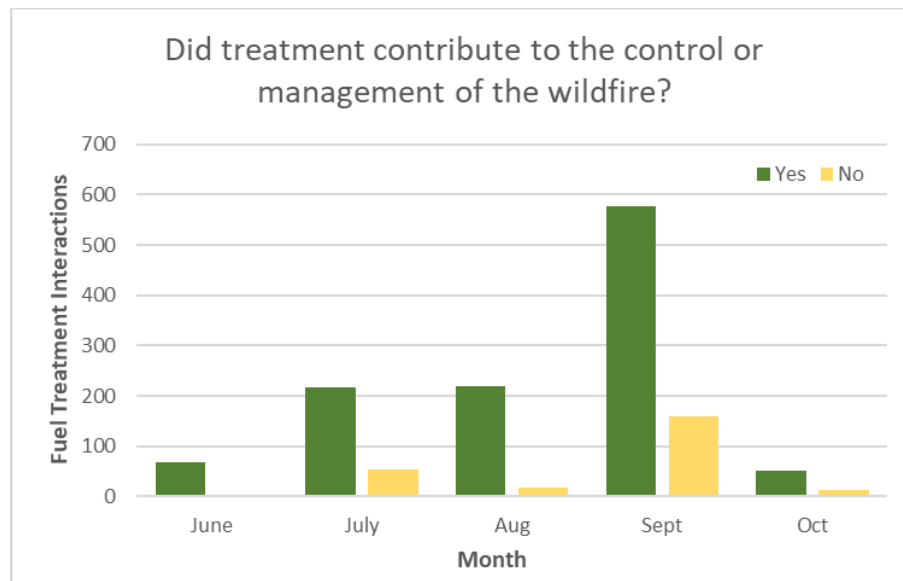
CFLRP landscapes work to reduce wildfire risk through a range of treatments, including both mechanical thinning and prescribed fire. Prescribed fire is an effective tool for increasing forest resilience to wildfire, and CFLRP participants have implemented nearly 2.7 million acres of prescribed fire since 2010 – 14 percent of the Agency’s total in that time period. CFLRP landscapes are increasing the scale of their treatments – they are implementing more prescribed fire in the last 4 years compared to the first and second 5-year intervals of the program:



### **Fuels treatment effectiveness**

Between 2017 and 2023, there were 1,478 recorded interactions between fuels treatments and wildfires on CFLRP landscapes and 83 percent of the time the fuels treatment improved control of the fire or moderated fire behavior.

The graph below shows fuel treatment interactions on CFLRP landscapes as captured in the Fuels Treatment Effectiveness Monitoring (FTEM) database. The green bars represent where fuels treatments aided in the control and/or management of a wildfire and yellow bars indicate where they did not. Treatments are particularly helpful for managing fires during the summer months, when there is typically the most risk of uncharacteristic wildfire.



At the CFLRP landscape-scale, we see that treatments completed through CFLRP allow for more efficient and effective wildfire suppression when needed and wildfire management where appropriate. Through a collaborative, scaled approach, CFLRP expands the pace, scale, and quality of treatments that reduce risk to communities and enhance forest health. Examples include:

- Monitoring done within the **Colorado Front Range** footprint suggest that pre-fire forest treatments are likely to moderate fire intensity and mitigate severe burn effects, particularly in areas where surface fuels were reduced. By doing so, treatments can contribute to increased tree survivorship, lessen erosion and sediment into critical water supplies, aid suppression efforts, and promote firefighter safety<sup>iv</sup>.
- The **Lakeview Stewardship** landscape in Oregon found that previous prescribed fire treatments helped to reduce suppression difficulty on the northern and eastern flanks of the 2023 Morgan Fire. Fewer resources were needed to effectively control that portion of the fire, allowing managers to concentrate on areas with a higher suppression difficulty.
- The **Pisgah Restoration Initiative Project** in North Carolina noted that previous prescribed fire activities and wildfires led to low intensity fire behavior on the Dobson Knob 2 fire. Fine fuels readily burned with low intensity, and as the fire approached the edges of the past entries of fire, shade from the closed canopy significantly reduced or outright stopped the fire progression.
- The **Southern Blues Restoration Coalition** in Oregon found that fire suppression costs for the 2021 Black Butte fire could easily have been twice as much, if fuels treatments had not been completed through CFLRP. In the few areas where fuels treatments were not finished, costs and effort to suppress the fire were higher.

With CFLRP landscapes ongoing for 10 or more years, we can now see the benefits of long-term, strategic implementation of treatments over time.

- For example, on the **Southern Blues Restoration Coalition** landscape, treatments have become more and more continuous, creating larger areas for managing natural ignitions and improving decision space under the appropriate environmental conditions.
- For the **Shortleaf Bluestem** in Arkansas and Oklahoma, the number of acres of prescribed fire implemented per year is increasing over time – as treatments are implemented across the landscape, managers can implement more prescribed fire and wildfires are more effectively managed or suppressed.

CFLRP Landscapes are working cooperatively to reduce hazardous fuels across NFS, private, tribal, state, and other land ownerships. Partners include federal and state land management agencies, tribal governments and agencies, county and city governments, fire departments and districts, non-governmental organizations, and private entities. These partnerships provide the implementation capacity, knowledge, and community relationships that make all-lands work possible.

- Within the **Southwest Colorado** landscape, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe is working with Mancos Conservation District in partnership with Colorado State Forest Service and Colorado Forest Restoration Institute to implement and monitor efforts to achieve common goals, including a 90-acre fuel break and forest restoration treatment on tribal lands. These efforts advance relationships between partners while also improving on the ground conditions.
- **Northern Blues** in Oregon worked with the Natural Resource Conservation Service and Oregon State University Extension to develop and host training modules, increasing workforce and technical capacity over the past year for implementing prescribed burns across all lands.

New efforts are underway to model fire behavior outcomes at programmatic scales, quantifying the impact of CFLRP treatments on wildfire hazard. Many CFLRP landscapes are using landscape-level prioritization tools to plan and implement treatments to reduce fire risk while achieving ecological and socioeconomic outcomes.

### **Socioeconomic benefits**

CFLRP encourages socioeconomic sustainability - leveraging the use of restoration byproducts to help offset treatment costs and provide benefits to local rural communities and providing local employment and training opportunities. The benefits CFLRP can provide local communities include restoration treatments themselves – treatments that can help reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire and protect communities and infrastructure, sustain clean air and water, and provide cultural and other values. A 2023 spatial assessment shows that 49 percent of these treatments are located within disadvantaged census tracts as defined by the Climate and Environmental Justice Screening Tool<sup>v</sup>.

Current CFLRP landscapes emphasize a range of socioeconomic goals, including expanding local wood product industry, emphasizing Tribal benefits, community outreach and youth education, expanding partnership with private landowners, providing local jobs, enhancing recreation opportunities, and increasing local prescribed fire capacity.

- Collaborative planning on the **Western Klamath Restoration Partnership** in California identifies Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) to be incorporated into implementation and monitoring. This includes identification of culturally relevant ‘Focal Species’ that each project is designed to support, such as salmonids, salamander, elk, black oak, tanoak, other legacy trees, huckleberry, acorns, willow, manzanita, and western pond turtle.
- For the **Deschutes Collaborative Forest Project** in Oregon, healthy forests are the backdrop for a significant outdoor recreation and tourism industry, contributing to the more than \$1 billion in direct tourism economic benefits in Deschutes County annually.

Benefits also include expanding community inclusion and engagement in restoration efforts and the management of public lands.



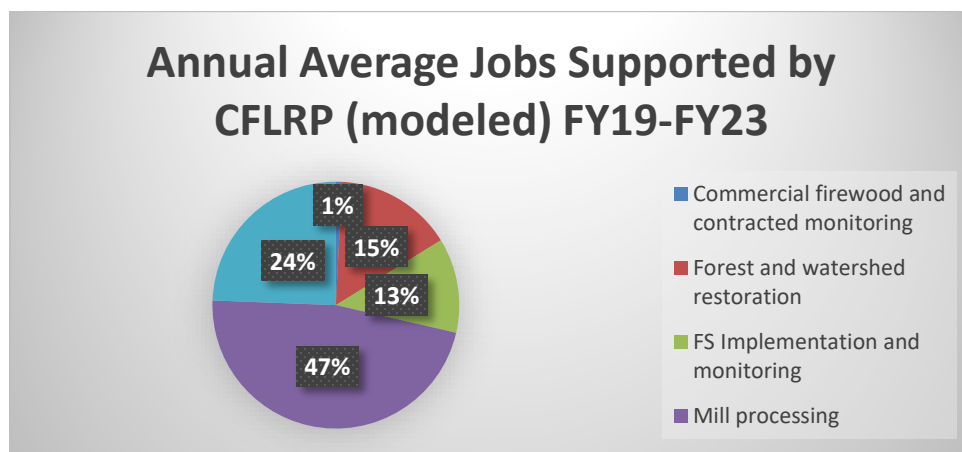
- For example, the **North Central Washington** effort worked with the Wenatchee Community for the Advancement of Family Education (Café), a local Hispanic service organization, to increase engagement and outreach with Spanish speaking community members.
- The **Northern Blues** landscape in Oregon hosted 47 workshops, trainings, talks, and webinars with private landowners and the general public in 2023.

In response to recent surveys of CFLRP participants, a majority of respondents perceived moderate to substantial progress on various socioeconomic goals, including reducing community wildfire risk (65 percent) and supporting local employment or training (66 percent)<sup>ii</sup>. Just over half perceived moderate to substantial progress on offsetting treatment costs via byproducts and accomplishing more work on adjacent lands, indicating opportunities for improvement for these collaborative goals.

### **Local Jobs, Labor Income, and Workforce Development**

Between FY 2019-2023, CFLRP supported an estimated yearly average of 3,830 full and part-time jobs and \$196 million in local labor income<sup>vi</sup>. On average, the percent of funding invested within the local area has increased over time, from 37 percent in FY 2019 to 67 percent in FY 2023, with a high of 72 percent in FY 2022.

As shown in the graph below, in the same time period, most of the modelled jobs were supported by mill processing and timber harvesting, followed by jobs supported by forest and watershed restoration and USDA Forest Service implementation and monitoring<sup>vii</sup>. The remaining one percent of jobs supported were in commercial firewood and contracted monitoring. Over the last three years, most of the modelled jobs have been linked to labor-intensive work (33 percent), followed by equipment-intensive work (31 percent)<sup>viii</sup>.



Across the 17 current CFLRP Landscapes, 68 percent of the boundaries include disadvantaged communities— census tracts that are overburdened and underserved as defined by the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool. In their most recent annual reports, CFLRP landscapes provided information about beneficiaries of CFLRP dollars – for example, the **Rio Chama** in New Mexico reported that 56 percent of the contracts were awarded to minority-owned businesses. On the **Southwest Colorado Landscape**, 86 percent of contracts went to self-certified small, disadvantaged businesses.

Current CFLRP efforts are emphasizing youth engagement, workforce development, and local job opportunities.

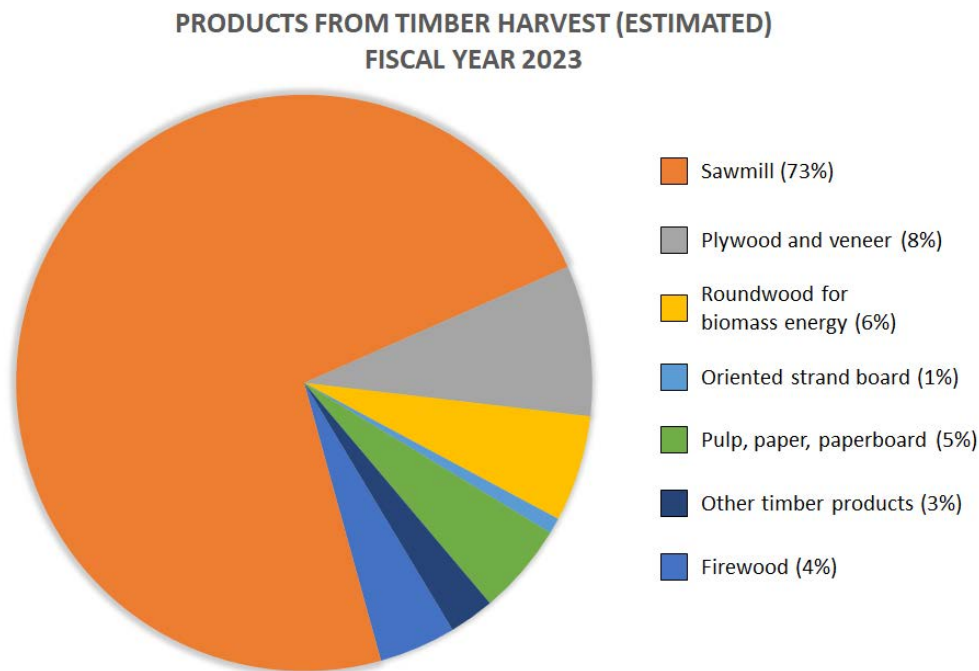
- For example, the **Rogue Basin** landscape in Oregon partners with Lomakatsi Restoration Project to support workforce training and employment programs serving tribal and



multicultural youth and young adults. In 2022, Lomakatsi launched an expanded version of their Tribal Ecological Forestry Training Program. A crew of 10 tribal youth from Klamath County gained professional certifications in wildland fire, chainsaw operation, cultural monitoring, and First Aid/CPR and spent the next year supporting landscape-scale forest and watershed restoration projects in the Rogue Basin and in their ancestral homelands. In 2023, Lomakatsi launched a second Ecological Forestry Training Program cohort serving 10 multicultural youth and third cohort serving 12 tribal young adults.

### **Wood Products Industry**

Most of the wood products harvested in FY 2023 (73 percent) was for **sawmill use** (e.g. creation of lumber, bolts, woodchips, pallets, pressure and creosote treated lumber), followed by **plywood and veneer** (8 percent) and roundwood for **biomass energy** plants (6 percent - nearly double the amount in FY 22). **Firewood** (commercial and home use) made up 4 percent of the total.



Over time, CFLRP landscapes have helped to maintain, and in some cases expand, existing industry, as outlined in the following examples:

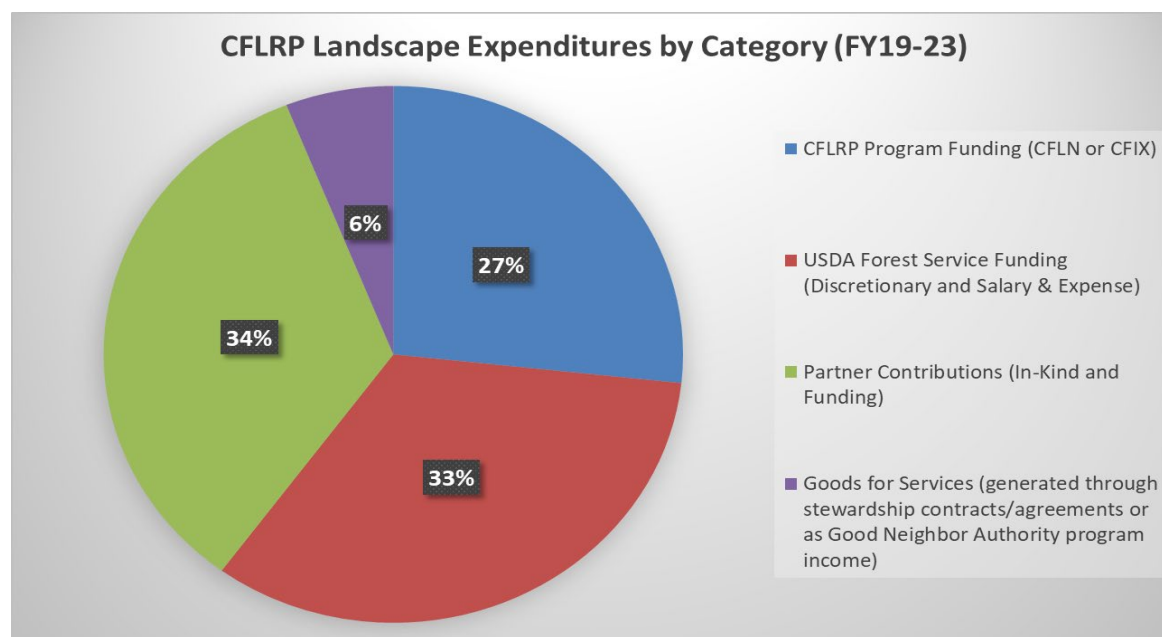
- On **Zuni Mountains** in New Mexico, CFLRP funding has played an important role in stabilizing a local business named Forest Fitness, and supported important investments in the development of horizontally integrated partner businesses - Armstrong Conservation and Rocky Mountain Ecology. Both new businesses work in close partnership with Forest Fitness and provide an additional 10 full-time jobs and secondary economic benefits. Forest Fitness has invested in new equipment that will support it in years to come. The owner attributed this growth to the stabilizing effect of CFLRP and the relationships with National Wild Turkey Federation that have led to new contracts.
- In the **Southern Blues Restoration Coalition** area in Oregon, local wood processing companies have invested heavily in upgrades and new infrastructure to utilize small diameter wood, adding jobs to the community. These companies have used the leverage of CFLRP funds along with the expectation of continued contracting with a focus on local benefit to help secure investments. They continue to place an emphasis on benefits to local communities with the expectation that the primary contractors hire employees locally when their projects are funded with CFLRP.

CFLRP landscapes reported a lack of infrastructure and markets for low-value wood products as a continuing challenge. Several CFLRP landscapes worked to assess new opportunities and technologies to expand markets and infrastructure, including new products and processing approaches.

- For example, on the **Pisgah Restoration Initiative in North Carolina**, the area's timber markets were severely impacted by the closure of the paper mill in 2023. A nearly immediate trickle-down effect was the five chip mills serving the area shutting down operations. In response, the USDA Forest Service set up service contracts to dispose of pulpwood at chip facilities to incentivize the use of these low value timber products and encourage chip mills to continue operations and court new markets. They are also partnering with the Southern Research Station and North Carolina State University to help better understand contracting options and the impacts of this market loss on our mixed hardwood forests.

## Leveraging Public and Private Resources

CFLRP leverages resources nationally and locally, publicly and privately, to advance our work collectively. The funding authorized for CFLRP can be used to pay up to 50 percent of the costs of carrying out and monitoring treatments. The long-term federal investment provided by CFLRP helps the Agency and partners attract additional funding and resources for work across that landscape.



Over the life of the Program, for every dollar of CFLRP funding spent, partners contributed \$1.66. In FY 2023 alone, CFLRP landscapes reported more than 110 unique partner contributions totaling about \$40 million. Contributions come from a wide range of collaborative partners— including local, regional, and national nonprofits; private landowners; youth corps; water agencies; Tribal Governments; trails associations, state agencies, other federal agencies, cities, counties, soil & water conservation districts, businesses, and universities.

Partner contributions play a critical role in advancing work on parts of the CFLRP landscape that are adjacent to NFS lands, including private lands, Tribal lands, State lands, and other Federal lands. Since FY 2019, 43 percent of partner contributions advanced work across other land

ownerships to help knit together the landscape as a whole and achieve outcomes at scale. The examples below illustrate the wide range of work that is made possible by bringing resources together.

- **Lakeview Stewardship, OR:** In FY 2023, the Lake County Umbrella Watershed Council contributed a range of work valued at \$1.1 million as part of the Lakeview Stewardship CFLRP - including 760 acres of forest health and fuels reduction treatments on private lands and post-fire restoration with beaver dam analogs along 10 miles of streams.
- **Northern Blues, OR:** The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation Tribes invested more than \$750,000 for watershed health, forest health, and fire resiliency on 1,370 acres and managing invasive and noxious weeds on 505 acres.
- **Rio Chama, NM:** The Forest Stewards Guild provided opportunities to several Youth Corps Crews that resulted in work on the ground (contributions to conservation projects from fuel reduction work to trails to stream projects) and economic and educational opportunities for youth (a paycheck and college credit).

## **The Collaborative Approach**

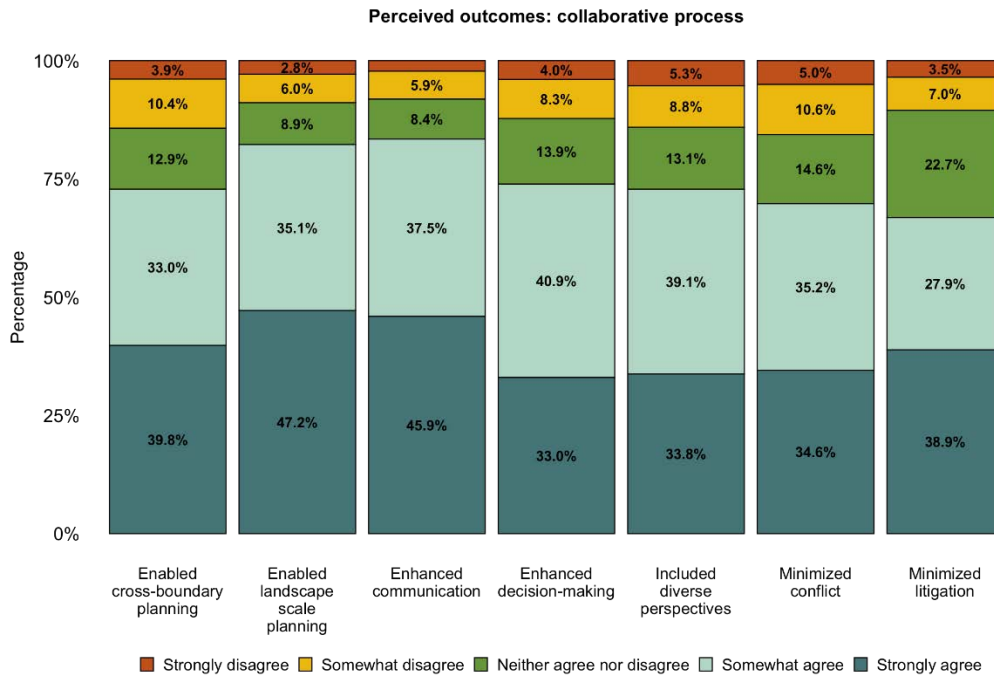
The collaborative process – bringing together people with diverse interests in a transparent and inclusive way to share knowledge, ideas, and resources towards a common purpose – is the foundation of CFLRP. The authorizing legislation requires that the restoration strategy used in carrying out work be developed and implemented through a collaborative process.

### **Collaboration Impacts:**

Through 15 years of CFLRP implementation, we have seen that working in collaboration with partners and stakeholders enables us to plan, implement, and monitor at more integrated and broader scales. It increases the durability and support for management decisions and creates conditions for innovation. The ideas, knowledge, creativity, and capacity we bring together collectively allow us to accomplish work that simply would not be possible otherwise. While it takes an investment to bring people together and build effective working relationships, the investment pays dividends.

- For example, on the **Southern Blues Restoration Coalition** in Oregon, the Blue Mountains Forest Partners collaborative group was crucial in helping plan and monitor project treatments affected by wildfire. Their Upland Forest Restoration Zones of Agreement influenced project design. The safety corridor identified in the Community Wildfire Protection helped the Agency expedite planning efforts and focus treatments in the right place.
- On the **Southwest Colorado**, the Agency and partners carried out a variety of treatments across multiple jurisdictions to restore fire-adapted landscapes and reduce hazardous fuels. Collectively, cooperators accomplished 27,666 acres of all-lands hazardous fuels reduction in the landscape in FY 2023.

The nearly 400 CFLRP participants across 15 CFLRP landscapes were recently surveyed. The participants generally felt that a representative cross-section of partners were included in their CFLRP effort and that they worked together to identify shared interests and concerns<sup>ii</sup>. Certain respondents were more likely to participate in the survey than others – for example, more than 50 percent of responses came from non-governmental or USDA Forest Service participants. Respondents reported several positive outcomes related to the collaborative process:

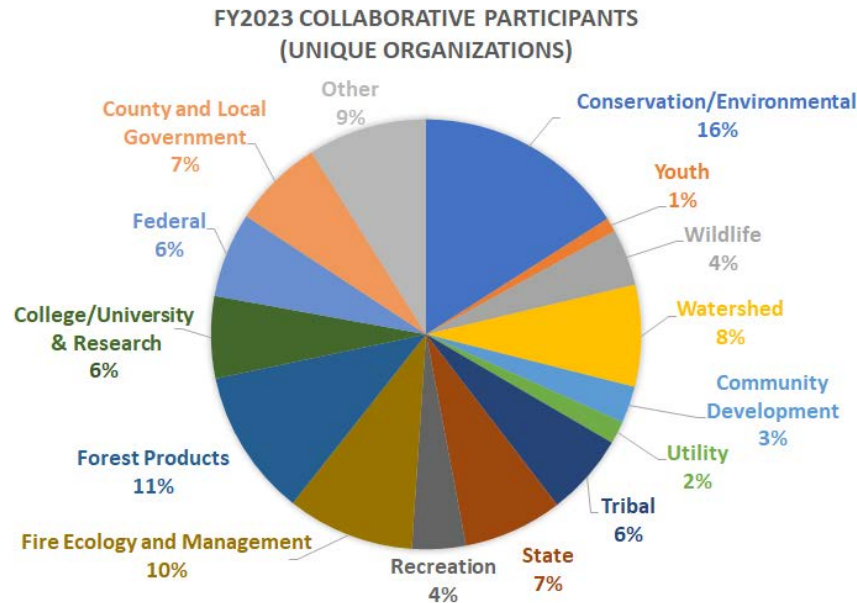


Initial lessons learned from these collaborative assessments include:

- Early and frequent engagement is needed to build trust and shared understanding, help participants understand how and when to inform decisions, and articulate what decisions are made and why.
- Collaboration benefits from inclusion of diverse perspectives and interests, and there are many factors that determine whether an entity engages. Inclusion should be managed based on local context, collaborative history, current and expected needs, and objectives.
- The most common limiting resources for collaboration are sufficient time and funding.
- Supporting a culture of collaboration, where Agency staff have the capacity, training, direction, and incentives to commit to the collaborative process, can help sustain collaboration over time.

### **Collaborative Participation:**

Over the life of the program, the 31 Landscapes funded to-date have worked with collaboratives encompassing 720 unique organizations, businesses, governments, and others. The graph below shows the diversity of interests represented in collaboratives in FY 2023.



### **Partnership with Tribes:**

Representation from Tribal entities in CFLRP collaboratives has increased by 81 percent as compared to the first 10 years of the Program. Agency staff and collaborative partners are increasingly working with Tribes, within or outside of the collaborative structure, to support meaningful working relationships and advance Tribal goals on the ground and in communities. The following examples are illustrative of the kinds of partnerships in place, along with other examples throughout the report.

- On the **Northern Blues** in Oregon, First Foods monitoring is occurring with the Nez Perce Tribe and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation on reservation, NFS, private, and The Nature Conservancy lands, with 41 plots and 30 site assessments completed. 2023 was the first year that First Foods monitoring was done in partnership with the Nez Perce Tribe, which expanded Tribal representation, and increased the geographic range of sampling.
- The **North Central Washington** project worked with the Mid-Columbia Fisheries, Cascade Fisheries, Cascadia Conservation District, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation and Yakama Nation Fisheries to improve fish habitat complexity, restore floodplain connectivity, and restore fish passage. The partnership advanced larger-scale, essential aquatic projects in 2023. The Mad River Pine Flats restoration project involved more than five miles of river habitat and associated floodplain restoration, with treatment sites selected through partnership-led stream surveys and collaborative strategies. These actions will have meaningful improvements to critical fish habitat and better prepare key watersheds for a changing climate.

### **Conclusion**

Through 15 years of CFLRP implementation, USDA Forest Service and CFLRP participants have advanced our collective knowledge about approaches to collaborative landscape restoration, highlighting both best practices and areas for continued focus.

- **Investing in collaboration.** The requirement to collaborate allows for local variability and creates durable outcomes. Fifteen years of CFLRP implementation has led to a greater understanding of collaboration best practices and resources. We continue to learn

about sharing ownership and risk, working towards greater inclusion, and building resilience to change over time.

- **Supporting success with multi-party monitoring.** The multi-party monitoring approach both builds trust and accountability across collaborators and allows for innovation and adaptive management over time. Leveraging learning from the first 15 years, a new CFLRP Common Monitoring Strategy initiated in 2022 provides greater consistency and capacity for monitoring at landscape-scales.
- **Working at scale for integrated outcomes.** When multiple interests come together to identify opportunities across the landscape, they can achieve cross-cutting results. Learning about tools and approaches for collaborative planning at these scales can help evaluate tradeoffs and treat the right acres, at the right time, at the right scale.
- **Accelerating results while navigating challenges and change.** Collaboratives expanded the scale of prescribed burns to reduce uncharacteristic wildfire risk and continue to work to achieve the desired scale of impact. While some CFLRP landscapes benefited from more robust local forest products infrastructure, all CFLRP efforts highlight the importance of sustaining infrastructure and markets for restoration byproducts.
- **Multi-year, place-based funding.** Long-term commitments attract partners to leverage resources and enable effective cross-boundary work.

## What's Next?

In the 2018 Farm Bill, Congress reauthorized CFLRP through FY 2023 and the Program is up for reauthorization. In addition to the 17 current CFLRP Landscapes, there are seven project proposals with Secretarial approval for onboarding pending funding availability.

Moving forward, the USDA Forest Service will continue to work with partners to apply lessons learned to existing and future CFLRP landscapes, and to its other priority work. Through collaborative approaches to addressing landscape-scale needs, we can share risks and successes, overcome setbacks, and advance the shared stewardship of our public lands.

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<sup>i</sup> Kooistra, C., Sinkular, E., and Schultz, C., Characterizing the Context and Demand for the US Forest Service's Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration program in 2020. <https://academic.oup.com/jof/article/120/1/64/6346533>.

<sup>ii</sup> Beeton, T.A., O'Reilly, H., vonHedemann, N., Colavito, M.M., Teel, T.L., Huayhuaca, C., Snitker, A.J., and Cheng, A.S., In Press. CFLRP collaborative governance assessment report: A national baseline synthesis for the Common Monitoring Strategy. Will be available at: [https://cfri.colostate.edu/publication/?sf\\_s=CFLRP](https://cfri.colostate.edu/publication/?sf_s=CFLRP).

<sup>iii</sup> Areas selected to reduce wildfire risk to communities, critical infrastructure, and natural resources from the nation's wildfire crisis.

<sup>iv</sup> Vorster, Anthony G., et al. Metrics and Considerations for Evaluating How Forest Treatments Alter Wildfire Behavior and Effects. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jofore/fvad036>

<sup>v</sup> <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#3/33.47/-97.5>

<sup>vi</sup> The Treatments for Restoration Economic Analysis Tool (TREAT) is a modeling tool used to estimate the economic effects (jobs and labor income) of restoration activities tied to CFLRP. A commercial economic impact analysis program, "IMPLAN," is used to build a model for each unique CFLRP landscape and the results are imported into TREAT and combined with user data by Forest Service economists annually.

<sup>vii</sup> Jobs totals include direct, indirect, and induced jobs, thereby capturing the "ripple effect" of investments to other industries. Timber harvesting: effects from logging of commercial timber volume; Mill processing: effects from mills that process commercial timber volume; FS implementation and monitoring: effects from salary and other agency expenditures; Commercial firewood and contracted monitoring: effects from any reported commercial fuelwood sales and contracted monitoring services; Forest and Watershed Restoration: effects related to contract/agreement funds spent on restoration work and related services

<sup>viii</sup> Equipment intensive work includes chipping in the woods, equipment intensive logging operations, and mechanical treatments such as mastication, grapple piling, excavator work, etc. Labor-intensive work includes labor intensive, simple mechanical treatments such as thinning with chain saws, hand piling, prescribed burning, tree planting, etc. Material-intensive work includes road work, culvert replacement, in-stream restoration, fence construction, some trail work, etc. Technical services includes stand exams, marking, layout, biological surveys, cultural surveys, invasive weed spraying, etc. Professional services includes studies completed by scientists, engineering design, acquisition or analysis of remotely-sensed data, scientific modeling, etc.