



State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet

Colorado 2024



Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2023 Estimate
Community Forestry and Open Space	\$29,000
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management	\$723,747
Forest Legacy	\$3,125,000
Forest Stewardship	\$468,192
Landscape Scale Restoration	\$96,000
State Fire Assistance	\$3,339,495
Urban and Community Forestry	\$838,784
Volunteer Fire Assistance	\$183,700
Total	\$8,803,918

NOTE: This funding is for all entities within the state, not just the State Forester's office.

The mission of the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) is to achieve stewardship of Colorado's diverse forest environments for the benefit of present and future generations.

Cooperative programs are administered and implemented through a partnership between the State of Colorado, USDA Forest Service and many other private and government entities. These programs promote the health, protection and productivity of Colorado's forestlands and rural economies, emphasizing reduction of risk to people, property and resources, management for timber and other forest products, wildlife, water resources, and conservation practices.

Program Goals

- Maintain and improve the health of Colorado's urban and rural forests and related economies
- Increase cost effectiveness and efficiencies through the use of partnerships in delivery
- Increase values through sustained productivity of forests
- Deliver programs that are voluntary using non-regulatory approaches

Key Issues

- Fragmentation of forest landscapes
- Loss of forest products manufacturing capacity
- Unprecedented levels of forest insect and disease activity
- Threat of wildfire in the wildland-urban interface
- Threat of wildfire outside the wildland-urban interface
- Community forests at risk to invasive insects and disease
- Risk of diminished forest resiliency and adaptability due to changing climate conditions
- Declining forest watershed health
- Declining riparian ecosystems
- Air quality issues associated with forest conditions

Forest Facts and Accomplishments

Selected Facts	Value	FY 2023 Accomplishments	Value
Population	5,773,714	Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	1,046
Acres of Forest Land	22,758,929	Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	11,650
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	4,763,563	Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans	9,678
Number of NIPF Landowners	52,614	Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	1,500
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	24,240,000	State Fire Communities Assisted	479
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	41,432,979	Coop Forest Health Acres Protected	21,552
Number of Rural Fire Departments	424	Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	0
Cities and Towns	272	Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	110
Forest Based Employment	4,000	Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	4,087,750
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	0	Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	0
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	36,254,000		

Program Highlights

Colorado Forest Action Plan

The CSFS completed the Colorado Forest Action Plan (CFAP) in 2020. Since that time, data, maps, and reports are hosted in the Forest Action Plan web application of the Colorado Forest Atlas (CFA). This web application had 1,951 unique users in 2023, based on Google Analytics. The CSFS launched a new File Explorer web application in the CFA where these data can be easily downloaded.

Both CSFS and its partners continue to use the composite priority map to evaluate optimal landscapes for achieving improved forest conditions, watershed protection and reduction in wildfire risk to communities. Goals, strategies and approaches from the CFAP are incorporated into forest management plans by foresters, used to evaluate state grant applications such as the Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation grant that is administered by CSFS, and used to develop an internal outcome-based framework for work planning. Additionally, the CFAP is guiding the development of the CSFS Forest Monitoring and Forest Health programs, which will continue to strengthen climate adaptive forest management recommendations both at CSFS and with partners.

In 2023, the CFAP informed other statewide prioritization and planning efforts including the Colorado Natural and Working Lands Strategic Plan and the Colorado Climate Preparedness Roadmap.

Cooperative Fire Protection

The CSFS role is to provide statewide service in fire ecology, natural resource management, wildfire risk assessment, community protection planning and fuels mitigation. The CSFS has the responsibility for forestry and fuels mitigation while the Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC) has the responsibility of wildland fire preparedness and response. Together the CSFS and DFPC provide a complete package of wildland fire management programs to the state.

CSFS staff interactions with landowners, communities and local governments have yielded 262 Community Wildfire Protection Plans and 226 Firewise USA® Communities, which is third among states in the nation that have an active Firewise USA® program. Cooperative Fire Funding received by CSFS is instrumental to achieve stewardship and resiliency of diverse forest environments, mitigate the negative effects of fire across landscapes, and protect people and property through assessment, collaboration, planning and implementation for individuals and communities.

In 2023, Community Assistance Funds Adjacent to National Forest Lands (CAFA) were awarded to one project in the Colorado Front Range to treat 73 acres. State Fire Assistance WUI Competitive Funds were

awarded to four projects affecting the Front Range and Western Slope regions with 652 acres planned for treatment.

Relying upon an interagency prescribed fire state agreement coupled with federal funding, the CSFS continues to expand its trained and experienced workforce to support planning and implementation of prescribed fire in the state. The CSFS also continues to deliver the NFPA ASIP course around the state to promote the Fire Adapted Communities tenet of the Cohesive Strategy. The agency also released an update to the Colorado Wildfire Risk Assessment and provided associated interagency sponsored trainings to promote widespread familiarity and utilization.

Economic Action

The CSFS provided input and information in support of the passage of state Senate bill 23-005, the Timber, Forest Health, and Wildfire Mitigation Industries Workforce Development Program. Passage authorizes the CSFS and state community colleges to develop 1-2 year certificate programs and professional internships that will begin in 2024.

The CSFS worked on a Statewide Biomass Assessment and provided biomass utilization guidance in support of the CSFS Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation state-funded grant program. Other state funding supported two additional awards under the CSFS biomass utilization grants program and Wildfire Risk Mitigation Loan Fund.

Additional efforts the CSFS was involved in include collaborative participation with the Rocky Mountain Restoration Initiative (RMRI), leadership Team of the Forest Products Committee of the Council of Western State Foresters, San Juan National Forest Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program, and the Colorado Mass Timber Coalition. Additionally, CSFS staff provided reviews and scoring to 2023 USDA Wood Innovations applications and proposal preparation guidance to 2024 applications.

Forest Health Protection

Colorado experienced its coolest water year (Oct. 2022-Sept. 2023) since 2010 according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Temperatures were the coolest in 13 years, but still above the 100-year average. There were record wet conditions along portions of the Front Range and drier-than-average conditions in the San Luis Valley. Statewide, the 2023 Water Year was the wettest since 2017 at 20.02" compared to the 100-year average of 18.10".

The CSFS, in collaboration with the USFS, conducts annual aerial detection surveys to map and quantify insect and disease activity in forested areas of Colorado. In 2022, the aerial detection survey conducted flights over nearly 30 million acres.

Western spruce budworm was the most damaging forest pest across the state with 202,000 acres affected, an increase by 90,000 acres in 2023. Mountain pine beetle mortality along the Front Range, in Gunnison County and throughout the southwest is now 3,100 acres. Western balsam bark beetle-caused mortality in subalpine fir has continued in the central and northern forests of the state, affecting 27,000 acres in 2023. The spruce beetle infestation statewide continues to decrease in most areas with about 19,000 acres affected in 2023 and cumulative acres affected since 2001 at 1.9 M, or 40 percent of the state's high-elevation Engelmann Spruce forests. The CSFS continues to implement semiochemical use, direct removals, and management activities to reduce spruce beetle and Douglas-fir beetle outbreaks. Douglas-fir beetle mortality totaled 17,000 acres in 2023 in mixed conifer forests in central and southern areas. Other insects causing damage in low elevation forests in the southwest include roundheaded pine beetle and pinon ips beetle.

The non-native emerald ash borer (EAB) was detected in Carbondale, the western most location in the state, likely due to human-assisted wood movement. EAB was also detected in Littleton adjacent to other infested communities.

Forest Legacy

During 2023, the Forest Legacy Program in Colorado was awarded funding for two projects. Combined, those projects will permanently conserve 7,288 acres in Delta and Huerfano counties. Two additional projects are under development for FY26 funding consideration. The CSFS and partners continue to have conversations on future project development and ways to increase capacity of the program in Colorado

given the increase in program funding.

The CSFS is enhancing capacity for the program by creating a position dedicated to Forest Legacy. Partner input was gathered and the position is moving through the creation and hiring process.

Forest Stewardship

The Forest Stewardship Program provides landowners technical assistance with the development and implementation of comprehensive resource management plans. The CSFS provided assistance and education to 1,046 landowners and developed/revised plans covering 11,650 acres in 2023. Of those plans, 9,678 acres are in high priority areas.

The Colorado State Forest Action Plan continues to guide the priority of fuels and forest health treatments. The Forest Action Plan along with the Forest Stewardship Priority area map are used extensively to help identify future outreach and education efforts on private lands.

The Restoring Colorado's Forest Fund awarded 6,390 seedlings to landowners in 2023 to help restore private forestlands affected by wildfire.

The Forest Stewardship Program Specialist will continue to engage landowners and partners through Forest Ag Newsletters. These newsletters are distributed to landowners, consulting foresters and partners twice a year to keep them informed of program updates, forest health issues and forest management assistance opportunities.

The Colorado Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee continues to meet and provide guidance on state and private forestry issues and provides input on Forest Legacy applications.

Through funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the CSFS hired four lead stewardship foresters to provide support on private land initiatives including landowner outreach & education, plan writing, modernization of the Colorado Forest Ag program and development of Landscape Scale Management Plans. These efforts are ongoing.

Good Neighbor Authority

During 2023 the CSFS developed five new Supplemental Project Agreements (SPAs) for over \$9M under the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) master agreement between Colorado and the USFS for additional timber sales, timber salvage, fuels treatments and capacity expansion on federal and high priority lands. The majority of new SPA funds came from Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding. In addition to the five SPAs, multiple modifications of existing agreements occurred adding funding and support to new and ongoing projects across several areas of Colorado. The CSFS currently has 24 active SPAs across the state and three that expired in 2023.

The CSFS developed seven new modifications to the Statewide BLM Good Neighbor Authority agreement and San Luis Valley BLM GNA Agreement that include capacity, timber sales, fuels reduction work and support for the CSFS nursery to grow and provide seedling trees for restoration activities on BLM lands.

Benefits from the GNA program include landscape-scale management over combined ownerships, leveraged fuels treatments and defensible spaces, removal of impediments to cross-boundary watershed restoration, and cooperation between county, federal, state, and tribal agencies, landowners, and other stakeholders. Recognizing these benefits, the 2023 State Legislature provided \$2M for CSFS capacity to focus on the GNA program in Colorado. This state support allowed the CSFS to continue adding critical capacity in high priority areas across Colorado to assist with cross-boundary management within mutually identified priority landscapes.

Landowner Assistance

In 2023, the CSFS requested funds from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Landscape Scale Restoration program in order to expand the outreach of existing programs to better reach underserved landowners.

With this funding, the CSFS will develop a new program titled "Assistance for Underserved Forest Landowners in Colorado" that can build off existing programs while providing targeted outreach and

assistance to underserved landowners in the state. In order to develop the most efficient and effective program that meets the needs of underserved Colorado landowners, the CSFS will first solicit assistance from a consultant to conduct outreach to partners, facilitate meetings, gather feedback and draft recommendations for program options for the Assistance for Underserved Forest Landowners in Colorado program in calendar year 2024. The CSFS will evaluate recommendations and integrate into program development.

Landscape Scale Restoration

The CSFS submitted one application for funding to the 2023 Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) Competitive Program with a goal of reducing the risk of uncharacteristic fire and post-fire effects, and enhancing forest resilience and wildlife habitat on private and tribal ranch lands in SW Colorado.

In 2023, the CSFS successfully expanded Colorado's online tree inventory system, Colorado Tree View, to include a multi-tab inventory capturing tree condition, management, history, risk and planned management and has engaged with 250 stakeholders to plan and implement training events for forest managers, advocates and volunteers around the state on the proper use of Colorado Tree View. Two tree inventories have been completed using the new system. The CSFS is in the process of developing a decision matrix to determine which communities will receive tree inventories, inventory analysis, canopy assessments and management plans into the future, and is continually working to improve and update the tree inventory system.

Urban and Community Forestry

The CSFS Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) Program provided financial and technical assistance to 110 communities in Federal FY 2023, reaching a total of 4,087,750 people or 70 percent of the state's population. In partnership with the Colorado Tree Coalition (CTC), the CSFS awarded community grants totaling \$125,518. These grants are funded by the USFS, CSFS, Xcel Energy, Xcel Energy Foundation, Colorado Public Radio and private donors.

Ninety-seven communities, six college campuses, and two electric utilities were recognized by the CSFS and the Arbor Day Foundation through the Tree City USA, Tree Campus Higher Education and Tree Line USA programs. Of the 97 TCUSA communities, 18 received Growth Awards for additions and improvements to their community forestry programs. Altogether, the 92 communities planted 14,446 trees and invested more than \$35.3 million toward the care of their tree resources.

Colorado's statewide urban tree inventory tool, Colorado Tree View, contains 549,794 trees managed by 172 local government agencies, HOAs, colleges and other collections. We continue to offer this tool as a free community resource, an introduction to the management value of inventory data, and as a tool to understand the condition of our urban forests at multiple scales.

The Front Range Urban Forestry Council (a chapter of the CTC) met regularly in 2023 and continues to play a key role in shaping and coordinating UCF efforts along the Front Range and across the state. Also, the newly created Colorado Intermountain Urban Forestry Council has met each month since their inception in April 2023. Our ability to host effective hybrid (in-person & virtual) meetings continues to improve and expand access to these networking and educational opportunities beyond the state.

Watershed Initiatives

The CSFS participates in collaborative efforts to protect our state's forested watersheds. Threats include uncharacteristic wildfire, insect and disease outbreaks and an increase in population resulting in additional demands on limited water resources.

The From Forests to Faucets program is a partnership between Denver Water, the USFS and the CSFS focused on treating both public and private land with the goal of mitigating the potentially negative effect of large-scale disturbance on key Denver Water reservoirs and infrastructure. The CSFS has identified, planned and continues to implement treatment on approximately 4,500 acres of non-federal land within Denver Water's Zones of Concern. A new agreement for additional funding and treatment will be signed in 2024.

Since 1987, the CSFS has partnered with Colorado Springs Utilities to implement the Pikes Peak Watershed Management Plan, which guides forest management in the 13,000-acre watershed. Under our

MOU, the USFS, Colorado Springs Utilities and the CSFS will facilitate work across boundaries through use of the GNA. In 2023, the CSFS completed 365 acres of treatment on the South Slope of Pikes Peak with 800 acres in progress and 230 acres planned for treatment in 2024.

Northern Water and the CSFS renewed their ongoing partnership with the recent signing of a multi-year agreement to fund proactive forest health initiatives aimed at reducing the severity and impacts of future wildfires in the region. The CSFS recently entered in to an agreement with Aurora Water for funding to establish and maintain a website for the Upper South Platte Partnership and contribute to forest thinning and restoration projects. The CSFS also signed a new MOU with the USFS and Denver Metro Area communities for Clear Creek Watershed and Forest Health Partnership.

Finally, the CSFS continues engagement in post-fire recovery and local restoration efforts.

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