

Forest Service Awards Nearly \$20 Million in Community Wildfire Defense Grants

June 26, 2023



Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Forest Service is investing \$197 million towards 100 projects benefiting 22 states and seven Tribes, as part of the Community Wildfire Defense Grant program.

Funded by President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the CWDG program was developed to assist at-risk communities with planning for and lowering wildfire risks on Tribal, state, and privately managed land. The program comes at a time when the nation faces an ongoing wildfire crisis, and these grants support the Forest Service’s plan to confront the wildfire crisis across all lands.

Grant proposals underwent a competitive selection process that included review panels made up of state forestry agencies and Tribal representatives. “Projects were selected using a collaborative, inclusive process that engaged tribes and state forestry agencies,” said Forest Service Chief Randy Moore. “All projects include at least two of the primary selection criteria mandated in the legislation. And in all cases, these

projects are taking critical steps to protect homes, property, businesses, and people's lives from catastrophic wildfires."

Of the 100 projects across 22 states and 7 tribes that were awarded in the initial round of funding under the Community Wildfire Defense Grant Program, this included 7 projects locally within the North Coast region, including several partners of the Six Rivers National Forest.

Grants awarded locally include:

- Briceland Volunteer Fire Department, Fire Hazard Reduction Project

\$205,251 to create a Fire Hazard Reduction Crew, to conduct roadside clearance and improve fuel breaks along otherwise unmaintained roads, creating safer routes for emergency response and evacuation and reducing the chance of roadside ignitions.

- Del Norte Fire Safe Council, Del Norte Wildfire Resiliency Program

\$3,089,552 to create a Hazardous Fuels Reduction crew to perform defensible space work around residences and create shaded fuel breaks. This project will provide training, education, public outreach and implement a county-wide RX burn association with landowners to create Firewise communities.

- Humboldt County Resource Conservation District, Greater Willow Creek Wildfire Resilience Project

\$5,027,427 to implement a suite of area-wide outreach, education, and implementation actions as well as the implementation of 9 priority fuels reduction projects encompassing 25 CWPP priority sites.

- Mattole Restoration Council, Prosper Ridge Community Wildfire Resilience Project

\$2,175,132 to hazardous fuels treatment on 450 acres of land bordering the King Range National Conservation Area. Various treatment methods will be used from prescribed treatment, mechanical and hand thinning.

- Resort Improvement District No.1, Shelter Cove Wildfire Resiliency & Community Defense Project

\$6,222,500 to provide outreach, coordination & Inspections services and conduct 1,211 acres of Hazardous fuels reduction work over a 5-year period.

- The Watershed Research and Training Center, Hyampom Community Protection Project

\$1,322,666 to implement 450 acres of hazardous fuel reduction treatments in strategic and critical private land locations including manual thinning and chipping, hand piling, pile burning, prescribed fire.

- Yurok Tribe, Yurok Fire Department, CWPP Update

\$250,000 to create a Community Wildfire Protection Plan that identifies critical at-risk communities on the Yurok Indian Reservation. Prioritizing places that are "low income", have "been impacted by a severe disaster", or have "high or very high wildfire hazard potential," as well as protecting sensitive and sacred

sites, assist in producing basketry materials, traditional foods, ceremonial regalia, and traditional medicines for the Yurok People. Finally, we recognize our river's health correlates to our human health, correlates to all flora and fauna species health and our main food source, salmon, and sturgeon, as being secondarily benefited by increasing water yields and improving our fish health, habitats, and their lifespans.

“Drought, climate change, increasing development in the wildland urban interface combined with years of excluding natural fire from the ecosystem have led to year-round fire activity and increased the destruction and scale of wildfires,” said Homer Wilkes, Under Secretary for Natural Resources. “These initial investments address wildfire risks on state, private and tribal land, and contribute to the ongoing work under the agency's Wildfire Crisis Strategy.”

The Six Rivers National Forest would like to congratulate everyone, including many of our own partners who received the first round of grant awards! The Forest Service will announce another round of funding later in 2023. The number of selected proposals in future rounds will depend on available funding. More information about funded proposals and announcements are available on the Community Wildfire Defense Grants website.