

2023 LRP - All Lands Central Oregon (SCALABLE Proposal)

Community Name(s): Jefferson County, Warm Springs, Greater La Pine, Crescent/Gilchrist, Greater Sisters, Greater Bend, Sunriver

Budget and Match Narrative

The full funding request includes 18 partners working across 3 counties, treating 20,888 acres on a footprint of 8,016 acres. Our total request is \$7,428,541.

This work is scalable, and we present 3 options for selecting priority work:

- Option 1: Bundles 9 partners with projects in underserved areas, treating 11,968 acres on a 4,259 acre footprint. Cost: \$4,272,948
- Option 2: Bundles 13 partners with self-identified high-priority projects, treating 7,096 acres on a 2,581 acre footprint. Cost: \$3,302,500
- Option 3: Bundles 3 new partners treating 3,033 acres on a 444 acre footprint. Cost: \$1,361,115

Projects could also be prioritized by geography: Greater Bend, Greater Sisters, South Deschutes County, Jefferson County/Warm Springs

The proposed 20,888 treatment acres is matched by 25,698 treatment acres on BLM and USFS, with more than 70% of matched treatment acres located in the wildland urban interface (WUI). Partners include State, County, Municipal, Tribal, non-profit, and private landowners.

Deschutes SWCD, Upper Deschutes Watershed Council, Walker Range, request personnel funds to oversee projects in cooperation with private landowners. Jefferson County will use a portion of their budget to train volunteers and students to complete on-the-ground fuels reduction work. The High Desert Museum requests funds to hire a forest manager to plan and continue fuels reduction work around museum buildings and on adjacent private property previously supported by the ODF Small Forestland Grant Program. Our full budget request also includes small equipment purchases such as chainsaws to implement on-the-ground work. Supplies include native seed for reseeding following invasive species and fuels reduction treatments as well as outreach materials to help recruit landowners for current and future fuels reduction work. COFSF will administer contracts, collect and validate implementation data, and collect spatial data for partners, streamlining ODF's efforts. COFSF will engage in targeted outreach to underserved communities, to identify and reduce their barriers to participation. Real-time problem solving is supported through peer-to-peer communication via the network and 2 field trips.

A detailed budget spreadsheet displaying \$ budgeted by category (requested and match) and a breakdown by each project partner was emailed to the State Grant Initiatives Coordinator

The 1.65 million acre project area includes an extensive WUI surrounding the cities of Bend, Sisters, La Pine, unincorporated areas of Crescent, Gilchrist, Cloverdale, and Sunriver. The project area provides countless benefits to area residents, including clean air, water, recreational opportunities, and a robust economy based on forest products, agriculture, and

tourism. Numerous high-use recreation areas are located across the landscape and the area is bisected by three primary state highways (97, 58, 20), and two scenic byways, Hwy 242 and the Cascade Lakes Scenic Byway. The project area has a history of large wildfires that prompt multiple evacuations, costly suppression, cause health complications due to heavy smoke, and have resulted in structural losses. The project area averages 179 fires a year, 71% human-caused, and 18 large fires in the past 10 years, emphasizing the risk to people and property from high fire hazard. Current conditions of the area's ponderosa, lodgepole and juniper forests present a high fire risk for communities. Forest health issues, a lack of fire resilience, and a growing population present significant challenges for agencies responsible for wildfire suppression and evacuation. The landscape contains Oregon's #1 and #6 firehazard for cross-boundary community exposure to wildfire. Many communities within the top 50 at risk for housing exposure (Quantitative Wildfire Risk Assessment) are within the project area: Bend #4, Sisters #20, Tumalo #21, La Pine #34. The project area is in a crucial time for partnering to scale up resilience by expanding treated landscapes.

Project Area Description and Challenges

The project area intersects with 8 current CWPPs all with goals of resilient landscapes, fire adapted communities and safe & effective wildfire response. The proposal aligns with CWPP goals by reducing fuel hazards on public & private lands, reducing structural vulnerability, increasing education & awareness of the threat of wildfire, & improving and protecting evacuation routes. This project is directly tied to reducing fuel hazards on public & private lands with the intent as described in the CWPPs of reducing overall fire behavior so suppression resources are successful while providing increased safety for first responders & residents. Through matching efforts with Firewise sites, structural vulnerability is also being addressed. Most areas within the proposed work areas are rated as very high or high risk of impacts to people and property. Success will be shared with the public to tell the story of the region's current conditions & the cross-boundary work being done to support wildfire resiliency. Outreach materials & events match CWPP goals to increase education & awareness.

FAP goals accomplished: 1) leveraging partnerships to build landscape scale, cross-boundary projects, to conserve forest landscapes (shared stewardship); 2) restore disturbance resilient forests, manage ecosystem health toward fire adapted landscapes, & protect life & property while increasing pace, scale & quality of management on federal lands to protect forests from harm; 3) reduce negative post disturbance impact & reduce impacts of smoke on air quality through forest management. Proposed treatments address FAP priority issues of Climate Change, DEI, Forest Health, Water Quality & Quantity.

Proposed Activities

The goal of this work is to reduce wildfire risk, lower the expected severity of fire behavior, enhance public safety, and increase communities' fire resilience. The project will treat an estimated 46,586 acres with small tree thinning, pruning, brush mowing, mastication and prescribed burning. Fuel reduction projects are located near homes and critical infrastructure that is in and adjacent to communities.

The majority of the project's boundary falls within the Central Oregon Focal Landscape as identified in the USFS Wildfire Crisis Strategy, which calls for treating 20 million acres of USFS land and an additional 30 million acres of private land over the next 10 years. The projects also fall in Class 1 on the eNVC risk map, with small portions in Class 2. While the 1.65 million acre geography is quite large, the proposed work is part of a larger landscape resiliency and fuels reduction effort that has been in process over 17+ years, and includes Project Wildfire, Deschutes Collaborative Forest Project, two Joint Chief's projects, and over 62 official Firewise USA™ sites across the region. It also includes over \$170,000 of defensible space fuel reduction projects across 38 Firewise USA™ communities since 2022.

Work on non-federal lands can be broken down into three general focal areas: Greater Sisters area, Jefferson Co. & Warm Springs to the north, and south Deschutes County. A mix of tribal, local government, non-profit, industrial and non-industrial private, and HOA landowners will engage in thinning and fuel reduction on more than 8000 acres.

This work will deepen and expand the COSSA network of relationships, increasing central Oregon's capacity to coordinate and implement cross-boundary fuels reduction work. As COSSA continues to stitch together the patchwork of fuels reduction projects across Central Oregon, funding will increase the pace and scale of current Firewise USA™ defensible space projects and future Firewise USA™ sites.

Inclusion of underserved communities in fuels reduction projects will be increased in this project. In addition to working with Jefferson County and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, COFSF and OSU Extension will conduct targeted outreach to underserved communities, leveraging demonstration projects slated for implementation in Jefferson & Deschutes Counties and sharing success stories to increase awareness and support of cross-boundary landscape work. These efforts may include pub talks in favorite watering holes near at-risk communities. Where possible, LRP participants will serve as the program voice, putting a local face on the state's program. Efforts will also include field trips, videos, and print collateral designed to increase awareness, connect people to peers who have completed work on the ground, and develop a list of those interested in fuels reduction projects in underserved communities.

Building on lessons learned during LRP1, partners will learn from each other via quarterly peer-to-peer learning sessions, enhancing real-time problem solving. COFSF will update and enhance a list of qualified contractors, increasing its accuracy and utility to partners. The ability to identify and secure a contractor capable of completing the work-at-hand was a significant barrier to efficient implementation. An accurate, sortable, and detailed list will save time and money.

Project work will be administered under the umbrella of COFSF, which will draft and oversee agreements, collect and validate monitoring data, manage invoicing, and gather and update spatial data to meet reporting needs. This streamlines ODF's workload and provides needed services to partners in support of accurate reporting and project completion.

Cross-Boundary Opportunities

The proposed project boundary lies within the USFS Wildfire Crisis Strategy Central Oregon Focal Landscape, one of ten high-risk landscapes in the U.S. chosen for immediate investment to reduce overall fire risk. The project overlays with 8 CWPP's, and the Deschutes Collaborative CFLRP boundary to weave together current and ongoing efforts to improve landscape resiliency and reduce the risk of wildfire. This project adds the element of Shared Stewardship into these other existing initiatives which serves to broaden project partners to the fullest extent to insure an all lands cross boundary approach.

All project partners will either work on their own lands or will work with multiple private landowners to accomplish the overall objective of reduction of wildfire risk on public and private lands, in and adjacent to communities, near homes and critical infrastructure while restoring landscape resiliency. Additionally, over 50% of the proposed projects are immediately adjacent to public land, and 42% are privately owned, non-industrial lands. COSSA has also built new partnerships in Jefferson County and Warm Springs in order to protect cultural resources, critical infrastructure and smaller lot owners who are in high wildfire risk areas and also represent underserved populations.

To bring all these organizations together under an overall Shared Stewardship approach, COFSF will convene partners for an effort focused on supportive grant administration and coordination, while providing as-needed local support for state-level effectiveness monitoring, and creating stories of success highlighting cross boundary collaboration coming out of this proposed project.

Project Collaboration

Jefferson Co. Fire & EMS will treat heavy fuel loads on private, school district, & public land, to include two demonstration sites

Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs will reduce fire risk adjacent to the museum, which is of cultural importance to the tribe

BPRD is plans a 200 ft fuel break, weed control, native reseeding, and fuels reduction work on municipal land

Deschutes Land Trust is working on 2 properties in Sisters treating noxious weeds and conducting pile burning, and 1 thinning project in La Pine

Deschutes SWCD is developing a Forest Health and Wildfire Risk Reduction Program & will identify 10, 30-acre projects to implement forest health projects

UDWC will utilize trees removed from thinning projects for a stream habitat improvement project in cooperation with OWEB

Deschutes County will be working with private landowners in Sisters and La Pine, as well as conducting a prescribed burn

High Desert Museum will hire a forest manager to oversee 165 acres of fuels reduction on museum property and the adjacent private land

Shanda Assets will create a continuous line of fuels reduction work with the Melvin Butte USFS and SAFR projects

Walker Range & Shanda will reduce fuels in Mahn Acres Subdivision

Sunriver Owners will thin, chip, and brush common areas
Peaks 360 will create a fuel break to help protect areas near Lower Bridge
Caldera Springs will create fuel breaks to help protect residential infrastructure
OPRD will reduce fire risk in La Pine State Park
OSU Extension will assist with sharing success stories through outreach materials/events
COFSF will hold and manage agreements with project partners to streamline administration through the life of the grant

Project Timeline

Fall 2023-Sp 2024:

COFSF finalizes agreement with ODF and agreements with partners, final project layout, bidding and contract execution. Contractors and landowners begin on the ground work.

Admin/planning: COFSF draws up agreements for each project partner & develops invoicing processes, works with partners to develop protocols for collecting spatial data, required reports, & demographic data. Hold quarterly partner meetings.

Contractor List: Use partner meetings to refine & update content of list.

Outreach: Schedule field trips, develop outreach plan & timeline, develop outreach materials, update project webpage.

Summer- Fall 24:

Continue fuel reduction work, some possible delays for fire season restrictions.

Admin: Execute work as agreed to and described under winter/spring, partner meetings, support partners' mid-term reporting and data validation, hold mid-project field trip.

Contractor List: Expand content, format & distribute.

Outreach (continues through Spring 2025): Field trip, develop & distribute print collateral, host pub talk, update project webpage.

Winter 2024/5:

Mid-project check in COFSF and partners, make adjustments or amendments as needed, continue on the ground work.

Admin: update implementation timelines, continue partner meetings, complete interim reports.

Spring 25:

Finalize work, ensure completed work aligns with scope of work.

Admin: Final partner field trip, prepare for final reporting and wrap-up.

June 15 25:

COFSF support partners to complete end-of project reporting and close out agreements, submit final report to ODF

Admin: Complete contractor directory, collect final reports, invoices, & spatial data from partners, submit final report.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

This project expands the LRP program's reach into underserved communities in Jefferson County, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, and the La Pine area, which have high rates of poverty (15.9%, 27.8%, and 9.7% respectively in 2022). Underserved and poor communities traditionally have less access to the resources needed to create defensible space, and are thus more vulnerable to loss of property from wildfire & less able to recover afterwards.

In addition to including multiple underserved communities in our proposal, this project seeks to overcome the barriers these communities have to participating in the first place. Lack of awareness, inability to provide in-kind or cash match, challenges completing paperwork & reporting, cultural barriers, and a lack of trust for the government are just a few reasons for lack of participation.

COFSF and OSU Extension will partner to engage in targeted outreach, to increase our ability to serve these communities. Because people respond best to trusted peers, this project will engage community members who have completed fuels reduction work to serve as a key contact and bridge to the program. We will host field trips, pub talks, and engage in targeted outreach to connect underserved communities to others doing fuels reduction work, build relationships and add them to our network so we can enroll them in future programs.

Additionally, COFSF will collect demographic data on contractors and program participants. This information will paint a picture of the degree to which the program currently serves communities of color and poverty. We also plan to work in partnership with Heart of Oregon to broaden the population that is reached.