



United States Department of Agriculture

JOINT CHIEFS' LANDSCAPE RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP

Northeast Washington Initiative



WASHINGTON



Columbia River, NRCS

People living in northeast Washington and visiting enjoy stunning views of the foothills of the Rocky Mountains by day and gaze at stars by night. This wild and wonderful area is known for recreation, including hiking and camping, downhill and cross-country skiing, hunting and fishing, huckleberry and mushroom picking—offering a serene existence with a low cost of living. The whispering ponderosa pine, red cedar, Douglas fir and western hemlock forests are adapted to occasional natural fires. But like many other parts of the country, fire has been suppressed for decades to protect property and people, leaving forests crowded with too many trees and vulnerable to the rapid spread of pests. Between 2000 and 2010, insects and diseases damaged 1.3 million acres, annually, in Washington, more than 1.5 times the annual average in the 1990s. These combined factors have resulted in an over-abundance of dead trees and plant material, enabling fires to burn longer and hotter and do more damage. In 2014, wildfires burned more than 380,000 acres in Washington, more than six times the five-year average of acres burned. This Joint Chiefs' project was designed to protect communities and the cultural and natural heritage of the area around the 1.1 million-acre Colville National Forest. USDA's Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service worked collaboratively with public partners and private landowners to reduce and mitigate wildfire risk to ensure a healthy future for this treasured landscape.

Northeast Washington Initiative RESULTS



Before tree thinning treatment
USDA Forest Service photo



Reduce wildfire risks: The Joint Chiefs' funded the development of 36 forest management plans and fuel reduction work on 4,800 acres of private land to reduce wildfire threats.



Improved water quality: Wildfires often lead to increased sediment in streams and rivers. Reducing wildfire threats help protect water quality in the Pend Oreille River and other waterways, securing clean drinking water for people and safeguarding areas treasured for fishing and other recreation.



Enhanced wildlife habitat: Driven in part by the allure of spotting wildlife, consumers spend \$26.2 billion on outdoor recreation in Washington, each year. This project helped enhance habitat for wildlife, including bald eagles, moose, bighorn sheep, black and grizzly bear and a host of other species.

PROJECT IMPACT

25,000+
treated acres

To increase wildfire resiliency, the Joint Chiefs' funding supported the removal of dead plant material and tree thinning in overly dense forest stands on more than 25,000 acres.

Total awarded through the Joint Chiefs' from 2015-17: \$3.9 million

USDA's Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service are working together to improve the health of forests where public forests and grasslands connect to privately owned lands. Through the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership, the two USDA agencies are restoring landscapes by reducing wildfire threats to communities and landowners, protecting water quality and enhancing wildlife habitat.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

NORTHEAST WASHINGTON INITIATIVE



Sheridan's land after treatment for wildfire reduction, NRCS

Life on the Land

The rough terrain of northeast Washington draws people in search of solitude. That was certainly part of the appeal for Sara Sheridan, who spent most of her adult life here, raising her children. Just ten miles from the Canadian border, near the national forest, Sara owns 40 acres of land where she grows her family's food.

Over the years, Sara's land became overly dense and littered with dead and dying trees. She knew she needed help but didn't know where to start. "A friend told me about a program to help people manage forests," Sara said. "I was nervous—I don't have a lot of money, and I'm not able to do the kind of work I knew it would take." Sara cautiously invited USDA staff to her property and they helped her understand the available resources to help her improve her land and walked her through the application process.

Sara chose a local contractor to remove dead and unnecessary trees over three years, and she developed lasting relationships along the way. "I could tell they really wanted to help me," Sara said. "I was literally moved to tears because they respect what I am doing here and appreciate how much I love this land."

"There have recently been several small wildfires in Sara's area," said Bart Ausland, a Natural Resources Conservation Service forester who worked with Sara. "Fortunately, none of them become large fires. Sara's property is better prepared now that the forest surrounding her home has been opened up and the fuel load reduced."

Ultimately, USDA's assistance made Sara feel that our efforts is "all about trust, and I found that with everyone I worked with on this project."



Sara Sheridan and Bart Ausland, NRCS

Key Partners

Avista
Boise Cascade|
Bureau of Land Management
Conservation Northwest
NE Washington Forestry Coalition
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Vaagen Bros Lumber Inc.
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Washington State Department of Natural Resources