



United States Department of Agriculture

JOINT CHIEFS' LANDSCAPE RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP

Managing Fire and Ice

SAN BERNARDINO AND RIVERSIDE COUNTY FUELS REDUCTION PROJECT



CALIFORNIA



The community, the San Bernardino Mountains and National Forest.

Atop the San Bernardino mountain range, children sled and make snowmen surrounded by the sweeping vistas of Southern California. Down below, gold prospectors panned for treasure and streams traverse arid, fire-adapted forests. This is a land of contradictions. Designated as the San Bernardino National Forest more than a hundred years ago, the area has seen a great deal of change in that time. Timber harvesting and livestock grazing have taken their toll, and citrus fields and communities have grown and stretched toward the boundaries of the forest, requiring more freshwater resources than ever before. Over the years, smaller, natural fires have been suppressed. Currently, wildfires burn hotter, longer and do more damage, due to increased fuel buildup. This Joint Chief's Landscape Restoration Partnership (JCLRP) project helped restore the forests true state to improve the health of its trees and protect them from fire and disease. The threat of these dangerous fires is mounting as communities and potential economic loss in the area grows. Those circumstances is what this project was designed to address.

PROJECT IMPACT

50+ JOBS

This project created more than 50 jobs through Forest Service contracts, and supported 38 private land forestry jobs. This allowed thousands of acres to be rapidly improved during a time wildfire risk and drought conditions were at an all-time high.

Total awarded from the JCLRP from 2014-2016: \$17.6 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.

San Bernardino and Riverside County Fuels Reduction Project

GOALS



Reduce wildfire risk to communities and landowners: During this

three-year project, almost 9,800 acres of public, private and tribal lands were treated to remove dead plant material that would otherwise become fuel for a fire.

Improve water quality: The Santa Ana and Mojave watersheds originate in the San Bernardino Mountains.

Each year, thousands of tourists



recreate in and around the waterways, supporting the local economy. Removing

invasive species and accumulated brush helped reduce erosion and improve water quality for nearby communities and ensure safer access to these popular areas.

Enhance wildlife habitat: Removing extreme populations of select trees and shrubs allowed a greater diversity of native trees and plants to support



wildlife habitat. This provided shade and high perches needed by nesting birds for feeding, plus supporting wildlife like for bald eagles, peregrine falcons and bighorn sheep.

JOINT CHIEFS' LANDSCAPE RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP SAN BERNARDINO AND RIVERSIDE COUNTY FUELS REDUCTION PROJECT



Removing dead limbs and brush around cabins reduces the fuel on the ground—a critical step in protecting forests during wildfires.

Shortly after the turn of the 20th century, the U.S. government wanted to build support for Federal lands. In this time, before tour buses and nearby hotels, people rarely experienced the rugged, remote beauty of many places set aside for conservation and recreation. A program that allowed private citizens to hold permits to build seasonal-use cabins in national forests was created, and a partnership in protection began. Several hundred permits were granted within the newly created San Bernardino National Forest.

“Those permits and cabins have been passed down for generations,” said Mary Beth Najera, a forest resource officer with the San Bernardino National Forest. The leases must be renewed every 20 years. Permit holders pay an annual fee and are responsible for the upkeep of the cabins and surrounding area. The greatest benefit of the program is that cabin owners care deeply about the land, and with funding from the JCLRP, permit holders who are a part of the Southwest Shore Healthy Forest Association, cost-shared efforts to make the forest better prepared to withstand wildfires.

Richard Fisher, president of the Southwest Shore Healthy Forest Association, said, “The project has returned the area to its natural state so that the remaining trees and plants will be much healthier and resistant to disease and fire.”

“This collaboration means the surrounding forest and the nearby communities will be safer,” Najera said. “It was an efficient use of federal dollars and staff time. Less brush to burn, structures that are better protected—those gains help slow down and control fire in a time of crisis.” Furthermore, the permit holders learned about land management practices, empowering them to continue this work in the future and educate others about how to care for the forests and waterways that are important to all Southern California.



San Bernardino National Forest

Key Partners

The Nature Conservancy