



United States Department of Agriculture

## JOINT CHIEFS' LANDSCAPE RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP

# Growing Partnerships, Removing Boundaries

### EAST FACE OF ELKHORN MOUNTAINS PROJECT



East Face of the Elkhorn Mountains

Federal, state, local and private lands of different types and designations can be found around the Elkhorn Mountains of northeast Oregon. But those boundaries have no meaning to wildfires. Natural fire caused by lightning is common in the ponderosa pine and Douglas fir forests found on the slopes of the range's dramatic granite peaks where stately elk roam and forage. Recreation enthusiasts treasure the area for the stunning views and to challenge hiking. Local landowners take pride in the rugged acres they steward. Many of them earn a living from agriculture, timber harvesting and other activities that are close to the land. The shared connection to this place was the foundation of this Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership (JCLRP) project. Stakeholders came together to improve understanding, grow relationships and make this wild and beautiful part of the country better prepared for wildfires and more resilient.

#### PROJECT IMPACT

**\$3.25**  
Million Invested

Local landowners invested about \$3.25 million to match Federal funding to make their properties and the entire area more fire resilient.

Total awarded through the JCLRP from 2014-2016: \$6.2 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.

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



OREGON

### East Face of Elkhorn Mountains Project

## GOALS



Elk © Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife



#### Reduce wildfire threats:

More than 16,000 acres of land continue to be treated for fuel reduction, including removing dead woody material and thinning timber stands. These treatments reduce wildfire threats to communities and sustain 264 jobs.



#### Protect water quality:

Wildfires can send heavy loads of sediment into waterways, choking aquatic species. Reducing the harmful effects of wildfires can protect water quality, ensuring that steelhead salmon and other prized species can thrive.



#### Improve wildlife habitat: Elk need open forest areas for winter foraging and refuge.

Funding for this project supported management strategies like timber thinning in elk habitat to reduce damage to agricultural fields. Funds from selling the removed timber will be reinvested in further improving wildlife habitat.

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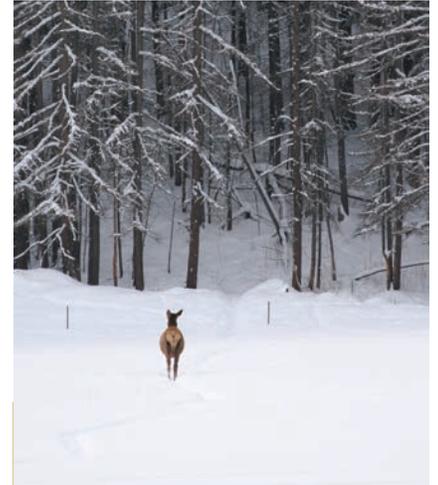
Partners exploring the Red Mountain Flume.

Shelly Gray loves living in eastern Oregon. “This land is our pride and joy,” said Gray. She and her husband, Jerry, own 1,100 acres, that are used for cattle ranching and personal recreation. “We love to bring our family up here and relax and hear the wind in the trees—it’s just beautiful. You can really forget about being at work when you come up here.”

The Grays are dedicated land stewards, and they enthusiastically participated in cost-share efforts to reduce wildfire risks around the East Face of the Elkhorn Mountains. Dense forest areas were thinned and dead plant material was removed from their property. Their cattle now have better grazing conditions, and there is substantially less fuel to feed wildfires. “In the summer, we get a lot of dry lightning, and that’s what causes most of the fires,” said Gray. “You can’t control nature. If you didn’t clean up some of the fuels, the fire would just spread and everything would be gone.”

The Joint Chiefs’ project was a catalyst, allowing federal agency teams to develop strong relationships with landowners like the Grays, local governments and agencies and organizations working to make the entire area more resilient.

“Seeing what can be accomplished when we invest in relationships and work together for a common goal has been one of the most rewarding accomplishments of my 28 years with the Forest Service,” said Bill Gamble, the district ranger for the La Grande District on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. “Around the same time the Joint Chiefs’ Partnership began, the newly formed Wallowa Whitman Forest Collaborative was in its infancy, and the northeast Oregon area was identified as a pilot area for applying National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy principles. This unique alignment of place, people and initiatives resulted in East Face becoming a nationally recognized example of the cross-boundary restoration activities encouraged and envisioned by the Joint Chiefs,” Gamble said.



Elk in the snow.

### Key Partners

American Forest Foundation

Bureau of Land Management

Eastern Oregon University

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Oregon Department of Forestry

Wallowa Resources

For more information, please visit [nrcs.usda.gov/JointChiefsReports](https://nrcs.usda.gov/JointChiefsReports)