

# **Robbins Gulch Forest Health Targeted Implementation Plan Modification, August 2023**

Hamilton Field Office, Ravalli County



Author: Stacy Welling, District Conservationist for NRCS Hamilton Field Office

## **Targeted Implementation Plan Modification**

The focus area for the Robbins Gulch Forest Health Targeted Implementation Plan (RGFH TIP) is being modified to address an increase in partnership opportunities as well as growing interest from landowners within the wildfire high risk areas. In response to the recognized wildfire risk within Ravalli County, a variety of partners have committed resources and staff to a collaborative effort to make a significant impact in reducing wildfire risk on both public and private lands. Blue Forest, Pheasants Forever, Montana Department of Natural Resources (DNRC), US Forest Service (USFS), and Bitter Root Resource, Conservation and Development (RC&D) have recently entered into the Mud Creek Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU is the first step the partners are taking to explore how conservation finance can accelerate restoration work on this landscape. Pheasants Forever has placed a position in Ravalli County specifically to guide and facilitate forestry work on both the public and private lands within the southern portion of Ravalli County. The modified RGFH TIP boundary will expand into the current area of partnership focus within the West Fork and provide NRCS EQIP funding for Forest Stand Improvement on private lands to augment these partnership efforts. In addition to Blue Forest and Pheasants Forever, the National Wild Turkey Federation, Mule Deer Foundation, and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation have all committed funding and resources to implementing forest thinning and wildfire risk reduction projects in Ravalli County.

The RGFH TIP boundary has been expanded to the southwest to include the West Fork in order to compliment the Mud Creek partnership efforts and has also been expanded north to capture high risk areas as identified through USFS wildfire hazard modeling. The Bitterroot National Forest has received approval for emergency actions from the Forest Service Chief to implement the Bitterroot Front Project. In preparation for the Bitterroot Front Project, the USFS has completed fire risk modeling that evaluates fire behavior, fuels and flame length. From this modeling, areas of high threat to values due to wildfire risk have been identified. The northern expansion area of the RGFH TIP modified boundary captures some of these high-risk areas and will increase opportunity for cross boundary treatments. These areas have also been identified as high priority by the Montana Forest Action Plan.

The RGFH TIP was first initiated through an active collaboration between the Fire in the Root, RC&D, BCD, DNRC, the Local Work Group, and the NRCS Field Office. This partnership has continued to grow and has expanded significantly over the last year including many more partners. It is critical for partners to continue to collaborate and align conservation activities in order to significantly reduce wildfire risk on the landscape within Ravalli County.

The overall goal and desired outcome for the RGFH TIP is to implement forest stand improvement treatments to improve forest health and reduce wildfire risk. This modification will allow the NRCS to achieve this goal at a more impactful level.

**Robbins Gulch Forest Health Targeted Implementation Plan**  
**Modification, August 2023**  
Hamilton Field Office, Ravalli County



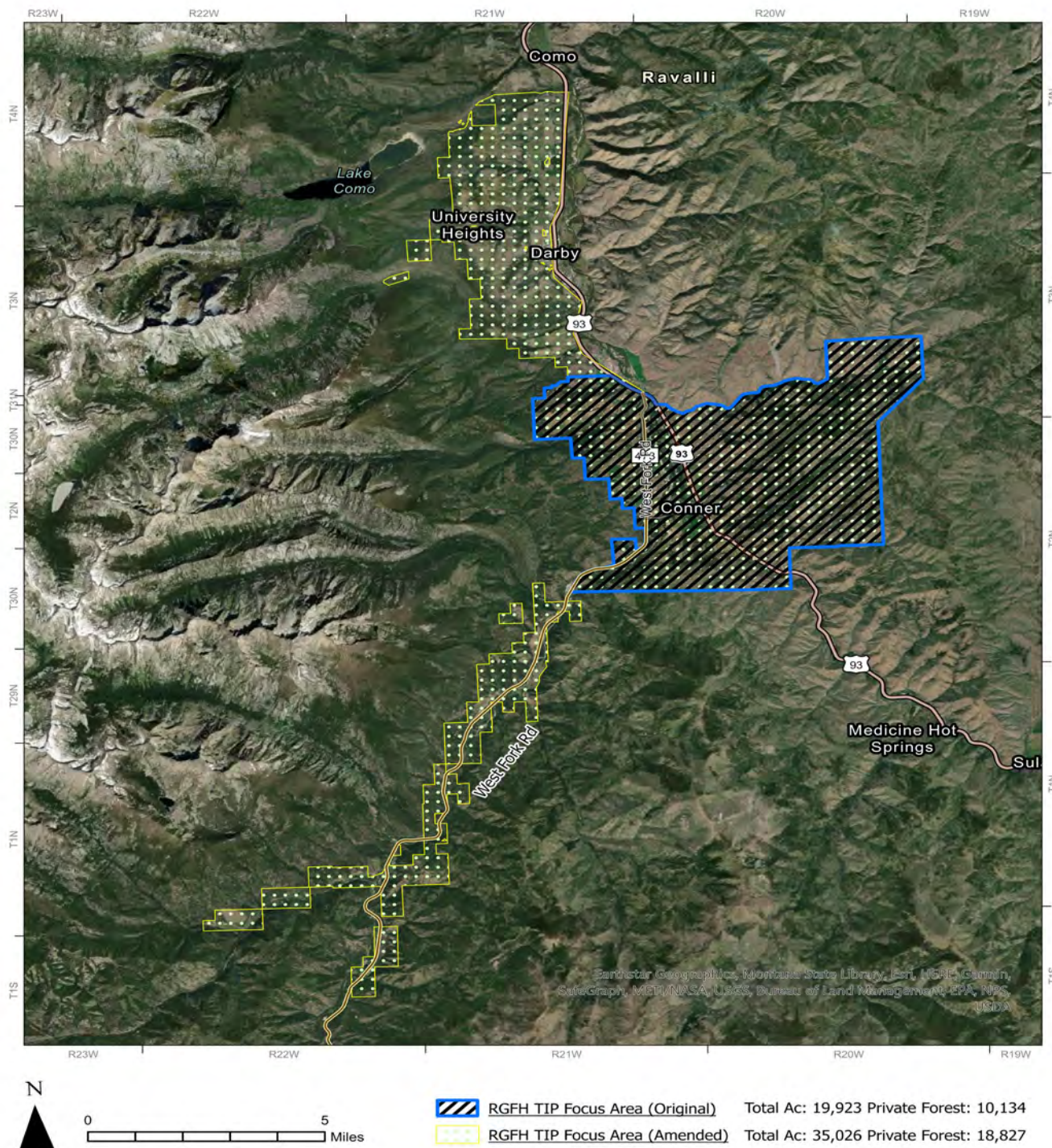
**Modified Geographic Focus**

Figure 1 displays the modified RGFH TIP focus area relative to the original. The modified focus area includes a total of 35,026 acres with 18,827 acres of private forest land. This modification is increasing the private forestland that would be eligible for fuels reduction treatment through the NRCS by 85%. As previously discussed, this expanded focus area will further cross boundary treatment and allow NRCS to provide assistance to the on-going partnerships and landowners.

# Robbins Gulch Forest Health Targeted Implementation Plan Modification, August 2023 Hamilton Field Office, Ravalli County



Figure 1: Robbins Gulch Forest Health TIP modified focus area



This map uses the UTM 11N projected coordinate system, North American Datum 1983. Additional data courtesy of the Montana State Library, BLM, and ESRI.



# Robbins Gulch Forest Health Targeted Implementation Plan Modification, August 2023 Hamilton Field Office, Ravalli County



## Implementation

**Table 1. NRCS Deliverables**

### **Original**

<i>Activities</i>	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total
<i>Forest Stand Improvement (CPS-666)</i>	200 ac	350 ac	350 ac	200 ac	1,100 acres
<i>Woody Residue Treatment (CPS-384)</i>	200 ac	350 ac	350 ac	200 ac	1,100 acres
<i>Critical Area Seeding (CPS-342)</i>	20 ac	35 ac	35 ac	20 ac	110 acres
<i>Herbaceous Weed Control (CPS-315)</i>	20 ac	35 ac	35 ac	20 ac	110 acres
<i>Tree and Shrub Establishment (CPS-612)</i>	400	600	600	400	2,000 Trees

### **Modified**

<i>Activities</i>	2024	2025	2026	Total
<i>Forest Stand Improvement (CPS-666)</i>	550 ac	550 ac	350 ac	1,450 acres
<i>Woody Residue Treatment (CPS-384)</i>	550 ac	550 ac	350 ac	1,450 acres
<i>Critical Area Seeding (CPS-342)</i>	35 ac	35 ac	20 ac	90 acres
<i>Herbaceous Weed Control (CPS-315)</i>	35 ac	35 ac	20 ac	90 acres
<i>Tree and Shrub Establishment (CPS-612)</i>	600	600	400	1,600 Trees

**Table 2. NRCS Budget Projections**

### **Original**

<i>CONTRIBUTIONS</i>	2023	2024	2025	2026	TOTAL
<i>NRCS EQIP FA</i>	\$250,000	\$435,000	\$435,000	\$250,000	\$1,370,000

### **Modified**

<i>CONTRIBUTIONS</i>	2024	2025	2026	TOTAL
<i>NRCS EQIP FA</i>	\$670,000	\$670,000	\$450,000	\$1,790,000

Robbins Gulch Forest Health Targeted Implementation Plan  
**Modification, August 2023**  
Hamilton Field Office, Ravalli County



## Summary of Modification

The RGFH TIP Modification entails the expansion of the TIP boundary with an increase in eligible forestland acres from 10,134 to 18,827 (85% increase). The modification will also increase the projected EQIP funding to \$1,790,000 total for the remaining three years of the TIP.

The resource concerns addressed or practices offered are consistent with those identified in the original RGFH TIP. As in the original RGFH TIP, the priority resource concern is **Wildfire Hazard from Biomass Accumulation**. Secondary resource concerns are *plant structure and composition* and *plant productivity and health*. Practices offered will continue to be: Forest Stand Improvement (666); Woody Residue Treatment (384); Critical Area Seeding (342); Tree and Shrub Establishment (612); and, Herbaceous Weed Control (315). Goals, implementation, and measurement of outcomes will be unchanged from the original RGFH TIP.

*The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees and applicants for employment on the bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)*