



News Release

FLORIDA

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USDA Seeks Proposals for Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership

GAINESVILLE, June 10, 2022 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is asking for proposals for the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership to improve forest health on public and private lands. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Forest Service are seeking the proposals by Aug. 5, 2022, for fiscal year 2023.

Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership aligns with the Biden-Harris administration's broader effort to reduce wildfire threats to communities and landowners, protect water quality and supply, and improve wildlife habitat for at-risk species. Most recently, President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law codified the initiative, showing broad support for the effort because of its inclusion in the once-in-a-generation investment to improve infrastructure and rural communities. Fiscal year 2023 projects will build on the fiscal year 2022 investment of more than \$48 million on projects that will mitigate wildfire risk, protect water quality, improve wildlife habitat, restore forest ecosystems and ultimately contribute to USDA's efforts to combat climate change.

"The Joint Chiefs' will align with USDA's shared stewardship strategy by selecting projects that demonstrate a cross-boundary effort, work at the appropriate scale and have mutually defined priorities that support local communities," said NRCS Chief Terry Cosby. "Partnerships at all levels – federal, state, Tribal and local—lead to well-developed, successful continued conservation with large scale impacts. Joint Chiefs' has a proven record of success, as further reflected in the program's inclusion in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law."

"Joint Chiefs' funding is an invaluable tool to help confront the wildfire crisis across all lands," said Forest Service Chief Randy Moore. "Working with our partners through the Joint Chiefs' program is an important element that supports the agency's 10-year wildfire strategy by increasing the scale of our wildfire prevention efforts while restoring the health of forests, watersheds and habitats across the country."

Opportunities to Collaborate

Joint Chiefs' project proposals are developed through a collaborative process between NRCS, Forest Service and partners. Past partners have included county, state, non-governmental, Tribal, utilities or private individual stakeholders. The collaboration process and partnerships will depend on the specific community needs of each project. Proposals are reviewed and vetted at multiple levels in the agencies based on local, state, Tribal and regional priorities.

"The partnerships will bring together agricultural producers, forest landowners, and National Forest System lands to improve forest health using available Farm Bill conservation programs and other authorities," said Juan Hernandez, Florida NRCS State Conservationist. "For example, in Florida, the Ocala Longleaf Priority Protection Area (Ocala National Forest) partnership project, funded in 2018, incorporates wildfire mitigation

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and water quality enhancement goals on both private and federal lands. This partnership accelerates forest restoration at a landscape scale by reducing wildfire risk, increasing appropriate understory vegetation and pollinator habitat, controlling non-native and invasive species, and protecting water quality.” Partners in this project include: NRCS, U.S. Forest Service, The Nature Conservancy, The National Forest Foundation, and the National Wild Turkey Federation.

Evaluation

NRCS and Forest Service national offices will evaluate the proposals and will announce the selected projects in late fall 2022. In selecting proposals, NRCS and the Forest Service will prioritize:

- Clear descriptions with goals and objectives, deliverables, timeline, and measurable desired outcomes.
- Reduction of wildfire risk in a municipal watershed or the wildland-urban interface (WUI). *A municipal watershed is a watershed from which municipal water is provided by a utility. The WUI as defined by the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6511).*
- Development of the proposal through a collaborative process with participation from diverse stakeholders.
- Increase of forest workforce capacity or forest business infrastructure and development.
- Leveraging existing authorities and non-federal funding contributions from partners.
- Support of established state, Tribal and regional priorities. Proposals should describe how the eligible activities were prioritized across the landscape and the source of the state or regional priorities (e.g., firehatched analysis, wildfire risk assessment, state technical committee watershed prioritization, Endangered Species Act recovery plan, state wildlife action plan, etc.).
- Alignment with USDA priorities and the Justice40 initiative, including benefits to historically underserved communities and climate mitigation and adaptation efforts.
- Partner participation in proposal development or project implementation.
- Coordination (i.e., pre-planning) with individual landowners within the proposal footprint.
- The geographic distribution of individual project activities across the landscape demonstrates a focus on resource conditions and a balance between land ownerships.
- Education and outreach to local communities about the project.

More Information

USDA has invested more than \$349 million across 110 projects in nine years through Joint Chiefs' projects, which focus on areas where public forests and grasslands intersect with privately-owned lands. Since 2014, these projects have delivered important forest and rangeland funding to 41 states and Puerto Rico. NRCS and the Forest Service also collaborates and coordinates to advance shared priorities through other programs and funding mechanisms and will continue to build on this collaboration to respond to disasters, address climate change, and advance equity. Landowners should contact their local [NRCS](#) and [Forest Service](#) office for more information.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. Under the Biden-Harris administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit [usda.gov](https://www.usda.gov).

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FY2022 Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership Projects

