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NEWS RELEASE

Tennessee Receives \$1.3 Million of More than \$46 Million USDA Invests to Protect Communities from Wildfires, Restore Forest Ecosystems and Improve Drinking Water

NASHVILLE, January 15, 2021 –The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will invest more than \$46 million this year through the [Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership](#) for projects that mitigate wildfire risk, improve water quality, and restore healthy forest ecosystems on public and private lands. Tennessee will receive \$1.3 million to improve wildlife habitat for at-risk species.

Funding for 37 projects includes \$13 million for eight new projects and \$33.3 million to complete work on 29 projects previously selected in 2019 and 2020. Through the projects, USDA's Forest Service (FS) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are working hand-in-hand with agricultural producers, forest landowners, and National Forest System lands to improve forest health using available Farm Bill conservation programs and other authorities.

"These Joint Chiefs projects are proof positive of what can be achieved when there is collaboration at all levels – federal, state, and local," said Sheldon Hightower, NRCS State Conservationist in Tennessee. *"We're proud to help continue these conservation partnerships and successes with these next eight projects, including the project here in Tennessee."*

"The Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership continues to provide an excellent example of the shared stewardship model," said Forest Service Chief Vicki Christiansen. *"The program enables federal, state, and local partners to work across boundaries and jurisdictions to accomplish joint management goals at a much larger scale."*

The Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership enables NRCS and FS to collaborate with agricultural producers and forest landowners to invest in conservation and restoration at a big enough scale to make a difference. Working in partnership, and at this scale, helps reduce wildfire threats, protect water quality and supply, and improve wildlife habitat for at-risk species.

The **East Tennessee Aquatic Habitat for At Risk Species** is one of eight new projects. NRCS and the USFS will invest more than **\$1.3 million** to apply multiple small-scale restorations strategically to achieve landscape scale conservation. It will do this by focusing efforts on 34 high priority catchments within the Cherokee National Forest and adjacent areas within 3 miles of the National Forest boundary.

Applying restorations in those areas substantially improves habitat and restored reaches are connected directly to at-risk source populations. Priority streams occur in both the North and South zones of Cherokee National Forest. The project aims to support Brook Trout, hellbenders, Tennessee Dace, and other at-risk aquatic species.

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The other seven projects are:

- **Alabama and Florida:** Sustaining Gains in Longleaf Pine Restoration Through Coordinated Cogongrass Control
- **Alaska:** Prince of Wales Landscape Restoration Partnership
- **Idaho:** North Fork Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project
- **New Mexico:** Sierra Blanca Restoration Partnership
- **Oregon:** Buttes to Basins - All Lands Forest Resiliency Project
- **Oregon:** Lake County All Lands Restoration Initiative
- **Puerto Rico:** Ecosystem Resilience Through Conservation Practices

Through the new three-year projects, landowners will work with local USDA experts and partners to apply targeted forestry management practices on their land, such as thinning, hazardous fuel treatments, fire breaks, and other systems to meet unique forestry challenges in their area.

For full project descriptions and information on completed projects, visit the [Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership website](#).

Successful Partnerships

USDA has invested more than \$247 million over seven years in Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership projects, which focus on areas where public forests and grasslands intersect with privately-owned lands. This year's selections bring the total number of projects to 93.

More Information

Agricultural producers and forest landowners interested in a project to mitigate wildfire risk should contact their local [USDA Service Center](#) to learn if their land is eligible.

All USDA Service Centers are open for business, including those that restrict in-person visits or require appointments. Visitors should call ahead and schedule an appointment. USDA program delivery staff will continue to work with our producers by phone, email, and using online tools. More information can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

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