

Wildfire Crisis Strategy FY23 Accomplishments

Master Stewardship Agreement

The National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF), in partnership with the USDA Forest Service, signed a Master Stewardship Agreement (MSA) in late September 2022. This first-of-its kind agreement paved the way for partner organizations to achieve the goals of the Wildfire Crisis Strategy.

For more information: <https://www.nwtf.org/content-hub/usda-forest-service-signs-50-million-agreement-with-the-nwtf-for-innovative-long-term-national-master-stewardship-agreement>



Region 5 Supplemental Project Agreement

After signing the MSA, the NWTF and the Forest Service immediately began working on a Supplemental Project Agreement (SPA) to complete important restoration work in California and look at innovative ways to move wood from areas of surplus to mill infrastructure that had additional capacity and needed wood volume. The SPA was signed on Feb. 28, 2023 and included the Colt Forest Stewardship Project (Colt) on the Klamath National Forest Gooseneck Ranger District. The Colt project is located within the Wildfire Crisis Strategy (WCS) Klamath River Basin Landscape. The Forest Service manages 55% of the 10 million acres in the WCS landscape, which is at high risk for catastrophic wildfires. Nearly 1.9 million acres of National Forest System lands have burned from 2012-22 within the WCS Klamath River Basin Landscape. The Colt project was approximately 6,000 acres in size and included a salvage timber sale that burned during the 2021 Antelope Fire (145,632 acres) and thinning non-merchantable plantation forested stands, brush mowing, juniper reduction and mastication.

For more information: <https://www.nwtf.org/content-hub/work-for-the-timber-transport-pilot-commences>

Work	Total Acres in SPA	Acres Accomplished	% Accomplished
Brush mowing/ juniper felling	1,605	1390	87
Juniper reduction	592	490	83
Plantation thinning	264	264	100
Timber removal	2,746	2320	80

Wildfire Crisis Strategy

Timber Transport Pilot Project

Due to the large number of acres impacted in California from the 2020 and 2021 wildfires, a lot of salvage was taking place on state, private and federal lands. In many cases, local wood markets were saturated and local capacity to take wood from National Forest System lands was unavailable. At the same time, mills in other parts of the U.S. were struggling to get enough wood and had additional capacity. From this situation, the Timber Transport Pilot Project (TTP) was developed. The concept was to examine the feasibility of taking wood from California and using railcars to transport it to Hulett, Wyoming. The goal, if successful, would increase pace and scale of restoration and maintain existing, critical sawmilling infrastructure necessary to complete forest restoration cost effectively. Additional benefits included invigorating underserved, rural communities and economies that are sometimes economically challenged, while achieving carbon storage and benefits beyond piling and burning the material.

During FY23, 713 truckloads of ponderosa pine salvage were hauled to Gilchrist Forest Products in Gilchrist, Oregon. Once there, most of the salvage logs were debarked and then hauled to Klamath Falls, Oregon, where they were loaded on railcars. Northern California and the Black Hills are in two different insect pest zones. At the recommendation of insect specialists within the Forest Service and some affected state foresters, logs were debarked before transport to prevent the spread of insects that are native to California but are not native to Wyoming. During FY23, a total of 82 railcars were moved between Oregon and Wyoming. For the purposes of this project, based on averages:

- A truckload is estimated to be about 4.7 mbf (thousand board feet).
- A railcar carries approximately 18.35 mbf.

For more information: <https://www.nwtf.org/content-hub/colt-forest-stewardship-and-timber-transport-pilot-project-2>

Local Wood Markets

In addition to moving wood via rail, the Colt project also provided wood to several local wood markets. During FY23, 323 truckloads of white fir and ponderosa pine were delivered to Roseburg Forest Products in Weed, California, and six truckloads of ponderosa pine were hauled to High Desert Lumber in Alturas, California.

Region 6 SPA

Building on the MSA and the SPA in Region 5, the Region 6 SPA was signed on July 31, 2023, and included the Hawks and Blue Mile projects on the Fremont-Winema National Forest, Chiloquin Ranger District. These projects were located within the WCS Klamath River Basin Landscape. The Hawks project became pivotal to continuing the work of the Railroad Timber Transport Pilot.

Region 2 SPA

The Region 2 SPA was signed on Sept. 22, 2023 and included two projects on the Big Horn National Forest, one project on the White River National Forest, and one project on the San Juan National Forest. Implementation would begin in FY25.

NWTF Capacity

The Region 5 SPA included funding for the NWTF to increase capacity to manage the Wildfire Crisis Strategy work and develop additional projects. A Wildfire Crisis manager and a Region 2 Wildfire Crisis coordinator were hired in July 2023.