

## Issues and challenges

Wildfires today are larger and more severe, starting earlier, ending later, and resulting in loss of homes, forests, and other resources. Past and current management practices, including fire exclusion, have left forests in dry regions stressed from drought, overcrowding, and uncharacteristic insect and disease outbreaks. Compounding the problem is the fact that humans cause 84 percent of all wildfires in the United States. These human-caused fires account for 44 percent of the total area burned and result in a fire season that lasts three times longer over a greater area (Balch et al, 2017). The increase in size and severity of wildland fires is causing ecological, social, and economic damage. The departure from historic fire patterns is also having an impact on water, wildlife habitat, stream function, large and old tree structure, and soil integrity.

Wildfires are affecting communities across the West. The 2017 fire season again illustrated the risk of wildfire to communities large and small. Subdivisions in urban areas have become a fuel component, burning from house to house similar to how crown fires burn from tree to tree. Economically, wildfires burn valuable infrastructure and timber, make recreation and tourism unappealing, and can have direct impacts to municipal water supplies (Diaz, 2012).

In 2009, the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (<https://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/strategy/thestrategy.shtml>) was developed as a strategic push to encourage collaborative work among all stakeholders across all landscapes to use best scientific principles and make meaningful progress towards three goals:

- 1) Resilient landscapes
- 2) Fire-adapted communities
- 3) Safe and effective wildfire response

This strategy establishes a national vision for wildland fire management, describes wildland fire challenges, identifies opportunities to reduce wildfire risks, and establishes national priorities focused on achieving these national goals.

To address these issues across the Intermountain

West, politicians, leaders, managers, practitioners, universities, agencies, and landowners are seeking solutions to the issues of forest health<sup>1</sup> and wildfire risk. People are gathering at conferences and workshops; politicians are drafting congressional bills; academia is conducting research and educational outreach; agencies are exploring opportunities to increase the pace and scale of restoration; and private landowners are motivated to reduce risk based on a sense of responsibility.

Wildfire threatens forest values, but this is not just a public land issue. As noted in the American Forest Foundation report titled, *Western Water Threatened by Wildfire: It's not Just a Public Land Issue*:

1. Across 11 Western states, more than ⅓ of the high wildfire risk is on private and family-owned land.
2. Nearly 40 percent of lands that keep water clean in important watersheds and that are at high risk of wildfire are privately or family owned.
3. Family forest owners want to do the right thing and are motivated to take action on their land. The majority cite the high cost of implementing management as a barrier.
4. Greater attention to management action is needed not only concerning private and family-owned lands but also regarding partnerships that work across public and private land boundaries.

## About this guide

In each chapter of this guide, the process used by the Klamath-Lake Forest Health Partnership (KLFHP) to plan and implement cross-boundary restoration projects is described. This process addresses the issues and challenges listed above. This guide is intended as a model from which other individuals and communities can learn. Public land managers and private landowners are encouraged to modify the KLFHP process to meet

<sup>1</sup> Forest health is defined in WA state statute as “the condition of a forest being sound in ecological function, sustainable, resilient, and resistant to insects, diseases, fire and other disturbance, and having the capacity to meet landowner objectives” (RCW 76.06).

the needs of their local circumstances. Hopefully, this will also spark ideas for ways to improve and refine the process. The final chapter (page 54) examines areas that KLFHP considers in need of further action.

The KLFHP process incorporates the recommendations of two important sources of information for improving the success of cross-boundary restoration: the survey by the Rural Voices of Conservation Coalition (RVCC) and the *Western Water Threatened by Wildfire: It's not Just a Public Land Issue*.

The Rural Voices of Conservation Coalition completed a survey in 2017 with 96 respondents representing networks of organizations, agencies, and entities engaged in cross-boundary management to learn how to improve implementation, foster peer learning, and inform supportive policy. Based on the survey, the RVCC made the following recommendations, which are discussed throughout this guide:

1. Find the right set of **core partners** who have complementary resources and abilities, and who are willing to invest time and energy; and develop the right structures and frameworks for partnering. (See Chapter 2, page 9)
2. Increase **flexibility**, particularly around use of funding, and in the rules, deadlines, and procedures required for all lands programs, tools, and authorities. In particular, flexibility on matching requirements for partner organizations is essential. (See Chapter 7, page 28)
3. Provide funding for **capacity-building**, partnership training, facilitation, coordination, leadership development, and other key components of all lands projects that are not always supported through traditional funding sources. (See Chapter 7, page 28)
4. Identify and figure out **how to use and/or “stitch together” available programs**, tools, and authorities, which can be a matter of different interpretations and risks rather than just clear guidelines; and implement and administer them. (See Chapter 8, page 30)
5. Encourage more **efficient processes for administering agency grants** and agreements with cooperators and partners on all lands projects. (See Chapter 8, page 30)
6. Continue to support **appropriate use of tools** for efficiencies where socially appropriate; these may reduce delays in projects due to agency timeline, which can frustrate partners and landowners. (See Chapter 8, page 30)

### Useful resources

- *Western Water Threatened by Wildfire: It's Not Just a Public Issue*  
[https://www.forestfoundation.org/stuff/contentmgr/files/1/3d98bbe1b03a0bdf4c726534d438b0ab/misc/final\\_fire\\_report.pdf](https://www.forestfoundation.org/stuff/contentmgr/files/1/3d98bbe1b03a0bdf4c726534d438b0ab/misc/final_fire_report.pdf)
- *How do We Accomplish All-Lands Management? Direct Insights from a Survey of Practitioners (Rural Voices of Conservation Coalition)*  
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/562e839ee4b0332955e8143d/t/59ede7cafe54ef255de3c9e0/1508763595768/RVCC+Land+Report+WEB.pdf>

7. Dedicate a **partnership coordinator**, or similar position, to coordinate the work and ensure that engagement in all lands projects is incorporated into the job description, as opposed to a collateral duty. (See Chapter 12, page 54)
8. Review and better **align respective agency policies** and processes for all lands-related programs/tools/authorities to improve inter-agency cooperation on projects. (See Chapter 12, page 54)
9. **Encourage informed risk-taking** among staff. Strategies include support from supervisors, colleagues, and partners; willingness of leadership to take the risk and set the tone; collaboration and finding social agreement; and flexibility in funding sources. (See Chapter 12, page 54)

The paper *Western Water Threatened by Wildfire: It's not Just a Public Land Issue* provides additional recommendations to help drive landscape-scale efforts across ownership boundaries, such as:

1. Focusing **collaborative efforts on both public and private lands** to adequately address wildfire risk; most existing collaborative efforts focus only on public lands (See Chapter 2, page 9)
2. Accomplishing forest restoration and risk mitigation projects at a **scale commensurate with the challenge** (See Chapter 3, page 13)
3. Increasing on-the-ground, cross-boundary efforts to **engage private and family landowners** focused on delivering measurable risk reduction and forest restoration at a landscape-scale (See Chapter 4, page 14)

4. Improving **policy and public funding** to support on-the-ground action, including private lands (See Chapter 7, page 28)
5. Catalyzing markets that **reduce the costs of wildfire risk reduction** and forest restoration, and make ongoing healthy forest management economical (See Chapter 10, page 35)

Finally, additional recommendations provided in this guide include:

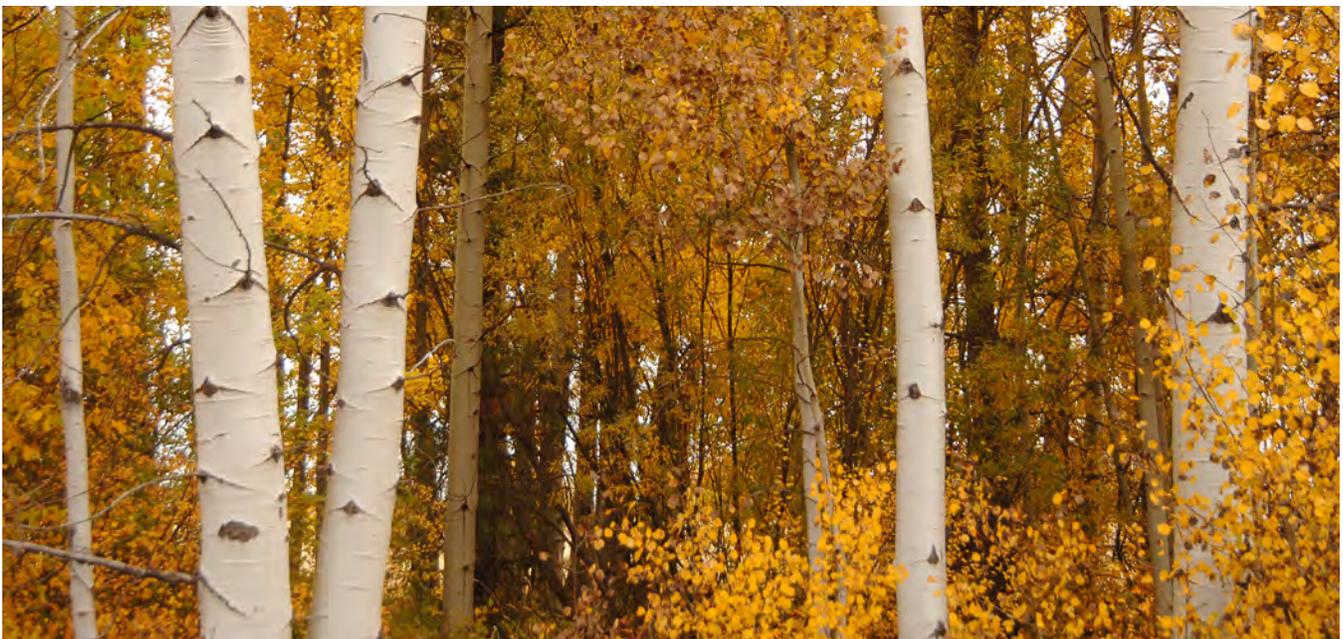
1. Addressing both **forest health and wildfire risk reduction awareness simultaneously** through private landowner outreach and education (See Chapter 4, page 14)
2. Gathering **data for private land** to inform recommendations and priorities (See Chapter 5, page 17)
3. Designing projects that meet all **three goals of the Cohesive Strategy** (See Chapter 5, page 17)
4. Providing **science-based**, natural resource knowledge and technical assistance to private landowners so they can successfully manage their lands (See Chapter 6, page 22)
5. Focusing on successfully **implementing projects on private and public land** (See Chapter 9, page 32)

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*“Having been involved with our local collaboratives for many years, as well as being a member of the National Wildland Fire Leadership Council that developed the Cohesive Strategy, I believe I’m in a great position to comment on the Klamath-Lake Forest Health Partnership’s collaborative work. It is my opinion that the work being accomplished in Lake and Klamath counties, through the implementation of the Cohesive Strategy principles, is second to none in the nation. When you look at the goals and objectives of the National Strategy—from working across jurisdictional boundaries to achieving improved forest health conditions on large landscapes scales—every box for the Cohesive Strategy can be checked! At the core of the success has been building relationships with many landowners who have different needs and interests. And these relationships could not be better. I would not hesitate for a minute to endorse our Partnership group as a national model for the way forest management should be approached and accomplished in the 21st Century.”*

Dan Shoun, Lake County Oregon County Commissioner

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Aspen in the Fremont-Winema National Forest