

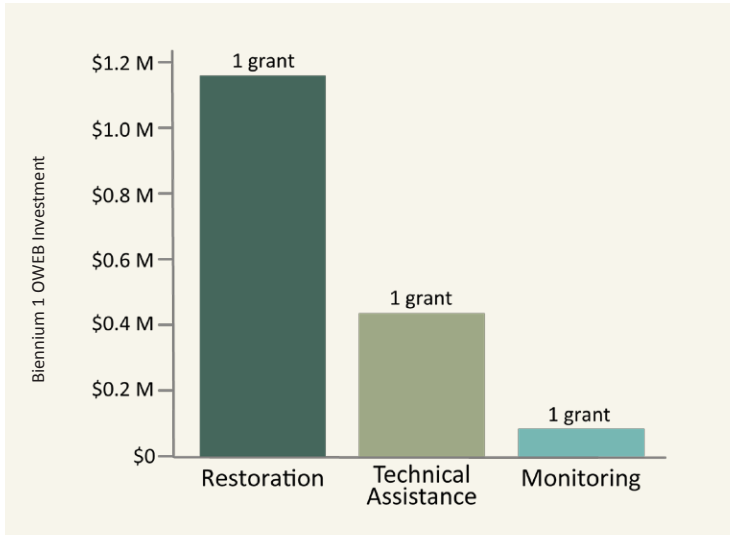


# ASHLAND FOREST ALL-LANDS RESTORATION



The Ashland Forest All-Lands Restoration Partnership focuses on Dry-Type Forest Habitat outside the City of Ashland, Oregon. It encompasses 58,000 acres centered on Ashland Creek, including the City’s municipal water supply. Over a century of fire exclusion and large-tree timber harvest has caused forests to become dense and less diverse. The landscape has become more prone to intense wildfires, elevating the risk to the community’s water supply and wildlife habitat.

## Funding



OWEB awarded \$1,999,998 in funding that leveraged \$1,815,459 in matching funds.

## Benefits

- Reduced risk of damaging wildfires and better options to suppress them
- Improved Dry-Type forest health with old-growth trees and open areas
- Increased controlled burn acres with minimized smoke impacts
- Protected, clean and abundant drinking water and healthy streams
- Improved habitat for sensitive species, including the Pacific fisher and the Northern Spotted Owl
- Sustained local, living-wage jobs and regional workforce training
- Engaged the community and private landowners in a local, collaborative solution

## About This Report

The Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) grant program is a bold, new conservation approach that supports high-performing partnerships to strategize restoration actions and measure ecological outcomes through coordinated monitoring. In January 2016, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board awarded an Implementation Focused Investment Partnership grant to the Ashland Forest All-Lands Restoration Partnership. This report documents progress made in their first biennium of funding (2015 to 2017) to meet their strategic action plan goals. Work completed under the FIP grant program is part of a much larger on-going collaborative effort of federal, state and local agencies, private landowners, and non-governmental organizations in the Ashland area.



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# Goal

Healthy forest landscape with a mosaic of complex old-growth, open forest, and oak woodlands restoring diverse habitats and increased resilience to fire, insects and disease

# Strategies

- Ecological thinning, fuels reduction, and controlled fire
- Foster development of an engaged citizenry

# Implementation Actions (2016-17)

<b>Restoration</b> <b>980 ACRES</b>  ecological thinning and pile burning <b>20 ACRES</b>  invasive plant removal <b>90 ACRES</b>  controlled burns <b>1,102 ACRES</b>  monitored for effectiveness and adaptive management		<b>Planning</b> <b>1,102 ACRES</b>  identified for treatment <b>19 PLANS</b>  for forest restoration for enrolled landowners	<b>Outreach &amp; Engagement</b> <b>100 LANDOWNERS</b>  contacted for forest management <b>60 EVENTS</b>  Workshops and tours to increase awareness <b>13,000 POSTCARDS</b>  mailed on controlled burning education and alerts <b>400 SUBSCRIBERS</b>  to text message alerts <b>1,000+ FOLLOWERS</b>  on social media
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# Near-Term Outcomes (0-10+ Years)

## Stand-scale

- Small tree density and fuel loads reduced, predicted fire behavior is less intense
- Prescribed fire is increasingly used as a management tool

## Landscape Scale

- Wildfire risk to high-value resources and assets is reduced
- Fire suppression effectiveness and safety is improved

# Long-Term Outcomes (20+ Years)

- Open and closed habitats support wildlife dependent on complex forests and oak woodlands
- Maintain water quality and aquatic habitat conditions



Dry-forest supports over 800 species. Ashland Forest All-Lands Restoration Initiative Partnership's work provides important habitat for species at risk. Photos courtesy of U.S Forest Service and U.S. Geological Survey.



# Strategic Action Plan (SAP) Progress, Biennium 1

## Strategies

Treat land with ecological thinning, fuels reduction, and controlled burns to restore open forest

Acres Treated



Progress: 1,070 acres

SAP Objective: 3,800 acres

Progress on metrics reflects implementation supported by OWEB funding, and does not represent all progress achieved via other funding sources.

## Monitoring Approach

- Maps where treatments occur and tracks changes in habitats and species over time
- Collects pre- and post-treatment data for monitoring the effectiveness of restoring open habitats while protecting old growth
- Uses changes in fuel loads and tree canopy base height in fire behavior models to monitor effectiveness in reducing potential wildfire spread and intensity

### Restoration treatments reduce forest wildfire hazard.

Ecological thinning and pile burning reduced flame length by 50%.



Ecological Thin and Pile Burn



Underburn Following Thinning

Monitoring shows that ecological thinning and subsequent underburn treatments reduce wildfire hazard. These treatments raise the canopy base height and decrease fuels to shorten the predicted flames. Shorter flame lengths are easier to control. Analysis showed a 50% reduction in flame length from thinning and pile burning, which changed the predicted wildfire behavior under dry and windy conditions from uncontrollable to controllable using bulldozers and heavy equipment. In units that were selected for underburning, flame length was reduced by an additional 55%. These much shorter flame lengths allow for direct control by firefighters.





# Adaptive Management in the FIP

	Restoration	Monitoring	Engagement		
Challenges	Controlled burning and smoke concerns are weather-dependent. Inflexible schedules don't accommodate needs.	State air quality regulations and administration often constrain opportunities for controlled burning.	Locations of photo point monitoring are often inexact. Early monitoring showed that treatments were thinning and reducing fuels less than expected.	Partners considered but could not resolve how to integrate commercial tree removal in State-subsidized fuel reduction projects on private lands.	The decreasing average parcel sizes of newly-recruited properties require more outreach capacity to treat less acreage.
Lessons Learned	Public outreach on burn days reduces calls and community smoke exposure.	Landscape-level shifts in wildfire risk are meaningfully assessed after project completion.	Accurate photo-point locations and high-quality pre-treatment photos are key. Discussing monitoring results drives adaptive change.	Landowners were not comfortable covering treatment costs with commercial sale of a portion of the excess trees.	Neighboring properties are often similar enough to be grouped together as larger units.
Adaptations	Strong collaborative partnerships were essential to identify constraints, build flexibility, and leverage strengths across partnerships and other projects.	More resources were budgeted for monitoring fuels and fire-effect to support adaptive management.	Restoration thinning became more thorough and comprehensive in treated units. Effort to pile background fuels along with fuels from thinning work increased.	Greater investment in regional workforce training and development helped meet increased demand for services.	Small properties were grouped together to create more efficient design and implementation.



Ecological fuels reduction on private lands is the key additive strategy of the all-lands project, which had previously only worked on federal land. Before brush removal and thinning, dense fuels in the understory created a fire hazard. After treatment, the ground layer is open for native species and wildfire hazard is reduced.