



# The Cohesive Wildfire Strategy

## *Agencies collaborate in a unique pilot project*

**F**ew projects better exemplify a collaborative approach to wildfire mitigation and forest restoration than the Cohesive Wildfire Strategy, as it is unfolding in a pilot project in the Blue Mountains of northeastern Oregon. The Cohesive Strategy is an outgrowth of the Federal Land Assistance, Management and Enhancement (FLAME) Act of 2009.

One of just three pilots nationally to implement the strategy on the ground, the Northwest project covers almost 6.5 million acres in Oregon and southeast Washington, involving multiple public, private and tribal ownerships.

### **Aligning multiple landowners**

Much is being accomplished as the project addresses the three Cohesive Strategy goals: resilient landscapes, fire-adapted communities and efficient, effective wildfire response. A multi-stakeholder steering group has been established, and the participating agencies have developed an extensive work plan. A key component is the development of new, robust Community Wildfire Protection Plans that will use various risk-assessment tools to prioritize forest restoration work in the region.

The pilot is creating an effective alignment of restoration efforts. An excellent illustration is the 70,000-acre East Face planning area, covering about 40,000 acres of federal lands on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest and 30,000 acres of state and private lands. This effort seeks to help communities and the ecosystem through creation of resilient, fire-adapted landscapes.

It will receive significant funding support through the *Chiefs' Joint Landscape Restoration Partnership*, involving the U.S. Forest Service and the National Resources Conservation Service.

As part of the Cohesive Strategy's fuels reduction component, the project team has awarded \$60,000 in feasibility grant funding to four biomass utilization projects. The strategy also links to the Forest Service's Eastside Restoration Strategy, around which an interdisciplinary team has been developed, working closely with local collaborative groups.

### **A unique state role**

Elements of the state of Oregon's pioneering investment of \$2.88 million in eastside forest restoration, which the 2013 legislature authorized in response to Governor John Kitzhaber's recommended 2013-15 budget, will also benefit the Cohesive Strategy pilot. The state investment seeks to support local collaborative groups, provide



**The Cohesive Wildfire Strategy seeks to treat thousands of forested acres to produce healthier, more fire-resistant stands, like this one in northeastern Oregon.**

scientific and technical assistance, and advance direct work with the Forest Service to increase pace and scale of restoration.

The Blue Mountains Cohesive Wildfire Strategy project is truly a holistic, all-lands approach to what may be the dominant forest issue in western states with large expanses of dry forest at risk of catastrophic wildfire.



Eyes are on Oregon as the Blue Mountains project seeks to implement the three key goals of the national Cohesive Wildfire Strategy:

- ◆ Fire-resilient landscapes
- ◆ Fire-adapted communities
- ◆ Efficient, effective response to fire



(Above) Thinned tree stand near Sunriver, Oregon.



(Left) Working around a house in a burnout operation, northeast Oregon, 2006.

(Below) Good defensible space around a home in the community of Mohawk in Lane County.



For more information on the Blue Mountains Cohesive Wildfire Strategy project:

<http://bluemtnwildfirestrategy.org/>