



## Restoring Forest Health and Resiliency



The Bureau of Land Management is infusing \$9.54 million for ecosystem restoration and resilience into Missoula Field Office public lands, as part of the Biden- Harris Administration's Investing in America agenda. The proposed work will focus on restoring public lands, strengthening communities and local economies, advancing climate resilience and furthering our commitment to Tribal collaboration and partnership.

### Why Forest Health and Resiliency

The Blackfoot – Clark Fork Restoration landscape has a storied history of large scale intense timber harvest to support construction of the transcontinental railroad, mining activities and industrial forest management in western Montana. These historic management practices resulted in forest conditions that are departed from conditions that existed prior to the westward expansion of Euro-Americans. Forest conditions within the landscape consist of young forests with too many trees that do not have an appropriate mix of tree species which results in risk of high intensity wildfire and unnaturally large insect and disease outbreaks. In addition to being less resilient to disturbances such as wildfire and insects, the current conditions have resulted in diminished habitat for important wildlife species and changes in habitat for culturally important plant communities and the ESA listed whitebark pine. Treatments to restore forest health are variable depending on the conditions in different areas across the landscape. The restoration strategies below describe and illustrate a range of activities typically used to create or maintain healthy, resilient forests.

### Restoration Priorities

#### [Vegetation Management – Timber Sales and Stewardship Contracts](#)

Managing forests with timber sales and contracts allows BLM to retain fire adapted species that are desirable to have on the landscape and remove excess trees that are more likely to be killed by wildfire or insect outbreaks. Like thinning carrots in your vegetable garden and removing undesirable weeds, thinning trees allows for BLM to retain desirable trees and provides more space for them to grow, creating healthier forests. Timber sales and contracts often include complementary projects like road improvements, wildfire risk reduction treatments, and noxious weed treatments. The Blackfoot – Clark Fork Restoration landscape has a long history of being important to the wood products industry in Western Montana; the BLM contributes economic benefits to local communities by offering forest products such as sawlogs for dimensional lumber, house logs, and various small diameter timber products including firewood, posts and rails, logs for paper chip production through timber sales and contracts.







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## Restoration Priorities Continued

### Vegetation Management – Small Tree Thinning

In areas where forests have regenerated from previous impacts like wildfire, up to 10,000 small tree seedlings can sprout in a single acre. To manage these young trees, BLM uses thinning with chainsaws to increase growing space, reduce tree competition, and reduce likelihood of disease. These treatments help shift species composition back to the natural range of variability, favoring resilient seral fire tolerant species like larch and ponderosa pine.

### Reforestation

In areas where fires have been put out for decades forests have grown unnaturally dense, having many more trees than what was found historically. To manage this multitude of young trees, BLM uses thinning or cutting with chainsaws to encourage growth and health of the remaining trees. These treatments result in the retention of tree species that can withstand low intensity fires like western larch and ponderosa pine.



### Prescribed Fire

Forests in western Montana evolved with fire until fire suppression coincided with the westward expansion of Euro-Americans. Prescribed fire will be used on the Restoration Landscape to reintroduce this important natural process. This management tool reduces the number of small trees and “fuels” on the forest floor and releases nutrients, improving tree and forest health. BLM prioritizes prescribed fire treatments around homes and private property and burns in other areas to promote natural ecological processes associated with fire.

Prescribed burns are conducted in close collaboration with partner land managers, like The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Forest Service, and Montana Department of Natural Resources. These collaborative burns allow BLM to treat forest conditions based on ecological need at the landscape scale rather than legal boundaries.

### Forest Resiliency Research

Missoula Field Office manages forest vegetation using a foundation in the best available science and supports research studies on BLM managed lands. Currently underway, the Adaptive Complexity Thinning in partnership with The Nature Conservancy seeks to understand how small tree thinning projects influence Canada lynx habitat. BLM and TNC are also partnering on a reforestation adaptation study with the Rocky Mountain Research Station to understand how climate change may impact reforestation and if changes for reforestation protocols can improve seedling resilience.



## Our Restoration Partners



Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes  
of the Flathead Reservation

