Restoration Cases
Flagship Collection

Case #14: Restoring forests and public trust in Oregon, USA with the Ashland Forest Resiliency Project

The City of Ashland, Oregon abuts the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest.
Photo credit: Sean Bagshaw

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In brief

Overview

In 2010, the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, the City of Ashland, and two non-governmental organizations, Lomakatsi Restoration Project and The Nature Conservancy, formed a collaborative partnership and initiated the 10-year (extended to 15) Ashland Forest Resiliency Stewardship Project to reduce the threat of severe wildfires across the 6,353 ha (15,699 acre) watershed. Reducing high severity wildfire on public and private lands was key to protecting the community and the city's drinking water, and to sustaining forests that provide for diverse wildlife and resident's quality of life. A "shared stewardship" approach allowed the partners to leverage significant co-investment and capacity. In 2015, forest restoration programs were extended to private lands, increasing the project area from 8,900 to 21,400 ha (22,000 to 53,000 acres). Fuel reduction treatments extended to 5,868 ha (13,300 acres) and by 2018 covered 28% of the extended project area, with controlled underburning on 607 ha (1,500 acres).

Exemplary practices

The project incorporated extensive community input from the outset and leveraged strengths of partners to sustain community support and co-investment. The Nature Conservancy led a collaborative, multi-party monitoring program that incorporated mentoring undergraduate and graduate students in watershed and forest research. The City of Ashland led community engagement efforts that emphasized transparency, learning, and dialogue to foster public trust. The City generated new funding to launch a "good fire" campaign in the watershed, engaging community members in workshops, watershed tours, public policy input, and coordinated smoke response. Lomakatsi Restoration Project designed and supervised implementation of ecological thinning and prescribed fire. Lomakatsi also provided skilled forest restoration technicians and offered training and workforce development programs for adults and youth, including tribal members.

Key lessons learned

◊ *Transparency and trust are at the heart of all-lands management, encompassing public and private lands.*

◊ *Restoration implementation needs to be flexible in response to changing environmental and social conditions.*

◊ *Strong collaborative arrangements are essential to identify constraints, build flexibility, and leverage strengths across partnerships.*

◊ *Clear and frequent communications with landowners and community help align project objectives with needs.*

◊ *Project funding needs to support restoration costs in addition to supporting a local workforce.*