

Wyoming Forest Action Plan Five-Year Review

Implementation Highlights

The Wyoming State Forestry Division (WSFD) has had a productive five years since the Wyoming Forest Action Plan was first created and implemented. Below are a few highlights from 2010-2014 that contributed to each National Priority.

National Priority #1: Conserve & Manage Working Forest Landscapes for Multiple Values and Uses

- The **BLM Co-op Forest Position** has proved to be an important tool in helping the BLM to increase their timber management program significantly in SE Wyoming.
- The **Governor's Task Force on Forests** was created to help address issues facing Wyoming's forested resource. The Task Force's number one recommendation was the endorsement of the Wyoming Forest Action Plan.
- **State Land Management** saw a dramatic increase in acres treated and quantity of sawtimber offered to sale. Much of this was due to the re-opening of three sawmills in the state.

National Priority #2: Protect Forests from Threats

- **Insect and Disease** has been a top priority for WSFD as a large mountain pine beetle epidemic continues to impact forest lands across the state. Without the diligent efforts of WSFD, in conjunction with many other state, private and federal stakeholders, the epidemic would have had far more disastrous impacts.
- **Fire Management** proved to be important as Wyoming continues to see more frequent and intense wild fires. In 2012, Wyoming experienced its worst fire season since 1988 as several large, high intensity fires stretched the state's resources.

National Priority #3: Enhance Public Benefits from Trees and Forests

- Even though much of Wyoming is open prairie, the **Community Forests** play an important role in providing benefits from these urban trees. Nearly half of the incorporated towns in Wyoming are part of the Tree City USA program.
- In 2010, both Wyoming and Montana joined in a partnership to create the **Northern Rockies Tree School** which provides important training and certifications to foresters engaged in communities that comprise WY & MT.

Implementation Challenges

While the WSFD has seen many success over the past five years, there have also been a few challenges along the way. One primary issue has been the funding challenges that occur bi-annually for state funds and annually for the federal funding. To continue providing high quality service and assistance to the public, it is important that WSFD show a strong track-record and highlight the success stories in order to receive the necessary level of funding.

Another issue has been staffing shortfalls and turn-over. While this is a typical issue that many state forestry agencies across the nation must deal with, WSFD is challenged with one of the smallest staff sizes to cover an expansive state.

The fire seasons have also appeared to be lengthening with more wildfires starting earlier in the season that are burning with greater intensity. The WSFD will continue to balance and allocate current fire resources in an effort to best address the increasing fire season.

Finally, the forest health issues continue to be a problem, as the mountain pine beetle epidemic continues to divert much needed time and resources. While additional funds have been used to address the problem, funding will continue to be needed until the current epidemic subsides.

Implementation Focus for the Next Five Years

As the WSFD moves forward with the next five years of the FAP, the implementation focus will continue much the same as the previous five years. The Division will work to address those challenges, while addressing some of the bigger picture issues such as funding and staffing shortfalls that are currently being experienced.

In addition, there will likely be a shift in the mountain pine beetle response efforts, with more resources going towards restoration and resiliency of the remaining forests rather than mitigation of the pine beetle epidemic. WSFD will continue to monitor the epidemic and respond as necessary.

Finally, there exists a tremendous potential to expand the use of the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) across the state. WSFD has been actively engaged in meeting and explaining the current status of GNA and gathering feedback and potential project ideas to consider. The GNA Authorities will likely prove to be a valuable tool in helping to treat across boundaries.

Data Needs & New Issues Revealed since Completion of FAP

While current data gaps in the WY FAP area limited, there have been a few identified. These include:

- The way data is analyzed for the Stewardship Potential Assessment in the WY FAP, is one gaps that has been identified. There exists a greater potential for stewardship in Wyoming and the map should be refined to reflect this.
- Improving the data needed to assess fire hazard and risk assessments for communities throughout Wyoming.

Stakeholder Check-In

The WSFD has continually kept stakeholders, partners and agencies engaged and aware of the WY FAP. Over the past six months, there has been an increased effort to visit with the six primary national forests in Wyoming and discuss the current state of the WY FAP and engage current leadership in providing feedback and recommendations. Additionally, the WSFD has worked to engage the State Forestry Districts in providing feedback as well. Any information collected as feedback has been documented and will be used in improving the WY FAP.