

Highlights from SPER I

Scaling-up to Promote Ecosystem Resiliency

collaborative action
to help restore naturally functioning ecosystems
and reduce wildfire risk to resources and communities

In late 2011, SPER I provided funding to six teams with “shovel-ready” fire and forest restoration projects in priority landscapes. Together, they proposed treating 19,767 acres. By the end of 2013, they had, in fact, treated 20,625 acres—including over 16,000 acres of prescribed fire, 1,631 acres of thinning, and almost 3,000 acres of other restoration treatments—with the funding. Since the treatments were rooted in collaborative partnerships and part of long-term plans, all delivered other benefits as well, from leveraged funds to increased workforce capacity.

“The Centennial Valley is entirely different as a result of the SPER projects. We’ve created significant defensible areas around over half the homes adjacent to the Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas and nearly all the homes in the Lakeview Community Zone. We’re now speaking...about high-intensity prescribed fires in areas near Lakeview over the next 2 years, which was previously on a 5-10 year horizon. County partners have secured federal funding for maintaining momentum and protecting the remaining homes in the valley. Our short-term goal is to have a truly fire-ready landscape, something unprecedented in this part of the country, and begin working in other landscapes.... We hope the Centennial will stand as an example of what is possible with commitment and reasonable funding.”

Ashland Forest Resilience Partnership

With better-than-expected revenue from a helicopter thinning project reinvested, this project completed almost twice the 290 acres of thinning planned, while also engaging the media to build support for further treatments in the municipal watershed.

Trinity Integrated Fire Management Partnership

In spite of record drought, 394 acres of prescribed fire and 42 acres of thinning that will help buffer communities from wildfire were completed through SPER. Some of the treatments were done in a prescribed fire training exchange that included numerous local participants, thereby helping build long-term fire management capacity.

Southwest Montana Fire Initiative

With just 148 acres of well-placed treatments—primarily thinning, with some pile- and jackpot-burning—this project changed the fire game in the Centennial Valley.



Upper Fountain Creek Watershed

Just over 800 acres of thinning and restoration treatments were completed in this project, set in a watershed supplying Colorado Springs. A monitoring program to track watershed health was also put in place. Additional outcomes from this project included a partner leveraging these funds to bring in an additional \$1.5 million for work in this and adjacent watersheds.

Allegheny & Potomac Highlands Restoration Project

Partners on this project completed over 10,000 acres of prescribed fire as well as nearly 1,400 acres of non-native invasive species control treatments. This work complemented a long-term program of cooperative burning in the landscape, bringing new state partners and lands into the partnership and increasing coordination.

Ozark Pine Woodlands & Glade Restoration Project

The project lead reported that partners were initially concerned that the proposal may have been overly optimistic. However, strategic allocation of an augmented crew and the purchase of a UTV to move people and equipment—paired with excellent long-term relations among partnering agencies—enabled them to complete 110% of the 6,457 acres of fire, thinning and invasives treatments planned.