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COUNCIL OF WESTERN STATE FORESTERS

FOREST HEALTH

HIGHLIGHTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

AZ | Alyssa McAlexander

State **Forest Health Programs** (FHP) help to maintain healthy and resilient forests for all Americans.

SUPPORTS HEALTHY FORESTS ACROSS ALL JURISDICTIONS

The USDA Forest Service **Cooperative Lands Forest Health Management** (FHM) program supports efforts to **reduce wildfire risk** in forests near communities, **promotes proactive forest management** to sustain forest product markets, and funds treatments that assess and help **mitigate forest health threats** across all land ownerships.

Every western state forestry agency has an FHP that delivers **information**, **education**, **technical assistance**, and **integrated pest management strategies** to state and federal land managers, professional foresters, private landowners, and other stakeholders. This assistance helps to prevent and manage native, non-native, and invasive pests to achieve healthy and resilient forest stand conditions.

Funding provided by the USDA Forest Service FHM is typically matched 1:1 by states and partners, doubling the impact of federal investment. (Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Justification, page 30a-63, USDA Forest Service)

> "The Forest Health Program provides critical monitoring and technical assistance to better allow private and public landowners to manage insect and disease impacts before they cause drastic harm to our forests. In Idaho, our forests and community trees are under threat from native and now non-native pests that can have devastating impacts. Monitoring allows us to track populations and predict outbreaks. Management advice can mitigate these risks and impacts, keeping our forests as healthy and productive as possible."

JULIA LAUCH
State Forester | Idaho Department of Lands

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HELPS REDUCE WILDFIRE RISK AND SEVERITY

State FHPs provide technical assistance to the public and non-federal stakeholders through integrated management strategies that help prevent and manage native, non-native, and invasive insect, disease, and plant outbreaks.

In 2024, Western state FHPs provided outreach and education opportunities to more than 8.5 million people. These opportunities help **reduce localized insect, disease, and invasive plant populations**, further **reducing the wildfire risk** in these areas and **increasing public awareness** of ongoing forest health issues in the West.

An important component of the FHP includes **collecting annual aerial survey data** that highlights where current insect and disease activity is occurring throughout the West.

In 2024, western states surveyed or monitored nearly 256 million acres of forested lands across all land ownerships. This data is utilized by natural resources managers to **guide the locations and prescriptions of future and ongoing timber sales**, helping to further reduce the risk of wildfire and decrease its potential severity.

INCREASES TIMBER YIELDS AND REVENUE

Insects and disease have the potential to significantly reduce timber yields. State forest health personnel work to **mitigate forest health threats** by surveying for new threats, monitoring current damage agents, and providing site-specific recommendations.

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WY | Harrison Brookes

FOREST HEALTH MANAGEMENT:

- Reduces tree mortality and loss from bark beetles, defoliators, and pathogens.
- Increases the quality of sawtimber by promoting higher-quality and more valuable trees.
- Results in faster, more productive growth, reducing the time it takes to bring stands to a merchantable state.
- Provides recommendations that can help land managers prepare for and mitigate forest health threats that can adversely impact strategic goals/targets.

ENHANCES PUBLIC BENEFITS FROM TREES

Technical assistance, surveys, and monitoring efforts provide **real-time data** for making sound forest management decisions. This data is used **to address present and potential threats** to trees, especially in high-use areas like communities, campgrounds, and other recreation sites.

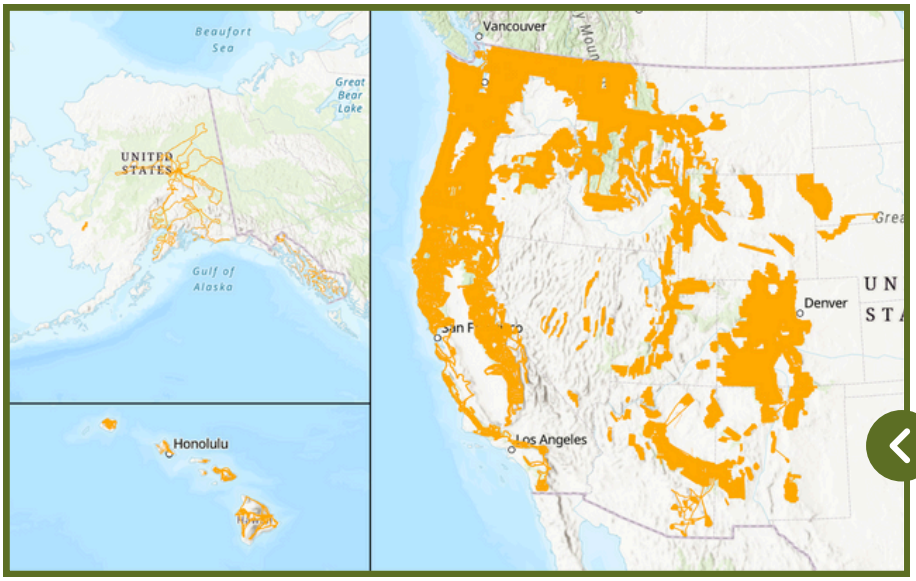
Education and outreach efforts convey crucial forest management strategies to partners and the public. These efforts **increase awareness** of native and invasive pests and proper forestry practices, which provide the public with safe and positive outdoor experiences.

OUTREACH TO OVER
8.5 MILLION
DIRECT AND INDIRECT CONTACTS

255,916,570
ACRES SURVEYED OR MONITORED
FOR FOREST DAMAGE

22,653
ACRES TREATED
FOR PESTS, DISEASES, OR INVASIVE PLANTS

2024 WESTERN STATES AERIAL SURVEY COVERAGE



Every year, state FHP staff partner with the Forest Service to conduct insect and disease surveys across the western United States. State personnel contribute as aerial surveyors and contracting partners, and perform ground data verification across all forested lands.

The map to the left shows the areas surveyed in 2024.

STATE SPOTLIGHT
SOUTH DAKOTA

South Dakota's Resource Conservation & Forestry Division (RCF) is working with the USDA Forest Service to use Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Forest Action Plan Implementation funds to provide cost-share assistance to forest landowners in high-priority areas identified in the 2020 South Dakota Forest Action Plan. Most of the high-priority area falls within the Black Hills and includes about 1.2 million acres of predominantly ponderosa pine forests, which require considerable efforts to sustain healthy forests and a productive timber industry.


SD | Tony Seidl

Through this program, RCF collaborates with other partners to encourage and implement healthy forest management practices.

As of July 2025, Custer County Conservation District and the South Dakota Family Forest Association (SDFFA) participate in this program, with a goal of treating a combined 110 acres of private forests. Twelve landowners have been awarded funding through their respective organizations and work directly with RCF staff to create a property-specific management prescription.

Funding through the IIJA Forest Action Plan Implementation program may include thinning overstocked pine trees, brush management to remove pine encroachment from meadows and grasslands, and other means to improve forest diversity through the enhancement of hardwood populations.