



Innovative Finance for National Forests

Summer 2025 Approved Projects

Leveraging Conservation Finance to Accelerate Trout Unlimited's Watershed Restoration on National Forest Systems Land – Wyoming & the Rocky Mountain West

Finance innovation: Corporate water stewardship funds for post wildfire recovery and municipal watershed drinking water supply protection; up-front cash match; low-interest loans.

\$160,000 to Trout Unlimited (TU) to accelerate post-wildfire recovery and drinking water protection projects on National Forest System lands in major basins of the Rocky Mountain West, including the Upper Colorado River, Missouri, and Bighorn River Basins. The Watershed Stewardship Accelerator Fund supports post-wildfire recovery and municipal drinking water supply protection through corporate water stewardship and replenishment funding. The ReBeaver Restoration Fund, through a partnership with BlueCommons, empowers local partners with innovative financing options – including an up-front cash match and low to no-interest loans – to tap into public funding for projects. To date, TU has raised more than \$4.3 million in corporate funding to support projects in these basins and has \$10.2 million worth of project opportunities in its pipeline. This work supports the USDA Forest Service National Active Forest Management Strategy and aligns with the Watershed Condition Framework that prioritizes water management projects.

Technical Assistance for Forestry Supply Chain Entrepreneurs – California and Western States

Finance innovation: Technical assistance to forest sector entrepreneurs to help them with financing and other challenges.

\$160,000 to Blue Forest Finance to provide technical assistance to wood utilization entrepreneurs operating on both public and private lands in California and other western states. Active forest management requires robust forestry supply chains. Despite growing investor interest and enabling policy market conditions, forest sector entrepreneurs face hurdles raising financing to grow their businesses. Blue Forest will provide technical assistance to these entrepreneurs and deliver value-added capital to the forest sector to

develop resilient supply chains for forest management. This enables Blue Forest and other investors to deploy capital more effectively into these businesses. The financial model is the California Wildfire Innovation Fund, which provides flexible capital tailored to forestry industry needs. This work directly supports the USDA Forest Service National Active Forest Management Strategy, EO 14223 “Addressing the Threat to National Security from Imports of Timber, Lumber,” and EO 14225 “Immediate Expansion of American Timber Production.”

Caldor/Cosumnes Watershed Outcomes Bank (Pilot) – California

Finance innovation: Coordinating, leveraging, and targeting multiple funding sources to strategically cultivated projects to maximize returns.

\$90,000 to The Freshwater Trust for the Watershed Outcomes Bank, which seeks to increase the speed, scale, and results for municipal drinking water supply protection, wildfire preparedness, and protecting communities from natural disasters. The Bank leverages, coordinates, and targets multiple sources of funding, such as state bond funds, to strategically cultivated projects that most cost-effectively achieve watershed protection targets across the Cosumnes River Watershed, including the Eldorado National Forest. This project, which builds on previous IFNF awards, will implement a central entity and partner governance structure for match funding, financing, and efficient fund delivery. This work directly supports the USDA Forest Service Active Forest Management Strategy and EO 14308 “Empowering Commonsense Wildfire Prevention and Response.”

Western Utility Watershed and Wildfire Preparedness Initiative – Arizona and Western States

Finance innovation: Mentor water utilities on strategies to finance forest health treatments to improve wildfire preparedness and to protect municipal drinking water supplies.

\$90,000 to the Salt River Project to provide technical assistance to western water utility companies to accelerate their investment in wildfire preparedness and drinking water protection projects on National Forest System and adjacent lands. Many water utilities have a desire to invest in these projects but lack resources and technical knowledge to determine the return on their investment. The Salt River Project will create a mentorship program to support water utilities in quantifying their wildfire risk and prioritizing future work. The Initiative will provide expert guidance and technical assistance to water utilities to build an investment strategy that is supported by internal leadership and external stakeholders. This work directly supports EO 14308 “Empowering Commonsense Wildfire Prevention and Response” and the USDA Forest Service National Active Forest Management Strategy.

Leveraging the Utah Fund: Scaling Through Blended Finance

Financing innovation: Creation of a fund to provide up-front funding for wildfire preparedness and municipal drinking water supply protection.

\$100,000 to Summit County, Utah, to continue development of a blended finance structure—targeting a \$4.3 million concessional loan—to accelerate wildfire preparedness and drinking water restoration in the Weber and Jordan watersheds. The loan will provide upfront cash availability and flow to shovel-ready projects, bridge funding gaps, and allow beneficiaries to repay over a longer term, easing annual operating budget pressure. This project will enable 2,100 acres of new treatments across the Unita-Wasatch-Cache National Forest. As a result of two prior IFNF awards, Summit County and the World Resources Institute transformed the Fund from a local pilot into a credible, multi-stakeholder vehicle for scaling wildfire preparedness and drinking water restoration. Over the past five years, Fund partners have: secured more than \$8.3 million from diverse group beneficiaries; established a state-housed endowment to fund future treatments; advanced Utah-specific wildfire modeling; engaged utilities as full planning and funding partners; and expanded from the Weber to the Jordan watershed, with 1,400 acres treated, 10,000+ acres permitted, and 6,000 more planned. This work directly supports the USDA Forest Service National Active Forest Management Strategy, EO 14239 “Achieving Efficiency through State and Local Preparedness” and EO 14308 “Empowering Commonsense Wildfire Prevention and Response.”