

December 28, 2018

Kevin Warner, Acting District Ranger
c/o Christopher McDonald
P.O. Box 309
Carbondale, CO 81623

Via electronic submission to: <https://cara.ecosystem.org/Public//commentInput?Prroject=55031->
and via email to: cmcdonald@fs.fed.us & kwarner@fs.fed.us

RE: Notice of Proposed Action for Basalt Mountain Salvage and Rehabilitation Project

Dear Mr. Warner and Mr. McDonald.

On December 12th representatives from the Basalt Parks, Open Space, and Trails (POST) Committee, Mid-Valley Trails Committee, and Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers (collectively called “Group” in this letter) met and reviewed the proposed rehabilitation project on Basalt Mountain and unanimously agreed to submit the following recommendations for the Project.

The Group is very interested in creating new trail connections to Mill Creek Trail which would provide access to the Basalt Mountain network of trails from both El Jebel and the Downtown Basalt area (see attached maps). Currently there is a lack of trail connections from the mid-valley population centers of Old Town Basalt and El Jebel/Willits to public lands. The Group requests that these connections be included in the Project.

As you know, trails have many benefits to nearby communities, including promoting recreation and health, increasing use of and access to public lands, fostering environmentalism and land stewardship, increasing property values, and increasing quality of life for the community. The Group believes that our requested modifications support the USDA| US Forest Service’s *2015-2020 Strategic Plan*, Outcome-Oriented Goal No. 2, “Deliver Benefits to the Public”, particularly Objective E, “Strengthen Communities,” and Objective No. F, “Connect People to the Outdoors”, and that these trail connections will be of benefit in that they “contribute to the human health, prosperity and quality of life” as specified by the Strategic Plan.

We are aware that the proposed Project is not about trail creation. However, the Group believes that this Project is a rare and synergistic opportunity to create a dialogue with affected parties to identify and implement trail routes. Potentially, some of the same machinery used for the proposed Project could also be used to do trail building. Furthermore, this is also a time when the land is significantly denuded of vegetation that normally is an obstacle to trail building.

Also please specify a buffer around existing established or (re) located trails in the Project area where hand cutting would be used instead of machines to remove unsafe trees in order to preserve the trail experience.

The Group recognizes that winter trail closures are a necessary requirement for mitigation.

The Group would like to propose further discussion between the Basalt POST, the Mid-Valley Trails Committee, Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers, the USFS, and other interested mid-valley stakeholders. There may be an opportunity for cash or in-kind contributions toward this Project if trail building is included in its scope.

Please email Watkins Fulk-Gray, Basalt Staff Planner, at Watkins.fulkgray@basalt.net or call at 970-927-4701, ext. 202 if you have any questions. Please keep us apprised through Watkins of any opportunities we would have to further the Group's interest, and he will pass on any information to all groups involved.

Thank you for considering our comments and recommendations.

Basalt Parks, Open Space and Trails (POST) Committee

Mid-Valley Trails Committee

Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers (RFOV)

Attachments

Location of Mill Creek Trail

Vicinity Map

Excerpts from Forest Service Strategic Plan: 2015-2020

Location of Mill Creek Trail

Project Area Map
Basalt Mountain Salvage and Rehabilitation Project
White River National Forest
Aspen-Sopris Ranger District
Eagle County, Colorado



SCALE

1 inch = 4,167 feet

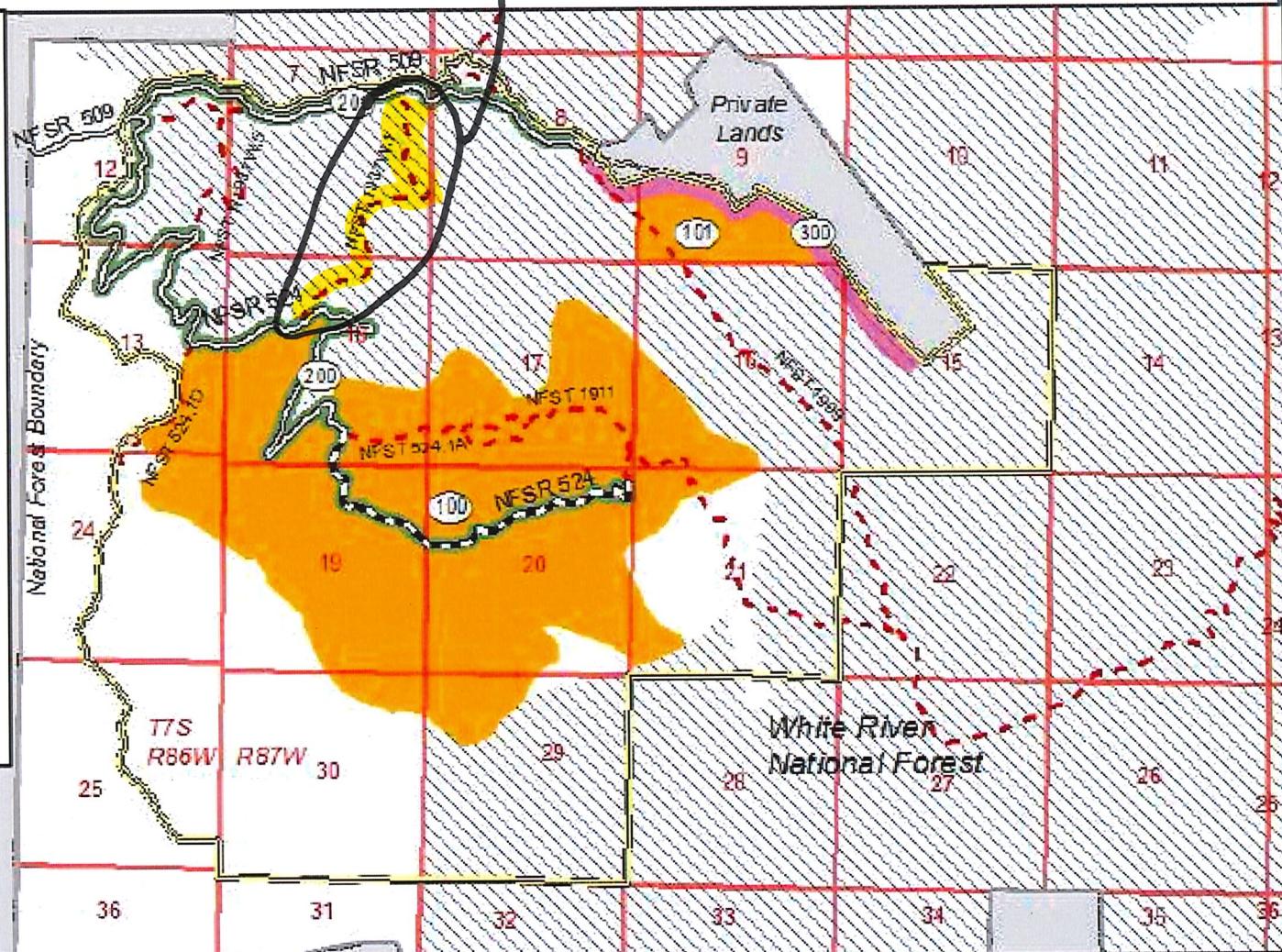
0 0.275 0.55 1.1 1.85 2.2 Miles
COG 111318

Portions of Sections 12-13, 24-25, T7S, R86W;
Portions of Sections 7-9, 15-18, 19-21, 29-30, T7S, R87W;
6th Principal Meridian

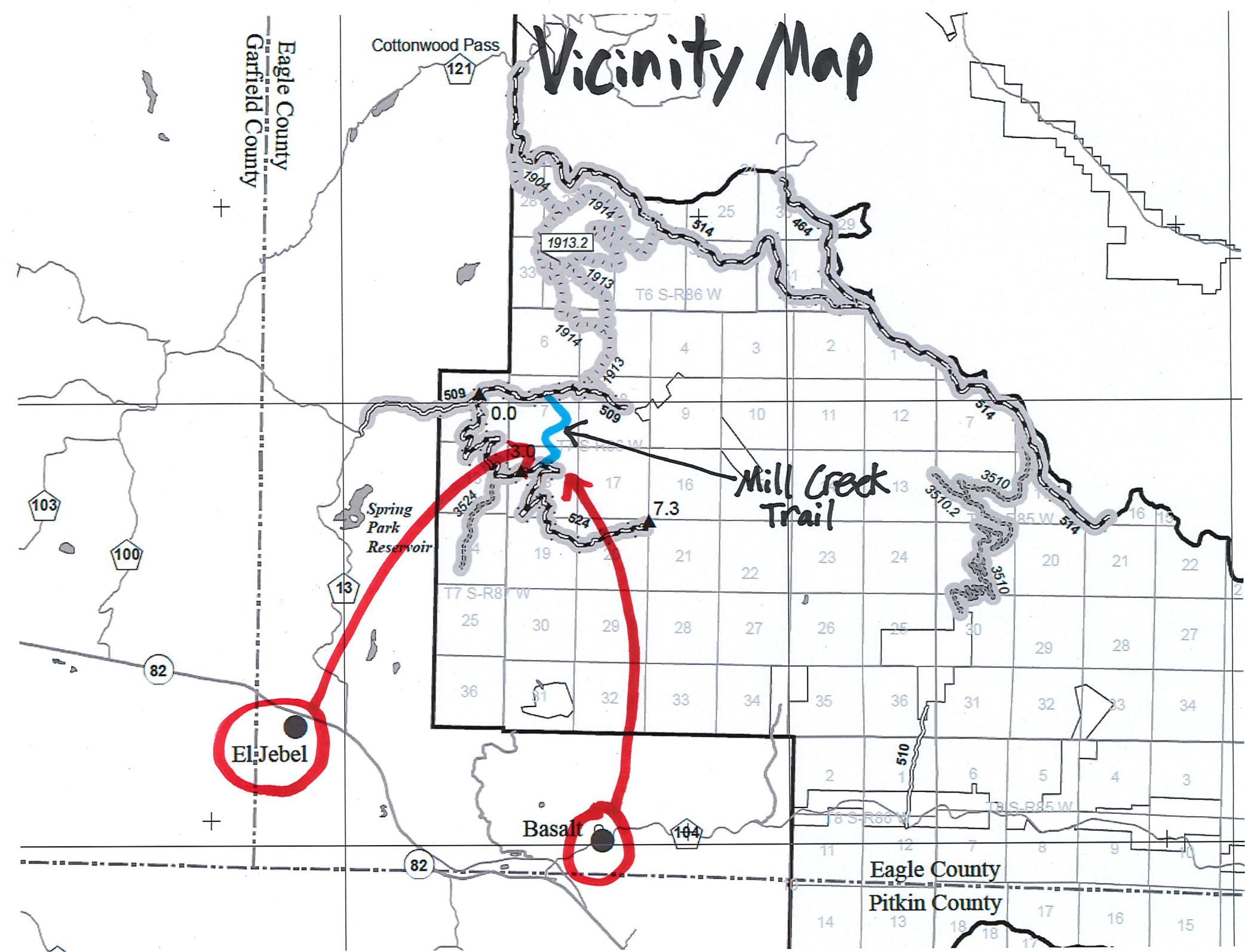
Mill Creek Trail

Legend

- Project Area
- County Road
- National Forest System Road (NFSR)
- Private Road
- Road Reconstruction
- National Forest System Trail (NFST)
- Basalt Mtn Roadless Area
- Private Lands
- White River National Forest
- 100's Salvage
- 200's Hazard Trees
- 300's Defensible Space



Vicinity Map



Strategic Objective E. Strengthen Communities

Our rural forests and grasslands and our urban trees strengthen communities by providing ecological, economic, and social benefits. Many benefits come from large natural areas that are connected as a functioning whole, such as a watershed. These areas are often in multiple landownerships. Working with State and local partners across ownership boundaries, we will focus on sustaining the benefits that people receive from these natural areas—maintaining local cultures and traditions, connecting people to the land, and contributing to a higher quality of life.

At the Forest Service, we will work through partnerships across the Nation, allowing for communication and collaboration across jurisdictional and cultural boundaries. Our ethic of working together reinforces community bonds, strengthening our Nation's social fabric and fostering community prosperity. Collaboration and community involvement are keys to accomplishing our work; our management of the national forests and grasslands is based on strong relationships between our local offices and the communities we live in—the neighbors who live next door.

Delivery of forest-related goods and services is integral to our mission at the Forest Service, stimulating tangible economic benefits to rural communities, such as private-sector investment and employment opportunities. The economic activity we support is directly attributable to the natural resource investments we make and the use of national forest and grassland resources that result in marketable products associated with outdoor recreation, hunting, fishing, timber production, livestock grazing, mineral production, land stewardship, and other activities. An extensive transportation infrastructure underpins most activities. In FY 2011, for example, all Forest Service activities combined contributed to nearly 450,000

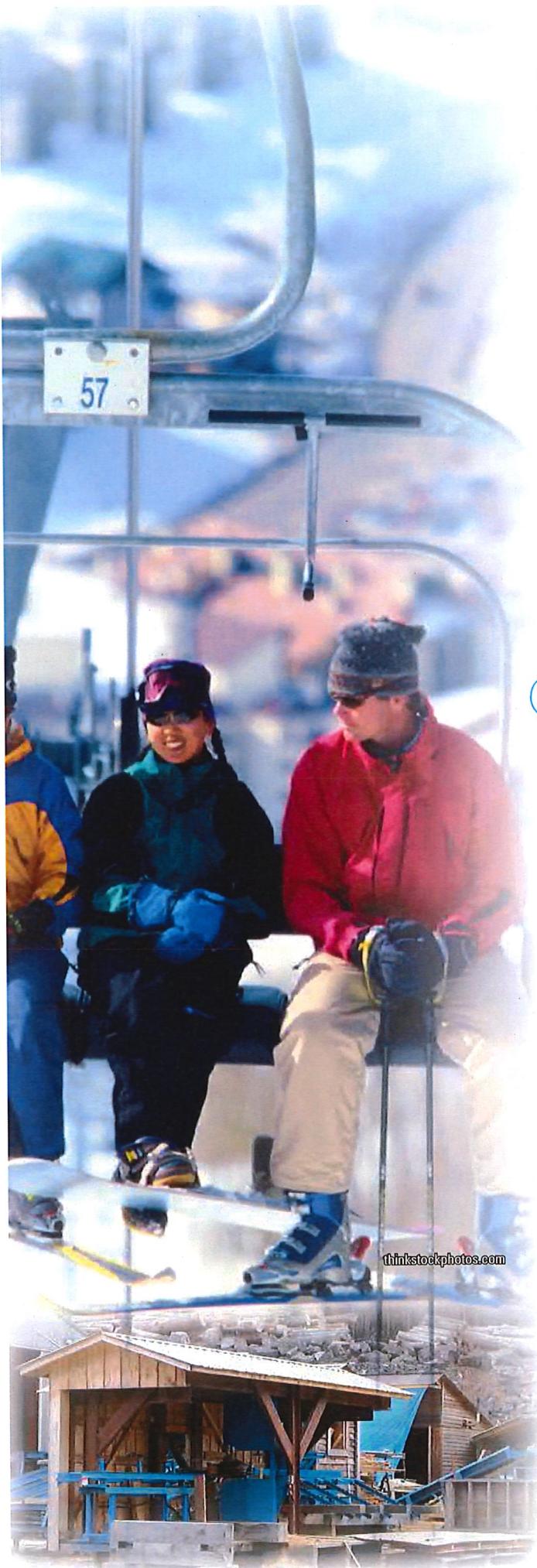
► LONG-TERM RESULT

Forest Service programs and activities contribute substantial socioeconomic benefits to the Nation and local communities.

jobs nationwide, with most of these jobs providing a tremendous benefit to rural communities located near the national forests and grasslands. Outdoor recreation alone, the largest contributor, supported more than 205,000 jobs and added more than \$13.6 billion to the Nation's gross domestic product. In addition, other activities such as subsistence hunting and fishing provide the primary food source for some rural residents.

As America's urban areas continue to grow, access to the natural environment and nature-based activities is becoming increasingly important to a community's overall health and well-being. Access to natural areas is particularly beneficial for youth, especially in many urban areas, where opportunities for outdoor play in natural settings may be limited. The Forest Service is dedicated to engaging young people in discussions about natural and cultural resources and encouraging them to help us care for the land. Engaging youth in our work will strengthen our communities and enable more Americans to explore and appreciate America's great outdoors, growing the future stewards of the Nation's lands.





Strategic Goal: Deliver Benefits to the Public



Wildfire poses increasing risks for growing rural communities near forest land. More than 70,000 communities are at risk from wildfire. The Forest Service works through cross-jurisdictional partnerships to help communities become safer. From 2008 through 2013, our joint efforts more than doubled the number of designated Firewise communities able to survive a wildfire without outside intervention. By fire adapting their communities, homeowners and landowners alike can reduce fire risks and work toward healthier landscapes and stronger communities.

Means and Strategies

- Promote and develop markets for sustainably grown wood, particularly for low-value timber and for use of wood as a “green” building material.
- Collaborate with and engage communities (including the public, our partners, American Indian tribes, and other Federal agencies) in making decisions about managing the national forests and grasslands.
- Continue to restore high-priority landscapes, taking social, economic, and ecological factors into account.
- Develop sustainable recreation settings and opportunities along with programs that complement national, State, and community tourism strategies.
- Use stewardship contracting authority when appropriate to achieve integrated natural resource management goals, including ecological restoration and production of wood products.
- Fully use programs and authorities, including the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps and Job Corps programs, for youth and veteran employment to deliver mission work, promote conservation values, and train the future workforce.
- Create jobs and opportunities for local communities to sustainably produce and use wood products and provide contracting opportunities in communities for small businesses.

Strategic Objective F.

Connect people to the outdoors

Forests and grasslands provide many opportunities for people to connect with the outdoors in both rural and urban settings, enhancing our quality of life. These lands offer a place to escape from daily routines and experience the serenity of nature, the mystery of wild places, the history of past cultures, and the excitement of engaging in the greatest variety of outdoor activities. The Forest Service manages 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands, comprising 30 percent of all Federal lands and including millions of acres of designated wilderness and thousands of miles of wild and scenic rivers. Most of this land is open for recreational pursuits; we receive more than 160 million recreation visits annually. More than 80 percent of Americans live in urban areas, and they have many opportunities to enjoy the outdoors on local open space and nearby national forests. Urban Americans benefit from the 100 million acres of urban forests, including urban parks, neighborhoods with shade trees, landscaped boulevards, public gardens, and more.

People of all ages and physical abilities visiting natural settings can enjoy beautiful scenery, engage in physical activities, socialize with friends and family, escape the sights and sounds of civilization, and learn about natural and cultural environments. The Forest Service offers information and interpretive programs to help individuals discover, understand, appreciate, and connect with the natural and cultural resources around us and to tell them how we manage and protect these resources for present and future generations. Outdoor opportunities and experiences promote physical, mental, and spiritual health; enhance community identity and sense of place; help bond family and friends; and foster citizen stewardship of the Nation's forests and grasslands. In many instances, lifelong conservation values develop from outdoor recreation experiences.

As a prominent portal through which the public interacts with the agency, outdoor recreation plays a

► LONG-TERM RESULT

Our Nation's citizens are engaged with their natural and cultural heritage.



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significant role in serving the public. We are broadening the scope of our recreational services to include more Americans, giving a wider range of access to the national forests and grasslands. We are making recreational facilities on the national forests and grasslands more accessible to everyone, including the estimated 57 million Americans with disabilities. Nationwide, we have more than 23,000 accessible recreational sites, such as campsites and picnic areas, and 8,000 accessible recreation buildings. By making our facilities more accessible, we are also providing additional recreation opportunities for senior citizens, large family groups, and families with infant strollers or young children. We are committed to inclusive participation in recreation opportunities for all people, regardless of age or ability.

Many forests and grasslands provide sustenance to American Indians, protect tribal spiritual values, and help perpetuate traditional uses and benefits for tribes

and other cultures. Communities can share in the challenge of sustaining recreation settings and opportunities on public, private, and tribal lands while also conserving cherished natural and cultural resources. As more people connect to the outdoors, the balance between recreational opportunities and other management objectives may require greater attention. At the Forest Service, we will remain dedicated to providing sustainable recreation opportunities and high-quality recreation experiences while minimizing the impacts of visitor use on the landscape.

Means and Strategies

- Maintain recreational settings, hiking trails, and other sustainable recreational opportunities on the national forests and grasslands for public use. 
- Improve recreation facility accessibility. 
- Engage partners and educators in developing, distributing, and using high-quality conservation education programs and materials so that people of different ages and abilities can understand and appreciate our country's natural and cultural resources and the need to manage them for present and future generations.
- Build stronger relationships with American Indian tribes through collaborative efforts focused on complementary management needs and information sharing.
- Support local urban and community forestry initiatives that reach people living, working, and visiting our country's urban areas.
- Help meet public needs and expectations for outdoor recreation on the national forests and grasslands through public and private partnerships. 
- Improve our capacity to engage volunteers through enhanced partnerships and service organizations.
- Improve our communication of outdoor recreation information about the national forests and grasslands on the Internet, social media, and other outlets to reach more people, serve them better, and receive customer feedback.
- Use the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps programs to provide outdoor experiences for young people and returning veterans to build conservation ethics and future stewards of the Nation's public lands legacy.

