

California Deer Association - 2020/2021 Active Projects



For CDA, 2020 marked a significant expansion into Forest Management, most notably Forest and Watershed Health programs with the US Forest Service. These include fuels reduction, forest thinning, prescribed fire, strategic fuel breaks, stream, meadow, and aspen restoration, and post-fire remediation. By utilizing our Master Stewardship Agreement with the Pacific Southwest Region, we were approached by and entered into two project agreements.

First, with the Klamath National Forest to start a landscape-scale restoration effort of 70,000 acres located in the Goosenest Ranger District, and the second with the Shasta-Trinity National Forest to layout and implement a 13,000 acre Forest Health, Wildlife Habitat Restoration on the McCloud Ranger District in a big game migratory corridor and winter holding area. There has been a continuous effort by CDA, the USFS, and our partners to dynamically expand the footprint and impact of these two projects. In the fall of 2020, CDA was acknowledged for our commitment and work with the Klamath National Forest and the Shasta-Trinity National Forest with the Southwest Regional USFS Partner of the Year Award for 2020.

In the spring of 2021, CDA entered into a project agreement with the Sequoia National Forest to remove post-fire hazard trees that are limiting a primary access route to the forest. During that same time CDA began initial discussions with the Mendocino National

Forest and the Shasta-Trinity National Forest on restoration efforts for the August Complex. Unfortunately, due to litigation the progress of these restoration efforts has been delayed until the fall.

To move to the central part of the state, CDA has looked to expand on our two National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) grants on the Eldorado National Forest to include additional wildlife habitat, riparian, and post-fire restoration efforts. In Southern California, we have discussed large-scale evaluation and post-fire restoration of wildlife watering sources and riparian areas with the Stanislaus National Forest, the Los Padres National Forest, and the San Bernardino National Forest. Currently we are seeking additional funding through our partners to kick off these projects in 2022.

CDA is still actively involved with the Modoc National Forest and the recovery of the Modoc Mule Deer herd. We currently have multiple landscape-scale projects under development with the forest to expand the impact of our adjacent habitat projects with the BLM, NRCS, USFWS, CDFW, and private landowners. These projects are a continuation of our long history in Modoc County and significantly aids in the recovery of the iconic Modoc Mule Deer, which still remains one of the top priorities of CDA and CDFW.

To date, we have secured the following funding for these active Forest Management projects:

Shasta-Trinity National Forest, Eastside SPA

USFS Funding	\$231,800	Secured
NFWF, NorCal Forests and Watershed	\$260,500	Awarded
Wildlife Conservation Board, Forest Conservation Program	\$740,000	Awarded
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, PAC Habitat Enhancement	\$40,000	Awarded
NEEF, 2021 Biodiversity Conservation	\$55,000	Pending
	<i>\$1,272,300</i>	<i>Total</i>

Klamath National Forest, Goosenest SPA

USFS Funding	\$1,109,500	Secured
Wildlife Conservation Board, Forest Conservation Program	\$367,000	Awarded
NFWF, PSW Fuels Management	\$166,000	Awarded
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, PAC Habitat Enhancement	\$40,000	Awarded
CDFW Prop 1, Goosenest Watershed Restoration	\$1,300,000	Pending
CALFIRE CCI, Forest Health Program	\$3,253,000	Pending
USFS, Joint Chiefs Landscape Partnership	\$1,500,000	Pending
	<i>\$1,682,500</i>	<i>Total</i>
	\$6,053,000	Pending

Sequoia National Forest, Kern River SPA

USFS Funding	\$500,000	Secured
	<i>\$500,000</i>	<i>Total</i>

CDA has continued to expand our network of partners and agencies throughout California to continue to put solid habitat projects "on the ground." We're in the development of multiple planning and implementation projects from the North Coast to Bishop, from Empire County to the Los Padres, and throughout the Sierra's. We have become one of the leading NGO's in California for planning and implemen-

tation of habitat and conservation projects to benefit deer and other wildlife. As an organization, we are committed to growth and to expand our influence and project work throughout the state of California. Though we are focused on the current/active projects, we are constantly seeking out future projects and partnerships for years to come.



Below are a list of active projects for 2020/2021. Where many of these projects will be completed during the 2021 calendar year, some will remain multi-year landscape scale projects.

CA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife

CDFW, BGMA Modoc Warner Mule Deer Recovery	\$229,600	Awarded
CDFW, BGMA Rock Creek Meadow Restoration	\$26,000	Awarded
CDFW, BGMA Buffalo Skedaddle Spring Restoration	\$384,400	Awarded
	\$640,000	Total

Bureau of Land Management

BLM, Tuleadad Habitat Restoration	\$100,000	Awarded
	\$100,000	Total

Planning

Sierra Nevada Conservancy, Modoc RCD	\$53,000	Awarded
Sierra Nevada Conservancy, Forest and Watershed Health - Fandango Planning Project in the Modoc National Forest	\$120,000	Awarded
USFS, Fandango Wildlife Surveys	\$50,000	Secured
	\$223,000	Total

Interstate Mule Deer Migratory Corridor and Slink Fire Restoration - Mono Ecoregion

NFWF, Big Game Migratory Corridor	\$262,000	Awarded
BLM and NFWF, Hwy 395 Migratory Corridor	\$70,000	Awarded
CDFW Slink Fire Wildlife Habitat Restoration	\$2,300,000	Pending
	\$2,632,000	Total

Eldorado National Forest

NFWF, Bear River - Cole Creek Habitat	\$37,200	Awarded
NFWF, Fuels Management and Restoration	\$47,900	Awarded
	\$85,100	Total

Natural Resource Conservation Service

NRCS, CIG Fawn Rescue and Retention Project	\$75,000	Awarded
	\$75,000	Total

US Fish and Wildlife Service

USFWS, Rock Creek Habitat Restoration	\$25,000	Secured
USFWS, Alaska Canyon	\$25,000	Secured
USFWS Modoc Open Habitat	\$25,000	Secured
USFWS, North Thomes Creek	\$6,000	Secured
USFWS, Dry Creek Basin, Phase 2	\$25,000	Secured

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	<i>\$106,000</i>	<i>Total</i>
Contracted Projects:		
Dry Creek Basin Habitat Restoration, Phase 2	\$43,000	Secured
Bare Creek Habitat Restoration	\$434,500	Secured
Newland Reservoir Fuels Reduction & Habitat	\$421,200	Secured
Lower Parker Habitat Restoration	\$67,000	Secured
Gleason Creek Habitat Restoration	\$102,000	Secured
Avanzino Habitat Restoration	\$64,200	Secured
Timbered Mountain Habitat Restoration	\$255,000	Secured
DVR Habitat Restoration	\$120,000	Secured
Boot Lake Habitat Restoration	\$125,000	Secured
Wire Lake Habitat Restoration	\$230,600	Secured
Swaringer Reservoir Habitat Restoration	\$349,300	Secured
9 Mile Habitat Restoration	\$340,000	Secured
Dry Cow Habitat Restoration	\$299,000	Secured
Hat Mountain Habitat	\$20,700	Secured
Rye Grass Habitat Restoration, Phase 2	\$295,000	Secured
West Valley Habitat Restoration, Phase 2	\$131,000	Secured
Tuledad, Phase 2	\$91,000	Secured
CalPines Habitat Restoration	\$296,000	Secured
C Reservoir Habitat Restoration	\$90,400	Secured
Fee Habitat Restoration	\$30,800	Secured
Garrett Habitat Restoration	\$11,000	Secured
Bray Habitat Restoration	\$48,400	Secured
Total	<i>\$3,865,100</i>	

When warm weather sets in, the state of California's residents begin to prepare for what could be yet another devastating fire season. Year after year, wildfires torch through dry land consuming miles of nature's fuel. Fire fighting resources have resorted to being reactive rather than preventative and this has resulted in devastating consequences. In 2020 alone, California wildfires burned 4,397,809 acres, largely affecting a large population of wildlife and critical habitat.

The habitat required for early success in wildlife includes beneficial grasses, forbs, wildflowers, shrubs and saplings. With the dense, closed-canopy forests that can be seen in much of the state of California, the forest understory is riddled with tree debris, ladder fuels, and full shade due to canopy closure. These densely growing, closed-crowned conifer stands leave little chance for success in promoting and sustaining required habitat and forage components for wildlife. Forests have become a weapon of mass destruction when paired with fire, but with planning there is a way to help manage the future of wildfires. The solution isn't new, it's a long-standing method of prevention popularly used by Native Americans — controlled fires, or prescribed fires.

Prescribed fires are a way to protect habitat and promote the early successional generation of desired forage and bedding components needed to promote healthy wildlife populations. While

it may seem counterintuitive, prescribed fires serve several important functions; they reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires by limiting fuel, restore important habitat and help maintain habitat that is currently healthy. Planned fire successfully removes leaf litter from the ground, exposing an open floor for grasses, legumes, and other herbaceous plants to germinate and flower which



Goosenest Prescribed Burn



means the food will be plentiful for wildlife. Many shrubs produce more fleshy fruit 2 to 5 years after a fire than they would if they had been in an area that had not been burned. When it comes to the reward of planned fire with regard to wildlife health - there is no question, and that is exactly where California Deer Association is focusing a great deal of future groundwork.

Recently, California Deer Association became one of the first Non-Governmental Organizations to hold prescribed fire rights

with the United States Forest Service. This positions CDA to help our federal and state partners put good fire in front of bad fire and help establish more healthy habitat for wildlife.

In late Spring, California Deer Association assisted the Goosenest District of the Klamath National Forest with a prescribed burn project working alongside U.S. Forest Service, CDF, and others. After months of planning, nearly 500 acres of biofuels were successfully burned. This is just one of the many prescribed burns planned to help reduce wildfire risk and aid in healthier wildlife.

As an organization, CDA feels a great deal of honor in helping our partners do work that will help wildlife flourish. We look forward to using this tool and others to do our part in these restoration and prevention efforts.



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California Deer Association & US Forest Service A Partnership Made in the Forest

In 2020, the largest wildfire in California history scorched six counties in the northern part of the state. The August Complex Fire burned more than one million acres across three national forests and destroyed hundreds of structures. But devastating fires are not limited to California. Across the West, more than 10 million acres burned in 2020—a record in modern history. These fires consumed more than 17,500 structures and more than \$3.5 billion in firefighting costs. Tragically, lives were lost, people were displaced by evacuation orders, and wildlife suffered immeasurable effects from these firestorms. Fires released smoke that degraded air quality nearby and hundreds of miles away. They also destroyed wildlife habitat, including imperiled species, migratory species, at-risk species, and other dependent species in those fire-struck regions. The fires' aftereffects will lead to erosion that harms water quality in local watersheds, and a possible disconnect for migratory species and local wildlife dependent on bedding, nesting, and forage components. Postfire restoration is necessary to restore form and function to many of these areas. Unfortunately, large and destructive wildfires are becoming more common across the West, with new records set almost every year. Although several factors contribute to this trend, a significant one is the declining health of the nation's forests. The U.S. Forest Service, which manages 193 million acres of land, reports a backlog of 80 million acres in need of restoration and 63 million acres facing high or very high risk of wildfire. CDA is working with many of our Forest Services partners across the state to identify these "most at risk" areas and to assemble partners and funding to accomplish the restoration efforts needed to lessen these risks, provide for wildlife, and protect these public resources.

Given the toll on neighboring communities, public health, and the environment, today's extreme wildfire risks could readily be described as a nuisance. For various reasons, including budget changes and personnel reductions, from 2009 to 2018, the Forest Service implemented forest restoration projects to reduce fire risks and improve forest health on approximately 4 million acres per year, including fuel reduction projects on about 1.4 million acres per year. At that pace, it would take decades to treat the areas at risk of catastrophic wildfire, ignoring any other risks that might arise in the interim. CDA and other partners within the Stewardship Program are increasing these efforts and acres treated. Some factors that contribute to declining forest health and increasing fire risk, such as climate change, require long-term policy

changes with benefits that will be realized only gradually. Forest restoration projects offer a way to mitigate these risks in the short term. One study led by Forest Service scientists estimated that of four factors driving fire severity in the western United States, live fuel was the most important - accounting for 53 percent of average relative influence, while climate accounted for 14 percent. Whatever the future course of climate change policy, the fact remains that many national forests have already accumulated decades worth of underbrush and fuels, escalating present fire risk. Forest restoration can help reduce these risks in the short run by creating and maintaining healthy, resilient forests and maximizing the ecological, environmental, and economic benefits people derive from them. By promoting landscapes with healthy forests, diverse forest types, and wildlife habitat within the plans designs, restoration projects can reduce the risk of megafires, protect and promote habitat for a multitude of wildlife species, and provide other conservation benefits.

The Forest Service's ability to pursue forest restoration, however, is hampered by several obstacles including limited funding, red tape, and litigation. Forest restoration is costly, and the agency's budget for it is limited. Moreover, the Forest Service cannot easily leverage commercial timber harvesting to fund beneficial restoration work because harvesting has declined substantially, mill capacity near national forests is shrinking, and the brush and small-diameter trees that pose the greatest fire risks are often not marketable.

Fortunately, NGOs like CDA, states, tribes, industry and conservation groups that benefit from healthier forests have incentives to contribute funding, manpower, and other means of support. CDA has worked to put together several innovative federal-state and public-private partnerships across the state that have demonstrated the ability to increase and expedite needed restoration while promoting collaboration among diverse interests. These examples and others like them show the potential for markets, incentives, and collaboration to help our USFS partners increase capacity to accomplishing the work on this restoration backlog and reduce alarming fire risks at the same time.

Innovative partnerships like CDAs Master Stewardship Agreement can be a great platform to accomplish this work. These kinds of works can be disrupted or hindered by the same bureaucratic obstructions, litigation risks, and other obstacles that hamper



the Forest Service's forest restoration efforts. Drawing lessons from some of the

6. Support the Forest Service in their effort to be a "Good Neighbor" through longer, more flexible partnerships with states, tribes, and counties. CDAs roll on the ground here has been beneficial to all partners. We have worked as a liaison to help connect adjacent partners and have promoted working relationships with a diverse group of supporting "Neighbors".

Open Markets

7. Promote innovative wood markets by establishing a Forest Service restoration fund for long-term cost-share partnerships. The agreement CDA has with the Region 5 Forest Service has this exact opportunity within its draft and it provides us the opportunity to keep monies within the region and expand conservation efforts on the ground.

8. Open timber markets for export. In today's market structure, with the cost of lumber and the demand for species-specific needs, there has not been a greater need for this than now. With the incredible amount of salvage timber, bio-fuels, and limited delivery points, export markets could drastically help remove time-sensitive products from the forest to the markets. This is necessary for us to be able to work at the pace and scale needed to accomplish the amount of work before us.

Conclusion

Various factors have contributed to the elevated fire risk and wildlife habitat degradation facing many western forests. Forest restoration projects can lower the risk of wildfires, increase beneficial habitat for wildlife, and provide many other benefits. Protecting and enhancing these resources is the driving force behind CDA and these great partnerships. CDA is continuously becoming a stronger partner and will continue to strive to assist the Forest Service, BLM, State, and many other partners in expanding our capacity in this great work. A big shout out again to all of our supporting CDA members and partners who have made this expansion into this large landscape restoration world possible.

successful partnerships we have enjoyed, some key points have surfaced that we all should support and/or understand. These are items that every CDA member or any conservationist should be ready to support or be willing to discuss while looking for a positive solution to accomplish common goals.

Recommendations

Encourage Collaboration Rather Than Conflict

1. Make categorical exclusions easier to apply and expand acreage limits. This was the successful approach the STNF & CDA took with the Eastside Project, wildlife driven, habitat and forest health restoration project across 13,000 acres.

2. Avoid analysis paralysis by limiting Endangered Species Act consultations to projects with on-the-ground impacts on protected species. Limited Operating Periods (LOPs) is a determinant factor of when the job can get done, too many restrictions impede efficiency in accomplishing the tasks. Understanding these can aid in your response on projects that are released for public comment, and we all should add positive support and comments when these projects are released for review in your areas.

3. Make litigation less disruptive by requiring lawsuits to be filed quickly and clarifying how fire risks and forest health should affect injunction decisions. We are working with our federal partners to alleviate certain types of projects from litigation attempts. CDA projects with Sequoia National Forest were just a part of the news where the litigation surrounding some of these projects was struck down, enabling CDA to continue work with our SNF partners in the forest above Lake Isabella.

4. Allow prescribed burns to be excluded from state emissions calculations. Prescribed fire can put less than 25% of the smoke in the air than a wildfire over the same acreage can produce. CDA has been a strong supporter of prescribed burns and within the Master Stewardship Agreement with the Forest Service, can work beside our USFS partners while putting this good fire on the ground.

Increase the Forest Service's Ability to Partner with Others

5. Scale-up public-private partnerships by empowering the Forest Service to enter longer-term contracts and cooperative agreements. CDA has entered into a 10-year agreement within the USFS under the MSA contract and look to continue the good work within that agreement.



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