

COLLABORATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

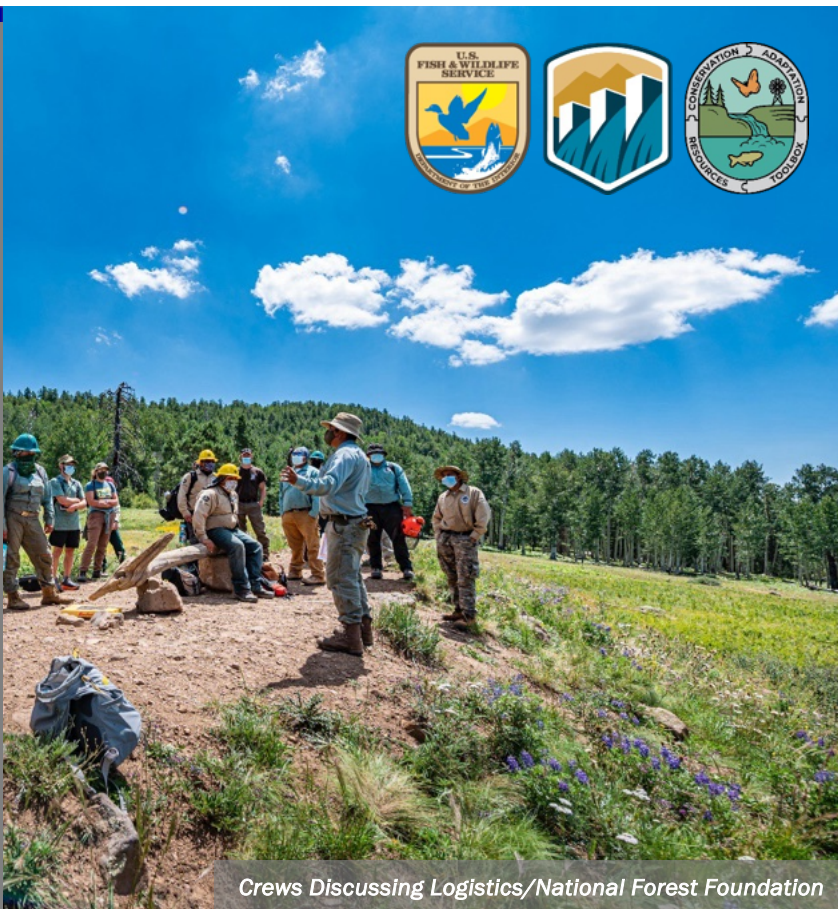
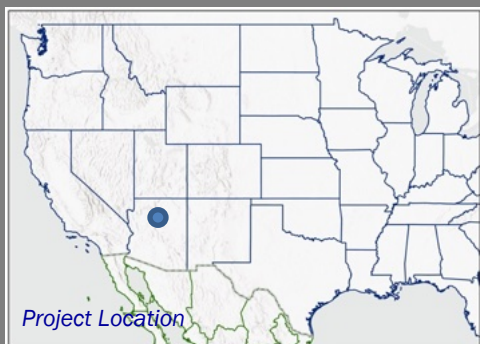
Wood for Life, a Collaborative Partnership to Provide Wood to the Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribe



**NORTHERN
ARIZONA
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INTRODUCTION

Historic fire suppression practices and climate change increase the risk of high-severity wildfire in ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) forests in Northern Arizona. To restore the health of these fire-adapted forests, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) engages in forest restoration projects, including forest thinning, through initiatives such as the Four Forest Restoration Initiative (4FRI). In 2018, the USFS began conversations with the Hopi Tribe and Navajo Nation to address their need for heating fuel after the Kayenta Coal Mine closure. This resulted in the formation of Wood for Life (WFL), a collaborative network of organizations in northern Arizona, transporting wood from thinning projects for use as firewood by Tribal members.



Crews Discussing Logistics/National Forest Foundation

KEY ISSUES ADDRESSED

Unmarketable wood from forest thinning projects is typically burned, but climate change has shortened safe burn windows. Managers needed non-burn approaches to reducing fuel loads after thinning in high-risk areas like the WUI. After the closure of the Kayenta Coal Mine, Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribe members increasingly used firewood for heating and cooking. There is an opportunity to provide wood from thinning projects to Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribe members, but identifying appropriate policy mechanisms is difficult. The amount of firewood that can be supplied, transported, and processed is limited by available capacity. Overcoming the limited capacity to make wood available to Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribe for heating, cooking, and ceremonial use, requires multiple partners leveraging a diverse array of funding sources.

PROJECT GOALS

- Remove thinned wood from projects in the WUI to reduce risk of future wildfire
- Find policy solutions to supply wood to Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribe for fuel, ceremonial, and housing needs
- Leverage relationships with partners to increase capacity and funding for supplying, delivering, and processing wood

THE WOOD FOR LIFE PLAYBOOK

The Wood for Life “Playbook”, linked in the resources section, contains a wealth of information that can help partnerships implement similar programs in their geographies.



Forest Cutting Crews/National Forest Foundation

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Making firewood available to Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribe: WFL has provided approximately 10,000 cords of firewood to the Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribe members. Typical households use five cords of wood that cost \$2,577 per year (ERI Publication in Press).

Climate Adapted management - Full Fiber Removal: The use of “full-fiber removal” where thinned wood is removed instead of burned reduces wildfire risk when climate change is reducing the length of safe burn windows and increasing the likelihood of piles reigniting after burning.

Overcome Policy Hurdles for Supplying Wood: WFL used free tags program (36 CFR 223.3), stewardship agreements with non-federal partners, and free use authorities (36 CFR 223.5) to make wood available to Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribe.

Local Partnerships for Wood Distribution: Navajo Nation Chapter Houses, Hopi Villages, Ancestral Lands Conservation Corp crews, Chizh for Cheii, Koho 4 Hopi and others were critical for distribution. Delivery methods were tailored to each community and include pick up sites, home delivery, and more.

Strengthening Relationships with Stewardship Agreements: The Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps crews restored Hart Prairie, a culturally significant location for many Tribal Nations in the region and provided 349 cords of wood.

Collaborators

- See full list of collaborators online

CART Author: Liam Thompson, University of Oklahoma, May 2024.

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Visit CART:



LESSONS LEARNED

Listening to the needs of community partners enabled Wood for Life partners to provide a variety of forest products for community needs, including pine needles and wood chips for livestock bedding, wooden beams for construction, wood for ceremonial purposes, and more.

Stewardship agreements are an effective policy mechanism to increase firewood supply for WFL but **require a partner with the necessary capacity and funding to be successful.**

WFL started by using existing policy mechanisms that allowed firewood harvesting to provide wood (e.g., CFRs 223.3 & 223.5) and **scaled to larger, more complex agreements as the project gained momentum** (e.g., Stewardship Agreements and Supplemental Project Agreements). Funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law allowed partnerships with the Ancestral Lands Conservation Corps. While WFL utilized several innovative mechanisms to overcome barriers, **more work is needed to include Indigenous voices in creating straightforward policies for Indigenous biomass use, and to increase local tribal capacity through agreements.**

NEXT STEPS

- Work with additional National Forests to support the implementation of similar WFL projects
- Increase the amount of wood provided by WFL for ceremonial and housing needs
- Establish additional wood distribution sites at easily accessible locations
- Identify long-term funding opportunities to transport and distribute firewood

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Logs being Cut into Firewood/Jacob Dahlin