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NEWS

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Grant Funds Available for Forest Restoration, Watershed Protection Projects

FORT COLLINS, Colo. – Colorado landowners and communities wanting to protect forested watersheds may be eligible for grant funding from the Colorado State Forest Service.

For the next six weeks, the CSFS will accept proposals for the Colorado Forest Restoration Pilot Grant Program, which helps fund projects that demonstrate a community-based approach to forest restoration. Project proposals must address the protection of water supplies or related infrastructure, as well as the restoration of forested watersheds.

“This program focuses on mitigating threats that affect watersheds at risk, as identified in the Colorado Statewide Forest Resource Assessment,” said Jeff Jahnke, state forester and director of the CSFS, a service and outreach agency of the Warner College of Natural Resources at Colorado State University. “Forest management projects funded by these grants will help protect Colorado forests and enhance the public benefits they provide, ultimately protecting water quality and quantity.”

The Colorado Forest Restoration Pilot Grant Program encourages diverse local stakeholders to work together to develop forest restoration proposals that address diverse forest health challenges such as community and water-supply protection, ecological restoration, forest product utilization and wildfire risk reduction.

Severe wildfires have the potential to negatively impact watersheds through significant increases in runoff and erosion, diminished water quality and accelerated loss of snowpack. For example, the 2002 Hayman Fire that burned across the watershed of the South Platte River continues to cost Denver Water millions of dollars on sediment removal projects and related activities. The projects have been necessary to restore storage capacity and water quality in reservoirs downstream of the burned area.

Colorado landowners and anyone else with legal authority to contract for work on relevant properties are eligible to compete for grant funding. The state can fund up to 60 percent of each awarded project; grant recipients are required to match at least 40 percent of the total project cost through cash or in-kind contributions, including federal funds. Proposed projects must be located in communities with a CSFS-approved Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

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The Colorado Forest Restoration Pilot Grant Program was established in 2007. Based on the availability of severance tax funds, continued funding of up to \$1 million annually has been authorized for the next two state fiscal years.

An interdisciplinary technical advisory panel, convened by the CSFS in partnership with the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, will review project applications this winter. The state forester will make final selections and notify successful applicants in spring 2011.

All grant applications are due by 4 p.m. Jan. 26. Applications and additional information about the Colorado Forest Restoration Pilot Grant Program are available at local CSFS district offices or csfs.colostate.edu.

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