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NEWS

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Tree planting helps Walsh recover from 2011 wildfire

LA JUNTA, Colo. – The Baca County town of Walsh, in conjunction with the Colorado Tree Coalition and Colorado State Forest Service, recently planted more than 150 trees after receiving a \$1,500 grant to help reforest the community following a devastating 2011 wildfire. The grant was awarded to the ReForest Walsh Fire project under the CTC’s ReForest Colorado program, which focuses on post-disaster tree planting efforts.

On May 11, 24 volunteers from the surrounding community – including landowners, Walsh FFA students and firefighters, representatives from the Walsh Town Council and Baca County Commissioners, and CSFS personnel – helped plant the trees on the edge of Walsh, where a wind-driven grass fire burned 30 acres in early April 2011. The fire led to the evacuation of 120 residents and destroyed one home, multiple outbuildings, vehicles and machinery. A separate Baca County grass fire in early April 2011 also burned one residence.

“There was a time when everything here was gray,” said Donna Davis, CSFS La Junta district forester and CTC representative. “This planting brought a lot of healing for residents and the community, who worked together to plant a future and a hope for tomorrow.”

The CTC grant covered the cost of 152 Rocky Mountain junipers – 140 seedling trees grown at the CSFS Nursery in Fort Collins, and 12 larger potted trees from Van Hooks Nursery (La Junta). In addition to grant-purchased trees, Quail Unlimited donated weed barrier fabric and staples and Van Hooks donated two additional trees. Landowners prepared the site by removing burn-scarred trees and provided the drip irrigation, along with gravel to anchor the weed barrier.

The new trees were planted on three separate properties, with the CSFS demonstrating planting techniques and overseeing the installation project alongside the Walsh community.

The CSFS La Junta District serves Otero, Crowley, Bent, Cheyenne, Kiowa, Prowers and Baca counties.

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