



News Release

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Joint Fire Science Program Provides Funding to Promote Forest Health in Colorado and Wyoming

Grant will improve communication between scientists and land managers

BOULDER, Colo —A grant from the national Joint Fire Science Program will improve forest conditions in Colorado and southern Wyoming by bridging the gap between forest management and forest science professionals in the Southern Rocky Mountain Ecoregion (SRME). The funding will allow the newly formed Southern Rocky Mountain Ecoregion Consortium to engage land managers, scientists and community leaders in dialogue and on-the-ground learning opportunities focused on the role of fire in forest health.

The SRME Consortium's successful proposal was developed collaboratively by a steering team that includes representatives from Colorado State University, University of Wyoming, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Geological Survey, Colorado State Forest Service, Colorado Forest Restoration Institute, Larimer County, Colorado and The Nature Conservancy.

“The goal of the SRME Consortium is to facilitate greater interaction between forest research and management by breaking down existing barriers,” said Tim Sullivan, state director of The Nature Conservancy in Colorado. “Removing these barriers will allow both the science and land management communities to do the best job they can for the forest.”

Forest managers in the southern Rocky Mountains face a number of challenges, including the recent devastating fires on Colorado's Front Range, ongoing bark beetle outbreaks and emerging climate change impacts that are affecting the health of the region's forests. Land managers need

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access to the most current science, research and technology in order to effectively address these challenges. In turn, scientists and researchers need to know the most pressing needs of land managers so they can focus their work on these long-term problems.

“Fostering communication between land managers, landowners and the research community is essential in our efforts to improve forest health for present and future generations, and the SRME Consortium provides the mechanism to make this happen,” said Jeff Jahnke, State Forester and director of the Colorado State Forest Service, a service and outreach agency of the Warner College of Natural Resources at Colorado State University.

“Our understanding of how fires and other natural disturbances function in forest ecosystems is rapidly evolving, particularly in light of events such as the ongoing bark beetle outbreak,” said Dr. Daniel Tinker, Associate Professor of Forest and Fire Ecology at the University of Wyoming. “As a scientist, I look forward to working with the Consortium to more directly share new and exciting research findings with land managers and other interested stakeholders.”

The SRME Consortium will facilitate interaction between participants through field trips, seminars and webinars, and a new website (<http://www.SRMEconsortium.org/>) that will serve as a hub for sharing information about research and research needs. The Consortium also will give participants the opportunity to experience hands-on forest management by applying current research and innovative management strategies to a demonstration landscape.

“The unique mix of engagement and learning opportunities offered by the Consortium will provide participants with several ways to interact with colleagues throughout the region enhancing the many ways scientific research can be designed and utilized to improve the health of wildfire dependent ecosystems,” said Sam Foster, Director of the Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station.

The SRME Consortium is part of an initiative by the Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP) to establish a national network of scientists and land managers working together to accelerate the awareness, understanding and adoption of wildland fire science information. Currently, the SRME is one of eight pilot regions. Representatives from the U.S. Department of the Interior and U.S. Forest Service oversee the JFSP, whose mission is to find solutions to the problems faced by those who manage fire-prone forests and rangelands.

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