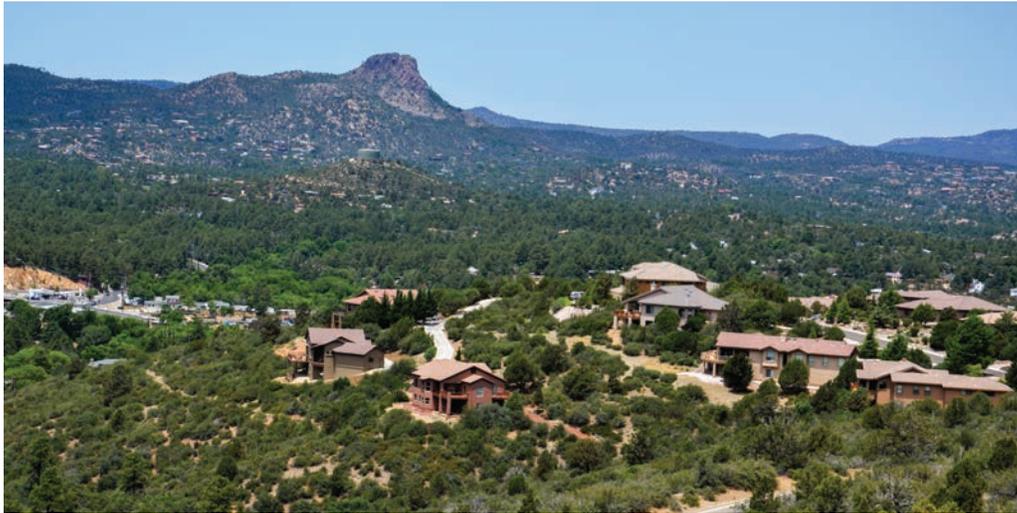




United States Department of Agriculture

JOINT CHIEFS' LANDSCAPE RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP

Prescott Basin Cross Boundary Project



Homes nestled among the forest around Prescott. USDA Forest Service photo

A combination of drought and the long-term effects of aggressive fire suppression created an unnatural buildup of brush and tree material around Prescott, AZ. Because of these conditions, recent wildfires have burned with dangerous intensity and pose great risk to residents. Surrounding communities have experienced the devastation firsthand. Area wildfires in 2013 forced hundreds of people to evacuate and took the lives of 19 wildland firefighters. A 2017 wildfire scorched 28,000 acres of public and private land, resulting in \$14 million in damages. This wild landscape is only an hour and a half outside of Phoenix and sits where the Sonoran Desert transitions into the Colorado Plateau. Retirees are drawn here for the mild weather and stunning vistas, and the economy is bolstered by tourists who hike, bike and camp along the Prescott National Forest. Today, funding and resources through the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership are helping reduce fuel buildup and improve forest health to prevent further tragedy and economic loss. Private partners are collaborating with federal agencies to increase education and landowner engagement. The Joint Chiefs' project has helped the community implement land management strategies on 8,600 acres of public and private land.

PROJECT IMPACT

28,000
Homes Protected

Wildfire risks were reduced for nearly 28,000 homes—representing more than 53,000 residents.

Total awarded through the Joint Chiefs' from 2015-17: \$2.7 million

USDA's Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service are working together to improve the health of forests where public forests and grasslands connect to privately owned lands. Through the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership, the two USDA agencies are restoring landscapes by reducing wildfire threats to communities and landowners, protecting water quality and enhancing wildlife habitat.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Prescott Basin Cross Boundary Project RESULTS



Mexican Spotted Owl Grapevine
© Richard Balland



Reduced wildfire threats to communities: This project's collaboration led to a partnership between the Prescott National Forest and the Highlands Center for Natural History. Nine-hundred 4th grade students visited the Center to learn about forest restoration and fuel reduction.



Protected water quality: Wildfires remove plants that hold soil in place, leading to harmful runoff and erosion that can alter streams and rivers. Estimates following a recent nearby fire indicate that heavy rains in some areas could increase sediment flowing into waterways from 2 to 18.5 tons, per acre. Work to halt wildfires protect water quality for the residents of the Prescott Basin.



Enhanced habitat for at-risk species: Improving forest conditions also supports recovery efforts for the threatened Mexican spotted owl. Thinning the forest enhances habitat for this species and other native wildlife.

JOINT CHIEFS' LANDSCAPE RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP PRESCOTT BASIN CROSS BOUNDARY PROJECT



Tom and Jenn Ashcraft (center right) gather with neighbors and partners to celebrate forest restoration efforts. Photo courtesy Ashcraft family

Volunteers Heal From Tragedy by Healing Nature

Jenn Ashcraft was in the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001. Searching for peace after that horrific attack, she moved to Prescott, Arizona and began volunteering with the American Red Cross. During Jenn's time volunteering, she met her husband, Tom Ashcraft, who has lived in Prescott for almost three decades. He raised his two sons and daughter there, and proudly watched them begin successful careers and loving families.

They met in the summer of 2013, when Jenn volunteered to help those affected by the Yarnell Hill wildfire that raged near Prescott. Tom's son, 29-year-old Andrew, was one of 19 firefighters who lost his life helping to contain the fire.

Their shared tragedies brought them together, and they married in 2015. To honor his son and all of those who died in the fire, they began an effort now known as Project Andrew. They collaborated with their neighbors, reached out to the Natural Resources Conservation Service and formed partnerships with USDA's Forest Service, local agencies and others to make their 19-acre neighborhood, adjacent to the Prescott National Forest, better prepared for wildfire. Technical support from the Joint Chiefs' enabled them to develop a conservation plan, and program funds helped them implement the plan. The group worked to thin the forest by removing excess trees and brush that is can easily start fires throughout the neighborhood. This helps improve forest health, better protect the community and property and prevent loss of life.

"We want this project to be a model of what is possible," said Jenn Ashcraft. "When we work together, we can lower the economic impact of wildfires, keep our firefighters safe and avoid tragedy like the one our community has endured."



Photo courtesy Ashcraft family

Key Partners

- Arizona State Forestry
- BLM-Phoenix Field Office
- Highlands Center for Natural History
- City of Prescott
- Prescott Area Wildland Urban Interface Commission
- The Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management
- Yavapai County