



Three Year Strategic Plan FY22 – FY24

An Urgent Case for Change

America's National Forests and Grasslands represent the centerpiece of our country's public lands. The 193 million acres of the National Forest System – comprising 8.5% of all land in the United States – provide abundant clean water and wildlife habitat, sequester carbon, support communities, and offer unparalleled recreation opportunities for all. They are lands we share and steward together.

In 2021, we see an urgent need for action. The combined pressures on America's public lands are mounting faster than ever before. During the worst of the Covid-19 2020 pandemic, a record number of people visited National Forests and Grasslands, a welcome trend that also resulted in human impacts on strained recreational facilities and sensitive ecosystems. Past management practices have disrupted natural cycles, reduced biodiversity, and fragmented wildlife habitat. Our changing climate is exacerbating and accelerating negative impacts through drought and warming temperatures, and the timeline to mitigate those effects is shrinking. Larger and hotter wildfires are the norm, burning forestland and soils more intensely than natural fire, and increasingly threatening nearby communities. After fires, sedimentation increases in rivers, creeks and streams and affects the life they support. Invasive species shift forest and grassland ecosystems out of balance. Communities that depend on healthy forests for recreation and forest products often find a valuable economic resource in peril.

It is our responsibility and our mission to work for National Forests and Grasslands on the massive challenges before us. Many entities support the health and well-being of America's National Forests. Chief among them is the United States Forest Service, charged with managing the forests on behalf of the American people. Nonprofits, small and large, support wildlife habitat, water conservation, trail building and other activities on National Forests. The National Forest Foundation, however, is the only organization officially chartered by Congress to partner with the Forest Service. We are the only nonprofit conservation organization that has solely dedicated itself to restoring these public lands for today's and future generations.

As we move forward in achieving this important work for our National Forests and Grasslands, we will demonstrate that in all we do, we welcome, need, and value people of all races, creeds, ages, sexual orientations, gender identities, and backgrounds. We are committed to building and maintaining a culture where diversity, equity, and inclusiveness are fundamental to our organization.

Since 1993, when the National Forest Foundation was founded, the organization and our partners have planted millions of trees; improved miles and miles of trails; enhanced forest resiliency, and reduced fire risk. We have mobilized millions of Americans to work in and for the forests. We are proud that as an organization, we have grown quickly over the last five years and have steadily increased our impact. But the monumental challenges that the National Forest System is facing and the opportunity these lands offer for natural climate solutions, biodiversity, connecting the human spirit with nature, and community sustainability – both inspire and demand us to do more.



Vision

A sustainable and resilient National Forest System for all to enjoy

Purpose

We improve and restore the health of our National Forests while inspiring millions of Americans each year to experience and protect these lands.

Our Values

UNITE. We believe in the power of bringing people together. Stewarding our National Forests and Grasslands is a complex venture. These lands are often the center of controversy over both management objectives and practice. When people with diverse views and backgrounds sit down together and work toward agreement, their joint commitment to the land leads to more creative and lasting recreation, restoration, and stewardship strategies. We encourage and facilitate collaborative processes and strive to improve the relationships between communities and the Forest Service.

RESTORE. On-the-ground conservation efforts will restore our National Forests and Grasslands, acre by acre and stream by stream. Restoration blends an understanding of historic natural conditions with science, indigenous and traditional ecological knowledge, and the need to adapt for our changing future. To ensure that our forests, watersheds and habitats can persist and are resilient through adverse impacts over time, effective restoration also demands that we care for the whole system. The most sustainable strategies involve people who make their living from the land as well as those who advocate for its protection and those who enjoy its bounty.

ENGAGE. Engaging Americans is the path to nationwide support for the forests. Now and in the future, our National Forests and Grasslands depend on enduring public trust and engagement. Our work will embody the cultures and perspectives of people across our nation. As we pursue our mission, we reach out to communities, individuals and partners, to create ownership and support collective efforts that preserve and embrace these national treasures. People who have rested by their favorite creek, explored a new trail, or spent a day pulling weeds or cleaning a campsite understand that our forests are fundamental to our national identity and are a legacy we must pass on to future generations.

SUSTAIN. We invest in sustainable solutions. We believe in the importance of investing in the strength of communities of interest and of place, helping people convert their passion for forests into meaningful and sustainable conservation solutions and actions. We value collaborative community organizations and recognize that building their capacity is key to maintaining their engagement and stewardship of National Forests and Grasslands. In addition, we believe that lasting impact is achieved when creative solutions target ecological, economic and community objectives.

ADD VALUE. We aim to complement and accelerate the work of the U.S. Forest Service. As a key nonprofit partner of the U.S. Forest Service, the NFF is the only nonprofit conservation

Mission

The National Forest Foundation, chartered by Congress, engages Americans in community-based and national programs that promote the health and public enjoyment of the 193-million-acre National Forest System, and administers private gifts of funds and land for the benefit of the National Forests.



organization solely focused on our National Forests. We don't duplicate the responsibilities of this important federal agency; rather, we complement its daily work beyond the status quo. We take advantage of our ability to respond in a timely and flexible manner, filling the conservation and stewardship gaps across our treasured National Forests and Grasslands.

Our Strategy

The goals for our three-year strategy are ambitious. We will build on our existing work to restore forest health and improve outdoor experiences, and we add an overarching goal around engaging millions more Americans to join us.

We will pursue these goals with an unwavering commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, resulting in the benefit of a broad diversity of communities and particularly those that have historically been underrepresented in public lands.

- **We will invest more in on-the-ground projects to improve the health of our National Forests.** We will accelerate and broaden our on-the-ground action to increase carbon sequestration and water replenishment and to restore more acres.
- **We will triple our impact on** National Forest recreation infrastructure, expanding the capacity for more people to love the forests without negatively impacting forest health.
- **We will engage millions more Americans in personal and meaningful relationships with National Forests.** Our reach will be digital, in-person and through partners. We will focus on communicating with and through a broader diversity of Americans and we will engage millions more than before to build a constituency that demands and works for healthy forests.

Our Model for Impact

Over almost 30 years of working to benefit the nation's forests, the National Forest Foundation has proven that combining on-the-ground restoration work and engaging Americans in outdoor experiences creates a powerful wave of action.

Now, with a push to find solutions to changes in the climate, the NFF is increasing its focus on the natural solutions America's public lands offer. By combining the proven actions of the past with increased focus on measurable climate solutions like carbon sequestration and water replenishment, the NFF will accelerate its positive impact on forest health.



Our work complements the work the Forest Service does to steward these lands. The needs on the land and in communities far outstrip what the Forest Service can do alone. The NFF catalyzes corporations, foundations, and individuals to engage in hands-on and virtual ways of lending support, raising needed private funds to leverage public dollars. We put these combined resources to work toward restoration and recreation projects, and toward expanding the constituency for our National Forests & Grasslands.

The NFF inspires Americans by highlighting the forests' wonders and benefits. We invite participation in this work, and we serve as a neutral convener to bring communities and land managers together to build agreement around resource management. We mobilize and partner with youth groups, conservation corps, and stewardship organizations to repair trails, stabilize creeks, plant seeds, pull weeds, refurbish campgrounds, and much more. We reach out to new constituencies to build awareness and enjoyment of all that our nation's forests can provide. We amplify our impact by sharing the positive stories of working together for public lands, as well as the lessons learned along the way.

The NFF changes conditions on the ground, restoring forests and prairies, protecting watersheds, and enhancing recreation infrastructure. We rely on the best available science and natural resource professionals to inform our work. Our outreach activities build a constituency to support public lands now and in the future. Our strategic approaches, combined with our commitment to partnerships and collaborative execution of our work, will make the difference all Americans deserve to see in our National Forests and Grasslands.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

We know we need to set the standard for valuing and supporting all people with the processes, programs, and tools they need to do their best work to reach the ambitious goals in our strategic plan.

We are committed to transforming the NFF, and how we do our work, through our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). We are taking steps to develop an external organizational vision statement, baseline data, and DEI plan. We will be ready to share our progress by the end of fiscal year 2021.



The National Forest Foundation Theory of Change



TAKE ON-THE-GROUND ACTION

Strategic Approaches ▶

Directly implement natural climate solutions, including forest restoration, while partnering with others to increase impact

Promote recreational and restorative outdoor activities to engage Americans in supporting their National Forests

Connect new groups of people to forests in ways that move them to action

How We Execute ▶

Aggregate and leverage resources, funding and expertise across a wide range of sources

Amplify knowledge

Celebrate forests and welcome all to public lands

Broad Outcomes ▶

Public land acres are positively impacted and recreation infrastructure improved

More Americans have a personal and meaningful relationship with their National Forests through involvement with the National Forest Foundation

The National Forest Foundation identifies and prioritizes critical issues and opportunities throughout America's National Forests to increase both awareness and involvement

We improve and restore the health of our National Forests and Grasslands while inspiring millions of Americans each year to experience and protect these lands

INSPIRE AMERICANS



Prioritizing Our Work

With 193 million acres in the National Forest System, the NFF must prioritize the places and projects we work on to achieve the highest impact possible.

First and foremost, we build from strength. Everything we do must help to achieve our core mission of dramatically improving the condition of the National Forests while engaging the public. Our work must align with our core values and our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, have measurable impact, leverage limited resources, and be both doable and fundable.

Beyond that, we will prioritize work that maximizes our ability to:

- Reach a broad diversity of people, communities and organizations
- Excite key stakeholders including Forest Service, donors, implementation partners
- Effectively engage the private sector
- Highlight and amplify NFF's unique value and role as a neutral convener and resource aggregator
- Achieve an intersection of outdoor experiences, natural climate solutions, and engagement objectives

Our Goals and Critical Path: What We Will Do Over the Next Three Years

GOAL: Triple NFF's 2020 investments from \$11.7M to \$36M for annual on-the-ground restoration work that improves the health of forests and watersheds of the National Forest System.

The keys to achieving this goal are to increase the average investment per project, and size and number of projects. We will anchor our work on National Forests and Grasslands but will work across boundaries as appropriate to achieve the most benefit.

1. Strengthen NFF's capability to expand relationships, reputation, and awareness within the Forest Service to increase the number and scale of projects that NFF manages. We will ensure that Forest Service leaders at a range of levels understand our ability to be responsive, raise and aggregate funds for different types of projects, implement those projects, engage different types of communities effectively, and bring projects in on time and on budget.
2. Prioritize clearly where NFF is going to work, anchored in funding availability while building a portfolio that is diverse in geography and communities that benefit, including historically marginalized and low socioeconomic communities.



Subgoal: Multiply by 10X over 2020 the annual amount of carbon and water-based funds that support NFF’s on-the-ground restoration activities to improve the health of National Forest System lands through natural climate solutions.

1. Support a shift by the Forest Service to allow registerable carbon projects that are viable in the verifiable carbon market space and obtain carbon registry approval of NFF as an implementing partner.
2. Raise funds and implement carbon and water projects.
3. Clarify and implement our value proposition for on-the-ground work by effective measurement of carbon and water impacts and clear communication of those impacts to donors.

Resilient Forests Are Critical to Water Quality and Quantity

More than 3,000 communities, serving millions of Americans, drink water that flows from watersheds contained within National Forests and Grasslands. Water is the lifeblood for resilient ecosystems and the prosperity of human communities. National Forests and Grasslands play a critical role in storing and filtering water, mitigating flooding, recharging groundwater, and regulating the timing and magnitude of streamflow.

Resilient Forests are a Key to Climate Solutions

Our forests are one of the most efficient natural systems for pulling carbon dioxide (CO₂) out of the atmosphere. Trees absorb CO₂ from the atmosphere and store it as carbon in trunks, roots, branches, leaves and even the soil. National Forests make up about one-fifth of the total U.S. forestland and contain one-fourth of the amount of carbon stored in forests in the lower 48 states, coastal Alaska and Puerto Rico.

Healthy Forests = Stored Carbon = Climate Solutions



GOAL: Triple NFF’s 2020 investments for improving National Forest System recreation infrastructure from \$3.6M to \$11M in response to the 150 million-and-growing annual NFS site visits.

1. Ensure NFF’s contractual and other abilities to work effectively on projects funded by the Great American Outdoor Act and other sources.
2. Expand recreation infrastructure and access to that infrastructure, enabling greater numbers of people and more diverse communities to enjoy our National Forests and Grasslands sustainably.
3. Build data pilots to find or develop baseline data and inform at a granular level who is visiting which forests, when, and why to prioritize investments and communications.

Forest Recreation Infrastructure

The 2020 Covid-19 pandemic spurred people to explore public lands in numbers greater than ever before, and the gaps in facilities became very apparent in the overwhelmed campgrounds, jammed parking lots, busy trails, and overflowing trash bins and outhouses. The Forest Service estimates the backlog on maintenance of infrastructure is currently \$5.9 billion, which includes \$3.8 billion in roads and bridges and \$1.5 billion for visitor centers, campgrounds, and other facilities.

If we are to be successful in connecting people to the land and fostering inspiring outdoor experiences, we must give attention to improving recreation amenities to be more sustainable and accessible.

On-the-Ground Project Metrics and Tracking

1. For NFF-initiated projects, establish mechanisms for tracking project-level data, including project-based costs, project size (e.g., acres of forest, linear feet of stream, miles of trail) and project-based accomplishments/impacts.
2. Establish a monitoring system to track whether and how projects are achieving inter-related goals.
3. Increase by 75% the average size of NFF-initiated grants and contracts awarded, from ~\$90,000/award in 2020 to ~\$158,000/award.
4. Increase by 75% the number of grants and contracts awarded, from ~200 grants and contracts in 2020 to 350 grants and contracts.
5. Award at least 25% of NFF-initiated contracts annually to vendors recognized by the Small Business Administration as Underserved Communities.
6. Award at least 15% of nationally competitive grant funds annually to work that engages communities that have historically been underrepresented in public lands management.



GOAL: Triple engagement from 2M to at least 6M individuals annually through marketing, communications, and opportunities for action.

1. Triple corporate reach over 2020 as measured by giving, volunteering and other engagement, including focus on helping corporations meet both their Environment, Social, and Governance and Corporate Social Responsibility objectives. This will include building multi-channel and multi-level partnerships with at least fifteen new or reactivated corporate partners to increase visibility, awareness, and engagement.
2. Increase youth and next generation engagement by 20% per year through partnerships and grants that offer pathways to experiential outdoor education, recreation, and conservation careers. Expand opportunities for youth from historically marginalized populations by exploring partnerships with, for example, historically black colleges and universities, tribal connections, career and technology education programs, and local high schools.
3. Build comprehensive media and social media strategy by audience, including effective channels and influencers for different groups.
4. Maximize the value of our resources by analyzing the effectiveness of current and potential forms of engagement, evaluating a broad marketing campaign, and piloting a range of options before full rollout.

Building Awareness, Catalyzing Action

As America has shifted substantially to online engagement in the Covid-19 pandemic year, so will our engagement goal be achieved through a primarily digital strategy.

We understand that we must first reach our target audiences before we can engage them, and we aim to reach them as efficiently as possible with the right messages and the right messengers. We understand that the most efficient way to do this is through other organizations, including corporate partners, the Forest Service, nonprofit partners, and carefully selected influencers in key communities. Our engagement goal ties directly to our other goals, as only through depth and breadth of engagement will we create the constituency that our National Forests and Grasslands need and deserve.

