



Watersheds for Firesheds

FAQ - March 2023

What is the US Forest Service's new Wildfire (aka 'Fireshed') Strategy?

The Forest Service defines '[firesheds](#)' as a way to delineate where fires ignite and are likely to, or not to, spread to communities and expose buildings. Fireshed maps are used to show the source of exposure to fire. The fireshed registry is the geospatial portal that portrays the past, present, and future in terms of agency investments in forest and fuel management in relation to historical and predicted fire activity.

Where does the funding come from for this Strategy?

The 2021 federal [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#) provided \$3.5 billion over the next five years for the National Forest Service's [Confronting the Wildfire Crisis: A Strategy for Protecting Communities and Improving the Resilience of America's Forests](#) – also known as the '10-Year Strategy.'

What about the funding in the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)?

The IRA includes \$200 million for the Water Source Protection Program. As of this writing, the Forest Service has not formally determined how those funds will be allocated, but it looks like most will be going to the Forest Service's master stewards contract.

How much Fireshed funding has the Forest Service made to date?

A total of \$591 million has been made in May 2022 and January 2023. Another round is expected before the end of this federal fiscal year (9/30)

How is the Forest Service making its decisions about which Firesheds to prioritize?

The Forest Service currently prioritizes NEPA-ready landscapes focused on community hardening and built infrastructure protection.

Why doesn't the Forest Service prioritize watersheds, source water, and listed species habitat?

For a combination of reasons – the:

- Forest Service's historic focus on timber, not forests
- Lack of capacity to integrate source water landscapes with their NEPA processes
- Lack of effective advocacy for source water protection from downstream water users such as cities and irrigation districts.
- Pressure from members of Congress to focus on WUI protection.

Who is making the decisions about which NEPA-ready landscapes to prioritize?

Regional Foresters can make those decisions.

Where should a local advocacy coalition or a municipal water agency start?

See the [Watersheds for Firesheds Roadmap](#). The top three objectives:

- If you don't have one already, develop a robust coalition
- Make a case for why this watershed/these listed species lands need protection
- Talk with/get to know your District Ranger/Supervisor and Regional Forester

What is a good source for identifying important source water watersheds?

See the [Benefits of forested lands for the Nation's drinking water](#). The map in this document allows you to drill down into local watersheds. There is no map that overlays data for source water, listed species habitat, and climate resilience priorities with the Fireshed Map. Confluence West and the Healthy Headwaters Alliance are advocating for the Forest Service to create such a map.