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# News Release

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## **Federal Partnership Reduces Wildfire Threats through Local Partnerships**

*Public, Private Partnerships to Invest Over \$51 Million in 2016*

**AUBURN**, Feb. 16, 2016 – USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the U.S. Forest Service today announced a federal investment of over \$40 million for restoration of forests near growing communities to reduce wildfire threats, protect water supplies, improve wildlife habitat and support rural economies. This is the third year of the [Joint Chiefs’ Landscape Restoration Partnership](#) between the two agencies to improve the health and resiliency of forest ecosystems where public and private lands meet.

“The health of our forests and our rural communities very often go hand in hand,” said Ben Malone, NRCS state conservationist in Alabama. “USDA works with other public and thousands of private landowners through a range of programs and partnerships to decrease the threat of wildfire, restore forest habitat and increase economic and other opportunities for the families and businesses that make their homes near woodlands.”

This year, NRCS is investing \$7 million in 11 new Joint Chiefs projects and committed additional investments totaling nearly \$33 million in 27 projects launched in 2014 and 2015. Local partners plan to invest up to an additional \$11 million in financial, technical and in-kind assistance for the 38 projects.

This partnership is sending funding to Alabama through the “My Alabama Woods Restoration” project. The project is located across multiple counties in Northwestern and Northeast Alabama. The project area is located at the center of ongoing partnerships working to restore both longleaf and shortleaf pine. The goal of this project is to build upon ongoing work to expand restoration of shortleaf pine 1,375 acres across the project area using more than \$294,000 in funds. Technical assistance will also be provided to privately owned lands within the counties in the project area.

Partners for the project include National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, American Forest Foundation, Alabama Forestry Association, Auburn University – School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, Alabama Forestry Commission, and Alabama Treasured Forest Association

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“The Joint Chiefs’ partnership is one of the many ways USDA is working with local partners to help meet the increasing challenge of protecting communities, watersheds, forests and woodlands from the devastating and increasingly expensive impacts of wildfire,” Malone said.

Since its start, \$104 million has been invested through USDA’s Joint Chiefs’ Landscape Restoration Partnership to reduce wildfire threats to communities and landowners, protect water resources, and improve habitat for at risk species. [Summaries of all projects](#) selected can be found on the NRCS website.

Since 2009, USDA has invested more than \$29 billion to help producers make conservation improvements, working with as many as 500,000 farmers, ranchers and landowners to protect over 400 million acres nationwide, boosting soil and air quality, cleaning and conserving water and enhancing wildlife habitat. For an interactive look at USDA's work in conservation and forestry over the course of this Administration, visit <http://medium.com/usda-results>.

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