Eastern Washington Grabs Big Forest Restoration Grant

Local News

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Colville, WA - Northeastern Washington is getting $968,000 in federal funds for forest restoration work, as part of a larger effort announced on Thursday by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack.

Twenty-three projects nationwide will focus on improving forest health and hiring local workers to do it. Washington's winning project is on the Colville National Forest and nearby lands.

Getting the news was a big relief, says Mitch Friedman, executive director of Conservation Northwest, part of the Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition, because the competition for this funding is tough.Together over the last eight years, our group has fostered more than two dozen successful, on-the-ground, quality forest restoration projects. That's what put us in good position to compete for this million-dollar grant. - Mitch FriedmanThe project is part of a multi-year plan that's expected to support more than 500 jobs in Ferry and Stephens counties.

Friedman says this year's funding already has been appropriated by Congress, but it will take a little longer for the work to get under way.

"We do have to create the projects that allow the guys in yellow hats to get busy. So, I'd say by this fall, we should be putting that money to work on the ground."

Friedman says the priorities are decommissioning many miles of old logging roads and thinning small-diameter trees from overcrowded stands which have become fire hazards.

Vilsack announced a total of more than $44 million in accelerated forest-restoration funding in 13 states.

More information on the group is online at newforestrycoalition.org.