

cent of such land in Arizona, and 56 percent of such land in New Mexico, has an average diameter of 9 to 12 inches diameter at breast height;

(7) the population of the interior West grew twice as fast as the national average during the 1990s;

(8) catastrophic wildfires—

(A) endanger homes and communities;

(B) damage and destroy watersheds and soils; and

(C) pose a serious threat to the habitat of threatened and endangered species;

(9) a 1994 assessment of forest health in the interior West estimated that only a 15- to 30-year window of opportunity exists for effective management intervention before damage from uncontrollable wildfire becomes widespread, with 8 years having already elapsed since the assessment;

(10) healthy forest and woodland ecosystems—

(A) reduce the risk of wildfire to forests and communities;

(B) improve wildlife habitat and biodiversity;

(C) increase tree, grass, forb, and shrub productivity;

(D) enhance watershed values;

(E) improve the environment; and

(F) provide a basis in some areas for economically and environmentally sustainable uses;

(11) sustaining the long-term ecological and economic health of interior West forests and woodland, and their associated human communities requires preventing severe wildfires before the wildfires occur and permitting natural, low-intensity ground fires;

(12) more natural fire regimes cannot be accomplished without the reduction of excess fuels and thinning of subdominant trees (which fuels and trees may be of commercial value);

(13) ecologically based forest and woodland ecosystem restoration on a landscape scale will—

(A) improve long-term community protection;

(B) minimize the need for wildfire suppression;

(C) improve resource values;

(D) improve the ecological integrity and resilience of these systems;

(E) reduce rehabilitation costs;

(F) reduce loss of critical habitat; and

(G) protect forests for future generations;

(14) although landscape scale restoration is needed to effectively reverse degradation, scientific understanding of landscape scale treatments is limited;

(15) rigorous, objective, understandable, and applied scientific information is needed for—

(A) the design, implementation, monitoring, and adaptation of landscape scale restoration treatments and improvement of wildfire management;

(B) the environmental review process; and

(C) affected entities that collaborate in the development and implementation of wildfire treatment.

(Pub. L. 108-317, §2, Oct. 5, 2004, 118 Stat. 1204.)

SHORT TITLE

Pub. L. 108-317, §1, Oct. 5, 2004, 118 Stat. 1204, provided that: "This Act [enacting this chapter] may be cited as the 'Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act of 2004'."

§ 6702. Purposes

The purposes of this chapter are—

(1) to enhance the capacity to develop, transfer, apply, monitor, and regularly update practical science-based forest restoration treatments that will reduce the risk of severe wildfires, and improve the health of dry forest and woodland ecosystems in the interior West;

(2) to synthesize and adapt scientific findings from conventional research programs to the implementation of forest and woodland restoration on a landscape scale;

(3) to facilitate the transfer of interdisciplinary knowledge required to understand the socioeconomic and environmental impacts of wildfire on ecosystems and landscapes;

(4) to require the Institutes established under this chapter to collaborate with Federal agencies—

(A) to use ecological restoration treatments to reverse declining forest health and reduce the risk of severe wildfires across the forest landscape; and

(B) to design, implement, monitor, and regularly revise representative wildfire treatments based on the use of adaptive ecosystem management;

(5) to assist land managers in—

(A) treating acres with restoration-based applications; and

(B) using new management technologies (including the transfer of understandable information, assistance with environmental review, and field and classroom training and collaboration) to accomplish the goals identified in—

(i) the National Fire Plan;

(ii) the report entitled "Protecting People and Sustaining Resources in Fire-Adapted Ecosystems-A Cohesive Strategy" (65 Fed. Reg. 67480); and

(iii) the report entitled "10-Year Comprehensive Strategy: A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment" of the Western Governors' Association;

(6) to provide technical assistance to collaborative efforts by affected entities to develop, implement, and monitor adaptive ecosystem management restoration treatments that are ecologically sound, economically viable, and socially responsible; and

(7) to assist Federal and non-Federal land managers in providing information to the public on the role of fire and fire management in dry forest and woodland ecosystems in the interior West.

(Pub. L. 108-317, §3, Oct. 5, 2004, 118 Stat. 1205.)

§ 6703. Definitions

In this chapter: