

Eureka Economic Development Partners Forest Restoration Training Program Phase One

Background

Like many Western Montana communities, Eureka is feeling the impact of the decline in the traditional timber industry with the loss of mills and logging infrastructure. Eureka has participated in a number of reviews and planning studies that focus on the need to transition the forestry/timber industry.

Many of these studies, including the Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and the recent Department of Labor's Regional Innovative Grant (**RIG**) process through the Montana Department of Labor, have identified the need to build relationships with the forest management agencies. This program is directly tied to that need. Eureka Rural Development Partners (ERDP) is the first economic development organization in Montana to develop a working partnership with the Forest Service to complete work on the ground.. The proposed Forest Restoration Training program will build on this relationship to advance the ability of local organizations to work with the local Extension offices and land management agencies (State and/or Federal) to address changing workforce needs in the timber industry.

Forest Restoration Training Project

ERDA is leveraging a number of local, state and federal resources, totaling over \$340,000, to fund the program including local ERDA dollars, ARRA, CDBG-ED and Governor's Set-aside. ERDP is partnering with the Federal Forest Service on an ARRA project to complete much needed work within the national forest, specifically in wild land urban interfacing while providing training and carrying out field research for curriculum development.

The **first phase** of the program will be the development of a pilot project to train an eight person crew, hired through ERDP, to complete thinning and hand slashing in key acreage in and around Eureka that will protect community and residential buildings.

For the first phase pilot, the local Forest Service will provide classroom and OJT training for the ERDP crew with Forest Service specialists and field crews. ERDP crew members will spend up to 20 hours on each of the following forest specialty areas:

- Archeology
- Fire
- Engineering
- Wildlife/Habitat
- Hydro
- Silviculture/Soils
- Forestry
- Trail
- Recreation
- Surveying
- Ecosystem Monitoring

Parallel to the pilot project, ERDP will be bringing together partners, through its Curriculum Committee to develop a Forest Restoration Workforce Training Program. The main goal of the Forest Restoration Workforce Training program will be to provide training and employment opportunities in the growing field of forest restoration to **displaced timber industry workers**. The outcome is to have an accredited training program that can be replicated across Montana

through the MSU-Extension program. Experience gained through the 50 week pilot project will be key to the curriculum development process

Governor's Set-aside monies will be used for the following:

Administrative costs, including staff time and travel	\$ 200.00
OJT wages for ERDP crew during the pilot period	16,800.00
Curriculum Committee printing/production costs	1,500.00
Contracted services (Wallowa Resources)	1,500.00
TOTAL	20,000.00