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### CSU to head new Colorado Forest Restoration Institute

Colorado State University has been selected to develop the Colorado Forest Restoration Institute, stemming from the passage of the Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act enacted by Congress in 2004.

The Colorado Forest Restoration Institute in the College of Natural Resources at Colorado State will aim to restore the health of Colorado forests and reduce catastrophic wildfires by providing the best available science in forest ecology, restoration and management in ways that are readily usable by the diverse group of land managers in Colorado.

**The new institute will help federal, state and private land owners develop and implement the strategies of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act/Initiative, National Fire Plan and the Forest Service's strategic plan.** The formal signing of the Institute's Charter was earlier this week at the Western Governor's Conference in Breckenridge, Colo.

The Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act was enacted to help ensure that the best available science is used to develop and implement comprehensive, restoration-based forest treatments. To accomplish this task, the bill established three institutes, one each in Colorado at Colorado State University, Arizona at Northern Arizona University and New Mexico at New Mexico Highlands University.

**Colorado has 23 million acres of forests, with federal lands comprising about two-thirds of the forested area.** More than 200,000 private land owners control 6 million acres. Forest landscapes in Colorado are complex mosaics of forest types and ownerships, with nearly 1 million people living in the "red zone" area with high risk of catastrophic fires, largely as a result of unnatural changes in the forests.

Direct costs for fire suppression have totaled over \$200 million since 2000. The total cost of 500,000 burned acres is much greater than the suppression costs alone, including losses related to damaged forests, watersheds, communities and lives. Declining forest health may decrease the diversity of species in Colorado forests, increase the risks of outbreaks of insects and diseases and reduce the flow of rivers that provide water to all states of the southwest.

**The CRFI approach to reversing declines in forest health and reducing wildfires will build on a collaborative framework to meet the needs of Colorado forests and people.**

"We will enhance the knowledge of land managers by developing accessible information in workshops, major reports, working papers and field visits around the state. Community-based collaborative efforts are key," said Dan Binkley, director of the Colorado Forest Restoration Institute at Colorado State. "We will address critical gaps in scientific information with mission-focused research and educate the next generation of forest managers and decision makers using the full resources of Colorado State's College of Natural Resources and all its partners."

The CRFI will be organized around three fundamental activities: research, information translation and transfer, and education.

Along with Binkley, Bill Romme, professor of forest ecology, and Robert Sturtevant, senior researcher with the Department of Forest Rangeland and Watershed Stewardship, will serve as associate directors of Colorado State's Institute. In anticipation of the establishment of the institute, the directors and the College of Natural Resources have sponsored a statewide workshop on forest restoration, conducted a field tour of Colorado's Ponderosa Pine Forests and established a Colorado Forest Restoration Network of federal, state, community, academic, environmental and private sector partners.

**"Colorado's forests are not only a state and American treasure, but natural places that are valued by visitors worldwide,"** said Joyce Berry, dean of the College of Natural Resources at Colorado State. "We are honored and eager to focus our expertise, and to work with our Colorado partners, to ensure that the wonderfully diverse benefits of Colorado's forests are sustained for generations to come."

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