



2021-2025

# Five-Year Strategic Plan



Photo: Colorado State University Photography

**VISION: Healthy and resilient forests**

**MISSION: To achieve stewardship of Colorado's diverse forest environments for the benefit of present and future generations**

## History of the Colorado State Forest Service

In 1955, the Colorado General Assembly established the Colorado State Forest Service as a division of the Colorado State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, now known as Colorado State University. A decade after the CSFS was established, legislators expanded agency responsibilities and designated the CSFS as the state entity to “provide for the protection of forest resources of the state from fire, insects and disease” and to educate private forest landowners in management techniques.

Insect and disease concerns dominated the attention of the CSFS during the 1970s and led to significant increases in personnel and funding. As the CSFS entered the 1990s, legislative activity at the state and national levels resulted in significant program changes. The Colorado General Assembly passed a tax relief measure

for forest landowners actively managing their property. Federal entities increased emphasis on federal programs such as Forest Stewardship, Forest Legacy, and Urban and Community Forestry, resulting in an influx of additional funds for state forestry agencies. By the late 1990s, insect and disease concerns took the forefront again as the CSFS managed unprecedented levels of tree mortality from bark beetle epidemics that continue to impact Colorado's forests.

A dramatic 2000 wildfire season propelled the CSFS into a level of activity previously unknown to the agency. With the development of a National Fire Plan, the CSFS began focusing more attention on the wildland-urban interface. In 2012, the Colorado General Assembly transferred the state's wildfire command and control duties from the CSFS to the state's Department of Public Safety, focusing CSFS efforts on forest management and forestry outreach objectives, such as wildfire mitigation and forest health. In 2018, an internal reorganization honed the agency's ability to meet those objectives through its core services, as outlined in its 2016-2020 strategic plan and continued in this strategic plan.

As the CSFS has adapted its focus and approach throughout the decades in response to emerging forestry issues, the staff remains committed to providing timely, relevant forestry information, education and services to Colorado residents, in order to achieve resilient forests and communities.

For a complete history of the CSFS, go to [csfs.colostate.edu/agency-profile/](https://csfs.colostate.edu/agency-profile/).



Photo: Kelsey Lesniak, CSFS



Photo: Mercedes Siegle-Gaither, CSFS

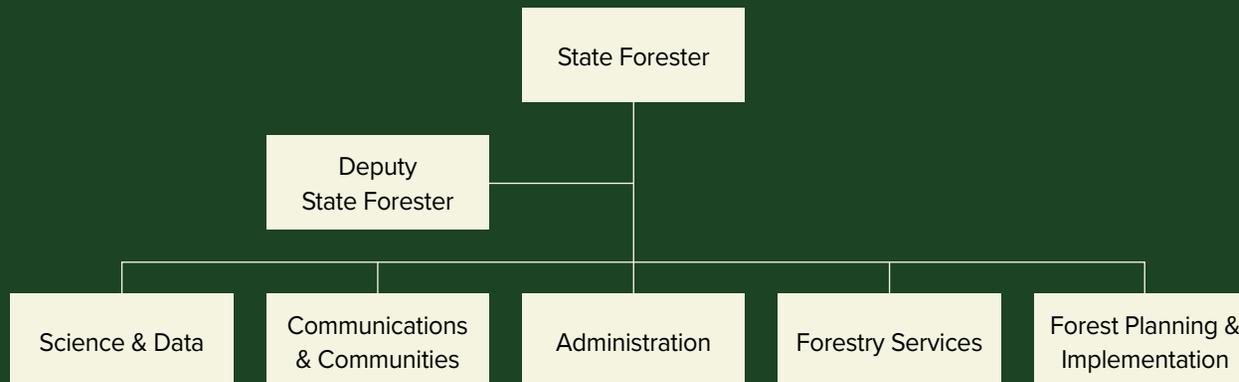
## How This Document Should Be Used

*This strategic plan outlines the vision, mission and strategic goals of the Colorado State Forest Service through 2025. It is derived from the CSFS and key partners, and supports the agency moving cohesively toward the same vision and strategic goals.*

*This plan is a guiding document that provides clear direction at a high level – a plan that is easy to understand and can be referenced regularly by staff and partners. This strategic plan should be used in conjunction with other CSFS planning processes that focus on a tactical level to ensure actions are aligned with the agency’s vision and have a positive impact on achieving the strategic goals that support the agency’s mission.*

*We expect this document to grow and change with the CSFS as goals are achieved and/or need to be modified, and as the environment within which we are working continues to change.*

## Colorado State Forest Service Organizational Structure



In 2018, an internal reorganization at the CSFS created five divisions within the agency, each led by an associate director. The Leadership Team consists of the state forester, deputy state forester and five associate directors.



Photo: Morgan Elliott



Photo: Joy Jackson



Photo: Jamie Nogle, National Wild Turkey Federation

## How We Serve the Residents of Colorado

The Colorado State Forest Service is a service and outreach agency of the Warner College of Natural Resources at Colorado State University and provides staffing for the Division of Forestry in the Colorado Department of Natural Resources. As Colorado's lead state agency for forestry, the CSFS provides a wide range of forestry services through focused programs that deliver measurable, impactful results, using a non-regulatory approach, strategic partnerships and personalized service. With field offices across the state, the CSFS works with residents and partners to improve the health of Colorado's forests, offering:

- Leadership, resources and guidance in forest management
- Wildfire risk reduction and community wildfire protection planning
- Adaptive forest management that addresses climate change
- Wood utilization and marketing support
- Outreach and education to youth and adults
- Insect and disease detection, surveys and response
- Forest monitoring, inventory and data analysis
- Seedling trees and other plants for conservation projects
- Urban and community forestry assistance

## 2020 Colorado Forest Action Plan

In November 2020, the Colorado State Forest Service released an update to the state's forest action plan. That plan provides an in-depth analysis of the trends affecting Colorado's forests and guidance for improving forest health. It offers goals, strategies and approaches related to:



Forest Conditions



Forest Wildlife



Living With Wildfire



Urban and Community Forestry



Watershed Protection



Forest Products

Both the CSFS strategic plan and forest action plan are reviewed, in conjunction, every five years, with a comprehensive update to the forest action plan every 10 years. Together these two documents provide critical guidance to the CSFS for achieving its mission and fulfilling its vision.

## CSFS Operational Environment

The Colorado State Forest Service operates within statutory requirements and constraints from various state and federal funding sources. CSFS annual work plans will be guided by this strategic plan, which itself was informed by the development of the *2020 Colorado Forest Action Plan*. As an agile agency, the CSFS has the ability to plan and respond effectively to changing conditions in natural and sociopolitical environments. The CSFS constantly strives to gain efficiencies through new forest management approaches and opportunities, and diverse, stable and new funding sources.

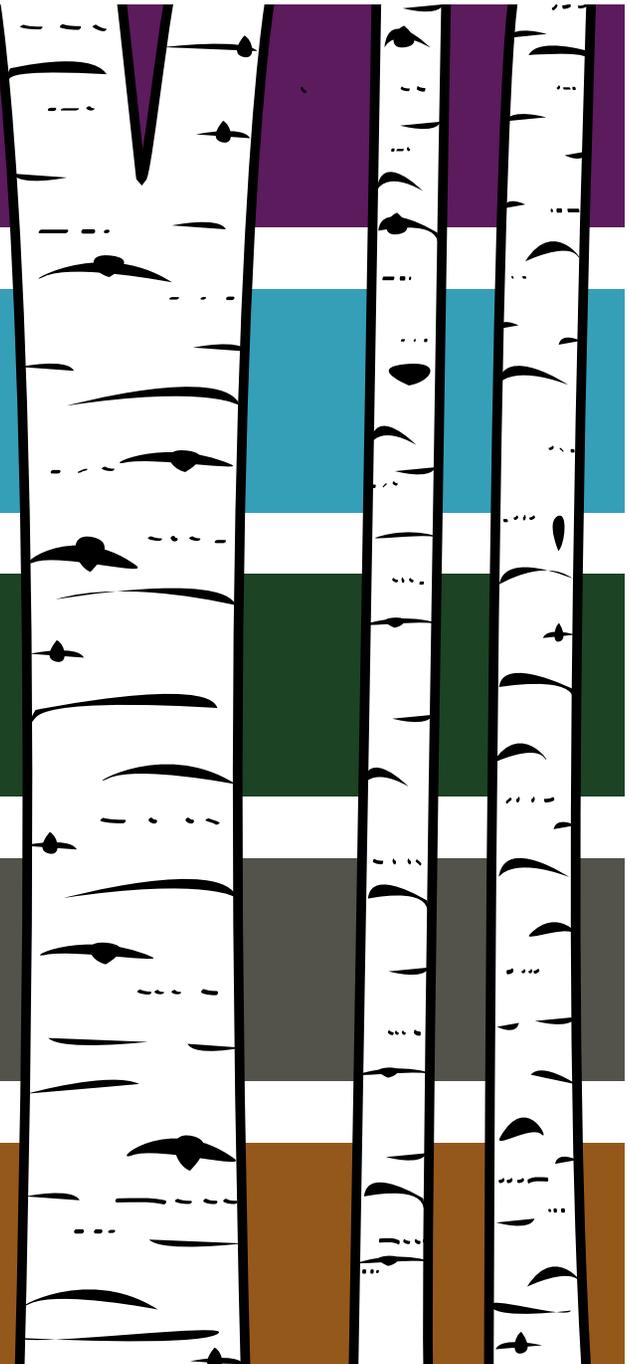
**GOAL 1: Forestry Leadership and Expertise**

**GOAL 2: Proactive Forest Stewardship**

**GOAL 3: Strategic Partnerships  
and Collaboration**

**GOAL 4: Visibility**

**GOAL 5: Organizational Excellence**



## GOAL 1: **Forestry Leadership and Expertise**

The Colorado State Forest Service is the state's forestry agency and primary resource for professional forestry services. This includes outreach, education, technical assistance and applied science for residents, as well as state, community and private forest landowners and managers in Colorado. The agency's services and outreach efforts are enhanced by its synergy with the Warner College of Natural Resources at Colorado State University.

### STRATEGIES:

- Share our excellence in forestry as Colorado's go-to agency for applying research and best management practices on the ground
- Maintain and enhance forestry and wildfire risk reduction expertise through professional development, field experience and application of current research
- Collaborate proactively with partners on research
- Serve as the primary source of data and information for forestry planning and implementation in Colorado
- Inform state and local leaders on the health and management of Colorado's forests



Photo: Kamie Long, CSFS



Photo: Joy Jackson



Photo: Bill Wolf, CSFS



Photo: Amy Bulger, CSFS



Photo: Colorado State Forest Service

## GOAL 2: Proactive Forest Stewardship

Colorado has approximately 24 million acres of forestland, ranging from high-elevation alpine forests to low-elevation piñon pine and riparian forests on the plains. Equally important are the urban and community forests that offer essential benefits and enhanced quality of life. We strive to improve all of these environments, mitigate wildfire risk to communities in the wildland-urban interface and help protect watersheds in priority areas. We accomplish this by increasing public awareness and implementing on-the-ground projects that conserve, protect and enhance the state's diverse forests.

### STRATEGIES:

- Foster resilient, healthy, functioning forests in mountain, riparian and urban landscapes
- Provide opportunities to help Coloradans understand the benefits healthy forests provide
- Promote a strong network within the forest products industry that supports cost-effective land management needs
- Deliver outreach and focused programs with measurable, effective results
- Engage collaboratives, communities and landowners in taking technically sound, scientifically based action to improve long-term forest health and resilience
- Utilize the *2020 Colorado Forest Action Plan* to evaluate priority forested landscapes and promote strategic planning
- Monitor forest health and treatments on a cyclical basis to guide adaptive management



Photo: Colorado State University Photography

## GOAL 3: Strategic Partnerships and Collaboration

Colorado's forests cover a complex pattern of private, federal, state, municipal, tribal and other lands. But forests transcend property lines, as do wildfires and forest insects and diseases. As a fundamental cornerstone of success, the Colorado State Forest Service works closely with partners and diverse landowners to achieve common objectives, with the CSFS leading and supporting an array of collaborative groups in Colorado.

### STRATEGIES:

- Identify and enhance mutually beneficial, strategic partnerships that further the Colorado State Forest Service's mission
- Collaborate with partners, landowners and stakeholders to achieve common goals and utilize and leverage resources
- Promote shared stewardship through improved communication and coordination with partners and stakeholders across property boundaries in Colorado and neighboring states



Photo: Sam Liebl, Gunnison Conservation District



Photo: Colorado State Forest Service



Photo: Maria Thomas, CSFS



Photo: Ryan Lockwood, CSFS



Photo: CSU Photography



Photo: Adam Moore, CSFS



Photo: Joy Jackson



Photo: Joe Lavorini, National Forest Foundation

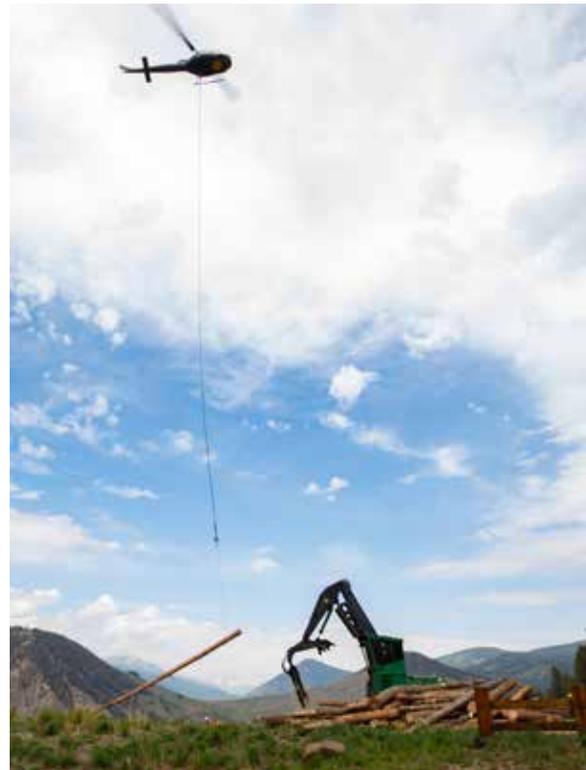


Photo: Kellon Spencer, kellonspencerphotography.com

## GOAL 4: **Visibility**

Residents, communities and stakeholders must know about the Colorado State Forest Service and its contributions to managing Colorado's forests. We constantly seek to increase recognition and visibility of the agency and the broad array of services we provide to the people of Colorado, including historically underserved groups. By using targeted approaches, we can create a better understanding of each resident's relationship with Colorado's forests and the benefits of forest management in the mountains, on the plains and in urban and community settings.

### STRATEGIES:

- Increase visibility and recognition of the Colorado State Forest Service and its services to foster an informed, supportive, diverse constituency and promote healthy forests
- Advance people's understanding of their relationship with Colorado's forests and the benefits of sound forest management
- Provide forestry leadership at all levels as we represent the agency
- Strive to engage and serve all Coloradans

## GOAL 5: **Organizational Excellence**

A well-respected, enduring and responsive organization is necessary to provide the best resources, direction and services to address the needs of Colorado's residents and forest resources. We promote a motivated, productive and engaged workforce by achieving a positive work environment and culture. We have strong leadership across the agency that supports employees, values innovation and quality, and develops a unified, effective and efficient organization.

### STRATEGIES:

- Create a supportive, cohesive and welcoming work environment where innovative employees work together, think creatively and are challenged, empowered, recognized and rewarded
- Offer competitive salaries and promote retention, longevity and professional development
- Require engaged, transparent leadership that provides a clear direction, advocates for the agency and seeks stable, diverse, sustainable funding sources
- Cultivate a diverse workforce that allows the CSFS to better serve all Coloradans
- Develop more consistent and efficient internal communications
- Foster an equitable and inclusive culture, based on CSU's Principles of Community, where all employees feel respected and valued



Photo: Kellon Spencer, kellonspencerphotography.com



Photo: Danielle Ardrey, CSFS



Photo: Denver Water

## Acknowledgments

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Finally, thank you to all of the foresters, natural resource professionals, administrative staff and others at the CSFS who serve the residents of Colorado. Your work in all corners of our state improves forest health and connects our agency to local communities and forests. Through your important work, we will achieve the goals in this strategic plan and foster healthy, resilient forests in Colorado.

Cover photos: Kamie Long, CSFS



Photo: Amy Bulger, CSFS



Photo: Mike Hughes, CSFS



Photo: Luke Cherney, CSFS



Colorado State University  
5060 Campus Delivery  
Fort Collins, CO 80523-5060  
(970) 491-6303  
[csfs.colostate.edu](http://csfs.colostate.edu)



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