



# Upper Sevier River Community Watershed Project

The **Upper Sevier River Community Watershed Project** is a collaborative partnership addressing restoration needs, management challenges, and research opportunities for rangelands, forestlands, and aquatic ecosystems in the Upper Sevier River Watershed. The project is composed of partners who have knowledge and expertise in managing watershed resources. Partners to date include:

**USDA Forest Service Dixie National Forest**  
**Utah Association of Conservation Districts**  
**Bureau of Land Management**  
**National Park Service**  
**Department of Environmental Quality**  
**Utah Division of Wildlife Resources**  
**Natural Resource Conservation Service**  
**Color Country Resource Conservation & Development**  
**Farm Service Agency**

**Utah State University Extension**  
**USDA Forest Service Rocky Mtn Research Station**  
**Jack H. Berryman Institute**  
**Paiute Tribe of Utah**  
**State of Utah Div of Forestry, Fire and State Lands**  
**Panguitch City**  
**Garfield County, Iron County, Kane County**  
**Southern Utah University**  
**Upper Sevier Soil Conservation District**

Located in rural southwestern Utah, the 1.2 million acre Upper Sevier Watershed has provided many goods and services to people for a long time. As use increased over the decades since settlement, the health of the watershed has declined. Streamside vegetation has diminished, streambanks have eroded, and water quality impaired. Fish and wildlife habitat has also degraded.

Decades of fire suppression, although well intentioned, have actually damaged the health of the watershed: forest types that depend on fire for renewal are outside their historic range of condition. Fire suppression has also resulted in high volumes of fuel (dense forests, brush, heavy accumulations of dead wood on the forest floor), creating a wildfire risk to homes and other structures bordering wildlands.

## ISSUES

The natural resources within the Upper Sevier River Watershed are vital to the local communities, both economically and for maintaining rural lifestyles of ranching and farming. If these values are to be sustained into the future, measures must be taken now to begin improving resources within the watershed. Specific issues we will address include:

- **Water Quality:** How will we ensure water quality and quantity for local ranchers, farmers, and communities, while providing for the needs of recreationists, fish, and wildlife?
- **Riparian and Upland Vegetation:** How will we maintain or restore streamside and upland vegetation communities that are resilient and sustainable?
- **Fire Safety:** How will we continue to protect private property while using fire to improve forest and rangeland health?
- **Access:** How will we continue to provide access while ensuring that roads and trails do not degrade the environment?

## MISSION

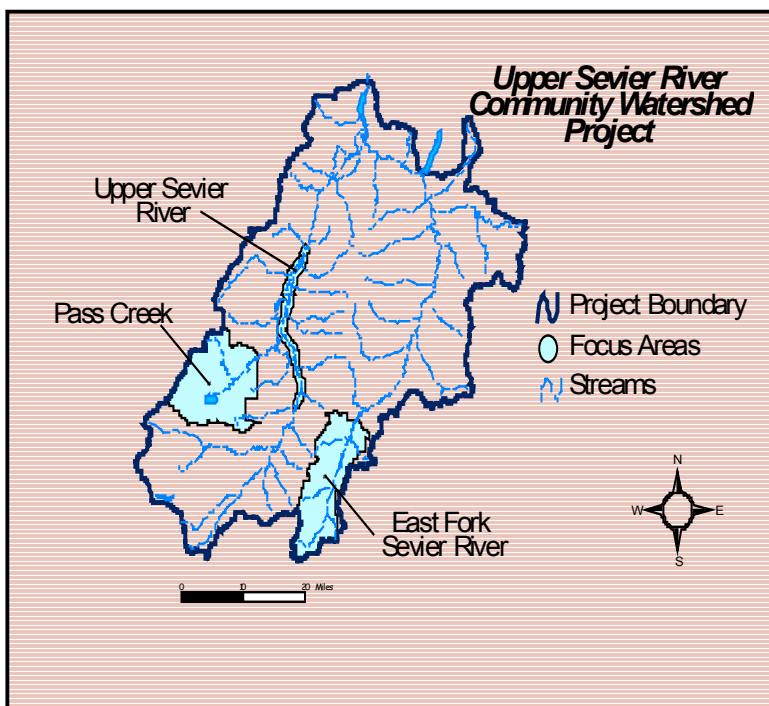
- **Restoration and maintenance of watershed ecosystems**
- **Cooperation, coordination, and collaboration**
- **Research, monitoring, and adaptive management**
- **Demonstrating restoration techniques**

## ADDRESSING THE ISSUES

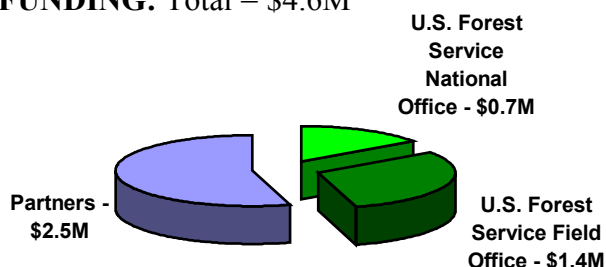
Because the Upper Sevier Watershed is so large, sub-watersheds have been identified in which restoration efforts will be concentrated. These areas were identified through collaboration among the partners, and are termed “focus areas.” By focusing our efforts, we will achieve significant and measurable success in areas that are the highest priority for restoration work.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

- ✓ Improved nine miles of riparian habitat; 750 acres of sage grouse habitat; stabilized two miles of a large gully system; initiated new grazing practices to improve riparian conditions with three private landowners; treated 2,000 acres with prescribed fire to reduce fire risk adjacent to private inholdings.
- ✓ Sponsored workshops dealing with feedlot operations, riparian ecosystems, and livestock management for ranchers and farmers within the watershed.
- ✓ Awarded a contract to develop a community owned, interactive website to better involve the public and partners in watershed restoration, monitoring, and information sharing.



## FUNDING: Total = \$4.6M



## PROJECTED OUTCOMES

Improved water quality, reduced water treatment costs.

Better representation of younger aspen across the landscape, healthier riparian ecosystems, increased numbers of fish and wildlife, improved forage conditions for livestock.

Improved quality of life – sustainable lifestyles, economic stability, increased citizen participation and development of a shared ownership in the management of resources within the watershed.

## WHAT'S NEXT...

- Complete a Watershed Assessment to create a database for future work
- Increase public involvement and project awareness through website, open houses, and hiring a partnership coordinator
- Increase involvement with Rocky Mountain Research Station and universities to assist with monitoring
- Continued implementation of projects to improve water quality, riparian/upland vegetation, and fish/wildlife habitats

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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