



Ecosystem Workforce Program

## Post-fire recovery in Western Oregon: State and local response and recovery support for non-industrial private forestland owners

FACT SHEET 33 • January 2025

This document summarizes results of a case study of three 2020 Labor Day Fire footprints in Western Oregon. It explores the question “What organizations and networks filled response and recovery needs of communities following the historically unrepresented extreme wildfires of 2020?” This fact sheet is informed by document review, participation in recovery-related meetings, and interviews with over 56 individuals representing organizations operating in the 2020 wildfire footprints.

### Introduction

The 2020 Labor Day Fires in Oregon’s Western Cascades affected an area where severe wildfires have been rare within recorded history. These events created long-lasting impacts for communities within these fire footprints. It also stressed response and recovery resources in areas where such support has historically been viewed as unnecessary. Four years later, recovery networks were still in need of funding and other forms of support that could help survivors still in transitional housing as well as small family forest landowners who continue to face financial, ecological, and social barriers to post-fire land management. Here we focus on three areas recovering from the Labor Day Fires: the McKenzie River Valley (Holiday Farm Fire), Umpqua Valley (Archie Creek Fire), and North Santiam Canyon (Beachie Creek and Lionshead Fires). Prior to the Labor Day Fires, many communities in Oregon’s Western Cascades lacked organized structure and a clear delineation of responsibilities related to wildfire recovery<sup>1</sup>. Thus, organizations not traditionally involved in wildfire recovery had to step in to fill needed recovery roles, and in other cases, new networks and organizations were formed.

Roughly 12 percent of the forestlands that burned in western Oregon during the Labor Day Fires are non-industrial private forestlands (NIPF). Survivors who lost their NIPF faced unique recovery challenges, ranging from erosion and hazardous tree concerns immediately after the fire to replanting year after year, often with low success rates. This report outlines the various roles organizations played in the case study footprints to support NIPF landowners in recovering their lands post-fire. For a detailed report on NIPF landowners’ recovery challenges, as well as recommendations for better supporting this population in future fires, refer to our forthcoming manuscript<sup>1</sup>.

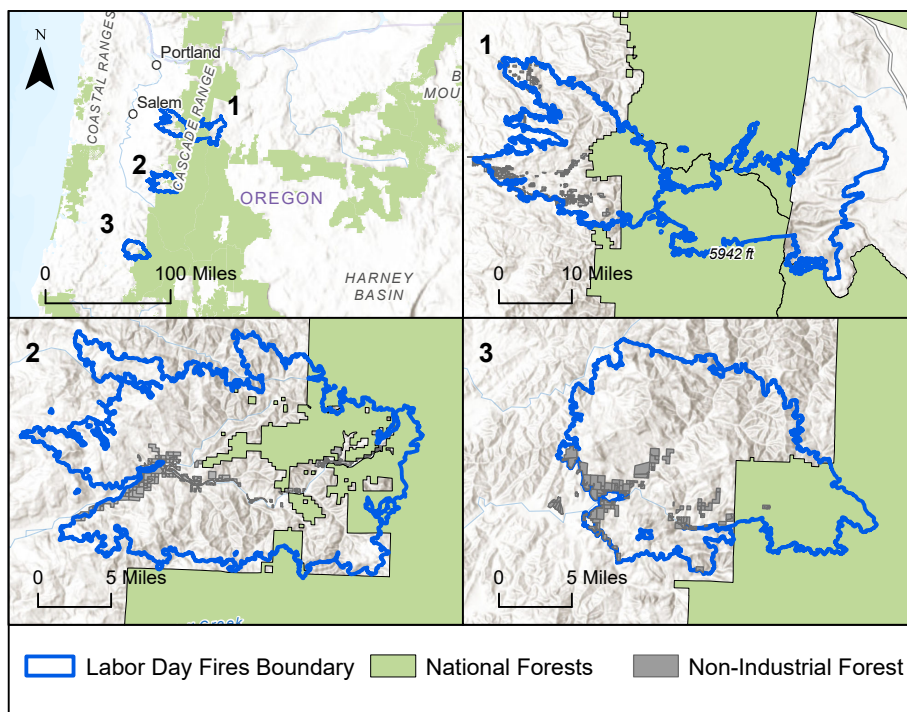


Figure 1. Overview of three case study footprints. Panel 1: Beachie Creek and Lionshead Fires; Panel 2: Holiday Farm Fire; Panel 3: Archie Creek Fire.

1. Serio & Huber-Stearns, forthcoming.

## Statewide support networks

Federal and state agencies as well as large to mid-size non-profits provide statewide support for non-industrial private forestland (NIPF) owners whose forestlands were affected by the Labor Day Fires. Several public and nonprofit organizations provided financial support in the form of grants that could be used for land management and recovery activities, which were either awarded directly to the landowner or to local organizations, such as watershed councils. Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) awarded grants to support private landowners conducting fuels reduction work and to nurseries involved in seedling production for reforestation within fire footprints. The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) provided financial support to organizations including watershed councils, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Tribes, and nonprofits in the Labor Day fire footprints, who then worked with landowners on upland and riparian restoration and replanting. Three USDA agencies—the Farm Service Agency (FSA), the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), and the Forest Service—provided federal financial support to recovering NIPF owners. The [FSA's Emergency Forest Restoration Program \(EFRP\)](#) is a cost-share, reimbursement-based program that funds activities such as post-fire site assessments, site preparation, fencing, and replanting. The program was widely used in the Labor Day Fire footprints, and involves coordination with NRCS and ODF, who provided foresters to conduct an initial site assessment. Three NRCS programs—the [Regional Conservation Partnership Program \(RCPP\)](#), the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\)](#), and the [Emergency Watershed Protection \(EWP\) Program](#)—provided financial assistance to NIPF owners in the Labor Day Fire footprints. The Forest Service provided Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) funding to Sustainable Northwest, which used the funding to support other nonprofits with seedling acquisition and landowner outreach. Sustainable Northwest is the lead partner implementing the NRCS-funded RCPP, which was unique in that it comprehensively provided landowners with technical assistance, tree seedling sourcing, project aggregation and funding for implementation of post-fire restoration and reforestation activities. Those activities included hazardous tree removal, brush management, weed control, and tree establishment. The EQIP program provided financial support to farmers and forest landowners for natural resource issues, and many NIPF landowners whose forests were impacted by the Labor Day Fires utilized this funding, sometimes in conjunction with the EFRP.

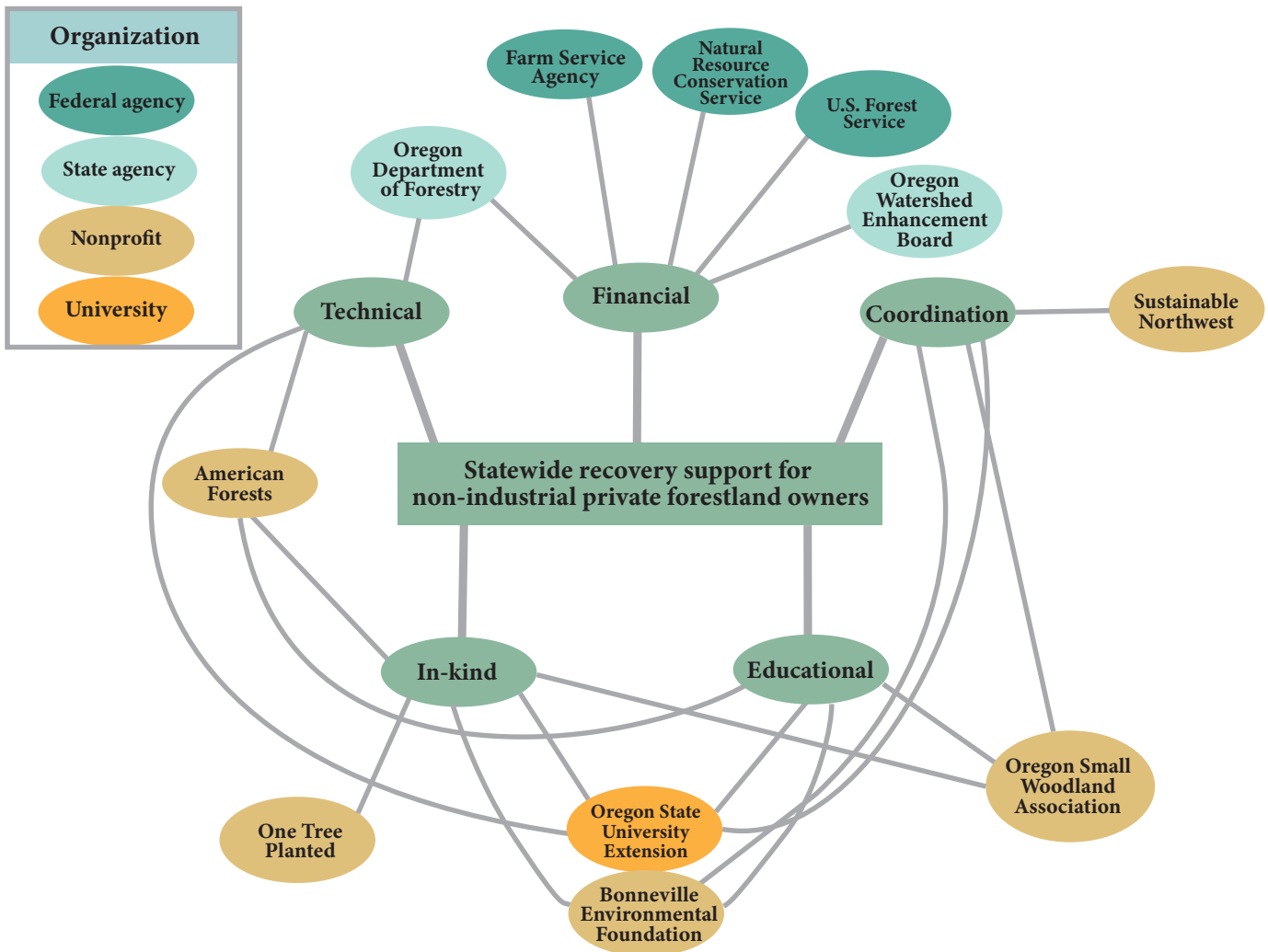


Figure 2. Statewide recovery support network for non-industrial private forestland owners across all case study footprints.

Nonprofits across the state provided critical in-kind support, as well as coordination, outreach, and educational support. American Forests and Bonneville Environmental Foundation (BEF), along with ODF, were instrumental in addressing the seedling shortage-- providing seedlings and native plants to organizations working with private landowners in the fire footprints. BEF provided coordination support through Collaborative Grow, CDS funding, and the Oregon Fire Resilience Network, and education through the [Treeline Newsletter](#). Sustainable Northwest, in addition to facilitating the NRCS-funded RCPP, formed the Western Oregon Cascades Recovery Effort (WOCRE) following the 2020 Labor Day fires, in consultation with recovery groups in the fire footprints. This coordination group has met routinely to align recovery strategies and funding proposals and share resources and best practices across public agencies, non-profits, conservation districts, and academic institutions. The Oregon Small Woodland Association, which has local chapters in most counties, brings NIPF landowners together and shares resources available to them. The Association also collaborated with ODF, Oregon State University (OSU) Extension services, and the USDA Forest Service to acquire and deliver seedlings to NIPF owners recovering from the fires. OSU Extension has played a critical role throughout the recovery process in educating NIPF landowners on post-fire management, providing technical support, and connecting landowners to other support opportunities.

### Holiday Farm Fire (McKenzie River Valley)

Seven percent of the forested acres burned in the Holiday Farm Fire were owned by NIPF landowners or tribes<sup>2</sup>. These NIPF landowners received financial, education, and technical support from many of the statewide organizations. Additionally, local groups in the McKenzie River Valley stepped in to fill gaps in the recovery system and connect landowners to available funding. [Pure Water Partners \(PWP\)](#), a program that began in 2014 to assist private landowners with riparian restoration, played a leading role in supporting NIPF landowner recovery in the Holiday Farm Fire footprint. Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB), McKenzie River Trust, Upper Willamette Soil and Water Conservation District, McKenzie Watershed Council, along with several other organizations coordinated the PWP Program. Following the fire, PWP provided recovery assistance to landowners, beginning with a property assessment to determine what land management activities were needed. PWP then worked with landowners to secure funding for the identified activities, which included erosion control, noxious weed removal, riparian replanting, fuels reduction, and hazardous tree removal. In response to the fire, PWP expanded their eligibility criteria to include upland landowners, not only landowners with riparian zones, when funding allowed. Additionally, the local nonprofit, McKenzie Valley Long Term Recovery Group (LTRG), was formed in 2021 to support housing and individual family recovery. Those clients were often referred to PWP programs and, on occasion, NIPF landowners were among those who worked with LTRG staff. As of fall 2024, the McKenzie Valley LTRG was expanding their scope of work to include other stages of disaster resilience, such as preparedness and response, and continued to support the community through other wildfires and disasters, including the 2024 ice storms.

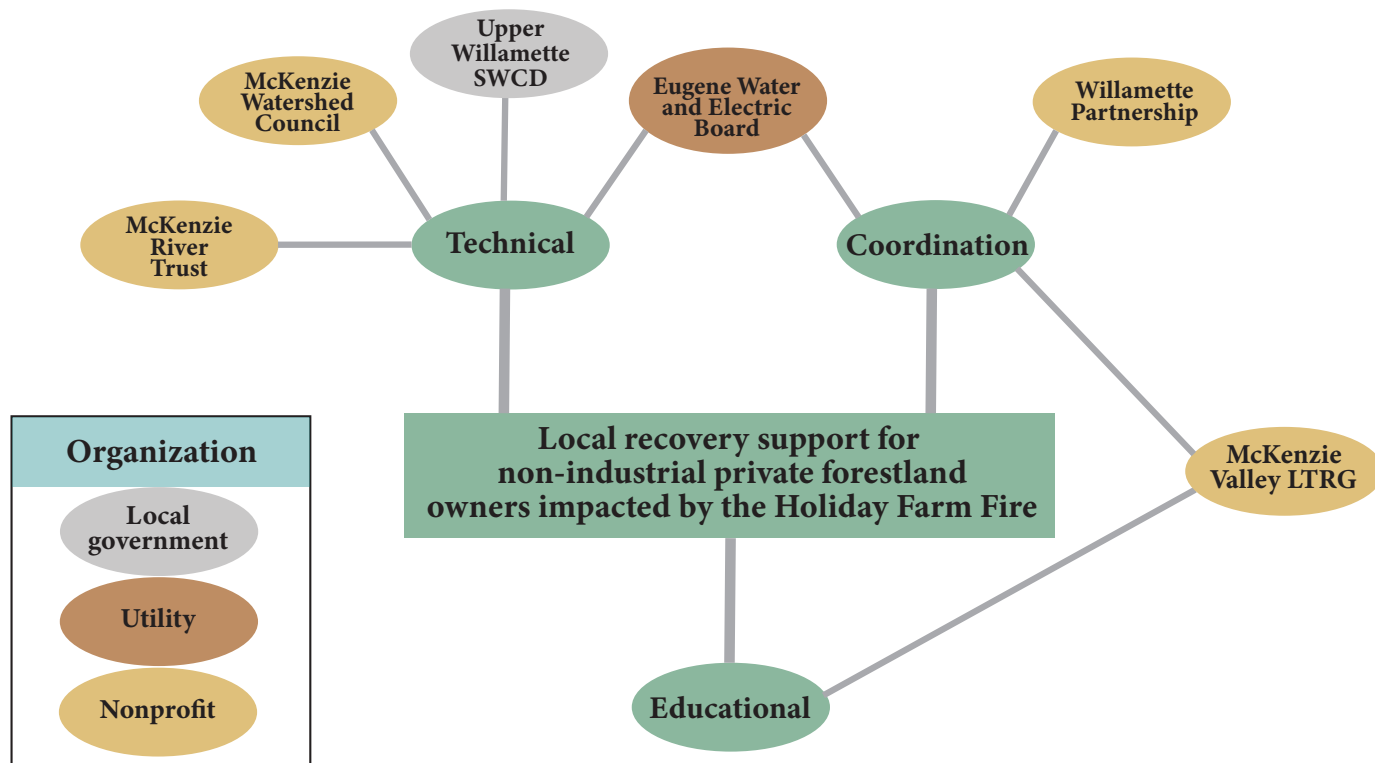


Figure 3. Recovery support network for non-industrial private forestland owners impacted by the Holiday Farm Fire.

2. <https://site.oregonforests.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/HolidayFarm-Summary-Sheet.pdf>

## Archie Creek Fire (Umpqua Valley)

Thirteen percent of the forested acres burned in the Archie Creek fire were owned by NIPF landowners or tribes<sup>3</sup>. NIPF landowners utilized many of the statewide support opportunities, including the FSA's EFRP and OSU Extension's technical and educational forestry support. Glide Revitalization, a nonprofit that served as the fiscal sponsor for the Archie Creek Long-Term Recovery Group, collaborated with OSU Extension to form the Archie Creek Fire Reforestation & Recovery Partnership. This partnership conducted outreach to private landowners in the fire footprint, connecting them with relevant funding opportunities, as well as technical and educational support. Glide Revitalization was initially formed in 2014, with a focus on building long-term economic resilience for the community of Glide. The group pivoted their scope of work to meet the community's needs following the Archie Creek fire, and they continued to engage in wildfire resilience work, including educating the community on preparedness, response, and fire mitigation activities. Partnership of the Umpqua Rivers, another local nonprofit, outreached to landowners with riparian zones impacted by the fire. They conducted property assessments and utilized federal and state funding for activities such as riparian replanting and bank stabilization. Statewide and national nonprofits, including Sustainable Northwest, One Tree Planted, Arbor Day Foundation, and American Forests, provided funding for seedlings that the Archie Creek Fire Reforestation & Recovery Partnership allocated to private lands reforestation.

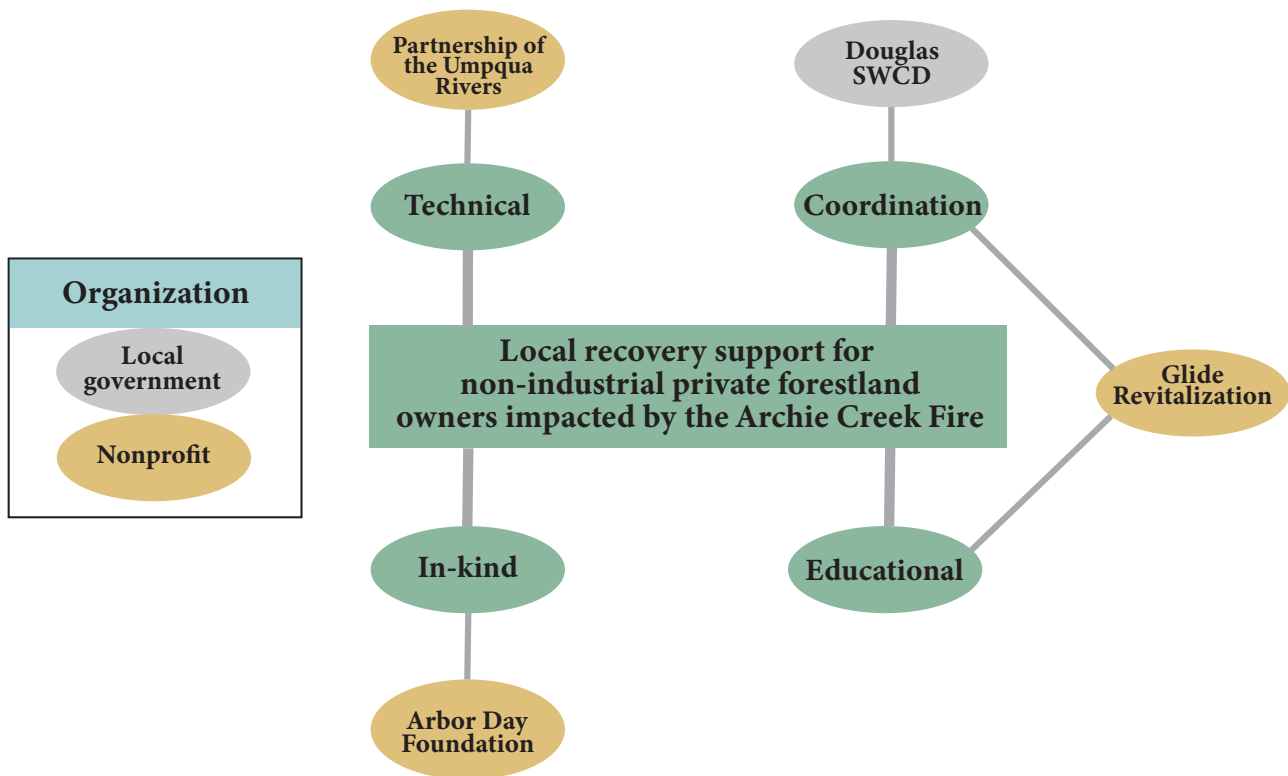


Figure 4. Recovery support network for non-industrial private forestland owners impacted by the Archie Creek Fire.

## Lionshead and Beachie Creek Fires (Santiam Canyon)

The Beachie Creek and Lionshead Fire footprints, both within Santiam Canyon, also contained large percentages of nonindustrial forestlands-- nine percent of Beachie Creek and 46 percent of the Lionsheads footprints<sup>4,5</sup>. Non-industrial private forestland owners in these footprints utilized the aforementioned resources available, including NRCS's EQIP and RCPP. One Tree Planted additionally donated seedlings to these footprints. ODF had a grant specific to the Santiam Canyon, which focused on conducting fuels reduction work with private landowners in the fire footprint. Local organizations that played a role in NIPF recovery include Marion Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), Santiam Long Term Recovery Group (LTRG), North Santiam Watershed Council, Marion County, and the City of Salem. Marion SWCD's primary assistance program available to NIPF who lost their forestlands in the fires was the Conservation Assistance Grant (CAG), which provides \$7,500 per applicant per fiscal year and could be used for recovery activities such as weed removal, bank stabilization, invasive species and brush removal, woody residue treatment, thinning, and replanting. Marion SWCD was also serving as the local technical assistance provider for the NRCS-funded RCPP in that county. The Santiam LTRG, which formed after the fires to support the community's recovery needs, assisted NIPF landowners with identifying financial and technical support programs for which they were eligible. Volunteers played a large role in the Santiam Canyon LTRG and assist private landowners with activities such as hazardous tree removal and replanting. The group continued to engage in wildfire recovery and resilience work, including facilitating a defensible space grant for private landowners in the Santiam Canyon. Marion County donated seedling to private landowners- primarily Douglas fir. Additionally, the City of Salem provided funding to the North Santiam Watershed Council (NSWC), and Bonneville Environmental Foundation provided funding and in-kind seedlings to NSWC and Santiam LTRG, which then was used to support NIPF recovery.

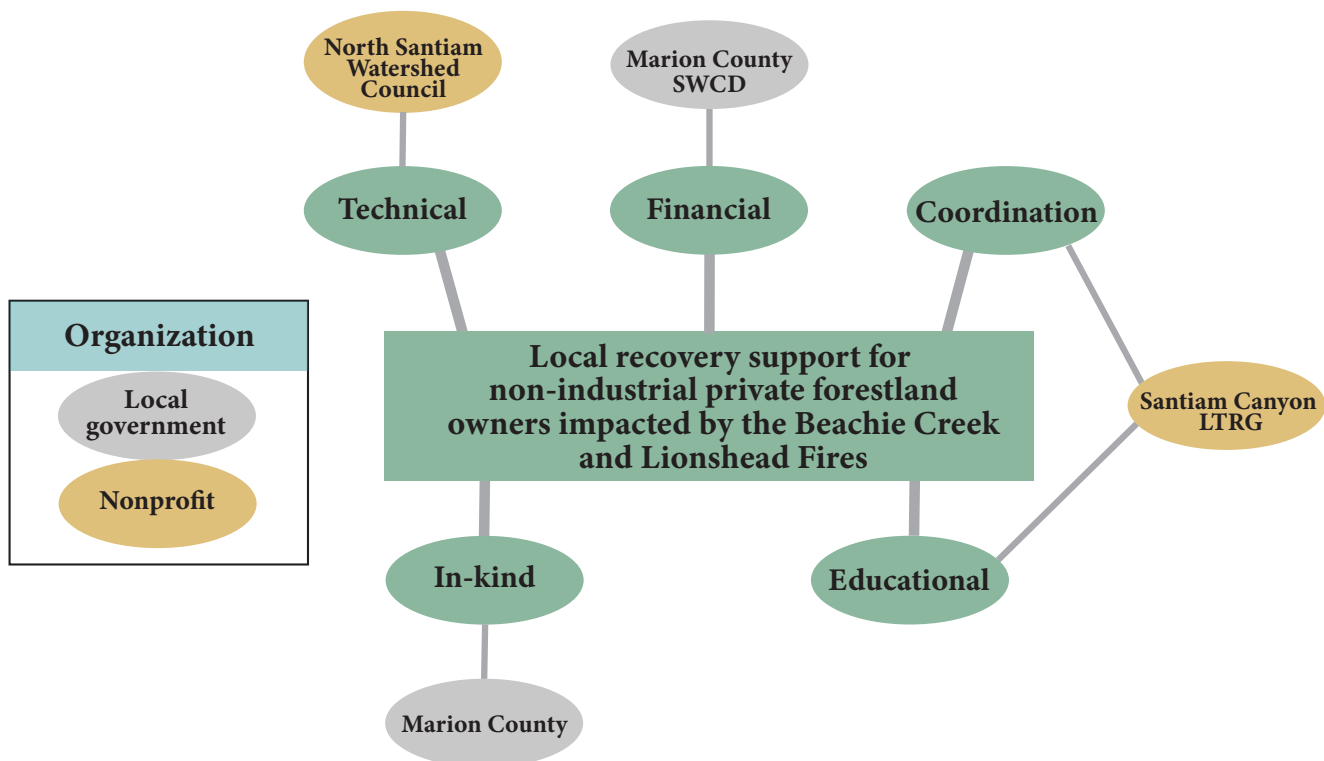


Figure 5. Recovery support network for non-industrial private forestland owners impacted by the Lionshead and Beachie Creek Fires.

### Summary:

Non-industrial private forestland (NIPF) owners impacted by wildfire experienced unique post-fire land management challenges, particularly in regions that did not historically have established recovery systems in place. In the case of the Labor Day Fires, federal and state agencies played key roles in providing financial support to NIPF owners, while a handful of boundary-spanning nonprofits provided coordination and educational support across fire footprints. Local organizations led outreach, education, coordination, and execution of support programs. Following the unprecedented scale of these fires in Western Oregon, many organizations pivoted or expanded their scope of work to meet their community's recovery needs. In the case studies presented here-- Santiam Canyon, McKenzie River Valley, and Umpqua Valley-- the local Long-Term Recovery Groups served as information hubs and key resources for NIPF owners, as well as the broader survivor community, navigating wildfire recovery.

4. [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://site.oregonforests.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Beachie-Summary-Sheet.pdf](https://site.oregonforests.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Beachie-Summary-Sheet.pdf)  
 5. [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://site.oregonforests.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Lionshead-Summary-Sheet.pdf](https://site.oregonforests.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Lionshead-Summary-Sheet.pdf)

## Supplemental Information

Organization	Type of organization	Type of support	Relevant activities & programs
<b>Statewide support</b>			
USDA Farm Service Agency	Federal agency	Financial	Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP)
USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service	Federal agency	Financial	Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), helps implement EFRP, Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program
Oregon Department of Forestry	State agency	Technical, Financial	Fuels reduction, dead tree removal, helps implement EFRP
Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board	State agency	Financial	2020 Post-Fire Recovery Grant Program - upland and riparian replanting; floodplain restoration
American Forests	Nonprofit	Educational, Technical, In-kind	Seedling supply, reforestation education
Oregon State University Extension Services	University	Educational, Technical, In-kind, Coordination	Property assessments, reforestation education, seedling supply, post-fire recovery education
Sustainable Northwest	Nonprofit	Coordination	Coordinating RCPP and the Western Oregon Cascades Recovery Effort (WOCRE)
Oregon Small Woodland Association	Nonprofit	Coordination, Education, In-kind	Connect landowners, share resources and opportunities, seedling supply
Bonneville Environmental Foundation	Nonprofit	Financial, Coordination, Educational	Collaborative Grow Program, Oregon Fire Resilience Network, Treeline newsletter
One Tree Planted	Nonprofit	In-kind	Seedling donations
<b>Holiday Farm Fire (McKenzie River Valley)</b>			
Upper Willamette Soil and Water Conservation District	Local government	Technical	Pure Water Partners
McKenzie Valley Long-Term Recovery Group	Nonprofit	Coordination, Education	Connect landowners to resources
McKenzie Watershed Council	Nonprofit	Technical	Pure Water Partners
McKenzie River Trust	Nonprofit	Technical	Pure Water Partners
Eugene Water & Electric Board	Utility	Coordination, Technical	Pure Water Partners
Willamette Partnership	Nonprofit	Coordination	Pure Water Partners
<b>Archie Creek Fire (Umpqua Valley)</b>			
Glide Revitalization	Nonprofit	Education, Coordination	Connect landowners to resources
Douglas Soil and Water Conservation District	Local government	Education	Connect landowners to resources
Partnership of the Umpqua Rivers	Nonprofit	Technical	Riparian restoration
Arbor Day Foundation	Nonprofit	In-kind	Seedling donations
<b>Lionshead and Beachie Creek Fires (Santiam Canyon)</b>			
Marion County Soil and Water Conservation District	Local government	Financial	Conservation Assistance Grant (requires match)
North Santiam Watershed Council	Nonprofit	Technical	Post-fire invasive plant control, property assessments
Santiam Long-Term Recovery Group	Nonprofit	Coordination, Education	Connect landowners to resources
Marion County	Local government	In-kind	Donated Douglas Fir seedlings

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