

Career Pathways: Fire, Forest, Fish & Facilities



Lead Organization: Trees Foundation

Key Collaborators: Mid Klamath Watershed Council, Mattole Restoration Council, Mattole Salmon Group, Mattole Valley Community Center, Native Health in Native Hands, Northern Mendocino – Ecosystem Recovery Alliance, Southern Humboldt Fire & Rescue, Tribal EcoRestoration Alliance, Tribal governments, workforce organizations, educational institutions, and other regional partners

More Information: bit.ly/Trees-Foundation

Sector: Working Lands and Blue Economy

Project Description

The Career Pathways: Fire, Forest, Fish & Facilities initiative, led by Trees Foundation and the Rural Resilience Partnership, builds local capacity to steward the forests, watersheds, and working lands of the Redwood Region. Designed to eliminate barriers to employment like long commutes and lost wages, the project provides paid, locally accessible training for high-demand natural resource jobs. It targets underserved Tribal citizens, youth, rural residents, and low-income households in Lake, Mendocino, and Humboldt Counties. Through standardized certifications and employer pipelines, it creates thriving-wage career paths while integrating Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) to strengthen wildfire resilience and community health.

Intended Outcomes

- Train 200+ participants via regional certifications in forestry, wildfire, and watershed restoration.
- Place 35 – 50 individuals into living-wage careers using strong regional employer hiring pipelines.
- Establish training hubs across Lake, Mendocino, and Humboldt for rural populations.
- Advance climate goals and mitigate wildfire risks by expanding cultural prescribed fires.

Progress Update: Challenges & Achievements to Date

Achievements include supporting 182 RT-130 firefighter certifications and certifying 478 emergency response partners to date, hosting cultural land stewardship workshops for over 100 Native participants, and establishing a three-month Early Career Internship program. Structurally, Southern Humboldt Fire & Rescue transitioned into a permanent Joint Powers Authority, drawing \$1 million into the local economy via emergency strike teams. Working alongside the Humboldt County Resource Conservation District, the partnership also helped secure a \$9.8 million USDA Community Wildfire Defense Grant supporting fuels reduction, prescribed fire, and community safety work.

Major challenges persist around recruiting younger generations to replace retiring volunteer firefighters in deeply rural areas and managing short grant timelines for complex, field-based workforce deployments.

Ways to Engage and Support the Project

- Visit our website: bit.ly/Trees-Foundation
- Reach out to Trees Foundation at: trees@treesfoundation.org
- Follow Trees on Facebook: bit.ly/Trees-Facebook