

OVERVIEW

ABOUT THE FOREST SERVICE

The USDA Forest Service has responsibility for the 191.6 million acres of national forests and grasslands within the National Forest System, which comprises the largest area managed by one agency in the United States. By providing technical and/or financial assistance to nonindustrial private forest landowners and to other Federal agencies and State and local governments, the agency also contributes to the sound management of over 500 million additional acres of forest land. Furthermore, the Forest Service conducts an internationally renowned forestry research program, providing the scientific basis for sustainable management of our Nation's forests and rangelands. Through international assistance and scientific exchange activities, the agency helps promote sustainable forest management throughout the world.

MISSION

The essence of the Forest Service mission is embodied in the statement "Caring for the Land and Serving People." We envision the Forest Service as an efficient, productive, multicultural, and multidisciplinary organization that is recognized for national and international leadership in natural resource conservation.

...maintain and enhance the quality of the environment to meet current and future human needs.

We follow our stewardship and service ethics and accomplish our mission through the development and practice of ecosystem management—the means by which the Forest Service is helping the Nation achieve the goal of sustainability. Simply stated, ecosystem management integrates ecological, economic, and social factors to maintain and enhance the quality of the environment to meet current and future human needs.

The Chief of the Forest Service reports to the Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Chief oversees five Deputy areas. Two Deputy areas (National Forest System and State and Private Forestry) administer programs that provide a broad array of benefits and services to the general public and other customers. These Deputy areas have primary responsibilities associated with the restoration and protection of forest and rangeland ecosystems, and for meeting people's needs and values within the limitations of maintaining ecosystem sustainability, health, and diversity. The Research Deputy area contributes to the protection and restoration of forests and rangelands, nationally and internationally, by providing scientific information and new technology. Research also contributes by taking a scientific approach to understanding and better serving people's needs and values. Two additional Deputy areas (Administration and Programs and Legislation) provide support services essential to accomplishing the agency's mission. The primary contribution of these Deputy areas is to ensure organizational effectiveness by creating and maintaining an atmosphere where people are respected, trusted, and valued and where expertise and professionalism are rewarded for achieving negotiated objectives. Additionally, Law Enforcement and Investigations reports directly to the Chief through its Director, as does the Public Affairs Office.

FOREST SERVICE STRATEGIC PLANNING AND THIS REPORT

The USDA Forest Service strategic planning process is conducted consistent with the provisions of the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (RPA) and the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA). Both acts require the development of a strategic plan with long-term goals and strategies for achieving them. The Forest Service was designated a pilot agency under GPRA for fiscal years 1994-97 and has developed strategic plans under RPA since 1976. A single strategic planning process that meets the requirements of both acts and the needs of the agency is being developed and implemented.

The RPA statute also requires a resource assessment, which forms a significant information base that is considered, along with public participation and other sources of information, in the development of the strategic plan. The RPA Assessment, completed every 10 years and updated every 5, reports on the status and projected trends of the Nation's natural resources on all forests and rangelands. The last RPA Assessment was completed in 1989 and updated in 1993; the next will be completed in 1999.

The RPA Program provides the Secretary of Agriculture's broad guidance for the agency in relation to one set of long-term goals over a 50-year timeframe, updated every 5 years. Implementation of GPRA focuses on strategic goals within a 5-year timeframe, tiered to the RPA long-term goals. Annual performance plans contain annual goals and performance indicators used to measure progress in achieving the GPRA goals. Accomplishments are monitored and reported each year in the "Report of the Forest Service," a document that meets RPA/GPRA requirements.

This report also incorporates some requirements of the Chief Financial Officer's (CFO) Act of 1990. The Forest Service is required by the CFO Act to develop financial statements reporting on the agency's financial position and results of operations during the fiscal year. The financial results and selected highlights of program accomplishments are reported in a separate annual CFO report. Figure 1 displays the agency's performance measures and accomplishments for FY 1995 and FY 1996.

THE DRAFT 1995 RPA PROGRAM

Public comments on the RPA draft program are formally requested every 5 years. These comments are analyzed and used to establish and revise the agency's strategic goals and objectives. The primary outcomes of Forest Service implementation of the strategic goals will be healthy ecosystems; vital communities; sustainable levels of products and services; and an effective, multidisciplinary, multicultural organization.

Managing for Sustainable Forest Resources

Ensuring sustainable forests is the ultimate goal of the agency's strategic plan. Managing for sustainable forest resources recognizes the linkage of the environment to the economic and social needs of human communities. The Forest Service is taking leadership in determining how the United States will meet the President's commitment to achieve the goal of sustainability by the year 2000.

*Ensuring sustainable
forest resources to meet
the needs of people*

The RPA Program in Context with Other Planning

The RPA Program provides broad, national-level guidance for Forest Service planning and program and policy development at all organizational levels. These other efforts will consider the goals and priorities expressed in the RPA Program, and develop planning and program direction and specific policies that are consistent with the strategic guidance and that contribute to achievement of the long-term goals. For example, such efforts include annual budgeting, forest land and resource management planning, research work planning, and policy development for various program areas (recreation, wildlife, range, cooperative forestry, research, etc.).

Next Steps in Finalizing the Draft Program

The Draft 1995 RPA Program is currently being revised for delivery to the 105th Congress as the Secretary's Recommended RPA Program, along with the President's Statement of Policy. The Recommended RPA Program will reflect key policy decisions made prior to its submission to the Secretary and delivery to Congress.

Content of the Draft Program

The Draft 1995 RPA Program strategic goals help achieve sustainable forest management.

The Draft 1995 RPA Program includes the agency's strategic goals, priority management actions to help achieve these goals, and projected effects and implications associated with the program. The program is focused on attaining sustainable forest management through the "Course to the Future," which includes these goals:

- **Restore and protect ecosystems**—This strategic goal has two areas of emphasis. The first emphasizes deteriorated ecosystems that are in critical need of restoration while the second emphasizes protecting all ecosystems now and into the future. The strategic objectives for these two areas of emphasis are identical.
- **Provide multiple benefits for people** within the limitations of maintaining ecosystem health and diversity. Forest and rangeland management activities focus on meeting people's needs for uses, values, products, and services.
- **Ensure organizational effectiveness** by creating and maintaining an atmosphere where people are respected, trusted, and valued and where expertise and professionalism are rewarded. The workforce will be multicultural and multidisciplinary. Forest Service employees will be empowered to carry out the agency's mission and be accountable for achieving negotiated objectives.

Measures of Performance Supporting the RPA Strategic Goals

The measures of performance included in the following table represent program accomplishment highlights for FY 1996. These measures document program accomplishments as well as progress towards achieving the RPA strategic goals in support of the agency's mission. Some program activities and indicators may be relevant to more than one RPA strategic goal. For instance, knowledge generated through research, inventories, and analysis to advance the "ensure organizational effectiveness" RPA strategic goal, provides the overall guidance for planning and on-the-ground natural resource management in pursuit of the other RPA strategic goals. In Figure 1, the indicators are organized by RPA strategic goal.

Figure 1.

FY 1996 MEASURES OF PERFORMANCE BY STRATEGIC GOAL

	<u>Accomplishments</u>	
	1995	1996
Restore and protect ecosystems		
Wildlife habitat restored/enhanced (acres)	108,435	104,683
Inland fish streams restored/enhanced (miles)	864	1,121
Anadromous fish streams restored/enhanced (miles)	531	631
Terrestrial threatened and endangered species habitat restored/enhanced (acres)	75,666	53,900
Watershed improvements (acres) 1/	35,500	66,314
Reforestation (plant/seed/site prep) (acres) 1/	387,000	357,512
Timber stand improvement (rel/thin/etc) (acres) 1/	273,300	258,764
Abandoned mine sites reclaimed (sites)	--	117
Pest suppression activities (million acres)	3.3	1.2
Federal/State rural tree planting (acres)	734,122	760,742
NFS lands treated for fuels management (acres)	541,351	616,163
Landowners enrolled in stewardship program (#)	18,300	15,303
Provide multiple benefits for people within the capabilities of ecosystems		
Road construction (miles) 2/	468	463
Road reconstruction (miles) 2/	2,400	2,853
Land purchased (acres)	87,332	56,333
Land exchange (acquired acres)	98,407	65,848
Land line location (miles)	1,837	1,424
Energy operations processed (operations) 3/	991	493
Bonded non-energy operations processed (operations) 3/	5,331	1,744
Timber volume offered (billion board feet)	4.0	4.0
Timber volume harvested (billion board feet)	3.9	3.7
Total harvest treatments (acres)	479,028	473,127
Wildlife structures completed (structures)	5,844	4,008
Head months of permitted livestock grazing (million head months)	8.6	9.2
Recreational use (million recreational visitor days)	345.1	341.2
Recreation trails available (excluding wilderness) (miles)	66,446	89,466
Ensure organizational effectiveness		
Urban communities provided assistance (communities)	7,258	8,079
Rural communities provided assistance (communities)	1,600	1,583
Research communication items (#) 4/	3,021	3,005
International forestry communication items (#) 4/	900	191
Employment/skills training provided (persons)	107,081	105,388
Job Corps students hosted (#)	8,747	9,060
Law enforcement incidents handled (incidents)	138,475	126,203
Coop. law enforcement agreements negotiated (agreements)	710	785

1/ Includes appropriated and Knutson-Vandenberg (K-V) funds.

2/ Includes appropriated, timber purchaser credit, and purchaser election funds.

3/ In 1996, the unit of measure changed from plans to operations. Accomplishments reported are comparable.

4/ Includes books, papers, reports, audiovisual materials, and others.

PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS AS GUIDED BY THE STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

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The goals in the agency's strategic plan provided the basis for developing program objectives and performance measures for FY 1996, including those addressed in the FY 1996 GPRA Performance Plan. Highlights of major issues, initiatives, and accomplishments are described below for each of the strategic goals.

Strategic Goal #1: Restore and Protect Ecosystems

Protecting, Maintaining, and Restoring Forest Health

Caring for the health of the Nation's forested ecosystems is the highest priority of the Forest Service. Although America's forests are generally in a healthy condition, areas of concern include ecosystems that are highly susceptible to drought, pest epidemics, and extensive wildfires, and where wildfire threatens communities. Overstocked forests are increasingly susceptible to deteriorating conditions.

Restoring and protecting forest land health through research and technical assistance

The agency addresses its goal to restore and protect forest health for present and future generations through technical assistance, monitoring, developing new scientific knowledge from research, and prevention and suppression activities for all forest lands, including the national forests, other Federal lands, tribal lands, and State and private lands.

Some of the actions the Forest Service took to address forest health concerns in FY 1996 were:

- Established the "Forest Health Reporting Framework for America's Forests" to facilitate timely reporting on forest health to State and Federal officials, and to the public, using the most current and sound information available.
- The Forest Health Monitoring Program expanded its network of permanent observation plots to include the State of Idaho. Forty percent of forested land in the contiguous United States is now monitored by the program. This program, conducted in cooperation with State forestry agencies, provides data on long-term trends in forest health for early detection and diagnosis of changes in condition. Results in FY 1996 showed that over 95 percent of tree crowns measured were in good or better condition. However, there are regions with unhealthy forests. Some of the greatest problems are due to the invasion of exotic pests and to the overly dense stocking of some forests resulting from past fire exclusion.
- Detection and evaluation surveys were completed on 661 million acres of forest land. Survey findings and technical advice on suppression needs and available alternatives were provided to managers of affected lands.
- Gypsy moth, southern pine beetle, dwarf mistletoes, and other insect and disease prevention and suppression activities were completed on 1.2 million acres of forest land.

- Technical assistance was provided to other countries to control pests, such as the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid and the Asian Gypsy Moth, that also threaten U.S. forests.
- Fuels reduction treatments (including prescribed burning to reduce concentrations of combustible materials like tree debris and understory growth, and mechanical treatments) were conducted on 599,482 acres of NFS and adjacent lands. An additional 17,681 acres were treated using contributed funding. A new communications strategy entitled "Fire 21" was established to improve the forest ecosystem through the reintroduction of fire and to make wildland firefighting safer and less costly.

Measuring Progress in Sustainable Forest Management

The Draft 1995 RPA Program represents a commitment to the sustainability of ecosystems by ensuring their health, biological diversity, and productivity. During the past 3 years, the Forest Service has been a key player in the "Montreal Process" Working Group on the Conservation and Management of Temperate and Boreal Forests. Along with a dozen other countries, the agency has agreed on a set of seven criteria that characterize sustainable forest management at a national level. These criteria can be measured by the use of 67 indicators that were identified in a collaborative process among all of the countries. The list of criteria and indicators was endorsed in the Santiago Declaration in February 1995. The "Montreal Process" has parallels in other parts of the world, including the "Taratutu Process" for the Neotropics and a "Dry Zone Africa Initiative."

Forest Service Research has taken the leadership role in determining the United States' capability to measure the sustainability indicators identified in the Santiago Agreement. In 1996, the Forest Service compiled the current state of knowledge of the criteria and indicators in "A Report to Facilitate Discussion of Indicators of Sustainable Forest Management." The Forest Service Forest Health Monitoring program is now using the seven sustainability criteria to frame its national assessments of forest health.

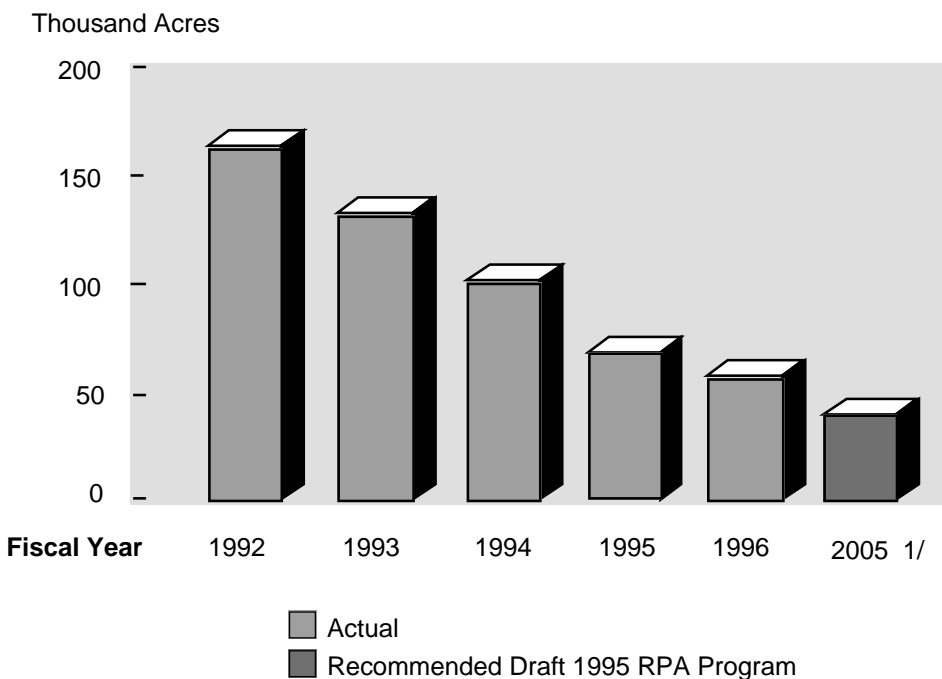
Vegetation Management To Maintain Healthy Forests and Provide Other Benefits

Ensuring the health and productivity of NFS lands

A total of 357,512 acres of NFS lands were reforested, primarily using genetically improved seedlings. Reforestation practices ensure that NFS lands remain productive to provide for healthy ecosystems and to meet stated management objectives. Timber Stand Improvement (TSI) treatments on NFS lands totaled 258,764 acres, compared to 273,300 acres in FY 1995. TSI activities include timber stand release, precommercial thinning, pruning, and fertilization. Reforestation and TSI treatments continue to decline as a result of timber harvest reductions. The increasing amount of intermediate harvest methods also contributes to a reduced need for reforestation.

Total clearcut acreage declined from 67,889 acres in FY 1995 to 56,617 acres in FY 1996. The use of clearcutting as a standard commercial harvest method has declined over the past few years, as shown in figure 2. Total harvest treatments were 473,127 acres, compared with 479,028 acres in FY 1995. This is the result of shifting away from regeneration harvests, especially clearcut acres. Timber sales are usually designed to incorporate multiple objectives, which may include insect and disease control, fuels treatment, and habitat restoration in addition to the production of wood.

Figure 2.

Clearcut Harvests

1/ Based on Draft 1995 RPA Program Projections.

Harvest treatments also continue to decline, reflecting a reduced timber sale program. Since 1989, various legislative and judicial directives have been implemented, particularly those associated with the protection of threatened and endangered species and the maintenance of associated old-growth habitat. These coupled with the implementation of ecosystem management reduced timber output as other project objectives were emphasized.

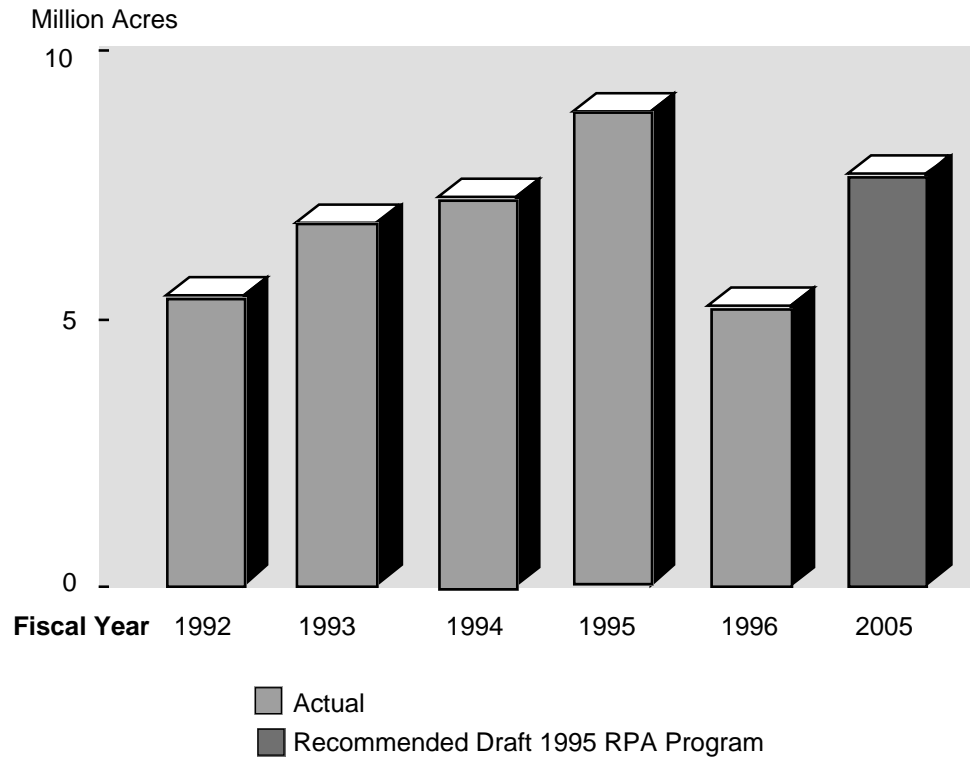
In FY 1996, range improvement management activities resulted in an additional 1 million acres achieving forest plan rangeland vegetation health objectives.

Landowner Assistance To Provide for Healthy Ecosystems and Vital Communities:

Providing technical and financial assistance to private forest landowners

The Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) and Stewardship Incentive Program (SIP) provide technical and financial assistance to nonindustrial private forest landowners to develop and implement multiresource management plans to better manage, protect, and use their natural resources. The acreage of land enrolled under the FSP by the end of FY 1996 was about 2.1 million acres. An additional 3.2 million acres were enrolled in forest resource management plans (figure 3). In FY 1996, assistance to nonindustrial private forest landowners through Federal/State cooperation led to the development of multiresource management plans for over 214,000 landowners and to tree planting on 760,742 acres, 26,620 acres more than in FY 1995.

Figure 3.

State and Private Forestry Multiresource Plans 1/

1/ Includes acres funded by forest resource management and stewardship.

Integrating Information from Ecological Assessments

The Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project (SNEP) Report to Congress was completed and delivered on June 7, 1996. SNEP completed an assessment of Sierra Nevada ecosystems, including ecological, social, and economic conditions; and projected and evaluated future trends under different possible management strategies. SNEP reports will be used as a source of information in the development of forest land management plans and in establishing research priorities.

Ecological assessments provide valuable information for land management planning.

The Interior Columbia River Basin Ecosystem Management Project has assembled the available aquatic, landscape ecology, terrestrial species, economic, and social data available for the interior Columbia River Basin into a 170-layer Geographic Information System (GIS). Using this data base, scientists were able to give project managers an assessment of current conditions within the basin. The same data base is being used to analyze management alternatives to be presented in environmental impact statements. The data base is also being made available to other users, allowing a common data base on which to base discussion of natural resource policies.

The Southern Appalachian Assessment, completed in 1996, was prepared by the Forest Service in cooperation with other Federal and State agencies that are members of the Southern Appalachian Man and the Biosphere (SAMAB) Cooperative. The assessment assembled and analyzed broad-scale biological, physical, social, and economic data to facilitate better, more ecologically based forest-level resource analysis and management. It will be used by both Federal and State land managers, as well as the public. The

assessment supports the revision of forest land management plans by describing how the lands, resources, people, and management of the national forests interrelate within the larger context of the Southern Appalachian area.

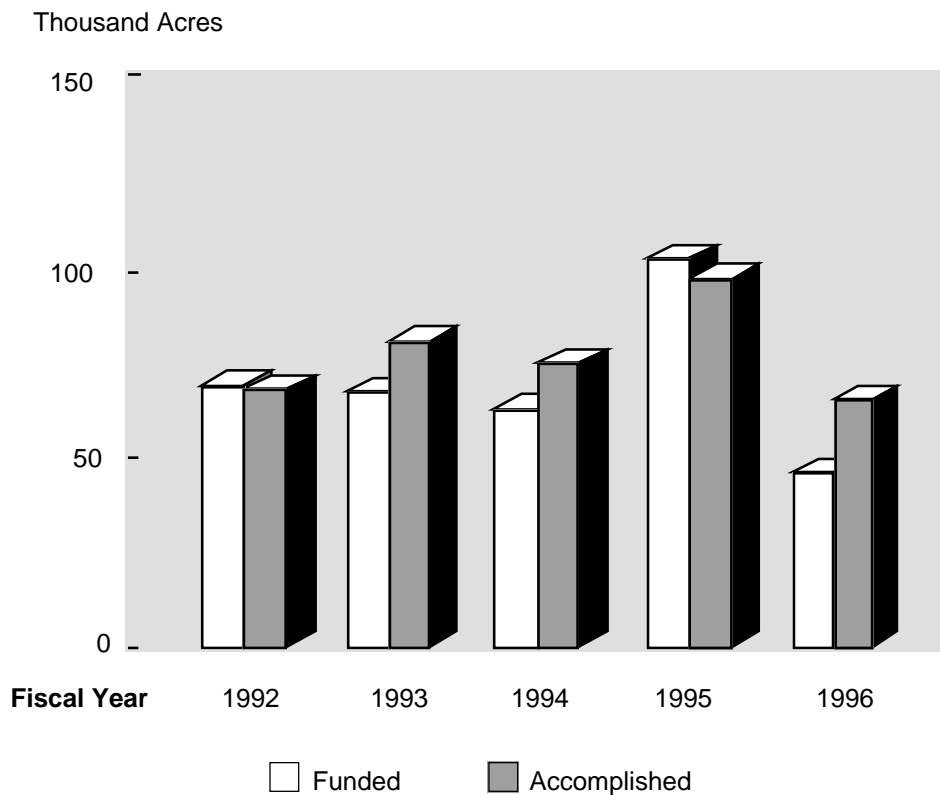
Land Acquisition and Exchange

FY 1996 funding provided for the acquisition of 40,051 acres needed for the protection of critical wildlife habitat, cultural and historical values, congressionally designated areas, outdoor recreation, and other land management purposes.

Land acquisitions and exchanges protect resources and improve management efficiency.

Land exchanges between NFS and other ownerships are needed to protect key resources, eliminate conflicting uses, and improve management efficiency. In FY 1996, the Forest Service completed equal-value exchanges involving 32,691 acres of NFS land for 65,848 acres of non-Federal land (figure 4). Much of the non-Federal land acquired through land exchanges lies within classified wilderness areas, national recreation areas, wild and scenic river corridors, national trails, and other congressionally designated areas.

Figure 4.
Land Exchange Accomplishments



Forest Legacy Program

The Forest Legacy Program protects crucial private forests from conversion to nonforest uses. The purchase of conservation easements is the most commonly used method to keep forests from being converted to other uses. In FY 1996, nine cases were completed to conserve 10,445 acres of forest land.

Restoration of Habitat

In FY 1996, the Forest Service accomplished 104,683 acres of wildlife habitat restorations/enhancements and constructed 4,008 habitat improvement structures. Key accomplishments included prescribed burning, constructing nesting structures, restoring open meadows and aspen stands, restoring wetlands and waterfowl habitat, and providing enhanced opportunities for viewing, photographing and learning about native animals, plants and fish—the fastest growing forms of nature-related recreation.

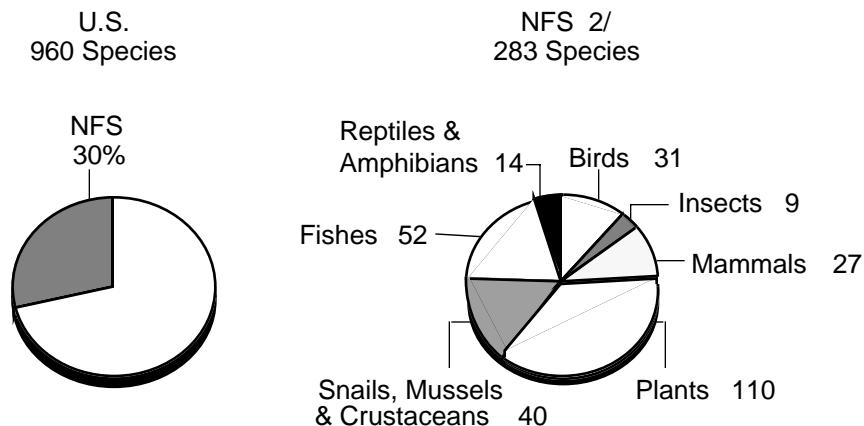
In 1996, the Forest Service restored or enhanced 6,518 lake acres and 1,121 stream miles of inland fish habitat, and an additional 1,333 lake acres and 631 stream miles of anadromous fish (saltwater fish that migrate upriver to spawn) habitat. These accomplishments were achieved through a variety of structural and nonstructural improvements such as: installation of fish passages at migration barriers; placement of logs and rocks to create nesting areas and trap spawning gravel; re-establishing vegetation to protect eroding stream banks; and enhancing the fish production capability of lakes.

Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species Habitat Improvement

In FY 1996, the agency accomplished 53,900 terrestrial acres, 177 aquatic acres, and 129 stream miles of threatened, endangered, and sensitive species habitat restoration/enhancement, and constructed 1,682 habitat improvement structures. Key accomplishments include: broad management strategies for many grassland, wetland, and forested riparian ecosystems species now at risk; aquatic resources restoration and enhancement activities; and native plant conservation and restoration. Figure 5 shows the distribution of federally listed species.

Protecting threatened and endangered species through habitat restoration and enhancement

Figure 5.
**Species Federally Listed as Endangered or Threatened—
 FY 1996 1/**



1/ These species include all varieties of life--from mammals to plants to mussels.
 2/ No change in numbers of species listed on NFS lands, mainly due to moratorium.

Protecting Soil and Water Resources

During FY 1996, soil resource inventories were accomplished on about 7.1 million acres. These inventories combine soils with related factors of vegetation, geology, landform, and climate to assess inherent capability and predicted response of the land to potential management actions. Watershed improvements were completed on over 66,300 acres of NFS lands.

Significant progress was made in cleaning up hazardous waste sites.

Environmental Compliance Projects—Significant progress was made in the Forest Service hazardous waste site program. Cleanup action was completed or initiated at 92 abandoned/inactive hazardous waste sites. Negotiations are ongoing with parties responsible for the pollution at 25 sites with settlements reached on the cleanup of 2 sites. The underground storage tank removal program is almost completed with the exception of ongoing remediation work at about 34 sites where tanks had leaked. Over 1,600 tanks have been removed since 1988.

Strategic Goal #2 : Provide Multiple Benefits for People

The President’s Forest Plan for the Pacific Northwest (PNW)

In April 1994, a Record of Decision was issued for the President’s Forest Plan for the Pacific Northwest. The plan was developed to address conflicts over timber harvesting from old-growth forests on Federal lands in the PNW inhabited by the northern spotted owl. Generally speaking, this includes the national forests of western Washington and Oregon, and northwestern California. The plan also focuses on protecting key watersheds for at-risk anadromous fish species, revising individual forest plans to include ecosystem- and landscape-level analyses, and adopting experimental management approaches and adaptive management techniques. The PNW initiative balances the needs of forest ecosystems and the needs

of human economic systems. The economic side of the PNW Forest Plan seeks a sustainable future for the communities, workers, and businesses within the range of the northern spotted owl. Federal agencies work in partnership with State, local, and tribal representatives to help the region adjust to changes brought about by reduced timber harvest levels.

Watershed Restoration/Jobs-in-the-Woods—Fiscal year 1996 program focus included improving the quality of jobs for previously trained displaced workers and other affected workers; increasing the duration of jobs by combining projects; and expanding the complexity of work. Specifically, the USDA Forest Service, within the area of the PNW Forest Plan, accomplished the following:

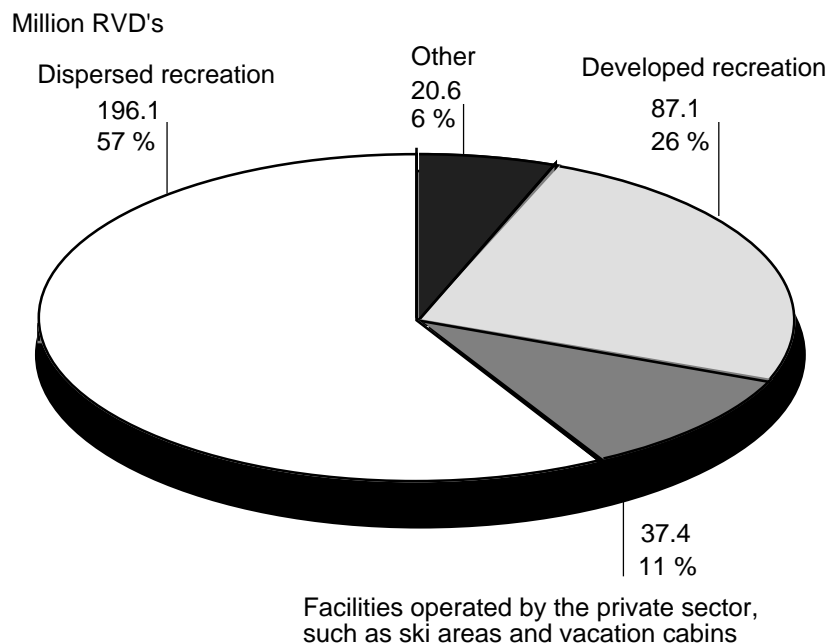
- Invested more than \$13.4 million, with over 80 percent awarded to affected communities and businesses.
- Participated in 6 workforce demonstration projects within Oregon and California that recruited and trained approximately 60 displaced workers.
- Employed over 700 displaced workers.
- Obtained a public interest waiver that allowed procurement actions to be directed to affected communities within the area of the PNW Forest Plan.
- A total of 679 million board feet (MMBF) of timber were harvested in FY 1996, compared to 493 MMBF in 1995.

Forest Service research provided scientific information and new technologies to support the PNW Forest Plan. Major accomplishments include development of data bases for analyzing the effects of land-use activities; evaluation of frameworks for the conduct of watershed analysis; reporting results of research on the effects of land management on watershed processes; and development of a number of models that relate performance of biophysical systems to land management activities.

Recreational Use of the National Forests

In FY 1996, NFS lands experienced an estimated 341.2 recreation visitor days (RVD's) (figure 6). (An RVD is 12 hours of visitation accumulated by one person or a combination of people.) During FY 1996, recreation seasonal capacity available was 213.4 million persons at one time per day (PAOT-days). (PAOT-days are calculated by multiplying the site capacity times the number of days per year that the site is open to the public.)

Figure 6.
FY 1996 Recreation Visitor Days (RVD's) by Activity



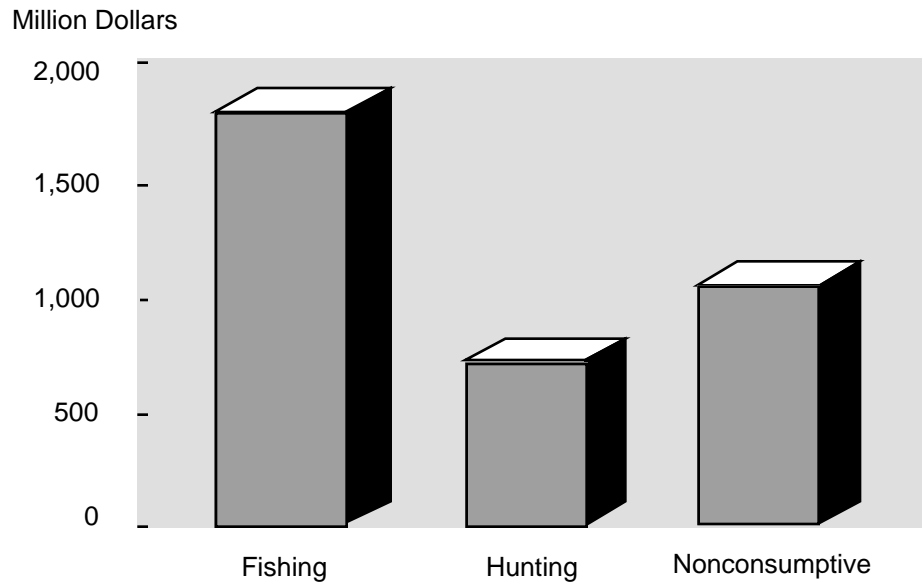
NFS lands experienced over 341 million RVD's.

The Forest Service manages over 23,000 developed facilities, including campgrounds, trailheads, boat ramps, picnic areas, and visitor centers, in addition to housing privately owned facilities on NFS lands. These facilities can accommodate approximately 2.1 million PAOT's. In FY 1996, public use of developed recreation sites represented 87.1 million visits.

The National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) contains 412 units of national wilderness in 38 States and includes 34.7 million acres of NFS lands. Recreation use in wilderness areas accounted for 14.5 million RVD's in FY 1996. At the end of FY 1996, there were 26,610 miles of trail available for use in wilderness areas.

Over 86 million activity days were spent hunting, fishing, and viewing wildlife and fish on national forests and grasslands in FY 1996. This resulted in expenditures of \$4.3 billion in local communities and over 139,000 full-time-equivalent jobs. These wildlife- and fish-related recreation opportunities resulted in \$3.58 billion in net public benefits (figure 7).

Figure 7.
FY 1996 Wildlife and Fisheries Benefits



In FY 1996, the Forest Service, along with other agencies, began implementation of a National Recreation Reservation Service (NRRS) that provides an easy, innovative way for the public to reserve Federal recreation facilities. NRRS will provide simple, consistent “one-stop” shopping for our customers; provide several means of customer access (phone, Internet, FAX, etc.); streamline and modernize business practices and handling of funds; reduce workload and operating costs for those with local reservation systems; and simplify and expedite the collection of user fees.

Accessibility—In FY 1996, the Forest Service implemented use of a “Decision Tool For Federal Land Management Agencies” document to use in balancing legal mandates when addressing access to the NWPS, in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the National Council on Disability, and Wilderness Inquiry, Inc.

Providing vital trail information to all trail users

The agency completed training and implemented a Universal Trails Project that provides vital trail information for all trail users, regardless of age or ability. The project provides for an objective trail survey, evaluation, and mapping of trail conditions with direct benefit to individuals with disabilities. It is responsive to the agency’s role under Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, providing programmatic information for dispersed trails. The project was developed under a Federal grant by Beneficial Design Inc., and is being implemented through partnership with them.

Scenic Byways—The National Forest Scenic Byways Program identifies routes that traverse scenic corridors with outstanding aesthetic, cultural, or historical values, and provides for increased rural tourism development. In FY 1996, the program included 133 national scenic byways within NFS lands, covering nearly 8,000 miles in 35 States.

Special recreation areas are critical to regional and local tourism.

Congressionally Designated Areas—The Forest Service manages 51 legislatively established special recreation areas totaling more than 8.4 million acres. Included in that total are 19 national recreation areas, 7 national scenic areas, and 4 monuments, covering approximately 6.4 million acres. These areas are critical to regional and local tourism programs.

Scenic Rivers—The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System was created in 1968 to assure a heritage of protected waterways. The system totals 154 rivers and 10,815 miles, of which 96 rivers and 4,348 miles are managed by the Forest Service. The Forest Service, BLM, National Park Service (NPS), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) established an interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council to provide a national forum to identify issues concerning implementation of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Heritage Resources

The Heritage Program protects the historic and cultural heritage of NFS lands and shares related information with the public for its enjoyment and education. In FY 1996, about 50,000 acres were inventoried for heritage resources with appropriated funding; 1.3 million acres including all funding sources. A total of 8,761 heritage properties received preservation attention in the form of restoration, rehabilitation, stabilization, and repair in order to extend their existence and availability to the public.

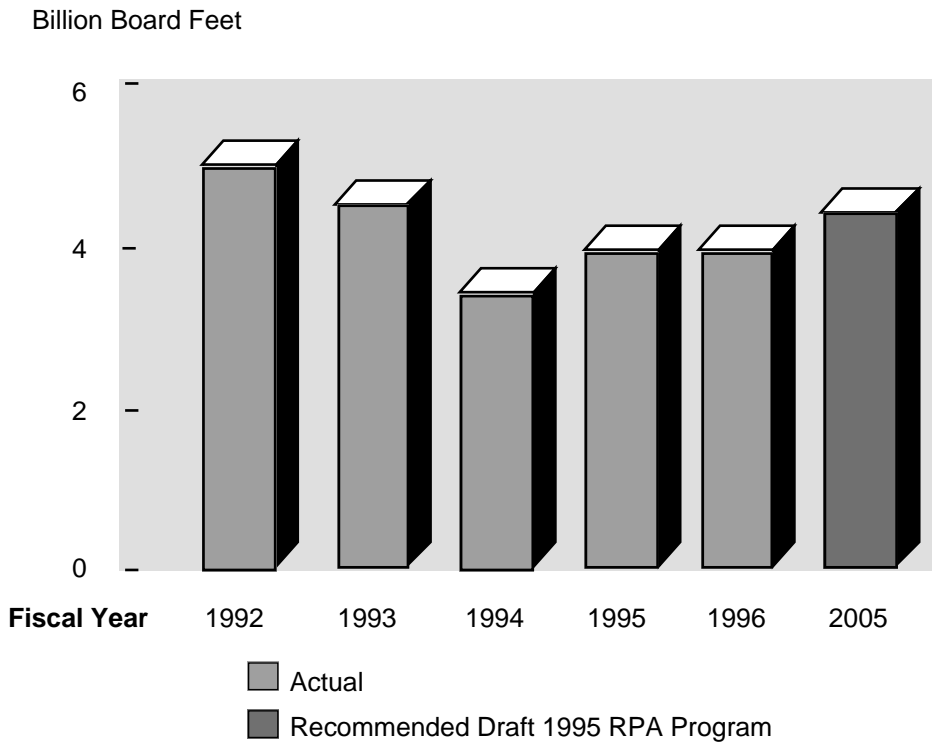
Windows on the Past—This public access/interpretive initiative is designed to increase public participation in heritage activities on NFS lands. In FY 1996, 545 new public interpretive projects were completed, and 1,318 new public outreach efforts were made to educate and inform the public about heritage values on NFS lands.

Passport In Time (PIT)—During FY 1996, approximately 2,200 volunteers contributed over 80,000 hours through PIT projects. Working with agency archaeologists, these volunteers restored historic structures, evaluated heritage sites, surveyed for sites in wilderness, monitored and restored sites damaged by looters or natural elements, developed interpretive materials, helped with classroom projects, and served as public hosts at historic interpretive facilities. The volunteers contributed a total of 44 person-years to work on Forest Service projects, approximating a \$1 million savings to the agency.

Wood Fiber Production

In FY 1996, the Forest Service offered 4.0 billion board feet (BBF) of timber for sale and sold 3.4 BBF from NFS lands (figure 8). Salvage volume accounted for 1.9 BBF of the amount offered. Volume harvested on 473,127 acres of NFS land was 3.7 BBF.

Figure 8.
Total Timber Offered



The number of acres treated annually through the regular and salvage timber sale programs is indicative of the extent of maintenance and restoration of forested ecosystems on NFS lands and the implementation of forest plan goals and objectives. Timber sales are usually designed to incorporate multiple objectives, which may include insect and disease control, fuels treatment, and habitat restoration in addition to the production of wood. Providing a continuing supply of forest products while complying with applicable laws and regulations provides goods and employment that benefit the public.

Forage Production

In FY 1996, analysis processes were initiated on 2,485 grazing allotments. Work was completed and decisions implemented for 562 allotments. The program continues to reflect an ecosystem perspective emphasizing restoration and long-term health of rangelands. The agency permitted use of forage for 9.2 million head months of privately owned livestock on NFS lands.

In FY 1996, new emphasis was placed on the management and control of noxious weeds by developing and implementing a strategy and treating noxious weeds on 67,174 acres. The Forest Service, as the designated lead agency for noxious weed activities within USDA, coordinated the development of the USDA noxious weed strategy. The strategy identifies priority action items and agency responsibilities, and outlines opportunities for cooperation to ensure an efficient and cost-effective approach to noxious weed management. A new partnership, "Pulling Together," was initiated

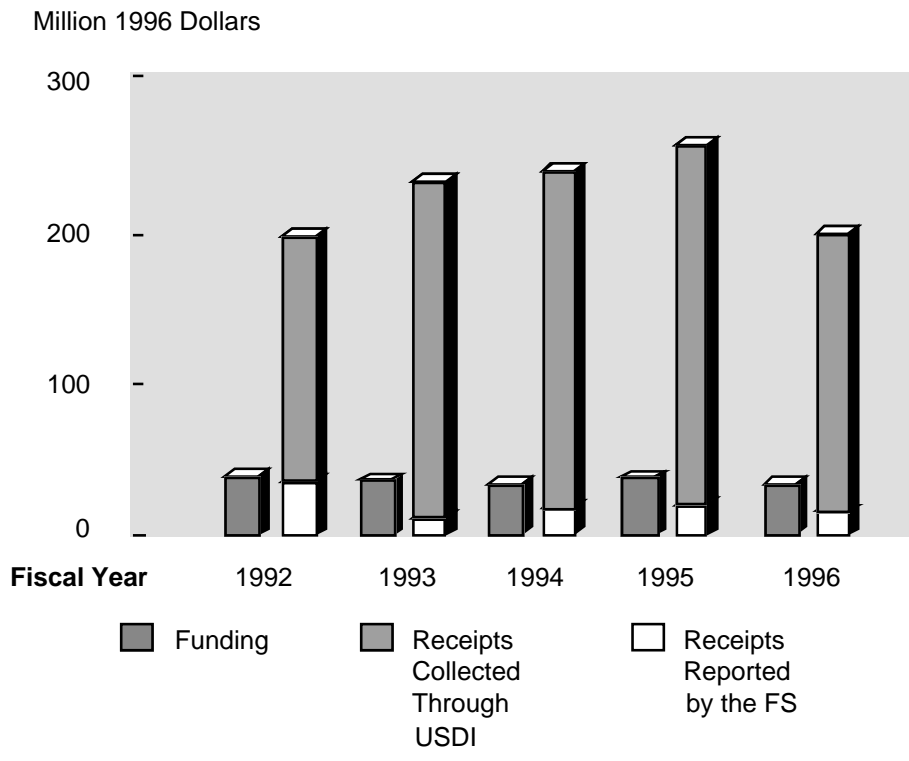
Emphasizing restoration and long-term health of rangelands

between the Department of the Interior, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and USDA to leverage Federal funds through cost-share challenges to neighbors and partners. This new program will encourage the formation of local partnerships to prevent and manage noxious weeds by group consensus across jurisdictional boundaries in a cost-efficient manner, to restore ecosystem health and biodiversity, and to ensure future productive use of the natural resources present.

Minerals Production

The value of minerals produced from national forest land operations in FY 1996 is estimated at \$3.5 billion. The Minerals and Geology Management (M&GM) program, funded at \$35 million in FY 1996, returned \$200 million to the Treasury (figure 9).

Figure 9.
Minerals—Funding and Receipts



During FY 1996, 10 million barrels of oil, 300 million cubic feet of gas, 115 million tons of coal (the two largest coal mines in the country are within NFS lands), 140 million pounds of lead (55 percent of the domestic lead production), and over 5.5 million tons of phosphate were produced from NFS lands.

Restoring and Sustaining Strong, Diversified Rural Economies

In FY 1996, 1,583 rural communities received direct technical and financial assistance. Within that total, 297 rural communities in California, Oregon, and Washington were assisted via the economic adjustment portion of the President’s Forest Plan for the Pacific Northwest. The plan also focused on improving the quality of jobs for displaced timber workers under the Jobs-in-the-Woods program.

Provided technical and financial assistance to 1,583 rural communities

Forest Service roads provide access to recreation sites.

Providing Access to the National Forests

Most of the road system required to meet public and administrative needs is currently in place, and emphasis is on managing existing facilities. Removal will occur in those cases where the facility can no longer be maintained to standard, facilities are considered unnecessary and costly, or when removal is necessary to protect or restore the ecosystem. In FY 1996, 1,675 miles of road were obliterated and the land restored for resource production, 2,853 miles of existing road were reconstructed, and about 463 miles of new road were constructed. The primary use of roads remaining in the transportation system will be to support recreational access. During FY 1996, 25 new bridges were constructed and 55 were reconstructed to provide safe access to NFS resources.

A total of 69,507 miles of trails were maintained on NFS lands in FY 1996, compared to 66,193 miles in FY 1995. Additionally, 2,150 miles of trails were constructed or reconstructed. Of that total, 454 miles were contributed by partners and volunteers. At the end of FY 1996, there were 116,076 miles of trails available for use on NFS lands, including wilderness trails. About 33.1 million recreation visitor days, 10 percent of all recreation use on NFS lands, were spent using trails.

Mapping and Digital Spatial Data

In FY 1996, the Geometronics Service Center (GSC) updated 1,162 primary base series maps and 40 secondary base series maps. The GSC built 686 Digital Elevation Models (DEM's) and edgematched 1,036 DEM's in support of the Digital Orthophoto Quad program. They also produced 1,489 DEM's for the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) under an interagency agreement. The GSC built 1,087 digital orthophoto quarter quadrangles (DOQQ's) and mosaiced 1,223 DOQQ's produced by the Forest Service and USGS into full 7.5-minute quad format.

Under the Single Edition Interagency Agreement with the USGS and the BLM, the three agencies cooperated to produce primary base series maps for lands within the Forest Service area of interest. In FY 1996, the USGS built DOQQ's to support single-edition projects and printed single-edition maps in color. The BLM completed amended protraction diagrams in support of the single-edition program.

The GSC distributed a total of 4,673 digital data files to other agencies and the public and 17,272 files to other Forest Service units. The GSC provided training and technical support in use of its data products to Forest Service Geometronics and GIS users.

Remote Sensing

Resource aerial photography contracts completed in FY 1996 covered 42,630 square miles. Thirty-three resource aerial photography contracts were completed and accepted in FY 1996.

*Developing information
for forest-level
decisionmaking*

Ecosystem Planning, Inventory and Monitoring ensures organizational effectiveness through the forest planning process in which relevant information is gathered and analyzed, and used to develop a desired future condition for the forest. This desired future condition is presented in forest plans, which provide the overall guidance for on-the-ground natural resource management in pursuit of the other RPA strategic goals of “restoring and protecting ecosystems,” and “providing multiple benefits for people within the capabilities of ecosystems.”

Accomplishments supporting an ecosystem approach include:

- The completion and release of three ecoregional assessments: Interior Columbia River Basin, Sierra Nevada, and Southern Appalachian. A “Lessons Learned” Workshop, designed as an adaptive learning approach to ecoregional assessments, was held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in July 1996.
- Completion of the content analysis of more than 1,000 detailed public comments on the proposed regulations to revise the National Forest Management Act planning rule, which had been published in the Federal Register on April 13, 1995.
- Completion of approximately 100 Draft or Final Environmental Impact Statements, 5,200 Environmental Assessments, and 9,800 Categorical Exclusions.
- The processing of about 121 Forest Plan Appeals, reducing the current backlog to 14 at the end of FY 1996 as compared to a backlog of 123 at the start of that year.
- The issuance of final Forest Plan Revisions for the Francis Marion National Forest in South Carolina and the National Forests of Texas, and seven Draft Forest Plan Revisions: Black Hills (SD), Arapaho-Roosevelt (CO), Rio Grande (CO), Routt (CO), Targhee (ID), Caribbean (PR), and Tongass-Chatham (AK).
- A strategy was developed to vertically integrate monitoring and evaluation through institutionalizing standard documentation and multilevel reporting. In FY 1996, for the first time, each region prepared a “State of the Region” evaluation report that built on monitoring and evaluation conducted on individual national forests.
- Cooperation with other agency efforts by leading a multiagency team on monitoring and evaluation as part of the December 1995 Ecological Stewardship Workshop in Arizona. The Forest Service also participated in a Federal Government-wide research and monitoring framework initiative sponsored by the White House’s Committee on Environment and Natural Resources.

Providing Scientific Information and New Technologies

The agency provides the scientific information and new technologies needed to manage and sustain the natural resources of the Nation's 1.6 billion acres of forests and rangelands. In FY 1996, the agency completed 3,005 research accomplishments, including books, papers, reports, and audiovisual materials.

Research on Protecting Ecosystems

Conducting research to promote forest health

Forest health continued as a major research priority in FY 1996. Blister rust, a serious disease of sugar pine, is causing this species to decline in Western States. The discovery of a gene resistant to the rust has led to a strategy for increasing the frequency of this gene in sugar pine stands, thus making the stands less susceptible to the disease. Publication of "Dwarf Mistletoe: Biology, Pathology, and Systematics," USDA Handbook 709, summarizes four decades of worldwide research. Handbook 709 provides the scientific information needed by forest managers to control mistletoe damage to valuable timber yet maintain biodiversity.

Protecting and maintaining healthy forest ecosystems also protects endangered and threatened species. Five small mammals are the main food source for the threatened Mexican spotted owl. The abundance of each of these mammals was found to be separately controlled by changes in forests caused by diseases and other disturbances. This information helps forest managers make trade-offs between protecting forests for timber and other values, while providing adequate food supplies for the owl. In California, populations of the threatened marbled murrelet were discovered to be sustainable in unharvested forest stands that are smaller than previously thought necessary. Also, most murrelets were found to prefer a narrow band of coastal forest. This new knowledge will help forest managers monitor murrelet populations accurately and will allow more flexibility in forest management practices. In intensively managed southern pine forests, investigations showed that mature hardwood tree species must be left in a zone at least 50 meters wide along streams to sustain populations of reptiles, amphibians, songbirds, squirrels, deer, and turkey. Analysis of stream flow measurements made over the past 50 years in the Pacific Northwest showed that logging road construction created higher peak flood flows than in nonroaded areas and this condition lasted longer after logging than previously thought. This new knowledge will help protect fish habitat by improving road design.

Air and water pollution is detrimental to ecosystems and people. Urban southern California depends on water from mountain streams. Research found that these streams are polluted by nitrogen compounds from polluted air. Ozone in smog damages forests downwind of most major cities. Ponderosa and Jeffrey pine forests in the Western United States are very susceptible to ozone damage. A new guide, "Evaluating Ozone Air Pollution Effects on Pines in the Western United States," PSW-GTR-155, will assist forest managers in evaluating ozone injury. Chlorine compounds used in making paper from wood are pollutants when released in air and water. Forest Service scientists, working collaboratively with scientists from the paper industries, developed a chlorine-free process that is now being tested on a larger scale. Emission of formaldehyde from particleboard and plywood pollutes indoor air. Forest products scientists from the Forest Service worked with industrial and public health scientists in providing information to regulatory agencies, manufacturers, and consumers on how to prevent air pollution in buildings from formaldehyde.

A growing problem, especially in the arid West, is destruction of homes by wildfires as more homes are being built within forests and brushlands. A method of testing the flammability of landscape vegetation was developed. The test is now being used to compile information on flammability for a homeowners' guide on selecting landscape vegetation.

Research on Restoring Deteriorated Ecosystems

Using fire to promote forest restoration

Ecosystem health has deteriorated in some forests because wildfires have not been allowed to fulfill their natural role in the ecosystem. Intensive use of some forests has also contributed to deterioration. The publication "The Use of Fire in Forest Restoration," INT-GTR-341, provides information on how to restore ecosystem health and prevent catastrophic wildfires. In restoring watersheds, closure and obliteration of roads may be necessary. Mathematical models were developed to evaluate the obliteration process in order to minimize erosion.

Guidelines for land management planning were produced to protect and restore habitat needed by the threatened Pacific salmon. The Forest Service's National Model Urban Rivers Restoration Project has focused on the Chicago River. The project's research findings were used to implement an action plan and demonstration projects to improve recreational and environmental values along the Chicago River, and to develop national guidelines for urban rivers.

Research on Providing Multiple Benefits to People

Forests benefit people in many ways, from products extracted from the forest to recreation within it. Mushrooms are critical organisms in forest ecosystems because they are essential in nutrient cycling and as a food for small mammals. Recently, mushrooms have become a \$40 million-a-year commodity in Pacific Northwest forests. The publication "Managing Forest Ecosystems to Conserve Fungus Diversity and Sustain Wild Mushroom Harvest," PNW-GTR-371, provides knowledge needed to manage this forest product. Wildlife is central to the "Alaska Experience." Researchers determined that in-State expenditures for wildlife recreation by Alaska residents and nonresident hunters amounts to \$220 million annually. Research showed, also, that people are recreating in wilderness areas with more and more frequency. Because of the impact visitors have on wilderness, the results may indicate a need to review the adequacy of existing wilderness protection regulations.

Wood decks are extremely popular in the United States and many are built every year. The new manual "Wood Decks: Materials, Construction, and Finishing" (Forest Products Society) helps both builders and consumers design, build, and maintain these outdoor structures for greater durability, safety, and enjoyment.

Each year, the United States Postal Service trashes tons of undeliverable mail. Forest Service scientists are working with industry partners to develop technologies to convert this liability into an asset by recycling undeliverable mail into useful paper products.

An advisory system was developed that aids in formulating silvicultural prescriptions for management of aspen in the North Central States. The system, based on 50 years of aspen research, uses an interactive model that

gives insight into the consequences of alternative silvicultural systems for stand structure, productivity, and ecosystem sustainability. Information on processing options for small-diameter logs was developed. With this information landowners can calculate how to maximize returns, make thinning of densely packed, small-diameter stands feasible, and improve forest health. Information on forest inventories for 45 States is now available on the Internet (<http://www.srsfia.msState.edu/script/ew.htm>).

Inventory and Monitoring in Support of Sustainable Management

Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) data, collected and analyzed consistently across all landownerships, helps place lands managed by the agency in proper context within the overall forest landscape. For example, using FIA data, land managers can identify rare resources located on NFS lands, and place an appropriate value on them. This is important for establishing protection priorities in developing forest plans.

In FY 1996, forest inventory was conducted on 44 million acres of forest land across all ownerships, and 90 reports were prepared relating to status and trends of the resources inventoried.

International Forestry Cooperation

Promoting international and domestic sustainable forest management

To meet its global leadership responsibility, the agency promotes sustainable forest management both domestically and internationally. The RPA Program Assessment reflects the new internationally developed criteria of sustainable forest management. The goal of this work is to explore and assist in critical forest management problems affecting the United States and collaborating countries alike. Working closely with the State Department, the Forest Service has been successful in incorporating U.S. perspectives into all the documents and agreements that are being generated.

In FY 1996, the agency engaged in 664 international forestry-related partnerships, compared to 240 in FY 1995. A total of 191 international forestry communication items (books, papers, reports, audiovisual materials, etc.) were produced during the year.

Partnerships

The Forest Service continues to increase its use of partnerships and other collaborative approaches to planning and management that engage a wider array of stakeholders and achieve shared goals, including greater efficiency in government. Some examples in 1996 were:

Southern Appalachian Man and the Biosphere (SAMAB) Cooperative and the Southern Appalachian Assessment—The SAMAB Cooperative, which produced the Southern Appalachian Assessment described earlier in this report, demonstrates the potential productivity resulting from greater collaboration between agencies, and between government and the private sector. Eleven Federal agencies, including the Forest Service, USFWS, NPS, and the Tennessee Valley Authority, worked with the natural resource departments of Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee to develop the assessment. It addresses broad-scale issues of resource conservation and economic development across a region covering over 37 million acres. Also involved from the private sector were corporations, academic institutions, nonprofit public interest organizations, economic development groups, and individuals. Together they gathered and analyzed information about the land,

air, water, and people of the region applicable to natural resources management. This cooperation significantly expanded the scope and depth of analysis that might have been achieved by separate efforts. It also avoided duplicating work that might have been necessary if each agency had acted independently. It resulted in creating improved working relationships among all the participants, which will continue to pay dividends as the agencies conduct their planning and management activities utilizing the results of the assessment.

Partnerships in Wildlife, Fish, and Rare Plants Programs—The Forest Service accomplished a significant share of wildlife, fish, and rare plant work through partnerships with over 3,300 organizations and agencies, such as the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, National Wild Turkey Federation, Trout Unlimited, Ducks Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, other Federal resource agencies, 44 State fish and wildlife agencies, and 43 State natural heritage inventory programs. About one-quarter of the wildlife, fish and TES habitat management program is accomplished through the challenge cost-share program. In FY 1996, over \$17 million in Federal funds were matched by partners' contributions for a total of \$40 million to accomplish 2,135 partnership projects on the national forests and grasslands.

Engaging in partnerships to achieve shared goals

Partnerships in Recreation Programs—In FY 1996, the agency formed approximately 1,500 partnerships to accomplish recreation objectives. As one example, the Forest Service, in partnership with the National Environmental Education Training Foundation and other agencies, held the first “National Public Lands Day,” a unique event predominantly funded by the private sector. Several thousand people volunteered their time to rebuild recreation facilities, interpretive sites, and trails. At the Forest Service sites, private sector funds provided a \$6 match for every appropriated dollar. If the value of volunteer labor is included, the ratio would be \$11 for every appropriated dollar.

Sixty percent of all downhill skiing in the United States occurs on NFS lands. In cooperation with the 135 ski area operators, through the National Winter Sports Partnership program, the national forests provided downhill skiing opportunities to approximately 32 million people in 1996. Partnering with the National Ski Areas Association, the Forest Service increased access to ski areas for people of all ages, cultures, and abilities and increased the public's understanding of how ecosystems work through conservation education programs at resorts such as Ski-Cology and Ski With The Ranger programs.

The agency and The Walt Disney Company explored avenues to share training and expertise in universal access and partnership possibilities for preparation for the 2002 Winter Olympics. The 2002 winter games will be held in Salt Lake City, Utah, on the Wasatch-Cache National Forest.

The following strategies will bring together private investors and public land managers to provide customer service through collaborative efforts:

In FY 1996, the agency established 48 “Demo” projects and began active implementation of 4 projects.

Public/Private Ventures (PPV)—This initiative provides opportunities for joint public and private-sector investment in recreation facilities and services on NFS lands. Agency direction to manage the PPV initiative was completed in FY 1996, and pilot projects were approved in early FY 1997.

Partnerships in Wilderness—The Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center continued to expand its interagency training role in support of the Forest Service and the following Department of the Interior agencies: NPS, USFWS, and BLM. Each of the Department of the Interior agencies has placed a representative at the center and is contributing financially. In FY 1996, the center trained 258 people and registered 113 new participants for the Wilderness Distance Education Program at the University of Montana. A Wilderness Education and Training Needs Assessment Survey covering the FS, NPS, USFWS, and BLM was completed and results will drive future education and training needs. Progress was made in editing wilderness correspondence courses and placing other courses on the Internet.

Building a Framework for Ecological Stewardship—The Forest Service cosponsored the December 1995 Ecological Stewardship Workshop in Tucson, Arizona, which, for the first time, involved collaboration with private foundations in co-funding a Federal initiative for developing reference information to support land managers. The workshop brought together scientists and land managers from dozens of Federal agencies, private foundations, universities, corporations, conservation organizations, and others, to build a framework within which the ecological stewardship of Federal lands and waters can be implemented. A reference document will be finalized during 1997 and related information is available on the Forest Service Internet Server at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/eco/workshop.htm>.

Provided technical and financial assistance to 8,079 urban communities

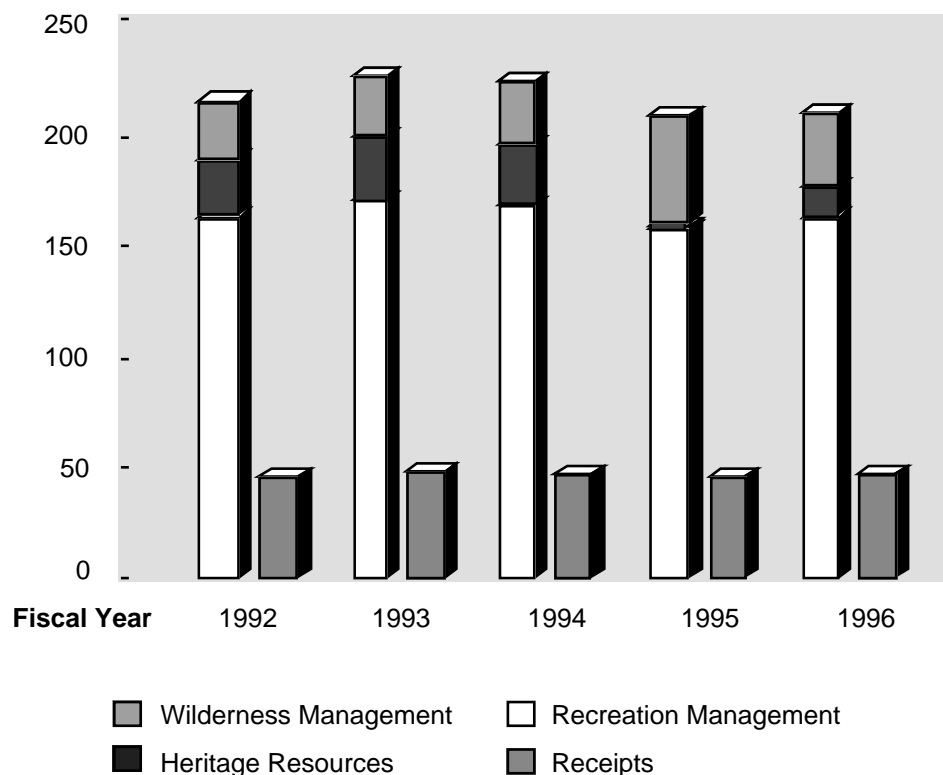
Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) Outreach—The Forest Service, working with communities and private organizations, helps establish, improve, expand and protect trees, parks, and forested areas in urban and other community areas. Technical and financial assistance are provided for tree planting, care, and protection. Public outreach and education remain key features of this program and directly assist the agency in reaching environmental justice and equity goals. In FY 1996, 8,079 communities received assistance through this program and planted 4,200,000 trees; 48,232 volunteer organizations participated in U&CF-sponsored projects; 1,597 matching Federal grants, totalling \$ 7,373,836, were awarded to participating communities; and Federal grants generated \$12,366,306 in matching financial and in-kind contributions from the public.

Financing Recreational Services

In FY 1996, recreation receipts totaled \$47.5 million, a 1-percent increase over FY 1995. Campgrounds and other facilities generated \$10 million compared with \$9.5 million in FY 1995. The fees recovered represent 22.5 percent of the total recreation use appropriation of \$211.1 million (figure 10).

Figure 10.
Recreation—Funding and Receipts

Million Dollars Actual

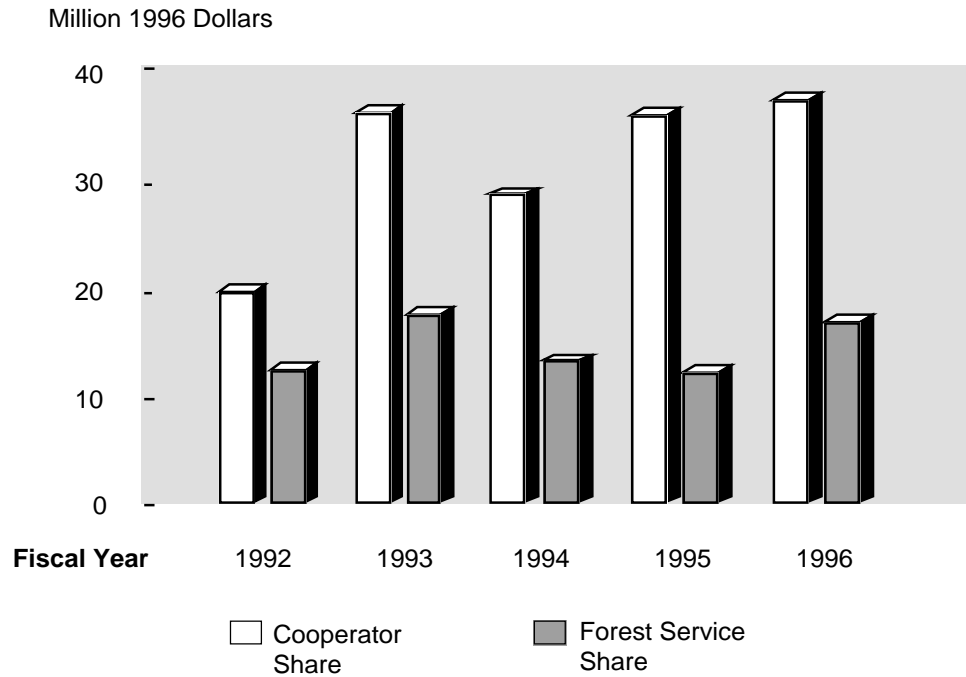


Implemented the Recreation Fee Demonstration Project

The Recreation Fee Demonstration Project, authorized by the Omnibus Consolidated Rescissions and Appropriations Act of 1996, gives the Forest Service demonstration (demo) authority to collect and retain recreation use fees. Demo projects will test different methods to establish, collect, and reinvest recreation use fees. In FY 1996, the agency established 48 demo projects and began active implementation of 4 projects. The remaining projects will begin implementation in FY 1997.

Challenge Cost-Share—In FY 1996, total recreation appropriated funding for the challenge cost-share program was \$16.9 million, up from \$12 million in FY 1995 (figure 11). The challenge cost-share (CCS) program, including agency and contributed funds, totaled \$54.4 million. In addition, a new challenge cost-share cooperative venture was initiated. Recreation funding totalling \$1 million was leveraged by the National Forest Foundation, providing a total of \$2.5 million in improvements to trails, recreation facilities, and wildlife and fish management projects.

Figure 11.
Recreation Use—Challenge Cost-Share Funding



Volunteers—Volunteers in the Touch America Project (TAP) contributed work valued at \$23.7 million on recreation-related projects. This represents 68 percent of the total work contributed.

Expanding Opportunities for Participation in Human Resource Programs

Offered employment and training to 105,388 persons

The Forest Service hosts a variety of programs that add value to the agency and program participants by providing work, volunteerism, training, and educational opportunities to the unemployed, underemployed, elderly, youth, and others with special needs. During FY 1996, Forest Service human resource programs offered employment and training to 105,388 persons, including many women and minorities. For an investment of \$121.5 million, \$121.3 million in accomplishments were returned from all programs. The participants constructed and improved campgrounds, trails, office buildings, fences, and roads; planted trees; fought fires; improved timber stands; and provided office support and other services.

One of these programs is the Job Corps, which is a residential, educational, and training program for the Nation’s disadvantaged youth aged 16-24. The purpose of the program is to provide the skills necessary to get and hold a good job at a living wage. Last year, 9,060 students participated in the Forest Service’s Job Corps program and contributed approximately \$21.5 million in conservation work on national forest lands. The youth learn trades such as basic forestry, urban forestry, heavy equipment operation and maintenance, cement and brick masonry, auto mechanics, carpentry, welding, culinary arts, plastering, and painting. Over 77 percent of the students who graduated last year were placed in jobs with an average starting wage of \$6.30 per hour.

Emphasizing financial management and accountability

Establishing Management and Fiscal Accountability

An agency-wide, multiyear effort to improve Forest Service financial health was initiated in FY 1996 by emphasizing financial management and accountability. The objective is to improve the financial and accounting records while facilitating a change to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foundation Financial Information System. Complementing these efforts are the development and implementation of managerial accounting tools, such as All Resources Reporting for the NFS, to provide full cost information to help improve governmental efficiency.

Providing Quality Information to Support Sound Decisions

The Meaningful Measures Process (MMP) is a recreation management concept that sets standards of quality for all aspects of the recreation program (facilities, sites, areas, etc.), determines realistic costs, helps to prioritize work, assists in budget allocation, and sets the stage for effective monitoring of results. In FY 1996, training of field units in the MMP was completed. Refinement of the process is continuing while implementation has begun at the forest level.

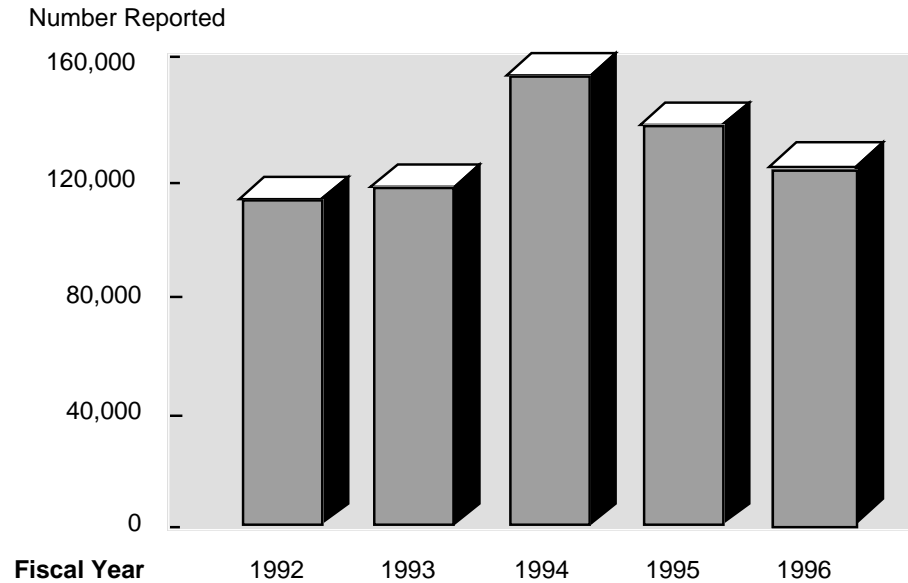
Law Enforcement and Investigations

The Law Enforcement and Investigations (LE&I) program mission is to serve people and protect natural resources and property within the authority and jurisdiction of the Forest Service.

In FY 1996, LE&I developed a strategic plan for the next 3 years. Six goals were identified to be completed by the year 2000.

During FY 1996, a total of 126,203 incidents or violations were handled on NFS lands by uniformed Law Enforcement Officers, a reduction of 12,272 when compared to 138,475 in FY 1995 (figure 12). Out of that total, 7,856 were felony-level violations and 25,273 were misdemeanor-level violations, representing an increase of 2,977 felonies and 2,160 misdemeanor cases when compared to FY 1995.

Figure 12.

Law Enforcement Incidents and Violations

Special Agents conducted approximately 1,160 investigations on felony and serious misdemeanor crimes for both resource violations and internal/hotline complaints.

These violations resulted in over \$9.2 million in damages to and losses of NFS property and resources. Violations/investigations included timber theft, archeological resource damage and theft of artifacts, arson, occupancy and use violations, and illegal drugs.

During calendar year (CY) 1996, approximately 318,550 cannabis plants were eradicated from 6,152 sites on NFS lands. A total of 3,482 individuals were arrested in connection with illicit controlled substance protection and distribution on NFS lands, compared to 2,095 in CY 1995. Drug enforcement efforts resulted in the seizure of over \$2.2 million worth of assets. The number of firearms seized, physical assaults, and boobytraps found increased over 1995 totals.

In FY 1996, the funding of 561 regular cooperative law enforcement agreements allowed the Forest Service to work closely with State and local law enforcement agencies and with other Federal agencies. Another 224 drug control agreements were negotiated to cooperate in combating illegal drug activities on NFS lands. The combined total of 785 agreements for FY 1996 exceeded FY 1995 by 75.

Employee Satisfaction—Continuous Improvement Process

Conducted CIP survey to assess organizational effectiveness

In FY 1996, the Forest Service conducted the Continuous Improvement Process employee survey to assess organizational effectiveness in key areas related to the work environment. Survey results are used for action plans and other improvement efforts at various levels of the agency. The Forest Service will track change or improvement over time through the use of subsequent surveys. The FY 1996 survey questionnaires were made available to 40,862 employees Servicewide. The number of questionnaires returned was 23,435, or 58 percent.

This survey represents a forthright commitment by the agency's leadership to acknowledge both its strengths and opportunities for improvement. The agency will continue to take a critical but positive look at where we are now, and will seek ways to keep improving. As a result, the Forest Service will be better able to meet customer needs through enhanced employee performance and efficient organizational processes.

External Relationships

Providing timely and valuable information through PAO

Through the Public Affairs Office, the agency continues to provide timely and valuable information to internal and external audiences, including Congress, employees, the Administration, stakeholder groups, and the media. The agency provides the Secretary of Agriculture and the White House with briefing papers, internal news and media summaries, and other informational items. The effectiveness of such information is evaluated periodically, helping to ensure that the information distributed meets the needs of customers.

In FY 1996, the agency produced over 1,200 communication items including videos, brochures, and publications. The agency began communication with the film industry to develop a memorandum of understanding, which will streamline processes for filming on the national forests.

The Forest Service continued to implement its strategic communications plan in support of the Draft 1995 RPA program and other core programs of the agency. Through the communications plan, the agency builds understanding by listening to the public and employees, sharing information about our programs, and facilitating dialogue among all interested groups.

During FY 1996, in meeting the spirit of Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice, the Forest Service adjusted its public involvement programs to ensure that agency information is accessible to all citizens, including low-income and minority individuals and other under-represented groups. In FY 1996, the agency began conducting environmental justice and public involvement training for employees.

The agency participated in the Interagency Federal Advisory Committee Task Force, which seeks to improve coordination among Federal agencies in their application of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), and to facilitate communication with interested citizens. The Forest Service worked with the General Services Administration (GSA) to conduct training sessions on FACA for Federal employees. The agency continued to work with the Department of Justice, GSA, and USDA's Office of the General Counsel to ensure guidelines related to FACA reflect the latest information available.

In FY 1996, the Forest Service Worldwide Web page was maintained and another 20 administrative units were placed on the Internet. The web site provided information about the agency's administrative and natural resources management activities, receiving approximately 300,000 visits a month.