

# HELENA National Forest

*Caring for the land and serving the people since 1906*

# Update



## Welcome to the Helena National Forest....

This Helena National Forest *Update* provides you an overview of the activities, programs, and accomplishments of the Helena National Forest over the past year.

2004 brought a number of changes to the Forest and to the agency as a whole. The Forest Service completed a study of our technical services staff, which numbered approximately 900 people across the nation. The study considered whether the work could be done more economically if retained in-house or contracted out to external vendors. The determination was made that a system which retained expertise in-house, using employees who would generally function remotely, is the most efficient system. Nation-wide, staff retained to conduct the work, primarily computer support, have been reduced to 550.

As that study was nearing completion, the Forest Service announced its intention to centralize most Budget and Finance functions and Personnel functions in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in 2005 and 2006 respectively. These actions, together with the restructuring of tech services, have all been selected to improve business efficiency in the future. Because the Helena Forest houses a human resources zone staff of eight individuals who provide service to four other Forests and the North Dakota grassland, centralization means a major disruption to our workforce and to our close relationships with these employees.

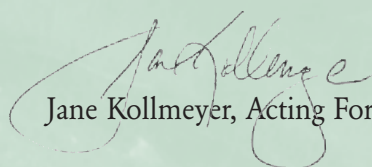
Retirements also created some transition in our workforce. Tom Clifford retired as Forest Supervisor after more than eleven years in that job and a thirty-five year plus career. Other familiar faces who retired at the end of the year are Realty Specialist Sharlene Larance (16 years on the HNF), Planner Chuck Neal (6 years on the HNF), and Surveyor George Rice (24 years on the HNF).

A lot of our energy this last year was directed to planning and implementation of fuels reduction projects. We have developed a number of valuable working relationships with other agencies, governmental entities, and private landowners, all directed toward addressing the serious fuels buildup in our western forests. While it was wonderful in 2004 to have a respite from the brutal fire seasons of recent years, I certainly hope that people will stay focused on the need to actively manage our forests.

As always, other activities included road maintenance, weed control, salvage sales, range management, mine reclamation, contracts for services were awarded, outreach opportunities were provided to local communities, special use permits were issued, wildlife and fisheries monitoring and enhancement projects were completed.

I would like to again acknowledge the wonderful assistance we enjoy from our partners, which include individuals, other natural resource agencies, non-profit organizations, volunteers, and civic groups. We truly appreciate the time and effort of our partners in helping us accomplish the important land management work we do. Many of the services enjoyed by visitors to the Helena National Forest would not be possible without the help of these partners.

The Forest is looking forward to many accomplishments in 2005, including a number of events which are planned to commemorate the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition as well as the centennial of the creation of the U.S. Forest Service. Please visit us at any of our offices or on our new <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/helena> website with your thoughts and ideas on management of the Helena National Forest.

  
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