



USDA Forest Service National Forest Systems Briefing Paper

Date: December 4, 2008

Topic: Completion of Initial Soil Resource Inventory/Terrestrial Ecological Unit Inventory Acceleration on NFS lands

Issue: FS Strategy to complete fieldwork and certification of SRI/TEUI on NFS lands.

Background: Climate change assessments and ecological service determinations are dependent on understanding the quality of the soil resource. Water quality and quantity analysis require a sound understanding of soil productivity, porosity and erosivity. Soil information is essential to designing forest and rangeland management prescriptions as well as conducting land management plan revisions.

60 million acres of NFS lands remain to be corporately inventoried. Currently the Forest Service soil inventory on NFS lands amounts to less than 1 million acres a year. This information is missing in critical parts of the western United States, namely the coastal and eastern side of the Cascade Mountains of Oregon and Washington, the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, Nevada, and Utah, the Idaho batholith, and the Southwestern Region. These areas have experienced tremendous population growth, high incidence of insect and disease, and catastrophic fire. Water shortages have occurred and more are predicted in the not to far distant future.

The number of permanent soil scientists in the Forest Service is down 26% since 1997. Regions 4 and 6 have the largest amount of uninitiated soil surveys to begin (30 million acres). Another aspect of the soil survey program is the certification of soil surveys that have fieldwork completed. Regions 2, 3 and 4 have the largest backlog of fieldwork to be certified by NRCS that require the assistance of Forest Service soil scientists (22 million acres). The remaining acreage is in soil survey areas where active field soil survey is currently in progress, i.e., Regions 3, 4, 6 and 9.

Strategy: The map represents a concept of staging the completion of all NFS lands initial SRI/TEUI. Phase I of the strategy includes SRI/TEUI projects that have been started. Phase II areas are SRI/TEUI projects that have been identified as needing to be completed to comply with forest plan revision needs and other land management needs or have an active MOU including areas that have had their fieldwork completed but the data has not been certified by NRCS. Phase III are the rest of NFS lands not previously inventoried and include a number of wilderness areas.

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