

USDA Forest Service (Update)

March 2008



SUBJECT: Stewardship Contracting Authority

ISSUE: Section 323 of Public Law 108-7, (16 U.S.C. 2104 Note, as revised February 28, 2003) grants the Forest Service authority until September 30, 2013, to enter into stewardship contracting projects for up to 10 years with private persons or public or private entities. This authority allows by contract or by agreement, the ability to perform services to achieve land management goals for the national forests or public lands that meet local and rural community needs. The intent of stewardship contracting is to accomplish resource management with a focus on restoration to meet land management goals and objectives such as improving wildlife and fisheries habitats, promote healthy forests, reduce fire hazards, and restore and improve watershed conditions. In addition, it authorizes the exchange of forest products for service work. This authority is enhancing agency collaboration efforts and building greater support for activities.

BACKGROUND: The Forest Service is committed to expanding the use of the tools available in the authority, contracts, and agreements and, improving the processes need to the implement the authority.

- A Stewardship Contracting “Nuts and Bolts” Preparation and Administration Training web site for Forest Service employees has been launched.
- The agency continues to provide Stewardship Contracting Preparation and Administration training. This training was developed as result of concerns identified from the field units. The training addresses both stewardship contract development and administration.
- The agency is continuing to work with our partners to assist help us identify barriers and solutions.
- The Forest Service is recognizing champions of stewardship contracting so their successes are known and others know where to go to gain additional support for their efforts.
- The Board of Directors (BOD), which includes directors from Forest Management, Acquisition Management, Watershed, Fish, Wildlife, Air, and Rare Plants, and Fire & Aviation Management are supporting and have placed an emphasis on the development of a stewardship agreement template, policy, and training for stewardship agreements.
- Recently the agency signed several stewardship agreements with conservation partners both at the regional and forest scale. Examples of these include agreements with Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and National Wild Turkey Federation.

Benefits of Stewardship Contracting

- Using stewardship contracting reduces the number of contracts and costs associated with preparing separate contracts.
- Service work can occur concurrent with product removal, thus full implementation of the NEPA decision can occur in a timelier manner.
- More restoration service work can be accomplished than under our current K-V timber sale receipt and sale area programs, resulting in a larger percentage of the value of the goods going toward service activities. Receipts in excess of service costs can be retained and used to accomplish additional restoration service activities.

- Partnerships and collaboration during proposal development increases understanding and cooperation of NEPA, therefore reducing cost associated with appeals and litigation.

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