

**FOREST SERVICE IMPLEMENTATION DURING FY 2004 OF THE  
STEWARDSHIP CONTRACTING AUTHORITY PROVIDED BY  
SECTION 323 THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND RELATED  
AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2003 (AS CONTAINED IN  
DIVISION F OF P.L. 108-7; 16 U.S.C. 2104 NOTE)**

**A Report to the Appropriations Committees of the U.S. House and Senate**

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## **PREFACE**

Section 323 of the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2003 (as contained in division F of P.L. 108-7; 16 U.S.C 2104 Note), grants the Forest Service (FS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) authority until September 30, 2013, to enter into stewardship contracting projects with private persons or public or private entities, by contract or agreement, to perform services to achieve land management goals for the national forests or public lands that meet local and rural community needs. This legislation expands stewardship contracting authority that Congress had previously provided, through passage of Section 347 of the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1999 (as contained in section 101(e) of division A of Public Law 105-277; 16 U.S.C. 2104 Note). One of the requirements of Section 347, contained in subsection (g), is that the FS and BLM must report annually to the Appropriations Committees of the U.S. House and Senate on: 1) the status of development, execution, and administration of agreements or contracts; 2) the specific accomplishments that have resulted; and 3) the role of local communities in development of contract plans. The purpose of this report is to satisfy this requirement for FY 2004.

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## Executive Summary

In Fiscal Year 2004, the Forest Service released direction for field implementation of stewardship contracting. This direction, contained in FS Handbook 2409.19, reaffirmed many of the principles of the stewardship contracting pilots: an open, collaborative process is part of implementing stewardship contracting projects; projects will comply with applicable environmental laws and regulations; deriving revenue from the sale of by-products and other materials is a secondary objective to the restoration goals; the agency will maintain oversight and control of operations. A number of technical points were also addressed. Handbook 2409.19 has also been updated to include the Tribal Forest Protection Act of 2004.

The Forest Service also provided additional resources on stewardship contracting to the field, including websites featuring collaboration resources and lessons learned and four integrated resource contracts, specifically developed for stewardship contracting projects. FS regional offices have subsequently held 82 training sessions for over 2,800 Forest Service employees, as well as numerous community members, timber industry representatives, conservation organizations, university staff, Tribal representatives, BLM staff, and State employees.

Both internal and external assessments of stewardship contracting implementation took place during FY 2004. The GAO completed a survey of stewardship contracting and the Forest Service conducted an internal assessment by sending questionnaires to all nine regions and conducting interviews with 74 internal and external stakeholders.

During FY 2004, the Regional Foresters approved 40 stewardship contracting projects for implementation under the authority provided by Section 347 as amended by Section 323. All of these projects met one or more the following objectives: to reduce hazardous fuels within Wildland-urban Interface (WUI) areas, reduce hazardous fuels outside of WUI areas, reduce insect and disease risk, improve wildlife habitat, including habitat for threatened, endangered and sensitive species, and control invasive weeds. The projects ranged in size; the largest of the approved projects has the potential to treat 150,000 acres and the smallest 20 acres.

The number of stewardship contracts and agreements awarded has increased each year, since the pilot legislation of 1999. During FY 2004, a total of sixty four stewardship contracts and agreements were awarded, treating 41,834 acres.

Local community involvement through active collaboration with Forest Service staff is an integral part of every stewardship contracting project. Stewardship contracting projects aim to accomplish forest resource work while supporting and utilizing workers in local communities, restoring and strengthening the connection between local communities and the National Forest. In 2004 the Forest Service contracted with a third party, the Pinchot Institute for Conservation, to provide an independent review of Forest Service collaboration with local communities in the context of stewardship contracting. The Pinchot Institute for Conservation conducted a purposive sampling of the 53 projects that fell under the programmatic monitoring requirement through telephone and/or in-person interviews using a standardized survey instrument. Based on these interviews, the Pinchot Institute for Conservation found that:

- The general expectation was that stewardship contracting would provide great opportunity for community/agency collaboration. The majority of agency interviewees indicated that these general expectations were being met, whereas non-agency participants provided a mixed response between “met expectations” and “no response”.
- Asked to identify what benefits stewardship contracting offers the local community, respondents concluded that this new mechanism provides (in ranked order): (a) the promotion of economic growth and diversification, (b) improved collaboration between the agency and its public, and (c) facilitated ecosystem and resource improvements. Reported benefits to the agency included: (a) improved efficiencies in accomplishing work, (b) improved public trust, and (c) increased flexibility in administration and implementation.
- Interviewees were also asked to elaborate on the benefits of collaboration. Responses covered a broad spectrum that included (in ranked order): (a) broader understanding and consideration of diverse interests, (b) increased trust, (c) increased opportunity for input in management activities, (d) increased sense of purpose and ownership in the project, and (e) increased support for the agency.
- The most commonly involved publics in a given stewardship contracting project include: (a) adjacent landowners/residents, (b) local government interests, (c) state agencies, and (d) environmental interests. They are involved in a variety of activities including: (a) planning and design, (b) comment and suggestions, and (c) outreach and public education. Participants overwhelmingly agreed that there are interests that should be engaged but aren't, the most commonly identified being environmental and/or conservation groups. By involving these nonengaged publics, respondents felt misunderstandings could be avoided and constraints to implementation could be alleviated.
- Various sources of assistance for collaborative activities were also identified by interviewees, the most common being financial support (from the agency). When asked to elaborate on additional needs, interviewees indicated that increased training on stewardship contracting (for the general public) and increased financial support, such as for monitoring, group facilitation, collaborative operating costs and field trips, were the most important unmet needs to date.
- Respondents felt that wide support for stewardship projects exists within their communities. Whereas support for stewardship projects within the agency was also high, it was lower than that expressed within the community. Interviewees were also asked to describe indicators of public/agency dissatisfaction. Nearly half of all respondents indicated some level of disagreement, predominantly with environmental groups.

In conclusion, Congress has provided an important tool for the agency to accomplish forest restoration. The authorities in Stewardship Contracting have allowed more land base to be treated with authorized funds. Stewardship contracting is improving our efficiency by allowing the agency to bundle contracts and treat vegetation at a landscape scale. The agency is also finding that successful stewardship projects are the direct result of good community collaboration. Successes and lessons learned are shared on our national website and at stewardship contracting training sessions with agency, contractors, and community members.

## Chapter 1 Background and Introduction

### 1.1 Background

Section 323 of the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2003 (as contained in division F of P.L. 108-7; 16 U.S.C 2104 Note), grants the Forest Service (FS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) authority until September 30, 2013, to enter into stewardship contracting projects with private persons or public or private entities, by contract or agreement, to perform services to achieve land management goals for the national forests or public lands that meet local and rural community needs. While the statute doesn't explicitly define stewardship contracting, by implication the tool entails use of one or more of the special authorities provided for in the law. These special authorities include the ability to:

- Offset the value of goods (i.e., timber) for services.
- Retain and reinvest receipts in the same, or another, stewardship contracting project.
- Award contracts and agreements that involve harvest of commercial timber on a "best value" basis.
- Designate timber for cutting by description or prescription.
- Enter into multiyear contracts for services exceeding five years but not more than ten years duration.<sup>1</sup>

Section 347 as amended by 323 expands the limited stewardship contracting authority that Congress had previously granted to the Forest Service.<sup>2</sup> The language of Section 323 is largely the same as the legislative language authorizing the FS stewardship contracting pilots, except that the new law:

- Applies to the BLM as well as the FS.
- Extends authority through September 30, 2013.
- Does not limit the number of stewardship contracting projects that can be undertaken.
- Drops prior language suggesting a focus on the harvest of "noncommercial" timber.
- Allows the responsible Secretary to designate a contracting officer.
- Substitutes "programmatic" instead of "project-level" monitoring.

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<sup>1</sup> There are two additional authorities that apply only to the USDA Forest Service. These authorities provide for:

- Non-USDA supervision of marking and harvesting of timber as determined by the Forest Service.
- Does not require advertising of timber sale contracts valued at over \$10,000

<sup>2</sup> The specific pieces of legislation that provided the authority for the Forest Service's stewardship contracting pilots were:

- Section 347 of the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1999 (as contained in section 101(e) of division A of Public Law 105-277; 16 U.S.C. 2104 Note). Authorized the FS to enter into up to 28 stewardship contracts.
- Section 341 of the FY 2000 Appropriations Act for Interior and Related Agencies – i.e., P.L. 106-113. Authorized the use of agreements as well contracts.
- Section 338 of the FY 2001 Appropriations Act for Interior and Related Agencies – i.e., P.L. 106-291. Authorized an additional 28 stewardship contracting projects, bringing the total to 56.
- Section 332 of the FY 2002 Appropriations Act for Interior and Related Agencies – i.e., P.L. 107-63. Authorized an additional 28 stewardship contracting projects, bringing the total to 84.



## **1.2 Introduction**

This report focuses solely on the activities and accomplishments of the FS in FY 2004; however, the FS and BLM have continued to work closely together while refining policy and direction for stewardship contracting under Section 347 as amended by 323. This year, with necessary policies and procedures in place and appropriate direction provided to field units, both agencies awarded contracts for more stewardship projects. Chapter 2 of this report will describe the field direction released by both agencies in January of 2004, changes to informational resources on stewardship contracting, the four new contracts available for stewardship contracting projects, the GAO report, and training provided for regional and field employees, external partners and collaborators, and potential contractors. Chapter 3 provides information concerning projects approved and contracts awarded in FY 2004. Chapter 4 includes information prepared by the Pinchot Institute for Conservation on programmatic monitoring of the involvement of local communities in developing and implementing stewardship contracting projects.

## Chapter 2 - Current Status

### 2.1 Field Direction Released

In January 2004, the FS and BLM jointly released direction for field implementation of Section 323. The Forest Service reviewed the comments from the pilot program, the listening sessions, field offices, other agencies, and the public before issuing the agency's direction to the field. The Forest Service's Interim Directive was distributed to field units as an amendment to the agency's Renewable Resources Handbook (FSH 2409.19). The amendment takes the form of a new chapter – i.e., Chapter 60, Stewardship Contracting.<sup>3</sup> The Interim Directive provides administrative direction to FS employees on planning, implementing, and monitoring stewardship contracting projects. The direction also contains a flow chart for staff to use to determine if stewardship contracting is the appropriate tool for the project. In addition to the initial press release, the FS and the BLM each published a Notice of Issuance in the *Federal Register* on January 28, 2004, advising readers that each agency had issued guidance on stewardship contracting.<sup>4</sup> The notices explained how interested parties could obtain a copy of the guidance.

This direction reaffirmed many of the principles of the stewardship contracting pilots: deriving revenue from the sale of by-products and other materials is a secondary objective to the restoration goals; an open, collaborative process is part of implementing stewardship contracting projects; projects will comply with applicable environmental laws and regulations; and the FS will maintain oversight and control of operations. A number of technical points were also addressed; for example, the FS and BLM direction includes:

- Awarding contracts on a “best value” basis. In best value contracting both agencies could consider such criteria as a contractor's past performance, work quality, and experience, and the potential benefits to local and rural community needs in addition to cost or price;
- Requiring contractors to post performance and payment bonds to protect the government's interests;
- Separately tracking the value of any goods being sold and the value of any services being received for Section 323 projects;
- Using excess offsets or residual receipts solely for on-the-ground project implementation, not overhead, administrative, or indirect costs; and

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<sup>3</sup> The Forest Service's Interim Directive is available at the following URL – [http://www.fs.fed.us/im/directives/fsh/2409.19/id\\_2409.19-2004-1.doc](http://www.fs.fed.us/im/directives/fsh/2409.19/id_2409.19-2004-1.doc)

<sup>4</sup> The *Federal Register* Notice of issuance of the Forest Service's interim directive is available at the following URL <http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/14mar20010800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2004/pdf/04-1791.pdf>

- Keeping full and open competition as “standard operating procedure” for both agencies and submitting documentation on anything less than full and open competition to the Regional Forester.

## **2.2 Information Resources**

Information regarding stewardship contracting is available on a variety of Forest Service and partner websites, including: the Healthy Forests, National Partnership Center, and Stewardship Contracting websites.

### ***2.2.1 Healthy Forests Website***

For the past year the Healthy Forests website has featured both Forest Service and BLM stewardship contracting projects. This website includes success stories, direction to the field, and other information on the Healthy Forests Initiative. One of the features of the website is a U.S. map where the viewer clicks on a State to read a description of each stewardship contracting project within the state. This map can be found at:

[http://www.healthyforests.gov/projects\\_map.html](http://www.healthyforests.gov/projects_map.html)

### ***2.2.2 Collaboration Resources***

Both the National Forest Foundation/Forest Service’s Partnership Resource Center website and the Forest Service Stewardship Contracting website provide information on collaboration within stewardship contracting projects. The links are found at:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/forestmanagement/projects/stewardship/collaboration/index.shtml>

<http://www.partnershipresourcecenter.org/resources/imp-tools/stewardship/index.php>

Forest Service NEPA training materials will be updated to include links to the stewardship contracting collaboration website and multi-party monitoring in their list of “Public Participation Resources.”

### ***2.2.3 Stewardship Contracting Website***

The Forest Service manages a website to provide general information on stewardship contracting, success stories, and collaboration “lessons learned” stories from recent stewardship contracting projects. The FS has also provided a link to the BLM website on stewardship contracting and the BLM has reciprocated on their website. This link is found at:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/forestmanagement/projects/stewardship/links/index.shtml>

## **2.3 Contracts and Agreements**

In FY 2004 the Forest Service released four integrated resource contracts specifically designed for stewardship contracting. The four integrated contracts will now be the primary contracting mechanism for stewardship contracting projects. The Forest Service is currently writing direction for the use of agreements in stewardship contracting projects. There are also plans to

update the direction in the FS Handbook to include the new integrated resource contracts and agreements.

#### **2.4 General Accounting Office Review**

In FY 2004, the GAO completed a survey of stewardship contracting. The GAO recommended that the Forest Service and BLM provide additional guidance on community involvement. In response to GAO's recommendations, the Forest Service will provide guidance on the basic principles and practices of collaboration in the Renewable Resources Handbook (FSH 2409.19, chapter 60). The Forest Service has also hired a contractor to prepare collaboration training materials and teach five classes, throughout the country, on effective collaboration under stewardship contracting. Forest Service front-line managers and key community members will be invited to participate in the training so that they may gain collaboration tools and experience to bring back to their communities.

The FS is also committed to teaching by example through online lessons learned posted on the website (listed below) on collaboration and community involvement. The Forest Service will continue to add resources and lessons learned to this website.

<http://www.fs.fed.us/forestmanagement/projects/stewardship/collaboration/index.shtml>

The Forest Service has also used an independent third party, Pinchot Institute for Conservation, to monitor and evaluate the agency's successes and failures in stewardship contracting since 2000. The feedback from the third party is assisting the agency in refining policy and handbook direction for stewardship contracting and how the agency interacts and engages local communities.

#### **2.5 Stewardship Contracting Assessment**

In order to gauge our effectiveness in the use of stewardship contracting, the Forest Service sent out a questionnaire to all nine regions and conducted interviews with 74 internal and external stakeholders throughout September 2004.

The assessment revealed that both Forest Service staff and external partners like the idea of stewardship contracting and what it can accomplish. They mentioned that stewardship contracting is a great tool with significant potential for carrying out the FS vegetation management program. The collaboration component increases the support for needed fuels treatment and restoration activities. Interviewees also believed the goods for services authority has allowed the Forests to carry out projects that would have been delayed due to lack of funding.

However, there were also a number of commonly expressed concerns, including the need for training and guidance on the use of the four new integrated resource contracts. Stewardship contracting involves a significant learning curve (both internally and externally), since a stewardship project includes, more collaboration, more complex contracting, and additional reporting than a traditional project. The learning curve is especially steep for those not involved

in the pilots. A number of contracting issues also surfaced, including: diversity of work included in each contract, bonding requirements, and the limited experience of most contracting officers with combining both service and timber tasks into one contract.

The Forest Service is heading up a team to respond to the recommendations in the assessment. The executive summary and assessment can be found at:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/forestmanagement/projects/stewardship/assessment/index.shtml>

**2.6 Tribal Forest Protection Act**

The January 2004 Forest Service Handbook direction has been updated to include the Tribal Forest Protection Act of July 22, 2004, and the revised draft direction is out for consultation with the Tribes. The agency will prepare training materials on the revised direction and distribute them to the field.

**2.7 Retained Receipts**

The legislation allows excess receipts from a stewardship contracting project to be applied to other authorized stewardship contracting projects. The regional forester must approve such a transfer of receipts in advance. However, even though a positive balance in receipts provides funding for additional projects, in and of itself it is not a good gauge of project effectiveness. A “zero” balance merely indicates that work completed to date has balanced the product value with services provided, which is a fundamental intent of stewardship contracting. Table (1) shows the balance of receipts by fiscal year.

Table (1): Stewardship contracting retained receipts by region and fiscal year.

<b>Stewardship Contracting Receipts</b> (dollars in thousands)				
<b>Region</b>	<b>FY 2003 Actual</b>	<b>FY 2004 Actual</b>	<b>FY 2005 Projected</b>	<b>FY 2006 Projected</b>
R-1	\$4	\$23	\$0	\$0
R-2	0	0	0	0
R-3	0	0	0	0
R-4	48	564	553	137
R-5	0	0	0	0
R-6	332	708	73	0
R-8	104	185	554	738
R-9	133	159	501	650
R-10	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>621</b>	<b>1,639</b>	<b>1,681</b>	<b>1,525</b>

## **2.8 Personnel Training**

The Forest Service conducted two national training sessions on implementing stewardship contracting under Section 347 as amended by 323, one on June 24-26, 2003 in Spokane, Washington, and the other on July 8-10, 2003 in Charleston, South Carolina. These sessions trained regional stewardship coordinators and staff who then trained implementing personnel on the National Forests.

The regions have subsequently held 82 training sessions for over 2,800 Forest Service employees, as well as numerous community members, timber industry representatives, conservation organizations, university staff, Tribal representatives, BLM staff, and State employees on how to implement stewardship contracting. These workshops also included instruction on the best value provisions associated with stewardship contracts and agreements. Some of the Regions have also conducted workshops for contractors on how to prepare bids for stewardship contracts.

The Forest Service and BLM held two training sessions on stewardship contracting with the Tribes and the Intertribal Timber Council in October 2004, as well as two additional training sessions with the Tribes in November 2004. In addition, the agency made stewardship contracting presentations to various organizations, including the National Forest Counties and Schools Coalition, in March 2004.

Table (2): Cumulative listing of training sessions completed, employees trained, employees to be trained, sessions planned, and partners attending.

<b>Stewardship Contracting</b>					
<b>Location</b>	<b>Sessions Completed</b>	<b>Employees Trained</b>	<b>Employees To Be Trained</b>	<b>Sessions Planned</b>	<b>Partners Attending</b>
Region 1	27	1124	0	2	Tribal Reps, County Supervisors, Contractors, University Staff
Region 2	6	255	35	1	Contractors, Small Business Contractors
Region 3	2	143	40	2	Tribal representatives, local service contractors/timber purchasers
Region 4	4	115	0	6-8	Timber Purchasers, Contractors, County Commissioners, BLM Employees, Utah State Employee
Region 5	4	146	100	3	Tribal Reps, Dangermond Group Consultants, BLM, American Red Cross, CA Fire Safe Council, CA Dept of Transportation, Superior Helicopter, Intertribal Timber Council
Region 6	6	300	150	5	Tribal Reps, County Reps, OR & WA State Employees, Blue Mountain Biodiversity, ONRC, Trout Unlimited, Timber Industry, County Commissioners
Region 8	7	380	20	1	State Forestry Departments, State Fish & Game, The Nature Conservancy
Region 9	14	100	83	6	Ohio University, Lawrence County (Ohio) Economic Development Corp, Monday Creek Restoration Project Group (Ohio), Rural Action (Ohio), Simms Creek Restoration Group (Ohio), Hocking Technical College, PDA Action Group (Ohio), Lake States Timber Purchasers, Missouri Dept. of Conservation, Missouri Dept. of Natural Resources, Missouri State Forester, National Wild Turkey Federation, Forest Products Association, Mark Twain Timber Purchaser's Association, American Fisheries Society
Region 10	7	75	0	0	City Counselors, Timber Purchasers, Local Environmentalists, Interested Citizens, Concessionaire, Tribal Reps, Alaska Forest Assoc.
National	5	255	0	0	GAO, BLM, SBA, Intertribal Timber Council, Tribes, USFWS, NPS, BIA, The Nature Conservancy, CDF, Parks Canada
<b>Total</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>2893</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>26-28</b>	

## Chapter 3 Specific Accomplishments

### 3.1 Projects Approved by Regional Foresters in FY 2004

During FY 2004, the Regional Foresters approved 40 stewardship contracting projects, submitted by Forest Supervisors, for implementation under the authority provided by Section 347 as amended by 323. The subsections that follow provide information pertaining to: 1) the name and location of these projects; 2) the resource management objectives; and 3) the size of the treatment areas and nature of treatments being applied.

#### *3.1.1 Name and Location of Approved Projects*

Table (3) identifies the 40 projects approved for implementation under Section 323 in FY 2004 and describes where they are located; the table also indicates the date each project was approved.

Table (3): Listing of stewardship contracting projects approved for implementation under Section 323 of P.L. 108-7 in FY 2004.

Project Name	Region	State	Forest	Date Approved
Condon Ponderosa Pine Tree Improvement Thinning Project	1	MT	Flathead	2/20/2004
Hayes Creek Fuel Reduction	1	MT	Bitterroot	4/29/2004
Fred Burr 80 Hazardous Fuels Reduction	1	MT	Bitterroot	6/03/2004
Green Mountain Fuels Reduction	1	MT	Kootenai	7/09/2004
Cedar Spoon Fuels Reduction	1	MT	Flathead	7/13/2004
Island Unit Fuels Reduction	1	MT	Flathead	7/20/2004
Frazier Interface Fuels Reduction	1	MT	Bitterroot	8/06/2004
Grasshopper Fuels	1	MT	Beaverhead-Deerlodge	9/16/2004
Antelope Salvage and Vegetation	2	CO	Rio Grande	1/15/2004
Bark Beetle Analysis	2	CO	Medicine Bow & Routt	1/27/2004
Battle Hazardous Fuels Collaborative	2	WY	Medicine Bow & Routt	8/02/2004
Homestead Park II	2	WY	Shoshone	8/11/2004
Outlook Restoration	3	NM	Lincoln	1/23/2004
White Mountain Stewardship Project	3	AZ	Apache Sitgreaves	3/05/2004
Sign Camp Stewardship Project	3	AZ	Gila	5/17/2004
Turkey-Gavilan Restoration	3	NM	Lincoln	4/29/2004
Quarter Round	4	ID	Payette	4/02/2004
Fox Flat Aspen Restoration	4	ID	Caribou-Targee	4/27/2004
Barney Top Resource Management Project	4	UT	Dixie	7/28/2004
Bryant's Fork Spruce Trap Tree Treatment	4	UT	Uinta	8/19/2004
Independence Fuels Reduction	5	CA	Eldorado	12/16/2004
Mokey Bear Fuels Reduction	5	CA	Eldorado	2/23/2004



Succor, Shirttail, Oak Hazardous Fuel Reduction	5	CA	Tahoe	3/01/2004
Sun Dawg Fuels Reduction	5	CA	Eldorado	5/17/2004
Last Chance Fuels Reduction	5	CA	Eldorado	6/09/2004
Pillsbury Homesite Fuels Hazardous Reduction	5	CA	Mondocino	6/24/2004
Grey Eagle Fuels Reduction	5	CA	Eldorado	8/12/2004
Thinning & Off Site Pine Log Removal	6	OR	Umpqua	1/12/2004
Spooner Vegetation and Road Management	6	OR	Wallowa-Whitman	7/16/2004
McMeadow Restoration	6	OR	Wallowa-Whitman	7/16/2004
HFR Biomass Disposal	6	WA	Umatilla	7/16/2004
Dark Meadow	6	OR	Wallowa-Whitman	7/16/2004
Ashland Watershed	6	OR	Rogue River-Siskiyou	4/28/2004
Prescribe Fire & Wildlife Habitat Improvement	8	SC	Francis Marion & Sumter	3/3/2004
Middle Fork Ecosystem Restoration	8	AR	Ozark/St. Francis	6/4/2004
Catpen Stewardship	8	NC	NF in NC	7/15/2004
Brice's Creek Watershed Wildlife Habitat Improvement	8	NC	NF in NC	9/28/2004
Cisco Camp pine thinning & Redlight Creek Watershed Restoration	9	MI	Ottawa	1/6/2004
Oak Wilt Control	9	WI	Chequamegon-Nicolet	8/4/2004
Kosciusko Stewardship	10	AK	Tongass	6/18/2004

### ***3.1.2 Objectives of Approved Projects***

The 40 Section 323 projects that were approved in FY 2004 are intended to address a variety of resource management objectives. Without losing much specificity, these objectives may be lumped into the following groupings:

- 1) Reduce hazardous fuels within “wildland urban interface” (WUI) areas,
- 2) Reduce hazardous fuels outside of WUI areas,
- 3) Reduce insect and disease risks,
- 4) Improve wildlife habitat, including habitat for threatened, endangered and sensitive species,
- 5) Control invasive weeds, and
- 6) Other.<sup>5</sup>

Using the groupings established above, Table (4) describes the resource management objectives of the projects approved in FY 2004. The basic objective of almost all of these projects is to

<sup>5</sup> Includes objectives such as the following: restore aspen stands; reconstruct and/or decommission existing roads; and/or improve recreation resources.

improve ecosystem and/or watershed health and function. Under this broader edict of ecosystem management, fuels reduction is often the key objective behind many of these projects – with the treatment of the “wildland urban interface” oftentimes given top priority. Many stewardship contracting projects also improve wildlife habitat or control invasive weeds.

Table (4): Objectives of stewardship contracting projects approved for implementation under Section 323 of P.L. 108-7 in FY 2004.

Project Name	Key Resource Management Objectives
Condon Ponderosa Pine Tree Improvement Thinning Project	6
Hayes Creek Fuel Reduction	1
Fred Burr 80 Hazardous Fuels Reduction	1,2
Green Mountain Fuels Reduction	1
Cedar Spoon Fuels Reduction	1
Island Unit Fuels Reduction	2
Frazier Interface Fuels Reduction	1
Grasshopper Fuels	1,2
Antelope Salvage and Vegetation	2, 3
Bark Beetle Analysis	3
Battle Hazardous Fuels Collaborative	2,3
Homestead Park II	2,3,5
Outlook Restoration	2,4
White Mountain Stewardship Project	1,2
Sign Camp Stewardship Project	2
Turkey-Gavilan Restoration	1,2
Quarter Round	2
Fox Flat Aspen Restoration	2,4,6
Barney Top Resource Management Project	3,6
Bryant’s Fork Spruce Trap Tree Treatment	3
Independence Fuels Reduction	1,2
Mokey Bear Fuels Reduction	1
Succor, Shirtail, Oak Hazardous Fuel Reduction	1,5
Sun Dawg Fuels Reduction	1
Last Chance Fuels Reduction	1
Pillsbury Homesite Fuels Hazardous Reduction	1
Grey Eagle Fuels Reduction	1
Thinning & Off Site Pine Log Removal	2,4
Spooner Vegetation and Road Management	2,4,6
McMeadow Restoration	2,4,6
HFR Biomass Disposal	2,3,4
Dark Meadow	2,3,4
Ashland Watershed	2,4
Prescribe Fire & Wildlife Habitat Improvement	2,4
Middle Fork Ecosystem Restoration	1,2,4
Catpen Stewardship	4,6
Brice’s Creek Watershed Wildlife Habitat Improvement	4
Cisco Camp pine thinning & Redlight Creek Watershed Restoration	6
Oak Wilt Control	3
Kosciusko Stewardship	4,6

**3.1.3 Size and Proposed Treatments for Approved Projects**

The stewardship contracting projects approved in FY 2004 vary in size and utilize a variety of land management treatments. Often, a sequence of treatments is applied to a given area – e.g., commercial thinning followed by prescribed (i.e., broadcast) burning. Without losing much specificity, the treatments connected to the approved projects may be lumped into the following groupings:

- 1) Precommercial thinning,
- 2) Commercial thinning,
- 3) Salvage harvesting,
- 4) Prescribed (broadcast) burning,
- 5) Noxious weed control,
- 6) Native plant seeding, and
- 7) Other<sup>6</sup>.

Table (5) identifies the treatments for each project based on the groupings above, as well as the planned treatment area.

Table (5): Size and nature of treatments to be applied in connection with stewardship contracting projects approved for implementation under Section 323 of P.L. 108-7 in FY 2004.

Project Name	Region	Proposed Treatment Area (acres)	Planned Treatments
Condon Ponderosa Pine Tree Improvement Thinning Project	1	14	1
Hayes Creek Fuel Reduction	1	733	1,2,4
Fred Burr 80 Hazardous Fuels Reduction	1	80	1,2,4
Green Mountain Fuels Reduction	1	600-800	1,2
Cedar Spoon Fuels Reduction	1	940	1,2,4,5,6
Island Unit Fuels Reduction	1	714	1,2
Frazier Interface Fuels Reduction	1	447	1,2,4
Grasshopper Fuels	1	3,814	1,2,4
Antelope Salvage and Vegetation	2	1600	1,2,3
Bark Beetle Analysis	2	10,000	1,2,7
Battle Hazardous Fuels Collaborative	2	4,505	1,2,3,4
Homestead Park II	2	1,050	1,2,4,7
Outlook Restoration	3	287	1,2
White Mountain Stewardship Project	3	150,000	1,2
Sign Camp Stewardship Project	3	150	1,2,4
Turkey-Gavilian Restoration	3	2600	1,2
Quarter Round	4	630	1,2,4
Fox Flat Aspen Restoration	4	97	1,2,4
Barney Top Resource Management Project	4	716	1,2,3,4
Bryant's Fork Spruce Trap Tree Treatment	4	178	3
Independence Fuels Reduction	5	1,260	1,2,4

<sup>6</sup> Includes treatments/practices such as roller chopping, hydro-axing and brush mowing; installing watershed improvement structures; creating ponds for wildlife and/or livestock; and reconstructing or decommissioning roads.

Mokey Bear Fuels Reduction	5	857	1,2,4
Succor, Shiretail, Oak Hazardous Fuel Reduction	5	2,382	1,2,4
Sun Dawg Fuels Reduction	5	955	1,2,4
Last Chance Fuels Reduction	5	1,700	1,2,4,7
Pillsbury Homesite Fuels Hazardous Reduction	5	540	1,2,4,6
Grey Eagle Fuels Reduction	5	3,165	1,2,4
Thinning & Off Site Pine Log Removal	6	460	1,3,4
Spooner Vegetation and Road Management	6	1,491	2,3,4,7
McMeadow Restoration	6	1,800	1,2,4,7
HFR Biomass Disposal	6	333	1,2,4
Dark Meadow	6	1,042	1,2,4,7
Ashland Watershed	6	22,286	1,2,4
Prescribe Fire & Wildlife Habitat Improvement	8	1,369	1,2,4,6
Middle Fork Ecosystem Restoration	8	5,103	1,2,4
Catpen Stewardship	8	4,500	1,2,7
Brice's Creek Watershed Wildlife Habitat Improvement	8	373	1,2,7
Cisco Camp pine thinning & Redlight Creek Watershed Restoration	9	20	2,7
Oak Wilt Control	9	100	3
Kosciusko Stewardship	10	38	2,7

As Table (5) indicates, the largest of the approved projects has the potential to treat 150,000 acres and the smallest 20 acres.

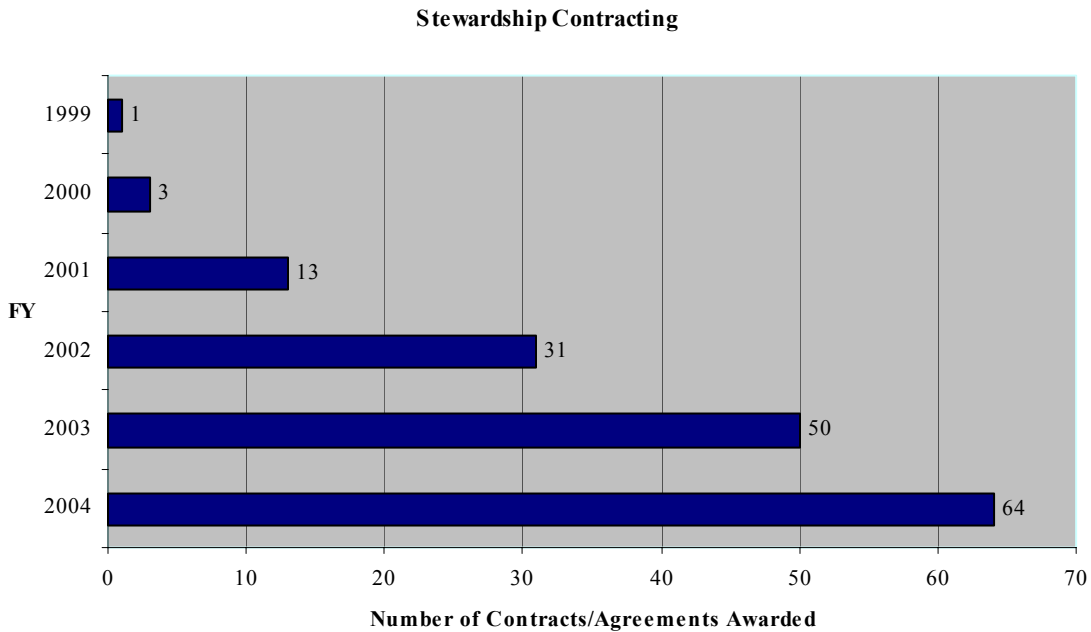
Fuels reduction is a key objective for most of the approved projects. As shown in Table (5), precommercial thinning, commercial thinning, and prescribed fire are the most common treatments.

**3.2 Stewardship Contracts/Agreements Awarded in FY 2004**

***3.2.1 Total Contracts awarded under authority***

The number of stewardship contracts/agreements awarded has increased each year, since the pilot legislation of 1999.

Chart (1): Number of contracts/agreements awarded, Fiscal Year 1999-2004.



During FY 2004, a total of sixty four stewardship contracts and agreements were awarded, treating 41,834 acres. Sixteen contracts were awarded in FY 2004 for projects approved by the regional forester in FY 2004. Note: there can be more than one contract/ agreement within a stewardship contracting project.

**3.2.2 Contracts awarded by state**

Table (6) lists the 64 contracts/ agreements awarded for FY 2004 by state.

Table (6): Number of contracts and acres awarded in FY 2004 by state.

<b>Region</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Number Contracts/Agreements Awarded in FY 2004 (from TSA)</b>	<b>Awarded Acres (from Workplan)</b>
8	AL	3	1,246
3	AZ	1	10,597
2	CO	14	6,065
5	CA	6	4,054
8	FL	1	1,558
1	ID	1	151
4	ID	1	5,390
8	KY	1	372
9	MI	4	417
1	MT	7	2,699
8	NC	7	53
2	NE	1	571
3	NM	3	396
6	OR	5	2,533
8	SC	6	2,253
4	UT	1	0
9	WI		
9	WV		
2	WY	2	3,479
	<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>41,834</b>

Stewardship contracting is improving FS efficiency by allowing the agency to bundle contracts and treat vegetation at a landscape scale.

Several forests, including the Eldorado National Forest, have had experience with multiple stewardship contracting projects. The contracting officer on the Eldorado National Forest recently offered the following insight and lessons learned on some of the efficiencies of stewardship contracting:

- Using an integrated resource contract saves preparation time by preparing only one integrated resource contract versus preparing both a timber and service contract. The

first integrated resource contract took longer to complete, but now they are just as fast to complete as a standard contract.

- Integrated resource contracts are more efficient and cost effective for the national forest to use, as they require fewer appropriated funds since they are exchanging goods for services.
- Foresters are seeing bid prices more favorable to the government because contractors are realizing that completing the service and timber work at the same time is more efficient, enabling them to complete contracts more quickly.
- Competition for stewardship contracts is increasing as contractors become more familiar with bidding on integrated resource contracts.

**3.2.3 Accomplishments for FY 2004**

<b>FY 2004</b>	<b>Nation-wide</b>
Non-WUI high priority hazardous fuels mitigated (acres)	12,779
Hazardous fuels moved to a better condition class - WUI and non-WUI (acres)	15,771
WUI high priority fuels mitigated (acres)	17,496
Total biomass used for energy (green tons)	138
Reforestation (acres)	986
Stewardship contract/agreement awarded acres	41,834
Timber Stand Improvement (acres)	5,422
Total volume harvested (CCF)	58,302
Timber Volume offered salvage sale (CCF)	3,401
Timber Volume offered - appropriated (CCF)	177,338
Timber Volume sold (CCF)	102,310
Range structural improvements (structures)	1
Miles of trail improved	4
Noxious weed treatment (acres)	1,530
Anadromous fish streams restored or enhanced (miles)	1
Inland fish streams restored/enhanced (miles)	10
TE&S terrestrial habitat restored/enhanced (acres)	1,674
Terrestrial wildlife habitat restored/enhanced (acres)	1,376
Miles of road improved	16
Miles of road decommissioned	35
Miles of high clearance road maintained	13
Miles of passenger car road maintained	26
Mechanically treated acres with byproducts utilized (%)	54.6



## Chapter 4 Role of Local Communities

Local community involvement through active collaboration with Forest Service staff is an integral part of every stewardship contracting project. Stewardship contracting projects aim to accomplish forest restoration while supporting and utilizing workers in local communities, restoring and strengthening the connection between local communities and the National Forest. Since 1999, the Forest Service has contracted with a third party to provide an independent review of Forest Service collaboration with local communities. Under the pilot authority (1999-2002), each pilot project had a multi-party monitoring team. Additionally, there were four regional teams and one national multi-party team. While the 10-year authority (2003-2013) requires programmatic monitoring instead of project-level monitoring, the pilots set the bar for a high level of local participation in the design and implementation of stewardship contracting projects. Under the 10-year authority, multi-party monitoring of individual projects is encouraged but not required.

As previously noted, one of the important differences between Section 323 of P.L. 108-7 and the legislation that authorized the Forest Service's stewardship contracting pilots is that Section 323 requires programmatic, not project-level, multiparty monitoring and evaluation. This legislative change created a need to develop and implement a monitoring process that, while meeting the intent of Congress, would be efficient and effective. The FS and BLM worked together in deciding how best to comply with this legislative requirement.

One of the challenges for the FS was to interface monitoring and evaluation of its stewardship pilots with monitoring and evaluation of the stewardship contracting projects initiated under Section 347 as amended by 323. The Forest Service has determined it would make the transition as follows:

- Projects that had completed NEPA remained under the process created for the stewardship pilots – i.e., project-level monitoring.
- Projects that had not progressed to the point of beginning NEPA were rolled into the process created to comply with Section 347 as amended by 323 – i.e., programmatic monitoring.
- Projects that had begun but not completed NEPA, could continue project-level monitoring or could be rolled into programmatic monitoring, at the Regional Offices' discretion.
- All projects approved in FY 2004 would be under Section 347 as amended by 323 – i.e., programmatic monitoring.

A number of factors influenced the agency's decision to pursue the preceding policy. One key factor was that the public listening sessions held shortly after enactment of Section 323 indicated considerable external support for continued project-level monitoring. Another important consideration was that the agency did not want to break faith with the various external stakeholder groups who had invested themselves in the project-level monitoring process being

used in connection with the pilots. Additionally, the agency felt that there were still important lessons to be learned from project-level monitoring of the pilots – and that these lessons, through an adaptive management process, could potentially prove useful in its implementation of Section 323. Beginning in FY 2005, stewardship contracting projects will be monitored nationally at a programmatic level.

The Forest Service and BLM have jointly developed a Request for Proposal (RFP) to solicit bids from potential contractors interested in carrying out monitoring of the role of local communities in development of agreement or contract plans.

The remainder of Chapter 4 incorporates information prepared by the Pinchot Institute for Conservation, detailing the results of their programmatic multiparty monitoring process for FY 2004.

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In February 2003, Section 323 of the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2003 (as contained in division F of P.L. 108-7; 6 U.S.C 2104 Note) was passed. It contained provisions allowing the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (FS) and the United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to enter into any number of stewardship contracts or agreements until Sept 30, 2013. Subsection (g) of the legislation further provided that the agencies establish a programmatic multiparty monitoring and evaluation process, specifically designed to assess the use of the new and expanded contracting authorities.

To help meet these Congressional mandates, the FS and BLM asked the Pinchot Institute for Conservation in July 2004 to help design and manage a portion of the required monitoring process. This assistance was requested partially due to the fact that the Pinchot Institute and its partners (including the Flathead Economic Policy Center, Columbia Falls, MT; Carla Harper, Cortez, CO; Interface, Ithaca, NY; and the Watershed Research and Training Center, Hayfork, CA) have had a long history of working alongside the FS in development of initial concepts, implementation tactics, and monitoring efforts associated with stewardship contracting within the National Forest System.<sup>7</sup>

In August 2004, the Pinchot Institute and the FS signed a final contract to meet three specific agency needs:

- a) The ***design, implementation and management of a multiparty process*** for securing programmatic-level information on the “role of communities in development of agreement or contract plans;”
- b) The ***development of monitoring and evaluation indicators*** that, when collected within the context of a multiparty monitoring process, will yield information that is responsive to the needs of both Congress and the agencies; and
- c) ***The preparation and submittal of information*** that summarizes, analyzes, and interprets the significance of collected and compiled data.<sup>8</sup>

This section summarizes the process developed to collect and analyze data for the FS, in addition to providing an overview of how, and with what level of success, stewardship contracting facilitated and expanded the role for communities in the development of agreements or contract plans during FY 2004.

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<sup>7</sup> NOTE: Michigan State University (E. Lansing, MI) also joined in August 2004 as an important partner in this effort.

<sup>8</sup> By the time of contract signing, the BLM decided not to engage in the monitoring process due to a low number of projects at an implementation phase.

## **4.2 Methods**

### ***4.2.1 A Framework for Evaluation: parameters and measures***

The initial solicitation from the FS and BLM (July 2004) identified a set of specific measures and/or indicators to be used for programmatic monitoring, based largely upon agency interpretation of the legislation. These measures, included:

- The ***nature of local community involvement*** in developing agreements or contract plans.
- ***Specific roles*** being played by various entities involved in developing agreements or contract plans.
- ***The benefits gained by those communities*** involved in the planning and development of agreements and contract plans.
- The ***benefits gained by the agency*** from involving communities in the planning or development of agreements and contract plans; and
- The ***usefulness of stewardship contracting to help meet the needs of local communities***.

These indicators helped frame the overall process, which studied a representative sample of those stewardship projects subject to programmatic monitoring.

### ***4.2.2 Sampling Strategy***

The chosen methodology for identifying the study population was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a type of nonprobability sampling that is used when it is appropriate to select respondents based on research objectives and research knowledge of the population (Babbie, 1995, Yow 1994).<sup>9</sup> For this effort, sampling was based upon a mix of characteristics that were identified as being critical to understanding collaborative processes in stewardship contracting, including project phase (e.g., design, implementation, monitoring) and reported collaborative processes. In addition, geographic location was used to stratify the sample so that each region's representation was proportional to the number of stewardship contracting projects present within that region.

To set the initial parameters for sampling, partners needed a clear picture of the number, location and status of projects utilizing stewardship contracting within the Forest Service. Regional Stewardship Contracting Coordinators were asked to provide a full listing of authorized projects in their regions (including: name, location, and appropriate agency contacts). A total of 53 projects were identified by these individuals (Appendix A).

To determine the operating status of these projects, a 100% sample of these 53 projects took

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<sup>9</sup> Babbie, Earl. 1995. The practice of social research (Seventh Edition). Wadsworth Publishing Company, Belmont, California. 476pp.

Yow, Valerie R. 1994. Recording oral history: A practical guide for social scientists. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, California. 284 pp

place in mid-September 2004. Specific questions asked of each project, included:

1. At what stage is your project?
2. Who initiated the project?
3. Who defined the project area? Is it part of a larger initiative?
4. What is/was the role of the community in NEPA?
5. What is/was the role of the community in contract development or contractor selection?
6. What is/was the role of the community in project monitoring?
7. Who is the agency lead for this project (e.g., Wildlife)?

#### ***4.2.3 Final Project Selection***

Final selection of projects for in-depth data collection (*programmatic monitoring*) was made based on a spectrum of measures including a representative sample of projects within every region, at various levels of development (e.g., design phase, implementation phase, monitoring phase, etc.), with differing levels of community involvement (e.g., heavy community involvement, low community involvement, no community involvement, etc.), and with various departmental leads (e.g., Timber, Wildlife, Fire, Silviculture, etc.).

A total of 26 projects were selected for full sampling within the programmatic monitoring process, including five projects in Region 1, five projects in Region 2, three projects in Region 3, three projects in Region 4, three projects in Region 5, two projects in Region 6, two projects in Region 8, and two projects in Region 9<sup>10</sup>.

#### ***4.2.4 Programmatic Interview Process***

During an initial coordination meeting in August 2004, the Pinchot Institute and its partners developed a list of preliminary questions for in-depth survey purposes. Initially based upon those agency measures/indicators discussed above, the questions were refined in September 2004 and circulated to agency representatives and regional contacts to ensure that the information gathered would be useful in meeting both the needs and goals set forth by the legislation. A final survey template was developed in November 2004 (Appendix B).

Regional partners began in-depth telephone or in-person interviews in November 2004. Each of these interviews followed a consistent format and protocol and they were targeted (at minimum) toward the project manager (agency personnel), a non-agency stakeholder, and a project contractor (where appropriate) for each project. By the end of January 2005, 78 interviews had been conducted, including 29 interviews with agency personnel and 49 interviews with non-agency partners.

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<sup>10</sup> Two projects, Crystal Lakes and Monroe Mountain were inadvertently included in the interview process and were not part of programmatic monitoring under Section 323. Monroe Mountain Ecosystem Restoration was retained under the Pilot monitoring program and Crystal Lakes is a hazardous fuel reduction project rather than a stewardship contracting project. Both projects provide insight in how the agency collaborated with local communities and were left in the analysis.

**4.2.5 Data Analysis**

As information was collected during the interview process, it was entered into a uniform format and sent immediately to Michigan State University for analysis. Following receipt of the data, university researchers coded questions and responses for entry into a software program used for qualitative analyses. The results of this analysis are presented hereafter.

**4.3 Levels of Understanding and Expectations**

**4.3.1 Understanding the Concept of Stewardship Contracting**

In order to determine the overall level of involvement of communities in stewardship contracting, it was decided that an important initial measure would be what the agency and public perceived stewardship contracting to be. It was expected that such perceptions would vary considerably depending on who was interviewed and that current perceptions could potentially influence both the diversity and level of involvement in on-going and emerging projects.

**4.3.1.1 What is stewardship contracting?**

Of the 78 interviews, responses revealed three general conceptual frameworks among the interview pool. Various, stewardship contracting was seen as: (a) a new contracting mechanism for the agency; (b) a new way of accomplishing work on the ground; and (c) a new way of engaging communities in public lands management. Some interviewees also hadn't any understanding of the concept, despite their involvement in a project.

Table 7. What is Stewardship Contracting?

	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Non-Agency</b>
	<b>N=78</b>	<b>N=29</b>	<b>N=49</b>
<b>New Contracting Mechanism</b>	57.6% (45)	62.1% (18)	51.0% (25)
<i>Goods for services</i>	32.1% (25)	41.4% (12)	26.5% (13)
<b>Accomplishing work on the ground</b>	38.5% (30)	37.9% (11)	36.7% (18)
<b>Involving local communities</b>	19.2% (15)	10.3% (3)	26.5% (12)
<b>Don't know</b>	9.0% (7)	3.4% (1)	12.2% (6)

In both agency and non-agency interviews, the majority of participants concluded that stewardship contracting provided a new tool for meeting land management objectives on National Forests. It is interesting to note that some respondents in this category specifically defined stewardship contracting as “Goods for Services.”

*“ It’s a different contract method the Forest Service has to do land management activities—as compared to either the traditional timber sale or service contract methods that have been available in the past. It allows the exchange of goods for services to accomplish more work on the ground than has been possible in the past.”*

As a new tool, survey participants explained that stewardship contracting assists the agency in various ways, including helping to expedite and reduce the cost of management activities, to retain funds on a given Forest for future activities, and/or to help target activities towards a desired end result. Stewardship contracts were also seen as a way of bundling a number of different activities into a single contract, thereby increasing efficiency and effectiveness and providing opportunities for smaller, localized contractors. Some respondents also felt that the process was less bureaucratic and offered longer-term commitments for work.

*“I see it as a tool for the Forest Service that, put in the right hands and with a good intent, could achieve good on the ground. I do like the fact that it provides opportunities for smaller contracts to be able to do work, especially if you look at smaller stewardship contracts.”*

Some respondents interpreted the intent of stewardship contracting as an impetus for changing the focus of work for the agency to include restoration (e.g., fire risk management, wildlife habitat), general land stewardship, and various conservation activities. Respondents believed that stewardship contracting emphasizes landscape management, with broader ecosystem goals aimed at providing benefits for multiple interests. Offering greater flexibility, projects that used a stewardship contract were often judged more successful in achieving various active management goals than those that utilized more traditional contracting mechanisms.

*“It’s an authority that gives the Forest Service an opportunity to bundle a lot of different work together in pursuit of an ecosystem goal—or a large scale goal—for a particular area. It lets us put together a lot of activities that we otherwise couldn’t do, and in the course of the work we may take out some product.”*

Other respondents believed the true intent of stewardship contracting was to provide benefits to local communities. For some, these included providing ample opportunity for community-members to become engaged in the project, including helping identify public needs, finding ways to address those needs, and providing general oversight of activities.

*“In terms of the actual technical definition, I don’t know what it means. I interpret it as a project the Forest Service is taking on that involves members of the community, local stakeholders. That makes it a project that not only benefits the Forest Service but also the local community”*

Others believed that the contracts held potential to impact the capacity of local communities, including retaining local businesses and providing incentives for industry to maintain and support local businesses.

4.3.1.2 *Does involvement affect perceptions?*

Because stewardship contracting is a relatively new tool for the agency, it was important to determine if personal involvement in a project affected levels of understanding or perception. When asked if their view of stewardship contracting changed given their involvement, respondents concluded with a near even mix between yes and no (Table 2).

Table 8. Has the understanding of stewardship contracting changed given involvement?

	Overall N=78	Agency N=29	Non-Agency N=49
Yes	41% (32)	48% (14)	37% (18)
No	59% (46)	52% (15)	63% (31)

Those who answered “yes,” were asked to explain how and why these perceptions changed (Table 3). Responses included: (a) that stewardship contracts were more complicated and required more work than previously thought; (b) that participants were positively encouraged about using the tools; (c) that stewardship contracts helped improve collaboration and the communication among interests; (d) that stewardship contracts reduced bureaucratic procedures; and (e) that Forest Service handbook guidance was stifling creativity.

Table 9. How has the definition of stewardship contracting changed following involvement?

	Overall N=32	Agency N=14	Non-Agency N=18
More complicated/more work	28% (9)	29% (4)	28% (5)
More positive encouragement	22% (7)	4.9% (2)	28% (5)
More collaboration	19% (6)	29% (4)	11% (2)
Less bureaucracy	13% (4)	0	22% (4)
Handbook guidance stifling projects	13% (4)	29% (4)	5.6% (1)

Those respondents who said stewardship contracts were more complicated to administer than previously thought, believed that the entire process (from contract development to bidding to monitoring) is unclear and lacks consistent direction. Respondents also found that stewardship contracts did not streamline the NEPA process as much as they had expected.

Others associated with the projects were encouraged by their involvement and felt that they had learned a great deal about the contracting process and associated tools. Others were pleased to find that, despite the fact that collaboration in stewardship contracting is time consuming and requires a great deal of energy, it does open communication channels within the agency and with external interests. Some found that stewardship contracting enabled the FS to address the needs of local communities and that there was great reward for engaging the public in various aspects



of a project. Still other respondents were discouraged by the level of collaboration in their projects and felt their expectations of the agency (in terms of opening up lines of communication and truly engaging the public in the project) were not met.

Some respondents were pleasantly surprised that stewardship contracts do help reduce the amount of bureaucratic “red tape” often associated with public land management. Others, however, felt that current FS direction regarding stewardship contracting stifles creativity and shifts incentives for utilizing the new mechanisms solely towards increased revenue production.

Finally, some respondents indicated that their understanding of stewardship contracting remained unaffected by their involvement in a given project.

#### *4.3.1.3 Assessment of findings*

The initial concept behind stewardship contracting first emerged in the 1980s in response to shrinking federal budgets, reduced personnel, and public demand for a broader range of outputs from federal forests and rangelands. These early contracts were designed to save public funds through improved contract administration, specification of desired end-results, and the consolidation of multiple activities into a single contract mechanism. Although these contracts were initially developed to facilitate timber management objectives, they soon evolved into tools that support the more comprehensive approach embodied by ecosystem management. By the 1990s, these early land stewardship contracts broadened to include local and small business participation, alternative land management strategies, and locally based planning efforts.

According to data comparisons, the interviewees’ perception of stewardship contracting parallels the development evolution of the concept for the agency. It provides a new set of tools to reduce bureaucratic processes, save federal funds, provide for more ecosystem management, and attend to the needs of local communities. Several findings during these inquiries are worthy of special note, however:

- **“Goods for Services” Limitations** (Table 7)—Some respondents (32% overall respondents) specifically defined stewardship contracting as “goods for services.” The fact that interviewees linked the entire concept to this singular authority indicates a less than complete understanding of both the intent and design of stewardship contracting. Considerably more agency personnel had this perception, than did non-agency representatives (41% of agency respondents, 27% of non-agency respondents).
- **The focus on local communities** (Table 7) —Whereas both agency and non-agency respondents indicated that stewardship contracts are designed (in part) to provide benefits to local communities, more non-agency respondents recognized this integral component than did agency partners (27% of non-agency respondents, 10% agency respondents).
- **Lack of understanding among non-agency public** (Table 7)—From the data, it appears that non-agency interviewees have a more limited understanding of the concept and objectives behind stewardship contracting, when compared to their agency counterparts

(12% non-agency interviewees responded “don’t know” compared to 3% of agency interviewees).

- **More work and greater complication** (Table 9)—Both agency and non-agency respondents concluded from their involvement that stewardship contracts were much more complicated and involved much more work than they had originally envisioned (28% overall respondents, 29% agency respondents, 28% non-agency respondents).
- **Feelings of encouragement** (Table 9)—More non-agency respondents felt encouraged by their involvement in the project than agency counterparts (28% non-agency respondents, 5% agency respondents). This striking difference sheds partial light on an individual’s willingness to engage in a second contract or project and their level of satisfaction in understanding processes and tools.
- **Different assessments of collaboration** (Table 9)—Agency and non-agency responses varied once again in measuring the levels of collaboration associated with stewardship contracts. Whereas agency respondents indicated satisfaction in opening communication channels between the agency and public and attending to the needs of the local community, some non-agency respondents indicated the FS did not come close to personal expectations in engaging the public in various project phases (29% agency respondents, 11% non-agency respondents).
- **New Rules, Less Flexibility** (Table 9)—More agency respondents discussed the overall impact of the new rules (as presented in the agency handbook) on the flexibility and efficiency of new contracting mechanisms. Many feel that these new rules stifle creativity, create more bureaucratic procedures (e.g., monitoring), and change the overall focus of stewardship contracting towards its fiscal benefits (29% agency respondents, 6% non-agency).

*“There is great potential for developing stewardship contracting tools. The “top down” direction is restrictive and does not allow people on the ground to work with the flexibility that the tools inherently grant.”*

### **4.3.2 Understanding the concept of collaboration**

#### **4.3.2.1 What is collaboration?**

With the impetus of work centering on the assessment of local involvement and collaboration in stewardship contracts, it was imperative that clear and concise boundaries be drawn between these two concepts prior to any discussion. To help with clarifications, each interviewer spent time discussing both concepts with the interviewee. “Local involvement” and “collaboration” should fall within the following parameters.

### *Local community involvement*

In general, local involvement involves any level of participation in a project by non-agency people, ranging from (but not exclusive to): volunteering labor or other resources at some point in the project, providing input and/or comments in response to agency ideas, initiating a project, or sharing in decision-making.

### *Collaboration*

In contrast, collaboration is a *kind of public involvement*. While there is no one precise or commonly accepted definition for collaboration, there is some agreement on the characteristics common to collaborative efforts. As stated in Snow 2000, a collaborative effort should include some but not necessarily all of these characteristics:

- People who do not work together on a regular basis or who, in fact, may be adversaries;
- Diverse voices;
- Combination of participant knowledge and skills (mutual learning);
- Volunteer;
- Flexible;
- Non-governmental in origin (but may include agency representatives);
- Concern over process, as well as substance (particularly with respect to decision making processes within the group);
- Local and place-based (but not always);
- Open and transparent; and
- Based on trust in the good faith of other participants.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Snow, Donald. 2001. Coming home: an introduction to collaborative conservation. Pp. 1-12 IN: Brick, Philip, Snow, Donald and Sarah Van De Wetering (eds.) Across the great divide: explorations in collaborative conservation and the American West. Island Press, Washington, D.C. 286pp.

4.3.2.2 *Expectations for collaboration with stewardship contracting*

As an overall measure of how local communities are involved in stewardship contracting, it was important to determine what expectations the agency and public had for collaboration within their projects (Table 4). Respondents generally believed that stewardship contracts would promote greater collaboration. A proportion of respondents either had no expectations for collaboration in stewardship contracts or didn't know if they had any expectations.

Table 10. Expectations for collaboration in stewardship contracts.

	Overall N=32	Agency N=29	Non-Agency N=49
<b>Provides for more collaboration</b>	75% (24)	41.3% (12)	24.5% (12)
<i>Involve more people</i>	15.6% (5)	13.7% (4)	3.4% (1)
<i>Result in less controversy</i>	18.7% (6)	10.3% (3)	6.1% (3)
<b>No expectations</b>	N/A	13.7% (4)	10.2% (5)
<b>Don't know</b>	N/A	41.3% (12)	53.1% (26)

The general expectation among interviewees was that stewardship contracts would provide opportunity for greater community collaboration in agency projects, though this feeling was more evident among agency than non-agency participants. Within this general response, participants elaborated upon both the level of involvement and associated processes within collaborative efforts. For example, some respondents expected to see more diverse participation of various stakeholder groups in stewardship projects, as opposed to traditional timber sales or service contracts. Such involvement, many believe, has potential for reducing controversy and improving relations among various interest groups. Some respondents also expected more face-to-face interaction between publics and the agency and greater efforts from the agency to seek outside input on its planned and on-going activities.

*“It is such a new thing—and a wonderful thing—to have public involvement in government issues, more than just a public hearing. That’s a great concept. It brings historical knowledge, which a lot of federal agencies have overlooked in the past, to a project. My expectations are to continue to see that be better. It’s so nice to have someone actually listen to you and actually participate. They always listen, but they seldom let you participate. We’ve had an absolutely wonderful start, and it needs to continue. It’s new, it will grow and change and grow, but it needs to keep going.”*

Other respondents expected collaboration to result in a greater emphasis on community needs, including the creation of public/agency-shared ownership of projects. Other respondents expected that collaboration would encourage a more creative approach to project design, with specific project outcomes focused on activities such as wildlife habitat improvements, and fuels reduction.

Some respondents had no expectations for collaboration within stewardship contracts or were not sure what their expectations were. Interesting to note is that the majority of non-agency participants (53%) indicated they weren't clear on their expectation for collaboration within stewardship contracts.

### 4.3.3 Meeting expectations for collaboration

Once expectations were identified, interviewees were then asked if they felt these expectations were being met over the course of project implementation and monitoring (Table 11).

Table 11. Were expectations for collaboration met?

	Overall N=78	Agency N=29	Non-Agency N=49
<b>Yes</b>	38.5% (30)	41.4% (12)	36.7% (18)
<b>Partially</b>	19.2% (15)	24.0% (7)	16.3% (8)
<b>No</b>	14.1 (11)	10.3% (3)	16.3% (8)
<b>No answer</b>	28.0% (22)	24.0% (7)	30.6% (15)

Interviewees were then asked to elaborate on their response, including an explanation of how these expectations were or were not met (Table 12).

Table 12. How were expectations met or not met?

	How were expectations met? N=16	Why weren't expectations meet? N=21
<b>Exceeded local involvement</b>	44% (7)	
<b>Developed better project</b>	25% (4)	
<b>Project actually happened</b>	13% (2)	
<b>Collaboration problems between the FS and public</b>		29% (6)
<b>Level of involvement not achieved</b>		19% (4)
<b>Specific project outcomes not achieved</b>		11% (3)
<b>Process cumbersome</b>		9.5% (2)

Some respondents felt that the actual level of community involvement in a project exceeded their initial expectation for collaboration and that the agency went above and beyond trying to engage a variety of interests in their project. Some also concluded that better projects emerged as a result of broader involvement and that more on-the-ground work was accomplished as a direct result of collaboration.

*“The Forest Service goes out of its way to involve people. Whether they are successful or no is a different matter. They want to find out what people think the landscape ought to look like after the fact [the project].”*

In contrast, some respondents discussed several on-going obstacles to collaboration, most often related to differences between the culture of the agency and that of surrounding communities. Some interviewees responded that the FS did not take public input seriously, despite the energy of the public in sharing ideas. Others stated that the FS was averse to confronting issues and

tended to avoid collaboration because the agency was not willing to relinquish or share any responsibility or decision-making authority.

*“There is real difficulty in interaction between Forest Service and volunteer groups. The Forest Service doesn’t know how to work with input from them. The bureaucracy is such it doesn’t allow them to work with it. I think some individuals in the Forest Service see that, but I wish there was someone with enough clout in the agency to sit down with people and say, ‘You have to learn to work with the public.’”*

Others felt that collaboration was simply a “buzzword” for the agency and, as a consequence, support and attention to the true spirit or intent of collaboration didn’t exist.

*“We really thought the main stumbling block of forest projects was collaboration between the logging community and the environmental community, but through this process we found that there was more common ground between these two interests. The real collaboration problem is between the Forest Service and the public.”*

Some respondents also reported that because the anticipated level of involvement (i.e., diverse involvement) was not ideal, projects were far less creative in their approach.

#### 4.3.2.4 Assessment of findings

According to the responses and their subsequent analyses, expectations around collaboration in stewardship contracting and actual achievements in broadening the involvement of the public in collaborative efforts varies. Despite these somewhat divergent results, specific comparisons of the data are worth of special note:

- **Unknown expectations for collaboration** (Table 10)—A large percentage of both agency and non-agency interviewees were unable to identify expectations for collaboration within stewardship contracting (41% agency respondents, 53% non-agency respondents). This inability to elaborate on general expectations highlights a potential weakness in promoting collaboration in training and public relation efforts.
- **Currently meeting agency expectations** (Table 11)—In general, more interviewees felt their expectations for collaboration were met than not. A slightly higher percentage of agency respondents indicated this perception over non-agency respondents, mostly related to improvements in project design and greater on-the-ground accomplishments (41% agency respondents, 37% non-agency respondents).
- **Currently not meeting public expectations** (Table 11)—A slightly higher percentage of non-agency respondents indicated dissatisfaction in meeting expectations for collaboration (16% non-agency respondents, 10% agency respondents). These conclusions were most often related to on-going obstacles associated with agency

relations, including: cultural differences, limited consideration of public input and ideas, and a general lack agency support and attention.

*“We need to have a Forest Service ID team that’s enthusiastic about collaboration and wants to hear other people’s views, not just certain people’s views. We need to let go of our preconceived notions, let go of our self-imposed ideals of how thorough our analyses need to be.”*

**4.4 Benefits of Stewardship Contracting and Collaboration**

Another important measure for assessing stewardship contracting is the associated benefits to both local communities and the agency. Interviewees were asked about the perceived and actual benefits of stewardship contracting to local communities and the benefits of the collaborative processes inherent.

**4.4.1 Local Benefits of Stewardship Contracting**

Asked to identify the benefits of stewardship contracting for communities, respondents cited: (a) economic growth and diversification, (b) improved collaboration between the agency and its public(s), and (c) ecosystem improvements. Direct benefits for the agency, included: (a) improved efficiency in accomplishing on-the-ground work; (b) improved public trust, and (c) increased flexibility for project administration and implementation.

Table 13. Perceived benefits of stewardship contracting

	Benefits to the community			Benefits to the agency		
	Overall N=78	Agency N=29	Non-Agency N=49	Overall N=78	Agency N=29	Non-Agency N=49
<b>Economic</b>	47% (37)	66% (19)	37% (18)			
<i>More local jobs</i>	33% (26)	24% (10)	33% (16)			
<i>More on-the-ground work accomplished by local contractors</i>	35% (13)	21% (6)	14% (7)			
<i>Greater opportunity to use local contractors</i>	22% (8)	21% (6)	4% (2)			
<b>Increased collaboration</b>	14% (11)	14% (4)	14% (7)			
<b>Environmental improvements</b>	8% (6)	10% (3)	6% (3)			
<b>Improved efficiency and effectiveness</b>				21% (16)	24% (10)	12% (6)
<b>Improved public trust</b>				19% (15)	10% (3)	24% (12)
<b>Increased project outcomes</b>				14% (10)	21% (6)	8% (4)

Respondents identified economic development as the primary benefit to communities. Stewardship contracts are believed to have potential to build or expand skills and/or employment opportunities for the local workforce. Respondents also believe stewardship contracts afford local businesses and contractors greater employment opportunities, particularly through the application of various expanded contracting authorities (e.g., best value contracting and multi-year contracts). Some respondents believe that when contracts include provisions for best-value selection and multiyear activities, smaller contractors have an increased chance of winning awards and creating stable and secure employment for longer periods of time (as compared to more traditional contracting scenarios, like timber sales).

*“It’s already enhanced some businesses—an arborist has had all the business he can handle doing private work up there. A couple of private businesses have been doing some less specialized work, brush thinning, cutting a couple of smaller doghair thickets. We’re hoping we can create some more value added products out of the small diameter material, and that will really be a big economic benefit down the road.”*

Respondents also believe that the use of stewardship contracts holds promise for greater collaboration in project design, implementation, and monitoring—thereby opening new avenues for dialogue between the agency and the public. Through this increased collaboration, improved awareness and appreciation of stewardship activities and community forestry are expected. Respondents anticipate increased consideration of local input and an improvement in project design.

*“Stewardship contracting provides increased efficiency (accomplish more work with limited dollars), goods for services. Best value is great because it is an incentive for contractors to do better work and it puts an emphasis on local work. Also, contractors provide valuable ideas about how to make the contracts more attractive and effective.”*

Finally, respondents believe that communities could benefit from actual on-the-ground improvements. Because so many stewardship contracting projects are designed to decrease wildfire risk or otherwise improve the health and vitality of surrounding ecosystems, many respondents felt that changes to the resource could greatly improve safety, recreation and aesthetic values within their adjacent communities.

*“It’s a coordinating, good will kind of effort. It’s good for the agency. It’s a great public relations for the agency, if nothing else. People aren’t so skeptical. For the public, it’s so nice for us to be asked what we want to do, to be involved. That’s a nice perspective.”*

The perceived benefits of stewardship contracting to the agency largely center upon improved administration and management processes. Some respondents believe that stewardship contracts facilitate activities on National Forests that otherwise might not be accomplished because of continuing budgetary constraints (e.g., watershed, forest health, fire reduction, wildlife habitat improvements). Other respondents see stewardship contracting as a way to improve public trust in the agency. Some participants believe that through increased dialogue and collaboration, support for a project will increase and the project may be less liable to appeal. Others believe that the open and transparent processes often associated with stewardship contracting could improve public relations and build a stronger common ground for decision-making.

Respondents reported that stewardship contracts hold great potential for increased flexibility of procedures and processes within the agency. The authorities associated with stewardship contracting allow for designing the project with specific end-results in mind (e.g., designation by description/prescription) and also help streamline contracting and budgeting procedures by



reducing the time spent in administrative oversight and by allowing receipts to be retained locally for future work.

**4.4.2 Local Benefits of Collaboration**

Interview participants were also asked to identify benefits to the community and to the agency due to the collaborative processes associated with stewardship contracting (as opposed to the benefits of the contracting tool itself). Responses covered a broad spectrum, including: (a) a broader understanding and consideration of diverse interests, (b) increased trust, (c) increased opportunity for input into land management activities, (d) increased sense of purpose and ownership for the project; and (e) increased support for the agency.

Table 14. Perceived benefits of collaboration.

	Benefits to the community			Benefits to the agency		
	Overall	Agency	Non-Agency	Overall	Agency	Non-Agency
	N=78	N=29	N=49	N=78	N=29	N=49
Broader understanding/consideration of diverse interests	26%(20)	24%(7)	37%(18)	9%(7)	10%(3)	10%(3)
Improved trust	14%(11)	14%(4)	33%(16)	9%(7)	10%(3)	8%(4)
Increased opportunity for public input	10%(8)	7%(2)	14%(7)			
Improved sense of purpose and ownership in a given project	6%(5)	7%(2)	4%(2)			
Increased support for the agency			14%(7)	17%(13)	21%(6)	14%(7)

The potential for stewardship contracting to facilitate more active involvement of diverse stakeholders in projects was identified as one community benefit. A more diverse involvement of interest implies an increased exposure of all parties to different views and levels of expertise, thus leading towards a broader understanding and consideration of each others’ interests and an increased level of trust among these interests. Other respondents believed that collaboration provided a venue for community input, which could ultimately result in improved project design and implementation. Others believed that collaboration helps improve a community’s sense of purpose or ownership in resource management decisions. In essence, to some respondents collaboration holds great potential for helping to build stronger, integrated communities, particularly when common ground can be established.

Other community-based benefits listed by respondents included the likelihood of collaboration to lead towards the establishment and maintenance of long-term relationships between the public and the agency and facilitating the sharing of ideas and values in an open and transparent process.

Among the identified benefits to the agency, several respondents believed that collaboration helped build greater public support for the agency and its activities. Through collaborative processes, the public gains a better understanding of agency plans and accomplishments and learns directly about its primary goals/objectives in land management decisions. Through collaborative relationships, the agency also is seen more as a community-member than as an “outside” force and bolsters its credibility in decision-making.

#### 4.4.3 Assessment of findings

Interview participants provided long lists of benefits associated with both the new stewardship contracting tool and the collaborative processes associated with it. In some instances, agency and non-agency respondents differed in their assessment of resulting benefits, as evidenced in the following points:

- **Stewardship contracting can lead to improvements in the local economy** (Table 13)—Whereas respondents overall ranked the economic benefits of stewardship contracts as the primary benefit, a higher percentage of agency participants felt this was a strong benefit (66% agency respondents, 37% non-agency respondents). This difference may be because the agency intends to focus its efforts on small and local businesses, but its intention is not being communicated or exercised in the way local communities might wish (21% agency respondents, 4% non-agency respondents).
- **Stewardship contracting can result in increased collaboration** (Table 13)—Agency and non-agency respondents were nearly equal in their view of increased collaboration as a primary benefit of stewardship contracts to local communities (14%).
- **Stewardship contracting can result in improved project efficiency and effectiveness** (Table 13)—Respondents, overall, ranked improved efficiencies and effectiveness as the primary benefit of stewardship contracting to the agency (21% respondents, overall). Agency interviewees ranked this benefit slightly higher than non-agency interviewees, most likely due to their deeper understanding of internal processes and procedures and the amount of time routinely required for completing work of similar scope under different contracting mechanisms.
- **Stewardship contracting can result in improved public trust** (Table 13)—Respondents, overall, also identified increased public trust as another agency benefit of stewardship contracting (19% respondents, overall). Non-agency participants had a slightly higher percentage compared to that of agency respondents, which is telling as they are outside of the agency and likely better understand public attitudes and levels of trust toward the agency.
- **Collaboration results in a better understanding and consideration of community interests** (Table 14)—Respondents, overall, indicated that collaboration's primary benefit to the local community resides within its ability to bridge various perspectives and help build common ground (26% respondents, overall). A slightly higher percentage of non-agency participants identified this benefit as the primary benefit to communities (37% non-agency respondents, 24% agency respondents). A larger percentage of non-agency respondents identified collaboration's ability to improve trust among parties as the primary benefit to the local community (33% non-agency respondents, 14% agency respondents).

- **Collaboration results in greater support of agency efforts** (Table 14)—Respondents, overall, indicated that the primary benefit of collaboration to the agency is the potential for increased understanding and support of agency efforts (47% respondents, overall).

**4.5 Local Involvement in Stewardship Contracting**

Another portion of the programmatic assessment of local involvement in stewardship contracts centered upon the diversity of participants, their respective roles, outreach mechanisms for involvement, and non-engaged partners.

***4.5.1 Currently Involved Interests***

Interviewees were asked to identify who, within their local communities, was involved in a given stewardship contracting project. The majority of respondents reported the involvement of: (a) state agencies, (b) environmental interests, (c) local government interests (which included elected officials, existing boards and councils, and local departments), and (d) adjacent landowners/residents (such as homeowner associations, residents, and cabin owners).

Table 15. Local Community Involvement

	<b>Projects N=26</b>
<b>State agencies</b>	77% (20)
<b>Environmental interests</b>	62% (16)
<b>Local government interests</b>	58% (15)
<b>Adjacent landowners and residents</b>	50% (13)
<b>Fire interests/ organizations</b>	35% (9)
<b>Forest industry</b>	35% (9)
<b>USDA Forest Service</b>	27% (7)
<b>Recreation interests</b>	27% (7)
<b>Tribal interests</b>	27% (7)
<b>Other federal agencies</b>	23% (6)
<b>Ranchers/grazing interests</b>	23% (6)
<b>Educators/educational interests</b>	15% (4)
<b>Project bidders/contractors</b>	12% (3)
<b>Other</b>	27% (7)

Interview responses showed how these participants are involved in a broad array of activities associated with stewardship contracting projects (Table 16).

Table 16. Project roles for local community members.

	<b>Projects</b>
	<b>N=26</b>
<b>Planning and design</b>	58% (15)
<b>Comments and suggestions</b>	42% (11)
<b>Public outreach and education</b>	31% (8)
<b>Implementation</b>	24% (7)
<b>Providing technical information</b>	24% (7)
<b>General interest</b>	19% (5)
<b>Funding source</b>	19% (5)
<b>Monitoring</b>	15% (4)
<b>Representation of local interests</b>	15% (4)
<b>Other</b>	19% (5)

#### 4.5.2 Outreach Practices

The variety of outreach activities was also an important measure of how local involvement was initiated and or maintained (Table 17).

Table 17. Means of local involvement.

	<b>Projects</b>
	<b>N=26</b>
<b>Invited by the USDA Forest Service</b>	78% (20)
<b>Invited by people/groups already invited</b>	42% (11)
<b>Given role in the community</b>	39% (10)
<b>Initiated the project</b>	23% (6)
<b>Non-affiliated public</b>	42% (2)

For the majority of respondents, local involvement in most projects followed a formal invitation from the agency to participate. Others became engaged when associates, friends or neighbors encouraged their involvement and extended broader invitations. Some respondents explained that their current role in the community facilitated their involvement, for example their membership on a local board or fire company, or the position they hold in a local industry. Other interests were involved in the original design of the project and/or the collaborative effort that led to its initiation.

The agency, in its attempt to broaden the involvement of the public in its efforts, exercised various outreach methods as part of its “invitation” for more local involvement (Table 18).

Table 18. Outreach efforts by the agency for increased local involvement.

	<b>Projects</b>
	<b>N=26</b>
<b>Meetings</b>	81% (23)
<b>Personal contact</b>	58% (15)
<b>Newspaper/radio</b>	46% (12)
<b>Mailed letters/postcards</b>	42% (9)
<b>Field tours</b>	38% (10)
<b>Existing community organizations/activities</b>	38% (10)
<b>NEPA scoping activities</b>	27% (7)

According to these findings, the agency predominantly engaged its public through scheduled meetings. These included either public/community meetings or pre-arranged gatherings of homeowner associations and groups. Personal contact was also an important method for reaching the public. This included personal telephone calls, door-to-door information sharing, word of mouth sharing, and discussions with potentially affected landowners. Media outlets, letters and postcards have also played an important role in sharing information with the public, as have field tours and agency attendance at existing community meetings/activities. Examples of such community meetings/activities include watershed council meetings, local government hearings and meetings, and fire related gatherings (e.g., fuel management cooperatives, fire department meetings, FireWise related gatherings, and community wildfire protection planning sessions).

**4.5.3 Non-engaged Parties**

A study of who was not engaged in a stewardship contracting process is as telling as who was. When asked if the diversity of interests involved in a given project was sufficient, participants responded overwhelmingly (69% of respondents) that there were interests that should have been involved in their project but weren't (Table 19). Among these non-engaged interests, the majority of respondents identified environmental and/or conservation groups.

Table 19. Who should be involved in collaborative efforts?

	<b>Projects</b>
	<b>N=18</b>
<b>Environmental/conservation groups</b>	56% (10)
<b>Adjacent landowners/homeowners</b>	28% (5)
<b>Loggers/timber industry</b>	17% (3)
<b>Internal USFS bureaucracy</b>	17% (3)
<b>Recreation interests/users</b>	17% (3)
<b>Community/general public</b>	17% (3)
<b>Legislators</b>	11% (2)
<b>Community business interests</b>	11% (2)
<b>Other</b>	17% (3)

Respondents provided a broad perspective on why certain interests weren't engaged in a project: (a) a lack of effort on the part of the agency to reach out to other interests; (b) difficulties in reaching and communicating with a given interest; (c) an interest's general opposition to a project; (d) "wait-and-see" mentality on the part of an interest; and (e) unknown/other.

Table 20. Why aren't interests involved?

	Projects
	N=18
USFS did not reach out	17% (3)
Hard to reach	17% (3)
Opposed to the project	11% (2)
Wait to see what happens first	11% (2)
Not sure	11% (2)
Other	17% (3)

Respondents thought stewardship contracting projects should aim to include certain interests, in order to: (a) the avoid misunderstanding; (b) engage important user groups; (c) avoid appeals and litigation; (d) avoid additional constraints to implementation; and (e) foster a more-inclusive process.

Table 21. Why should additional interests be engaged?

	Projects
	N=18
Avoid misunderstanding	33% (6)
Users of area	22% (4)
Avoid appeals and litigation	22% (4)
Constraint to implementation	17% (3)
Need to be inclusive	17% (3)

#### 4.5.4 Assessment of Findings

In reviewing local involvement in stewardship contracting, several emerging issues are noteworthy:

- **Consistency in involved parties** (Table 15)—As with earlier stewardship pilot efforts, those parties most often engaged in some element of the project include state agencies (77%), environmental interests (62%), local government interests (58%) and local landowners/residents (50%). In many instances, state agencies are active partners in project efforts, whereas the other parties are more concerned about how a project is designed and what its outcomes will be due to their proximity to on-the-ground efforts and overall concern for resource stability.
- **Local interests' involvement in the planning and design of projects** (Table 16)—Not surprisingly, the majority of community members are involved in the planning and design phase of a project. What remains unknown at this point is the level of

involvement and the specific roles these parties have taken. For example, when planning and design assistance were mentioned by respondents, did this just mean cursory review of already prescribed plans (e.g., NEPA scoping and comment) or did it mean substantive involvement in helping design project areas and prescriptions?

- **Direct agency invitation is the primary method of involving community interests** (Table 17)—In most instances (78%), local interests became engaged following a formal invitation from the agency to participate. This may partially be due to the fact that many surveyed projects were agency-led efforts and partly due to recent emphasis and encouragement within the agency to collaborate more readily with the public (specifically with stewardship contracts).
- **Public meetings still a major agency outreach tool** (Table 18)—An overwhelming percentage of agency outreach (81%) happens through the facilitation of public meetings. This is most likely linked to the historical posture of the agency, particularly with formal procedures like NEPA scoping and public comment collection.
- **Non-engagement of environmental/conservation groups** (Tables 19 and 21)—Despite respondents indicating that environmental interests were among some of the more consistent publics engaged in stewardship contracting projects, they also reported that they remain the most non-engaged sectors of the community (56%). This discrepancy is confusing and may warrant re-examination of roles (active involvement vs. provision of public comment) and reasons why certain groups valued participation opportunities. Initial review highlights potential benefits of reducing misunderstandings and avoiding appeals/litigation (33% and 22% respectively). However, a lesson from previous pilot monitoring and evaluation exercises indicates that the involvement of litigious or adversarial parties do not always result in reductions in appeals and/or litigation.



**4.6 The Collaborative Process**

Unlike the earlier iteration of stewardship contracting pilots, projects initiated under the new 2003 authorities (and those pilots moved into programmatic monitoring status) are not required to have a project-level multiparty monitoring process in place. While these are not congressionally mandated, the agency requires that all stewardship contracting projects involve collaboration. As such, it is important to determine if congressional mandate and or agency direction results in the establishment and/or full-utilization of collaborative or multiparty groups and processes in various project phases.

**Note: For the purposes of this discussion, we distinguish the formal collaborative process from general public involvement as described in Section 4.3.2.1.**

***4.6.1 Formation of Formal Collaborative Teams or Groups***

When asked, the majority of respondents indicated that a formal collaborative process or team was in place at the time of interview (Table 22).

Table 22. Is a formal collaborative team or process in place?

	Projects
	N=26
Yes	81% (21)
No	15% (4)
Sort of	4% (1)

**4.6.2 Involvement in Formal Collaborative Processes**

Interviewees provided extremely rich and varied data when asked who was involved in their collaborative group/process and what specific roles these individuals played. Because this information varied so greatly among regions, it was decided that descriptions and findings would be presented in a modified case study format. These detailed narratives can be found in Section 4.7.

**4.6.3 Management and Facilitation of the Formal Process**

Where applicable, interviewees were also asked to describe how their collaborative team or group was facilitated. The majority of respondents indicated that agency employees facilitated the collaborative group (Table 23).

Table 23. How is your collaborative process facilitated?

	<b>Projects</b>
	<b>N=22</b>
<b>USDA FS</b>	<b>50% (11)</b>
<b>Self-facilitated</b>	27% (6)
<b>Outside facilitator</b>	23% (5)
<b>Not facilitated</b>	23% (5)

For those groups for which formal facilitation did not exist, two separate conditions were evident. There were those respondents who said that the process was rambling and not organized at all. There were other respondents, however, who indicated that the process was intuitive and based on mutual trust and respect, thereby negating any need for a formal facilitator.

Participants were also asked if the same person or organization always facilitated the process. Among the 22 interviewees who responded, 41% (9) indicated that different people facilitated their meeting. In contrast, 36% (8) indicated that the same person helped facilitate discussion sessions for the group. Five participants (23%) did not provide a response.

**4.6.4 Outreach Practices**

Methods used by the collaborative group to enhance or expand its membership ranged between several activities (Table 24).

Table 24. Outreach efforts for the formal collaborative process.

	Projects
	N=22
Meetings	36% (8)
Personal contact	36% (8)
Newspaper/radio	23% (5)
Mailed letters/postcards	23% (5)
Field tours	18% (4)
Existing community organizations/activities	23% (5)
NEPA scoping activities	0%

The two methods most often used to engage a broader public in collaborative efforts were meetings and personal contact. In most cases, various meetings (e.g., homeowner groups, project-specific discussions, public forums, seasonal gatherings) were most successful in communicating the objectives and efforts of the collaborative groups. Personal contact was also highly ranked among interviewees, including personal invitations, individual phone calls, door-to-door information sharing, and word of mouth advertising. Various media outlets (including targeted mailings) and field tours (or show-me-trips) were also successful in engaging new publics in on-going efforts.

**4.6.5 Non-engaged Parties**

Participants were also asked whether or not they felt the level of involvement in their given collaborative effort was sufficient (Table 25).

Table 25. Are their interests currently not involved in the collaborative that should be?

	Projects
	N=22
Yes	45% (10)
No	23% (5)
No response	32% (7)

Ten respondents (45%) indicated that there were other interests that should be involved. These non-engaged groups included: environmental interests or groups, timber interests (including loggers), tribes, state agencies, affected landowners, members of the media, regional and national agency representatives, contractors, and people who had been engaged but subsequently dropped out of the process.

Most respondents could not fully explain reasons why these interests remain un-engaged but speculated that it may be due to: (a) the FS or other entity not extending a formal invitation, (b) excessive actual or perceived time requirements associated with involvement, (c) confusion over how best to engage, and (d) steadfastness in attitude, thereby making participation less attractive (i.e., an unwillingness to reach consensus in a collaborative approach).

Respondents believe that having some of these groups involved could help bring additional information and input to the decision-making foray or could help achieve greater buy-in for projects and agency activities. Others firmly believe that a diverse group of interests results in greater agreement and realization that interests and objectives can overlap or come to an appropriate middle ground.

**4.6.6 Assistance for Collaborative Activities**

In addition to the structure and functioning of formal collaboratives, another important assessment factor for stewardship contracting projects is the kinds and amount of assistance (e.g., financial, technical, etc.) available to both the agency and the public for participation in collaborative processes. Interviewees were asked to identify the kinds and focus of assistance available to them, sources for this assistance, associated restrictions, and potential impacts.

**4.6.6.1 Available assistance**

Respondents provided a general overview of assistance available to them for participation in the collaborative endeavor (Table 26).

Table 26. Types of available assistance.

	<b>Projects</b>
	<b>N=22</b>
<b>Financial</b>	59% (13)
<b>Training</b>	27% (6)
<b>In-kind time and labor</b>	27% (6)
<b>Technical</b>	23% (5)
<b>Other</b>	18% (4)
<b>None</b>	9% (2)
<b>No response</b>	14% (3)

Participants indicated that during FY2004, the most readily available assistance for efforts in a collaborative was financial, either through direct grants or reimbursements for operating costs. Specific training in collaboration was also available, including agency-led trainings following passage of 2003 legislation. In-kind contributions (e.g., time, labor, volunteer efforts) have also assisted collaborative groups, as have various types of technical assistance. Other kinds of assistance available to collaboratives include the donation of meeting space and coverage of publication costs (e.g., printing, copying, etc.). A small percentage of projects felt there was no assistance available for their collaborative group.

For the most part, available assistance attended to a variety of needs associated with the collaborative and its project (Table 27).

Table 27. Focus of assistance.

	<b>Projects</b>
	<b>N=22</b>
<b>Operating costs</b>	27% (6)
<b>On-the-ground activities</b>	18% (4)
<b>Collaboration</b>	14% (3)
<b>Other</b>	45% (10)
<b>No response</b>	23% (5)

The majority of assistance (most likely financial) helped with meeting planning/execution, meeting facilitation, postage/copying, and other general operating costs. Offered assistance also facilitated on-the-ground activities and the overall management of the collaborative. Some assistance was also provided for monitoring activities, planning efforts, topic-specific training, and the distribution of various kinds of technical information.

*4.6.6.2 Sources of assistance*

When asked where this assistance originated, respondents overwhelmingly replied that the agency provided the bulk of services (Table 28).

Table 28. Sources of assistance.

	<b>Projects</b>
	<b>N=22</b>
<b>USFS</b>	68% (15)
<b>Collaborative participants</b>	23% (5)
<b>Foundations/local organizations</b>	14% (3)
<b>Other</b>	32% (7)
<b>No response</b>	23% (5)

Participants in the collaborative, foundations and local organizations also each played integral roles in either supporting or providing various assistance mechanisms for those engaged within the collaborative effort. Other sources of support and assistance included: RC&D units, Resource Advisory Committees, other federal agencies, state agencies and the local community.

*4.6.6.3 Restrictions on assistance*

Participants were also encouraged to share any restrictions associated with available assistance. Only six projects responded to this question. Of these, two respondents identified over-bearing limitations on grant money expenditures (33%) and two identified a limited availability of training for the general public (most trainings, to date, have been available only to agency-employees) (33%).

*4.6.6.4 Impacts of assistance*

Participants were also asked to identify any impacts this assistance had on their overall projects (positive and/or negative). Only four respondents answered this question, each with a positive reaction towards the assistance. One respondent indicated that trainings in collaboration were very helpful, while another replied that technical assistance actually helped that agency and community work together more effectively. Others felt that offered assistance helped promote better information sharing.

4.6.6.5 *Additional needs*

Finally, interview participants were also asked to elaborate on any additional assistance they felt should be offered to improve either their collaborative process or the overall functioning/management of their project (Table 29).

Table 29. Additional assistance needs.

	Projects
	N=22
Training on stewardship contracting	32% (7)
Financial support	27% (6)
Training in conflict resolution and collaboration	14% (3)
Internal FS discussions	14% (3)
None	9% (2)
Other	14% (3)
No response	9% (2)

Respondents identified a growing need for more concise and focused training on the concept of stewardship contracting: (a) what it is and isn't, and (b) what the goals are behind its use (both regionally and nationally). Participants also reported needing more financial assistance, specifically for items such as monitoring, group facilitation, collaborative operating costs, and field trips. Specific training in conflict resolution and collaboration would also be useful to those participating in a stewardship contracting project. Respondents also reported a need for greater agency support, particularly a commitment to collaboration and making stewardship contracting a priority.

4.6.7 *Assessment of Findings*

An assessment of collaboration during FY2004, and in particular comparing these results to levels of general local involvement, highlights several issues pertinent to the ability of stewardship contracting to meet the needs of local communities:

- **Congressional mandate or agency direction doesn't impact the establishment of local collaborative groups** (Table 22)—When the new authorizing legislation was passed in 2003 and it did not call for local multiparty monitoring, many people feared that the collaboration inherent within stewardship contracting projects would wane. Whereas collaboration within projects during FY2004 ranged from project design to monitoring, local collaboratives are still going strong—despite lack of direction, funding, or formal recognition.
- **The agency tends to facilitate collaborative efforts** (Table 23)—Within collaborative efforts, the agency continues to take lead in managing and facilitating the group. Such

posture can have severe limitation on the functioning of a group, as the agency should be viewed more as a participant in the process, not as an outside authority figure.

- **Meetings and personal contact are the primary outreach efforts for building collaboratives** (Table 24)—Similar to local involvement, most information sharing and invitation into a collaborative effort takes place within a formal meeting setting or through personal contact with collaborative members. This seems consistent with the normal public relations outreach activities of the agency and in most instances, has proved successful. Other options may be equally viable, but may require additional resources, training or technologies.
- **A more diverse set of participants is wanted/needed in collaboratives** (Table 25)—When compared to levels of satisfaction with other form of local public involvement, respondents seem to be slightly more content with the diversity of interests involved in collaborative processes. Interesting to note, however, is that when listing which interests should be engaged, interviewees provided a much broader spectrum of interests for the collaborative, including timber interests, tribes, members of the media, contractors and people who might have dropped out of the process early. This difference in interests may be related to different objectives and desired end-results among those who engage in general local involvement activities and those who participate in collaborative efforts.
- **Financial assistance is available, but restrictions limit its benefit** (Tables 26 and 29)—Whereas respondents indicated that financial support (in the form of grants and reimbursed costs) is the most readily available form of assistance to stewardship contracting projects, critical funds are still needed for certain components deemed important by collaborative groups. Funding shortfalls include: monitoring, meeting facilitation, and general public involvement costs.
- **The bulk of current assistance is coming from the agency** (Table 28)—Based on responses, the bulk of assistance offered to collaboratives associated with stewardship contracting projects comes directly from the Forest Service. This is problematic for several reasons. First, singular sources of funds, technical assistance, etc. potentially limit both the focus and direction of efforts. For example, assistance from the agency can be burdened by strict budgetary guidelines, fluctuations in personnel and direction, and cultural bias towards innovation and risk-taking. Secondly, the agency can quickly become over-taxed by its own efforts, leading to heightened criticism for not doing and being all that it has promised. A more varied base of support and assistance should be pursued to ensure the influx of new ideas/energies and unrestricted financial support.
- **Training on stewardship contracting needs to include agency and non-agency audiences together** (Table 29)—Whereas the agency has provided some level of training for its staff on stewardship contracting, the public has much to gain by being included in these sessions. Mixed audiences will undoubtedly result in improved knowledge bases and may also result in improved trainings, as each participant brings his/her own perspective, questions and experience to the table.



#### **4.7 Regional Case Studies**

During each interview, participants were asked to describe the general structure and functions of those collaborative groups associated with their projects. Specifically, interviewees were asked to describe who was involved in the project and how they were engaged in project planning, implementation, and monitoring. This data was determined essential for identifying gaps in efforts and also for promoting a broader learning network among people involved in (or wishing to become involved in) collaborative endeavors with the agency

Because the responses to this portion of the interview varied greatly between regions, often due to regional conditions (e.g., culture, percent of public lands, economies, urban areas), it was decided that data would be presented in modified case study format. Such presentation, while not backed by statistical analyses, is designed to provide a rich assessment of conditions across the county that either foster or hinder collaboration during various phases of stewardship project execution.

#### ***4.7.1 Inland Northwest (Regions 1, 2, 4, and 6)***

In the Inland Northwest Region (which includes MT, ID, E. WA, and most of WY) five of the eight projects surveyed were initiated during the demonstration phase of stewardship contracting. Their initial project managers received some training in collaborative processes at stewardship workshops held annually by the Regional Office (R1) as part of the demonstration program. A pre-existing collaborative group that had been involved in one or more demonstration projects developed the sixth project, while an agency employee, who had closely observed one of the demonstrations, guided the seventh. The manager of the eighth project did not have previous experience in collaborative efforts.

#### ***Collaborative Teams and Process***

Among the projects interviewed, four involved proposals developed by the Forest Service, with input sought from existing community groups (e.g., a mature and experienced collaborative focused on forest stewardship, a group concerned about area wildlife, a homeowners' association, and a watershed group). In some instances, those groups subsequently diversified their public participation to include other viewpoints. However, only one of the groups initially consisted of a broad range of interests.

One of the projects had no collaborative process established beyond the standard NEPA scoping and comment periods, although the project was developed in close cooperation with the local government. A Forest Service manager said, "If I had to start over, I would...probably form a collaborative group with the environmentalists, timber industry, and the fire department." But, he added, "I'm not sure the result would have been any different."

While some of these collaborative groups identified with a formal "process," others did not. One Forest Service team leader replied "We had a process – but did people know they were on the collaborative team? Probably not. The Forest Service acted as the entity to pull things together." They did that by working separately with other concerned agencies, environmental groups, industry, etc.

#### ***Involvement in project planning and/or design***

At the time of the survey, one project was in the implementation phase, one had just awarded its implementation contract, two were in the contracting process, and the remaining four were still in their planning/NEPA phase (most nearing completion of it).

Many of the collaborative processes incorporated Forest Service-organized field tours during which community members and other stakeholders articulated their ideas and concerns. In at least two cases, the collaborative groups themselves organized and facilitated field tours to get input from other groups and individuals.

However, not every collaboration included field tours. One community participant said, "We didn't go out on the ground as a group. [The Forest Service] relied on us knowing the area already. [We did] a lot of B.S.-ing about what was needed." Out of those discussion sessions,

the core collaborators and others who attended some of their meetings developed a proposed project.

Some groups met regularly over a period of months, or even years, crafting projects they felt were appropriate. In at least four of these, some participants were upset about the lack of positive agency response to their suggestions. One community participant observed, “To me, [collaboration is] give a little, get a little. That hasn’t happened. The big alternative we were pushing for, they didn’t even want to analyze.”

In another project, local district- and forest-level managers made a significant effort to incorporate a number of management activities proposed by the collaborative, but then had to drop several of them because of the Regional Office’s interpretation of Forest Service handbook direction on what an appropriate stewardship activity is. A community member said, “I hate to see the changes being made. [Implementing the community proposals] would have helped a lot in building trust.”

### ***Involvement in implementation***

Since several of the projects have been under development for long periods (as much as four or five years), and because on-the-ground work had begun on only one project at the time of the survey, there was considerable frustration among both community and Forest Service participants. “Basically what happened, the Forest Service wore us out. We were anxious...we wanted to be part of this thing. ...We worked really hard to achieve consensus, trust building. There was a huge amount of energy put into this thing, and then the Forest Service just putzed around and putzed around, and they just wore us out. It’s been two years since we gave our report to the Forest Service.”

In several instances, the community moved into implementation before the agency. Two collaborative groups sought National Fire Plan funding so they could do fuels reduction treatments on private lands at the same time the Forest Service did its treatments under stewardship contracts on public lands. In both cases, however, delays in the Forest Service planning/analysis process resulted in the private land work beginning at least two years before the stewardship projects. In another community, a group that participated in the collaborative process raised private funds to pay for needed trail improvements when the Forest Service decided that they could not be included in a stewardship contract.

### ***Involvement in monitoring***

Each of the five projects that began as part of the stewardship demonstration program was initially required to establish project-level multiparty monitoring teams. When they were shifted out of demonstration status and put into the programmatic monitoring category, there was uncertainty about how to proceed. A collaborative participant in one community said, “Supposedly, yes, we were told we could be part of that [monitoring] ...Now we’re holding our breath to see what happens. It depends upon what got written into the [stewardship] contract.” On another project, the Forest Service manager said, “The plan is to offer people...a chance to be part of the monitoring group. ...I would like to see some carryover from [people involved in the] planning to the monitoring group.”

None of the five former demonstration projects surveyed now has a formal monitoring plan or team in place, although generally there seems to be an expectation on the part of both agency and community collaborative participants that there will be some sort of multiparty monitoring.



On the one project where on-the-ground work has begun, members of the local collaborative have made at least three trips to the project site to observe operations, take photographs, and have discussions with Forest Service personnel and the contractors doing the work.

Among the three projects initiated after the demonstration period ended, one has no plans to involve the collaborative group in monitoring (although the Forest Service would welcome comments from individual members), and a second has not gotten around to addressing the issue yet. In the third, the Forest Service, members of the collaborative group, and the successful bidder on the project all seem to have different ideas about what may or may not occur in the way of monitoring.

#### ***4.7.2 Southwest (Regions 2, 3, and 4)***

In the Southwest (which is comprised of Forest Service Regions 2, 3 and parts of 4), all surveyed projects (nine in total) reported that collaboration was either actively ongoing or had been an integral part of the conception and planning of particular stewardship contracting projects. For each of these projects, levels of collaboration fell within three broad categories: project-specific collaboration (2-projects), projects built from existing collaborative efforts (6-projects) and projects weak in collaboration (1-project).



For most of the stewardship contracting projects authorized during FY 2004, building upon an existing collaborative effort made most sense. There are literally hundreds of groups of varying degrees of formality that have sprung up over the last ten years within the region, each specifically focused on forest health issues and the rapid loss of economic infrastructure associated with natural resource management.

Only one project seemed to have floundered on incorporating a collaborative process. This was not due to any malice, but more the nature of the project, partner functions, and a general lack of understanding.

#### ***Involvement in project planning and/or design***

In general, federal land managers struggle with how to collaborate with the public on project planning and design beyond initial field trips and issue identification. At the same time, the public also struggles primarily because most people know very little about resource management. They know what they like aesthetically and that they care about wildlife and watershed health, etc. Some interviewees reported not being interested in the planning or implementation of a project (particularly from a technical side) but instead see value in being engaged during the monitoring phase. For several non-agency interviewees, a great deal of trust exists in the agency to plan and make decisions.

In contrast, however, one collaborative body for the region was actively engaged in project and contract design. This collaborative, which included agency representatives, actually hired a retired industry professional to work with the agency on designing the project and the final contract.

### ***Involvement in implementation***

Involvement in implementation is another vague measure, with opinions and perceptions varying a great deal within the region. In a number of cases people believed they were adequately involved in implementation because the agency allowed them to get firewood from the road side or because they had been invited to participate on a field trip during the harvest work. For each of these individuals, was their involvement considered valuable input during implementation? For most interviewees, they would answer “yes.” Even those “savvy” groups with a lot of specific on-the-ground involvement felt that they should in effect “get out of the way” during implementation. They see their job as beginning once it’s underway and they have something to contrast and compare, to monitor. No one complained of being left out of implementation.

### ***Involvement in monitoring***

For most respondents in this region, involvement in project monitoring was the area of greatest interest, though the meaning of “monitoring” seemed to vary greatly among the interviews. One federal land manager described his/her “ah ha” moment, when they realized that collaborative monitoring (or multiparty) was more about people getting out on the land and interacting than about technical measures involving soils or basal area. This seems to be much the same case for all of these projects. Local citizens want to broadly monitor areas of biophysical, economic, and social impacts. Whereas they do not consider themselves research scientists, for the most part, they do wish to gain a broader understanding of land management ethics and techniques. The majority of them want to feel involved in efforts but also want to maintain some distance from a perceived micro-managerial posture. Many of those interviewed see monitoring specifically as a trust building exercise.

The more advanced collaborative groups often mentioned contracting with a “data collector” or asking the agency to perform some specific data collection, but in no case did the collaborators express an interest in analyzing this data with any scientific rigor. In the cases where implementation is underway, people viewed themselves as proponents of the project, seemingly as marketers for the effort. They equated monitoring with promoting progress, especially among key decision makers within the agency.

Others reported various levels of informal monitoring. For example, a number of interviewees responded “yeah, we are taking some photos and going out there a few times a year.” This type of informal review helps satisfy some people’s need for engagement, even if it has little to do with actual research or scientific analysis. In nearly all cases where collaboration was on going, those interviewed took pride in their efforts in monitoring. They see monitoring as their primary role and feel fulfilled by their contribution to the agency and its activities. Some are even protective of their “community monitoring,” in that they don’t want the agency too involved. It is something they will report back to the agency on, a report card of sorts.

For this region, collaborative monitoring was well developed (particularly among the given sample) and there were no complaints of barriers to monitoring other than the usual needs for more financial support.

### ***4.7.3 Pacific Northwest (Regions 5 and 6)***

Within the Pacific Northwest (comprised of Forest Service Regions 5 and parts of 6), collaboration varied from project-to-project according to a wide array of conditions. This variation reflects the local and regional nuances in social and political conditions including existing partnerships and relationships, past experiences, and current leadership and direction. The variation is also due, in part, to the new and flexible nature of collaboration as a unique form of involving communities in public lands management. There is an inevitable learning curve that the agency and communities are going through.



Interviewee interpretation of “collaboration” was not consistent across the board. Some believed that the NEPA-scoping process, if it included a public meeting and discussion, was a form of collaboration. Others believed that collaboration must occur pre-NEPA scoping, and shape the project from the very beginning including identification of purpose and need for work, identifying project goals, planning and design, project implementation, and monitoring. Some projects featured pre-NEPA collaboration, while others involved collaboration as part of the NEPA scoping process. For the purpose of this discussion, collaboration relates to the interpretation of the individual interviewee and not to a pre-set definition of collaboration.

In all but one project, the agency pursued collaboration (whether pre or post-NEPA) once preliminary treatment locations and project objectives were identified internally. Only one project was identified as lacking any collaboration. The project did involve county government and contractor participation, including suggestions that impacted project design and contact details. However, none of the parties involved viewed the non-agency participation as collaboration.

#### ***Involvement in project planning and/or design***

In CA and OR, collaboration has been most commonly integrated as part of the project planning and design phases of stewardship projects. In most instances, the collaboration was initiated and facilitated through existing local institutions that include some combination of local/county government, Firesafe councils, fire departments, environmental groups, and other local residents and interested parties. These institutions and working partnerships were already established at the time of project initiation and tended to work on broad landscape planning and coordination issues.

In two instances, the agency brought the project to the existing institution post-NEPA as part of the scoping process. The agency introduced the projects and then held extended discussions about concerns, ideas, and comments from the broader group. In both instances, the agency was able to take the concerns and make small changes to the projects to integrate them. Some individuals felt this constituted collaboration, while others did not. Some interviewees felt that these projects fell short of their potential for providing local community benefits, although they



were generally satisfied with the technical merit of the projects for accomplishing land management objectives.

Pre-NEPA collaboration tended to be more extensive and resulted in broader integration of non-agency goals, ideas, and concerns into project planning and design. In one instance, the agency presented their vision and plans for the project and adapted it from to meet the concerns of the collaborative group. In the other instance, the larger collaborative group was able to work with actual maps to identify and draw treatment units alongside agency specialists. Both the agency and non-agency interviewees acknowledged the high value that local knowledge and perspective brought to that particular project.

In three instances collaboration contributed to defining contract criteria and/or contractor selection. In two of these cases, the collaborative group helped to identify the “best-value” criteria that was most important to them. They tended to weight the criteria towards selection ensuring “local” contracting and the quality of the contractor’s past work.

### ***Involvement in monitoring***

Project monitoring received the least amount of collaboration, which may be due in part to the fact that several of the projects were still in the early stages of contract development, offering, and implementation (not to suggest that monitoring cannot begin at project inception). Only one project had begun a collaborative monitoring process (although not formalized). The group had tentatively agreed to track materials removed and resulting product values from small-diameter materials. Any other monitoring that was suggested by interviewees was to be independent and non-collaborative in nature.

Several interviewees felt that their most important role as collaborators was to help the agency look at their project as part of a larger landscape effort involving a wide range of organizations, entities, and individuals. They were less interested in weighing in on the individual project as they were in coordinating efforts across ownerships and administrative boundaries. Although in these instances the collaborative groups tended to have limited impact on the stewardship project at hand, they felt that the broader communication and collaboration was beneficial. In two instances, this collaboration led to the identification of locations and objectives for future stewardship work in the local area.

#### ***4.7.4 East (Regions 8 and 9)***

Four projects were interviewed for in-depth study of collaboration in the East (comprised of Forest Service Regions 8 and 9). They are very different from one another both in size and in the kind of work they intend to accomplish on the ground. Each of them described their collaborative processes as informal. In those instances where collaboration was most successful, the collaboration around the project was based on a long history of trust between the agency and public and close working-relationships between the two. For the most part, non-agency interviewees had high praise for local ranger district personnel; they truly could not say enough good things. Two case examples provide general overview of conditions within the Eastern United States.



#### ***Case Study #1***

The first illustrative case study aims to treat several thousand acres. There are at least 15 partners involved in the project. It is on a district where there exists a long history of collaboration and cooperation with the public. One interviewee said it is important to understand that this project is happening because of long-term collaboration on the district; it is not that collaboration is happening because there is a stewardship project on the district. The infrastructure for it was already in place.

Each partner involved in the project has its own objectives for involvement; for each the Forest Service is the critical link, with open communication between partners occurring throughout. One partner noted that the Forest Service has gone above and beyond the call of duty to ensure that everyone who should be involved is involved; Forest Service personnel will go anywhere and talk to anyone about this project. An interesting aspect of this collaboration is that many of the individuals involved wear more than one hat: a member of a local wildlife group may also “represent” a state commission; a conservation “representative” may be a hunter and a hiker; Forest Service personnel are members of the local community and are involved in local activities on a daily basis.

Among interviewees, this project has been described as “totally collaborative.” The project is still in the planning stage, but these partners and others will be involved in all phases. They have already been involved in planning (providing expertise and ideas) and outreach and in successful trouble-shooting with potential appellants. It is anticipated that they will provide funding and labor at the implementation stage.

#### ***Case Study #2***

The second case study is vastly different, but equally collaborative. There are two main collaborators with many interested observers. A local Native American Nation has treaty rights on the forest and an MOU allowing the removal of a certain number of board feet of logs from the forest. They are building a traditional round house and specific kinds and size of logs from

their traditional lands in order to construct an authentic round house. For a variety of legal reasons, these logs cannot be taken under the MOU. As such, stewardship contracting provided a much needed venue for securing these materials for the Tribe. Incidentally, a Forest Service Tribal Liaison is the lead on the project.

For this project, FS and tribal representatives worked collaboratively on all aspects including coaching tribal workers and finding appropriate logs for removal.. This project led to a stronger relationship between the tribe and the local ranger. Now if there is a question on either side, they call and get together and discuss it. This project was a learning experience for the agency and the tribe building a relationship for the future.

**4.8 Support, Satisfaction, and Lessons**

Each interview concluded with an assessment of the level of support afforded each project by the community and the agency, with specific discussion of areas of contention and lessons learned.

***4.8.1 Level of Support for the Project***

Each respondent was specifically asked how widely supported they thought their project was within the general community and also within the agency.

***4.8.1.1 Support within the community***

The majority of respondents replied that there was wide support within the community for the stewardship project, though response rates differed somewhat between agency and non-agency interviewees (Table 30).

Table 30. How widely supported is the project in the community?

	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Non-Agency</b>
	<b>N=78</b>	<b>N=29</b>	<b>N=49</b>
<b>Widely supported</b>	65% (51)	79% (23)	57% (28)
<b>Somewhat supported</b>	12% (9)	14% (4)	10% (5)
<b>Most people are not aware of projects</b>	6% (5)	0%	10% (5)
<b>Other</b>	6% (5)	3% (1)	8% (4)
<b>No response</b>	10% (8)	3% (1)	14% (7)

***4.8.1.2 Support within the agency***

Respondents were also asked whether or not project efforts were widely supported by the agency. Strikingly, the rate of responses for agency support was lower than the response for the community presented above (Table 31).

Table 31. How widely supported is the project in the agency?

	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Non-Agency</b>
	<b>N=78</b>	<b>N=29</b>	<b>N=49</b>
<b>Widely supported</b>	49% (38)	69% (20)	37% (18)
<b>Somewhat supported</b>	15% (12)	17% (5)	14% (7)
<b>Most people are not aware of projects</b>	8% (6)	10% (3)	6% (3)
<b>Other</b>	4% (3)	0%	6% (3)
<b>No response</b>	24% (19)	3% (1)	37% (18)

#### 4.8.1.3 Assessment of findings

Comparing the responses between levels of support within the community and within the agency for a given stewardship project presents some interesting results:

- **The agency senses more support from the community than do non-agency interviewees** (Table 30). Although the difference in percentage rates is not overwhelming, there is slight variation on how the two populations responded to the question of community support. One might be able to conclude that such difference indicates a disconnect, perhaps the agency not being fully in-tune with the concerns or praises of its public. However, without more detailed data backing such claims, any/all conclusions are largely speculative.
- **There is less support for stewardship contracting projects reported within the agency, than within the local community** (Tables 30 and 31)—A lower percentage of respondents indicated wide support within the agency for a given stewardship project (49%), compared to the local community (65%). Drawing on responses to previous questions (e.g., Section 6.0), a lack of assistance to support collaboration or to develop a uniform level of understanding of stewardship contracting within the agency might have influenced how participants answered this question. In any regard, a closer look within the agency to determine levels of satisfaction and understanding among staff might be warranted, particularly if stewardship contracting is intended to be used more broadly in the near future.

*“There’s support for the project in the agency, but some concern about putting this much effort into such a small project. There’s support within the agency on the idea that just reaching consensus was a good thing to have accomplished—that [after the project] perhaps we can start to agree on more substantive things—get people into a pattern of trying to find agreement instead of laying out the territory about their disagreements.”*

**4.8.2 Level of Satisfaction with Stewardship Contracting and Collaboration**

Interviewees were also asked to describe disagreements, or other indicators of public/agency dissatisfaction, associated with the projects and/or collaborative efforts. According to these interviews, near even mixes of projects were impacted by some kind of disagreement, as were not (Table 32).

Table 32. Was any disagreement (public or internal to agency) experienced?

	Overall N=78	Agency N=29	Non-Agency N=49
Yes	30% (23)	31% (9)	28% (14)
No	23% (18)	35% (10)	16% (8)
No response	42% (33)	35% (10)	47% (23)

Nearly half of all respondents said some level of disagreement with outside environmental groups had impacted their project (44%). Other disagreements tended to center around some technical aspect of the project (30%), general skepticism towards the agency (26%), or some other factor (9%, including contracting details and/or a general lack of information).

**4.8.3 Lessons Learned**

Respondents were also asked to reflect upon their experiences as part of a collaborative endeavor and share relevant lessons learned. The two most common responses among interview participants were: (a) that collaboration takes time, and as a result one must start the process early (44%), and (b) The USFS needs to learn how to work better with its partners and the general public (44%).

Specific guidance on these lessons includes:

- **More guidance on the goals and means of collaboration** associated with stewardship contracting is needed from the Washington Office (e.g., definition of desired level of collaboration).
- **An incentive and/or reward system should be established** for agency employees who collaborate often and well with the public.
- The agency (and the public) needs to **overcome the US vs. THEM mentality**.
- **Defensive postures among all partners need to be relaxed**.
- A willingness to **learn from others** is imperative to the collaborative process. This includes visiting other projects to see how others are accomplishing tasks and objectives in different settings.
- Those involved in a collaborative effort must **be responsive** to needs, points raised, and suggestions of others.
- Outreach must be improved and **more diversity** within collaboratives should be encouraged.

- ***Risk-taking is okay*** and should be encouraged, as it can lead to immense innovation and creativity.
- ***Making mistakes is okay***, particularly if adaptive learning is encouraged and/or supported as part of this effort.
- True collaboratives house ***great power and influence***.

#### **4.9 Conclusion**

From the various interviews and analyses exercised for this programmatic review of local involvement and collaboration, one can conclude that despite continuing needs for clarity, direction and support, the agency and its various publics are maintaining a focus on collaborative processes to improve project design, interpersonal communication and overall goal-setting. Whereas there is still room for much improvement, efforts from both parties indicate earnest attempts at improving efficiencies and effectiveness towards a common goal of forest and community health.

Unique to stewardship contracting, attention to both local involvement and agency/public collaboration becomes an essential contextual element of success. The emphasis placed on specific authorities, such as “designation by description” and “best value contracting,” fully encourages a more active and mutual relationship with the public based upon encouraged dialogue, straightforward input and effective monitoring.

*“The project is very widely supported within the agency and the community. In the agency, it has achieved a wide array of resource benefits from fuels to wildlife. In the community, it has achieved fuels and community safety objective and make efforts on private lands more comprehensive.”*

These results for FY 2004 are encouraging and indicate that the leaning circle begun with the Stewardship Contracting pilots in 1999 has extended itself beyond the life of the demonstration program. As efforts continue and ripples within these circles widen and deepen, abilities both within the agency and external to it will undoubtedly grow, eventually facilitating the kind of collaboration envisioned and desired by the public within the functional administrative environment envisioned by the agency.





## **APPENDIX B: SURVEY TEMPLATE**

Confidentiality language (use any or all as you wish).

Records of this study will be kept completely confidential. The Pinchot Institute for Conservation is coordinating this study under contract with the US Forest Service. The data will be analyzed at Michigan State University and only researchers involved in the analyses will have access to the data. Only summaries will be reported to the agency. Your name will not be associated with any specific responses. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent of the law.

Participating in the interview is completely voluntary. You indicate your voluntary agreement through your participation. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the US Forest Service, the Pinchot Institute for Conservation or \_\_\_\_\_(local/regional partners name here).

Local community involvement:

Any local participation in a project from non-agency people along a spectrum of activities ranging from (not an inclusive list):

- volunteering labor or other resources at some point in the project  
to
- providing input and or/comments in response to agency ideas  
to
- initiating a project  
to
- shared decision making

Collaboration:

Collaboration is one type of local community involvement. While there is no one precise commonly accepted definition of collaboration, there is some agreement on the characteristics of a collaborative effort (Snow 200). A collaborative effort should include some but not necessarily all of these characteristics.

- May be composed of people who do not work together on a regular basis or who, in fact, may be adversaries
- Composed of diverse voices
- Combines knowledge and skills of participants. People learn from each other.
- Voluntary
- Flexible
- May be nongovernmental in origin (may include agency people)
- Concerned with process as well as substance; particularly with respect to the decision making process within the group (not always about consensus). Participants are willing to return to the table.
- Usually local and place-based but not always
- Open and transparent
- Based on trust in the good faith of other participants

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Region:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Project:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Who:**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Agency person**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Community member**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Contractor**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Other** \_\_\_\_\_

**FY04 PROGRAMMATIC MONITORING ON THE ROLE OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN DEVELOPMENT OF AGREEMENT OR CONTRACT PLANS**

Interviewers: when conducting your local community phone interviews, please include individuals that may not be part of the formal community structure but are part of the informal social network that provided input on the stewardship contracting project (for example, those who are behind the scenes helping to build coalitions, such as peer group leaders). The contractor will conduct purposive sampling up to 26 Forest Service projects under Section 323 of the FY 2003 Omnibus Appropriations bill (PL 108-7) **for the period of work in FY04**. A range of projects at various stages on a number of forests will be sampled in each of the nine Forest Service Regions with a minimum of three people contacted per interview.

**You have been involved in the \_\_\_\_\_ stewardship contracting project.**

1. If someone asked you to explain stewardship contracting, what would you say?

Has your view of stewardship contracting changed since your involvement in this project?

If yes, how has it changed?

2. I want to ask you about local community involvement in your project:

Who is or has been involved (Individual or group, tribal government, county government, etc.)	How did they get involved?	What is or was their role in the project?

3. What outreach efforts have been used by the Forest Service to get people involved in the \_\_\_\_\_ project?

4. Are there individuals or interests that you believe should be involved but aren't?

Who?

Why do you believe they should be involved?

Why do you believe they are not involved?

**The next set of questions are about collaboration as a specific type of local community involvement.**

5. Is there a collaborative team or process involved with any component of your project ?  
**If no, go to question #11.**

Project planning and/or design (pre or post NEPA)?

If yes, who is involved?

How are they involved?

Project implementation?

If yes, who is involved?

How are they involved?

Project monitoring?

If yes, who is involved?

How are they involved?

6. What outreach efforts have been used by the collaborative to get people involved?

7. Are there individuals or interests that you believe should be involved in your collaborative team or process that aren't?

Who are they?

Why do you believe they should be involved?

Why do you believe they are not involved?

8. How is your collaborative process facilitated?

Probes: A member of the team? An outside person? A disinterested party? Always the same person?

9. What kinds of assistance (financial, training, etc) have been available to support the activities of the collaborative team or process?

Type of assistance	From who?	For what?	Any restrictions	Impact

10. What kinds of additional assistance would have been valuable?

11. What were your expectations for collaboration in the \_\_\_\_\_ project?

Were your expectations met?

If yes, how?

If no, why not?

**The following questions are about your stewardship project generally**

12. How widely supported do you believe your project is in the community and in the agency? Have you experienced disagreement? If so, please describe it.

13. What do you see as the local benefits of stewardship contracting?  
To the community?

To the agency?

Specifically, what were the local benefits of \_\_\_\_\_ project? **(If not already stated)**

14. What do you see as the local benefits of **collaboration** in stewardship contracting?  
To the community?

To the agency?

15. Were there any lessons learned about collaboration in \_\_\_\_\_ project that you would like to share with the agency?

16. Knowing what you know now, would you participate in another stewardship contracting project?

If yes, why?

If no, why not?

17. Are there any additional comments you want to make about either stewardship contracting generally or your personal experience with it?