

FY 2003 Performance Report

Overview of Performance Reporting

The publication *How Federal Programs Use Outcome Information*, part of the Managing for Results Series, suggests that outcome information should be used primarily by program managers themselves to improve the effectiveness of the programs.

So, what is a desired outcome for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service? In the Forest Service, the legacy of annual reporting for the Resource Protection Act leaves the agency prone to reporting outputs in the quantity of products and services that are delivered, rather than outcomes as the results that are achieved, as required by the Government Performance Results Act (GPRA) of 1993. Forest Service leadership must shift the agency's focus to GPRA's requirements so that a frank discussion about the outcomes, or results, that are needed within the agency can occur.

The following definitions come from the publication mentioned above.

- INPUT** The resources, whether expenditures or employee time, used to produce outputs and outcomes. The Forest Service does not currently track employee time.
- OUTPUT** Products and services delivered. Outputs are completed products of internal activity—the amount of work done within the organization or by its contractors, such as miles of roads repaired or number of acres treated.
- OUTCOME** An event, occurrence, or condition that is outside the activity or program itself and is directly important to program customers or the public. Also included are indicators of service quality, which are important to customers.
- PERFORMANCE INDICATOR** A specific numerical measurement for one aspect of performance—an output or outcome.

The USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan (2000 Revision) states—

The agency's annual performance report will include information on what was accomplished relative to annual performance measures and the status of progress toward strategic plan objectives, based on multiyear trends.

For fiscal year (FY) 2003, because no approved annual performance plan existed, there are no annual performance measures. Instead, for this performance and accountability report, the Forest Service used the revised targets reflected in the agency's 2003 Program Direction as FY 2003 performance indicators, since they are based on the appropriated funding, rather than on the budget request sent to the President. The performance indicators for the FY 2003 Performance and Accountability Report may be identified in the "2003 Planned" column of Exhibit 5—FY 2003 Planned and Actual Performance Table, in the 2003 USDA Forest Service Performance Indicators and Trends section of this report.

Definitions for "efficiency" and "effectiveness" are provided in the requirements for the Management's Discussion and Analysis (MD&A) section of the *Form and Content of Agency Financial Statements* (OMB Bulletin No. 01-09). As each term relates to performance goals, objectives, and results, efficiency is measured by relating *outputs* (the quantity of services provided) to *inputs* (the costs incurred to provide the services). Effectiveness is measured by the **outcome** or the **degree to which a predetermined objective is met**, and it is commonly combined with cost information to show "cost-effectiveness."

Currently, the Forest Service may be able to develop and report objective measures to provide performance information about program efficiency, but it is not able to demonstrate the cost effectiveness of agency programs. Presidential Management Initiatives—such as performance and budget integration, improved financial management, and competitive sourcing—are moving the agency in that direction.

FY 2003 Performance Trends

The following discussion on performance indicators and trend information may contain wording that states “administered to standard.” In the Forest Service Directives System there are criteria by which the agency administers these performance indicators. The Forest Service Directives System has two components—Forest Service Manual (FSM) and Forest Service Handbooks (FSHs). The FSM contains legal authorities, objectives, policies, responsibilities, instructions, and guidance needed on a continuing basis by Forest Service line officers and primary staff in more than one unit to plan and execute assigned programs and activities. The FSHs are the principal source of specialized guidance and instruction for carrying out the direction issued in the FSM. Specialists and technicians are the primary audience of FSH direction. The FSHs may also incorporate external directives with related USDA and Forest Service directive supplements.

In the 2003 Planned and Actual Performance and the Performance Trends for 1999-2003 tables, there are performance indicators that appear to be duplicates between base program and National Fire Plan accomplishments but have different results reported in the “Projected 2003 Performance” column. These activities are funded through normal appropriations and National Fire Plan appropriations and, therefore, must be reported separately.

In FY 2003, the Forest Service provided financial and technical assistance to States and local communities through its wildland fire management, economic action, and forest stewardship programs. State and Private Forestry (S&PF) programs and projects focused resources and assistance to sustain rural communities and the 70 million acres of urban forests nationwide and to protect environmentally important forest areas that are threatened by conversion to nonforest uses.

The Forest Service worked closely with States and local volunteer fire departments to help prevent fires and to increase the survivability of homes from wildland fires. In FY 2003, the Forest Service protected communities from wildland fire by reducing the amount of hazardous fuel in the wildland-urban interface area. The agency does not have performance results prior to FY 2001 for the wildland fire performance indicators, so the trend has not been established for the required 4-year period. Continuing on a positive trend since 2001, however, the Forest Service treated 129 percent of the planned acres of hazardous fuels in the wildland-urban interface area and accomplished 96 percent of the planned number of acres for treating hazardous fuels not in the wildland-urban interface area.

The Forest Service assisted 699 natural resource-dependent rural communities with strengthening and diversifying their economic health, while promoting ecosystem health and conservation. These programs promoted community-based approaches to strengthen rural economies and tribes, encourage energy independence, and integrate public and private efforts to achieve sustainable economic development. Although the trend for this indicator shows that the number of communities appears to have decreased, this is a result of distributing part of this performance indicator to the National Fire Plan. At 699 communities with improved capacity, this indicator is at 93 percent of the 2003 planned number of 750 communities.

In FY 2003, the Forest Service focused assistance for the retention and strategic placement of trees, forests, urban parks, greenspace, and related vegetation for multiple purposes—mitigating air, water, soil, and noise pollution; reducing energy consumption; providing public health benefits; and increasing property values. The agency also assisted participating communities with planning, demonstration projects, and technical assistance. There were 10,869 communities that participated in these programs that are designed to enhance urban and community forestry resources.

The Forest Service brought cost-effective sustainable forestry to a diversity of landowners in FY 2003 by developing forest stewardship plans for small woodlot owners, tribes, States, and other Federal agencies. An additional 1,577,000 acres of nonindustrial private forest (NIPF) lands are now under approved NIPF stewardship, establishing the basis for their future management, sustained production, conservation, and income for thousands of landowners. The Forest Service reported 21,795 stewardship management plans for NIPF, which is 131 percent of the planned number of NIPF plans for FY 2003. The trend for the number of acres under approved NIPF stewardship plans continues to fluctuate, although the agency accomplished 98 percent of the planned acres.

The agency also worked to protect environmentally important forest areas threatened by the conversion to nonforest uses through nonregulatory partnerships. Through an incentive-based approach, the Forest Service worked to assure that both traditional uses of private lands and the public benefits of America’s forests are protected for future generations. The Forest Legacy Program expanded to 34 participating States and Territories, advanced 3 additional State implementation plans to the Secretary of Agriculture for approval and entry into the program, and protected nearly 300,000 acres in FY 2003. Cooperative forestry performance indicators show an increase in the trend

BIG BUSINESS AND ENVIRONMENTAL INTERESTS AGREE TO PROTECT RARE PLANTS

The San Bernardino National Forest and organizations with limestone-mining interests recently agreed to a Carbonate Habitat Management Strategy to protect the habitat and populations of four federally listed threatened or endangered plant species.

This strategy document is the result of several years of dedicated and collaborative work among the Forest Service, mining companies (including Omya California, Specialty Minerals, and Mitsubishi Cement), major claim holders, the Department of the Interior U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and Bureau of Land Management, San Bernardino County, and the California Native Plant Society.

Implementation of this strategy will enable economic development of the limestone resource of the northern San Bernardino Mountains (currently producing approximately \$175 million annually), while protecting the unique flora of the area.

Limestone mining in the San Bernardino Mountains is big business, and these valuable deposits are used in many commercial and industrial products. In addition, the limestone areas also provide habitat for a variety of rare plants. Four plants in the area covered by this agreement are listed as threatened or endangered: Cushenbury milk-vetch, Parish's daisy, Cushenbury buckwheat, and Cushenbury oxytheca. Limestone mining can result in the destruction of these plants and their habitat.

for the environmentally important (legacy) forests threatened by conversion to nonforest uses, but the 292,583 acres accomplished were 43 percent of the planned number of acres in FY 2003.

The health of forests and grasslands is important to the Nation for a variety of reasons—the production of clean water, forage for livestock and game, a wide variety of recreation opportunities, timber and other forest products, and many other uses. However, invasive species, native insects and diseases, and forest fires threaten the health of forests and grasslands. Partnerships and other coordinated efforts with private landowners and local, county, and State governments are needed to prevent the spread of invasive species and to implement treatment. The Forest Service is aggressively combating these issues through implementation of initiatives; partnerships with various Federal, State, tribal, and local governments; and other efforts.

The trend for the forest health performance indicators exists only for acres protected, and not for acres surveyed, whether on Federal lands or cooperative lands. The reported performance information for this indicator was in error due to confusion as to the unit of measure (UOM). While most regions and areas realized that the units were reported as “thousands of acres,” others did not and reported their performance in “acres.” This UOM error inflated the performance reporting for the 2003 planned acres protected on Federal lands. The valid performance information for this indicator with the correct UOM was 131.03 for the 10-month actual, 53.795 for the 2-month estimate, and 184.825 for the FY 2003 projected total.

The trend for protecting acres on cooperative lands has fluctuated over the last 4 years, reporting approximately 855,000 acres in FY 2003, which was 92 percent of the planned acres. Accomplishments for Federal acres surveyed and cooperative acres surveyed came in at 75 percent and 100 percent, respectively.

Although existing technologies enable the agency to implement standard prevention, suppression, and restoration treatments, additional long-term research and development is needed for finding solutions for controlling and eradicating invasive species. There are promising new management techniques, as well as newly developed chemical and biological control agents, but they are still in need of more testing to improve their efficacy. Also, the need for improved communication between the Forest Service and its partners is necessary to prevent invasive species from establishing themselves in the forests and grasslands of the United States.

Results for the Research and Development (R&D) performance indicators were predominantly successful. An omission of several units' accomplishments for research products, tools, and technologies developed shows accomplishments at 83 percent of those planned for FY 2003. The correct number is 10,986 but could not be verified before the audit. If this number proves to be verified as valid, results for this indicator will be at 159 percent of planned. A similar indicator, but for products, tools, and technologies pertaining to fire, reported 125 percent accomplishment. Results for Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) products, tools, and technologies and the percent of FIA target plots measured reported 97 percent accomplishments. Trend information exists for percent of FIA plots measured from FY 2000, showing a steady increase. For the products, tools, and technologies pertaining to fire, trend information exists from FY 2001, with the implementation of the National Fire Plan. After a 1,200-percent increase from 63 in FY 2001 to 783 in FY 2002, the number of fire products, tools, and technologies remains at 750 for FY 2003.

Results for the law enforcement and investigations performance indicators show that these performance indicators may need to be reevaluated and more closely aligned to the agency's mission. Enforcement of laws and regulations reported a 130-percent accomplishment,

while criminal investigations reported a 76-percent accomplishment. The indicator measuring eradication of cannabis reported 34 percent accomplishment in FY 2003. Trend information shows a significant increase in performance for enforcement of laws and regulations from the 28 percent in FY 1999. Although criminal investigations peaked at 72 percent in FY 2002, the trend appears flat.

In forest products, timber volume offered for sale reported 96 percent of FY 2003 planned volume, but the trend shows a 37-percent decrease in volume offered for sale since 1999. Timber volume harvested reported 73 percent of the planned volume, but the trend shows a 55 percent decrease in volume harvested since 1999. Volume of salvage timber offered for sale reported a 101-percent accomplishment for 2003. Timber volume sold was at 64-percent of planned volume. Permits administered for forest special products reported a 102-percent accomplishment. Approved National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents for timber sales reported 69 percent of 2003 planned approved documents.

The range management performance indicators showed mixed results. Acres of grazing allotments administered to standard reported a 130-percent accomplishment, while approved NEPA decisions for grazing allotments reported 68 percent of 2003 planned approved documents. The indicator for grazing allotment acres administered to standard increased over 80 percent from FY 2002, but is still approximately 83 percent of the FY 2000 number of acres. With 308 approved NEPA decisions for grazing allotments, this performance indicator increased significantly from 184 approved decisions in FY 2001, but is 66 percent of the 464 approved decisions in FY 1999.

For the planning, inventorying, and monitoring indicators, revised and new Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMPs) exceeded the 2003 planned number by 139 percent, while LRMP amendments reached 82 percent of planned for FY 2003. LRMP monitoring and evaluation reports reported 86 percent of the planned number. The new and revised LRMP showed such a

significant increase that the 2003 projected performance is more than the last 4 year's reports combined. Even with the FY 2003 decrease to 59 amendments, the trend for the LRMP amendments indicator has steadily increased from 15 in FY 2000 to 82 in FY 2001, and then significantly increased to 198 amendments in FY 2002.

Other accomplishments for the planning, inventorying, and monitoring indicators were 180 percent of planned acres of above project-level inventories and 92 percent of planned completed watershed assessments. The trend in above project-level inventory acres is more than 50 percent higher than FY 2002, but is still less than 40 percent of the high of 120 million acres in 2001. The trend for completed watershed assessments declined in FY 2003 for the second consecutive year.

There were 46 reported broadscale assessments underway, but there were none planned for FY 2003. Also, there is no multiyear trend information to report. While a significant number of Geographic Information System (GIS) resource mapping quads were reported, there was no "percent accomplished." The 35,608 quads reported in FY 2003 will serve as a baseline for this performance indicator in the future.

Three of the wildlife and fish performance indicators did not meet the planned number from the FY 2003 Program Direction. Terrestrial wildlife habitat restored or enhanced reported only 84 percent of planned acres for FY 2003, but the planned number of 284,396 acres is nearly 18,000 acres higher than any actual accomplishment since FY 1999. Streams restored or enhanced reported 84 percent of miles accomplished for FY 2003. The planned number of 2,000 miles of stream was realistic as the FY 2002 actual number of miles reported was 2,001 miles. Lakes restored or enhanced reported only 86 percent of acres planned for FY 2003, but the planned number of 20,212 acres was 1,784 acres higher than any actual accomplishment since FY 1999. On the other hand, interpretation and education products provided reported 145 percent of FY 2003 planned products.

WORKPLAN LAUNCHES IN 2003

The Forest Service launched a project work-planning tool on May 27, 2003, called WorkPlan. This new tool brings a consistent approach to project planning and tracking in the agency, replacing several variations of an older tool—Project Work Planning System (PWPS)—in use since the 1980s.

One of WorkPlan's primary objectives is to meet field-planning needs, while minimizing the impact of national reporting on the forest and district offices. At the field level, WorkPlan supports project management in planning and tracking progress, while at the national level it is a source of information for improved financial management—one of the initiatives in the President's Management Agenda (PMA).

WorkPlan is a Web-based system built upon the standard agency information technology network, which will minimize disruptions to users and system administrators as enhancements are developed. In the near future, WorkPlan will feature standardized reports, more user-defined capability, and a tracking module for expenditures, time charges, and accomplishments.

In fiscal year 2003, WorkPlan's development was sponsored by the Program Budget and Development Staff in the Washington Office, guided by a team representing all levels of the Forest Service, aided by contractor support.

The focus seen in the vegetation and watershed management performance indicators was on invasive plant control (including noxious weeds). Results for the vegetation and watershed management performance indicators showed that the Forest Service exceeded the FY 2003 planned numbers—136 percent for soil and water resource improvements, 116 percent for acres of

noxious weed treatments, and 124 percent for established vegetation. FY 2003 results were reported at 75 percent for manage air quality and 65 percent for improved vegetation. There was no planned number of activities in the FY 2003 Program Direction for the environmental compliance and protection (ECAP) indicator, which reported 265 activities.

OHVs AND THE FOREST SERVICE

Over the past 2 years, aerial and ground surveys have revealed an expanding network of OHV (off-highway vehicle) routes in a variety of locations surrounding Sitka, AK. These user-made trails are generally located in areas of easiest travel, such as muskegs, estuaries, stream banks, and in streams, beach fringe forests, and lakeshores. Riding OHVs off the designated trail and road systems presents many problems for the land and land manager. In the fall of 2002, the Sitka Ranger District initiated an educational approach to handling this growing problem.

Webs of heavily rutted trails are now found in many areas within a day's reach of town. Wildlife habitat is fragmented and fish streams are crossed, which results in damage to spawning and feeding habitat. The vegetation is churned in ways that would require decades for the area to recover.

The Sitka Ranger District has begun a program asking OHV users to protect all wetlands and reminding riders they are prohibited from constructing new trails or causing damage to natural resources of the forest.

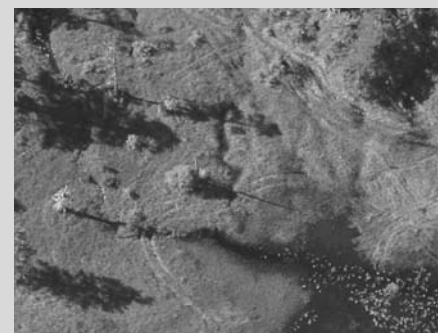
In late 2002, the Sitka Ranger District naturalist presented a 90-minute slide show presentation to nearly 500 students in the 7th through 12th grades. The slide show depicted resource damage caused by the irresponsible use of OHVs. The program explained the ecological reasons why riders need to stay on designated trails, rather than ride, as is common, through muskegs, estuaries, and other sensitive areas. The educational program did not simply outline the rules, but highlighted the reasons for them. The program also served as an opportunity to raise their awareness of forest resources.

The presentation explained the salmon spawning process and Sitka's dependency on healthy fish runs. Photos were shown of OHV riders running up a salmon stream, and students were asked, "Do you really want to run over the next generation of salmon that you would otherwise be catching for dinner?"

Each student was asked to fill out a questionnaire before the presentation, which showed that 42 percent of the students live in families that own OHVs, while 31 percent of students own their own OHVs. Half of these riders ride every weekend and on holidays. This highlighted the need for continuing education for the next generation of riders about the effects of OHV use on the environment.

This presentation was also given to the general public and, in the end, directly touched 900 people via classrooms, public halls, and special interest group meetings. It was featured through interviews on Raven Radio (with 3,000 listeners) and was later aired statewide. Articles in the Sitka Sentinel were read by 2,500 people a day.

The 2003 success of this outreach effort has led the district to create a Kruzof Island OHV management plan, which will clearly outline legal travel routes and OHV use areas for the desired outcome of ecosystem protection.



Trend information since FY 1999 for these performance indicators reflects what's happening "on the ground." Acres of noxious weeds treatment have significantly increased by 56 percent while the acres treated for soil and water improvements or acres of established vegetation have decreased, by 32 percent and 81 percent, respectively.

FY 2003 results for all the lands performance indicators show accomplishments of 94 percent or higher, with 117 percent reported for land use proposals and applications processed and 109 percent for both cases resolved through litigation or administrative procedure and acres acquired. Results for acres adjusted were 99 percent for FY 2003. These successful results in FY 2003 do not reflect the significant decreases in results since 1999 for most of these performance indicators. Three trends have decreased by 50 percent or more since FY 1999—land use proposals and applications processed; acres acquired, and authorizations administered to standard, while the indicator for acres adjusted is only 8.2 percent of the high of 337,396 acres in FY 1999. The trend for miles of boundary line marked or maintained remains flat, with accomplishments in FY 2003 near those of FY 1999. The most significant increase was in cases resolved through litigation or administrative procedure, with a 73 percent in the last 4 years.

FY 2003 results for the capital improvement and maintenance performance indicators show success in maintaining or improving National Forest System (NFS) roads—100 percent of miles of improved roads, as well as 121 percent of miles of high clearance roads and 134 percent of miles of passenger car roads maintained. The indicator for miles of trails maintained to standard also reported a 123 percent accomplishment. Miles of trails improved to standard and miles of roads decommissioned reported 76 percent and 58 percent, respectively. Also, capital improvement completed for facilities (over \$250,000) reported a 50-percent accomplishment. Trend information for the majority of these performance indicators begins in FY 2000. The exceptions are miles of roads decommissioned, which significantly decreased from 2,907 miles in FY 1999 to 888 miles in FY 2003, and Facility Condition Index (FCI), which is a new indicator based on industry standards.

Since 2000, there have been increases in miles of trail maintained to standard (23 percent) and miles of road improved to standard (240 percent increase). There have been decreases in miles of trail improved to standard (35 percent decrease), miles of high clearance road maintained (45 percent decrease), and miles of passenger car road maintained (36 percent decrease).

The minerals and geology performance indicators all reported above 90 percent for FY 2003. Operations administered to standard reported 99 percent, completed geologic permits and reports reported 95 percent, and operations processed reported 91 percent. Trend information since FY 1999 for operations administered to standard shows a 56-percent increase

since FY1999, and operations processed shows a 28-percent decrease in the same time period. Geologic permits and reports completed are up from 1,048 in FY 2002, the first year to track this information.

The Forest Service provided diverse, high-quality, resource-based tourism destinations and outdoor recreation opportunities in FY 2003. The agency's outreach efforts and partnerships focused on minimizing resource impacts and educating users in low-impact and responsible use of special places through programs, such as Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly, as well as the preservation of historic and prehistoric areas. Many of the 214 million visits the American public makes to the national forests and grasslands were made possible by recreation service providers through the Special Use Program. In programs like these, the Forest Service delivers annual economic outputs and social benefits that contribute to the accomplishment of long-term outcomes identified in the Forest Service's strategic goals and objectives.

For FY 2003, the majority of accomplishments for the recreation, wilderness, and heritage performance indicators were 99 percent, or higher. Heritage resources managed to standard reported 88 percent of planned for FY 2003, and products provided to standard reported 76 percent. Results for general forest areas managed to standard were 91 percent, while recreation special use authorizations administered to standard were 99 percent of the planned number. Of more than 25,000 special use permits, the agency administered 13,956 to standard, which is 99 percent of the goal for FY 2003.

Wilderness areas managed to standard reported 107 percent and operation of developed sites to standard reported 109 percent for FY 2003. Trend information shows that the Forest Service is managing nearly twice as many wilderness areas to standard as in FY 2000, but only 72 percent of FY 2002. Trend information for recreation special use authorizations administered to standard has very significantly increased, with 1,227 in FY 1999 and 13,956 in FY 2003. While the results for heritage resources managed to standard did not meet the planned number in FY 2003, the 7,504 sites managed is 88 percent more sites than in FY 2000. Other significant increases since FY 2000 are in general forest areas managed to standard, with a 1,000-percent increase, and operation of developed sites to standard, with a 33-percent increase in persons at one time (PAOT).

The challenge in many of the recreation programs is that the transfer of funds needed to pay for fire suppression has impacted the Forest Service's ability to accomplish recreation program goals in two ways—not only from the loss of funds, but also from the instability in program funding levels and the week-to-week workforce diversion in the height of the recreation field season. Developing contingency plans and adjusting schedules and operating plans required much time and energy.

A WIN-WIN FOR THE GILA NATIONAL FOREST

Web sites featuring recreation in the great outdoors have been around for years, but not sites that really make trails come alive, provide effective information delivery, support volunteers, and engage the public.

In 2003, the American Trails Website Contest set out to discover the best that the cyber world of trails and greenways had to offer. They received nominations for 88 trail-related sites, covering the gamut from community trails to designated National Recreation Trail sites and from accessible trail sites to best sites for kids and families.

We are proud to say that the Gila National Forest, located in the southwestern corner of New Mexico near Silver City, was selected as the 2003 winning Web site for trails on Federal lands.

Visitors to the Gila's recreational Web site can view a map of all trails or select a trail by the type of recreational activity they want. They can choose between trails with varying levels of difficulty or those best hiked in certain seasons. They can even use trail guides with 3D terrain images of a trail.

Visit the American Trails Web site at: <http://www.americantrails.org/webcon03.html>.

Or to visit the Gila's award-winning site directly, navigate to: <http://www2.srs.fs.fed.us/gilanf/rec/trails/>.

Another factor was the loss of approximately one-third of the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) positions that the Forest Service has traditionally hosted. The recreation sites program has become highly "leveraged" over the last 20 years in response to the steady decline in buying power of the appropriated funding at the field level.

In May 2003, the Forest Service was notified that it would lose approximately one-third of the SCSEP positions. As a result, the recreation program lost approximately 10 to 12 percent of the field workforce delivering the recreation site program. The long-term outlook is for a continuing decline in enrollees available to the Forest Service.

The Forest Service's ability to sustain the existing level of recreation site development without reducing operations and maintenance to an unacceptable standard is a concern under current conditions. Consequently, the agency placed greater emphasis on reconstructing existing facilities to meet current need, reduce annual maintenance and operations costs, and reduce backlog maintenance. In addition, the agency implemented the recreation site alignment process with the objective of balancing financial needs for annual operating and maintenance costs with available resources, thereby eliminating lower priority sites either through divestiture to the private sector or decommissioning. Inventory, costing, visitor use, and satisfaction data, which are critical to this decision process, continued to be improved and refined. The primary criteria in deci-

sionmaking is retaining sites which best meet the "niche" defined for each forest and that have the highest values on the "public benefit scale." The "niche" concept is a marriage of highest-quality local opportunities with public demand, community and tourism needs, and visitor satisfaction. The "public benefit scale" concept recognizes that some of the opportunities and services provided are of primary benefit to the individual user while others are more oriented to the population, as a whole. Development and implementation of this process was slowed in FY 2003 by the same factors discussed in relation to recreation site operations.

Special use permit administrators continued to feel the pressure of declining resources. The agency recognizes the need to develop additional human and financial resources for special use administration and has considered methods to do so. In the near future, the agency will implement cost recovery regulations to address the cost of issuing permits. Permit administration remains a concern and the agency will continue to explore obtaining the authority to retain special use fees. In addition, the agency is considering working with the administration to draft legislation to allow for private sector investment in Government-owned facilities. The difference between planned and actual accomplishment is primarily due to confusion in interpreting the definition of "to standard" and the inconsistent application of standards across all field units. A modification is being made to the Special Uses Database System to more consistently collect data on "administration to standard."

Supporting Performance Management with Program Evaluations

In *Managing for Results 2002, A PricewaterhouseCoopers Endowment for The Business of Government* (2001), the authors suggest a conceptual framework to describe the major stages in the development and use of systematic information for performance management. The four uses of program evaluations identified are:

- Strategic and Program Planning.
- Improving Program Delivery.
- Accountability.
- Attributing Results to an Agency's Programs.

Strategic and Program Planning

After an 8-year hiatus, Ecosystem Management Coordination (EMC) conducted program evaluations in two regions—Region 4, the Intermountain Region, and Region 6, the Pacific Northwest Region. In those 8 years, significant changes in the Forest Service have occurred. These include staffing at all levels of the agency; new policies for forest planning, roadless area management, the use of categorical exclusions; an Office of Inspector General evaluation of the NEPA process and timber sales; new case law in several relevant areas; and changing information management policy and procedures.

The evaluations focused on proven efficiencies in the oversight of national forests and grasslands; program oversight or procedures still needing improvement; and recommendations by each regional leadership team. The evaluation found that units scheduled for Land Resource Management Plan revisions have, or will have, business plans in place. Both regions realize that the accountability for business plans needs to be in place before forest plan revision begins. It is unclear how the very complex interagency relationship and assessment structure in each region will be addressed in the revision process. The regions are aware, however, of these complexities and will provide guidance as revisions begin.

PricewaterhouseCoopers reviewed NFS financial and operational business practices in Region 8, the Southern Region. The focus of the evaluation was on improving business management practices. The evaluation addressed business processes needed for aligning facilities and services, considering available resources, pricing, and customer needs.

Annually, the six regional research stations, the Forest Products Laboratory, and the International Institute of

Tropical Forestry within R&D evaluate needs at the various levels, assign priorities, and request funding. Requests are carefully reviewed and coordinated, and needs are identified as critical at the national level and then merged into a National Research Program. The base R&D program, however, is assembled from individual field submissions.

Recreation, Heritage, and Wilderness Resources conducted a program review in Region 10, the Alaska Region, in July. Recommendations from the evaluation support setting targets at a modest level because flat or reduced heritage funding necessitates supporting other agency programs. While this work helps protect heritage resources from the effects of other management activities, it does little to accomplish heritage program stewardship or public outreach goals as mandated in the National Historic Program Act.

Improving Program Delivery

After reviewing the noxious weed program in FY 2002 within Region 5, the Pacific Southwest Region, the Washington Office NFS staff completed the report and made recommendations in FY 2003. The report finds that partners at the Federal, State, and local levels are collaborating on cooperative weed management projects, but significant challenges must be overcome.

R&D revised approximately 10 percent of research work unit descriptions to reflect changes in the proposed research mission, problem, or approach as a result of national reviews of the work unit programs. R&D staff interviewed employees and station customers for each R&D review, enhancing program delivery internally and to external customers.

National-level trust fund reviews were conducted, with onsite field inspections in Region 2, the Rocky Mountain Region, Region 5, and Region 4. Most wildlife and fisheries projects funded through the Knutson-Vandenberg (K-V) Fund are well planned, documented, and implemented; however, some opportunities to use additional available funding to accomplish meaningful habitat improvements were missed. Also, a task force consisting of agency personnel, State fisheries department personnel, and representatives from conservation organizations began a thorough national-level review of the fisheries program. The first site visit was in Region 2; the review will continue into FY 2004.

Valuable guidance in shaping the R&D program and identifying research needs at regional levels comes from critically reviewing customer, research user, and peer comments. For example, as R&D began reaching out to underserved communities, they identified the

need to expand social science research effort. Many minorities do not know about national forests, and others, because of perceived barriers, do not use them. R&D believes this is a subject worthy of special emphasis.

National Visitor Use Monitoring surveys, the primary data source for the USDA Forest Service Visitor Use Program, were conducted on 31 national forests and grasslands in FY 2003, with results reported in FY 2004. In FY 2003, individual forest results were published for 29 national forests and grasslands surveyed in FY 2002.

The regional accessibility reviews have highlighted the need to standardize the information reporting formats so that the total number of facilities and programs that are accessible across the agency can be accessed.

Accountability

In FY 2003, three trust fund program reviews were conducted in Regions 2, 3, and 4. The results of these reviews are described below:

In Region 2, documentation, oversight, and management of the K-V Fund, Brush Disposal (BD), and Salvage Sale Funds could be improved. An opportunity exists to integrate biological and physical resource specialists earlier in the design of these projects. Recommendations included increasing oversight of these funds by resuming at least biannual trust fund workshops and conducting trust fund reviews on every forest on a 4-year cycle.

In Region 3, the Southwestern Region, documentation, oversight, and management of the K-V, BD, and Salvage Sale Funds could be improved. Also, staff knowledge of trust fund programs, policies, and procedures is limited, and established policies, procedures, and direction related to the K-V Fund are not being properly implemented. Recommendations included reinstating periodic forest-level trust fund reviews, having each forest appoint a K-V Fund coordinator, and providing the necessary training for these coordinators.

In Region 4, documentation could be improved; some financial direction, policy, standards, and procedures are unclear or incomplete; and coordination between resource and financial management staff areas can be improved. Recommendations included increasing oversight of the trust funds at the forest level, coordinating with the Washington Office to clarify financial direction and then disseminating this direction to the forests and districts as it becomes available, and implementing a review procedure for trust fund balances that involves resource and financial management staff.

In conjunction with the Office of General Counsel and the USDA Hazardous Materials Management Group, the ECAP program reviewed the ECAP Programs in Region 2, Region 8, and Region 9, the Eastern Region.

All regions are weak in complying with the Safe Drinking Water Act. Region 8 currently is understaffed in their Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act program and is falling behind the other regions.

The Infra Rangeland Module, which tracks national forest grazing allotments and permits, was reviewed to evaluate long-term progress on the completion of allotment NEPA procedures. The national forests met approximately 50 percent of their scheduled work from 1996 through 2002. The delay in meeting the schedule was due to difficulty in moving through the NEPA process, appeals of project decisions, lack of trained field personnel, inadequate project funding, and diversion of personnel to other higher-priority work (fire duty).

The Washington Office Lands Staff conducted a Lands Policy and Oversight Review of Region 9 in FY 2003. This review focused on the Land Ownership Adjustment program, and specifically addressed the manner in which the regional office was fulfilling its oversight responsibilities of the Region 9 national forests. The review was physically limited to the regional office staff and leadership. There were several organizational and staffing issues identified and, as a result of this review, the region is taking action to place more responsibility with the Regional Lands Director for coordinating all lands transactions between the forest supervisors, the regional forester, and the Washington Office NFS Deputy Area. Additionally, there has been significant improvement in coordination and communication between the Congressional delegations and the Washington Office Legislative Affairs and Lands Staffs. This in turn has been positive in assisting third parties and others to better focus their efforts negotiating and facilitating lands transactions. Another result has been the clear direction from the regional forester to selected forest supervisors to engage in collaborative land ownership adjustment planning within selected States to better direct efforts of all parties in developing a desired public/private landownership base. Recommendations relating to improving lands skills have been implemented and the Washington Office and region are working together to provide the necessary development opportunities.

Delayed or Postponed Evaluations

No national-level reviews of the water, soils, or weather programs were done in FY 2003. A national-level review of the air program was planned for FY 2003, but was delayed, leaving no clear focus for regions in filling program vacancies or in addressing the changing workloads due to the Presidential Management Initiatives.

Also, no program evaluation was done in Minerals and Geology Management, as a result of extended vacancies in the directorate as well as higher national priorities.

How Forest Service Programs Accomplish the Mission

National Forest System

The NFS Deputy Area provides stewardship and management of more than 192 million acres of Federal lands through the following 10 program areas.

Land Management Planning is the framework used to conform to laws and regulations governing the management of national forests and grasslands. The planning process is focused on the concept of sustainability under planning regulations that require national forests to conduct assessments that include ecological, social, and economic issues on a broad geographic scale.

Inventory and Monitoring supports forest plan revisions and amendments; watershed assessments; ecoregional and subregional broad-scale assessments; corporate system implementation schedules; and other forest, regional, and national priorities. Forest plan monitoring and evaluation is receiving greater emphasis on several fronts, including the new planning rule, revisions and consolidation of directives, installation and implementation of corporate databases, data migration, and implementation of GIS data dictionary standards.

Recreation, Heritage, and Wilderness components include administration and management of partnerships, tourism, interpretive services, and recreational special uses.

By maintaining the diversity, viability, and productivity of plant and animal communities, Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat Management improves current and future opportunities for consumptive, recreational, commercial, subsistence, and other beneficial uses of fish and wildlife resources. Partnerships have become crucial to implementing this program, numbering on

average 2,000 per year, and leveraging more than \$25 million annually.

Grazing Management administers allotments according to forest plan standards and guidelines for the maintenance, enhancement, or restoration of watersheds where livestock grazing takes place.

To improve and restore watershed conditions, Forest Products uses timber sales and contracts to reduce accumulated fuels. These contracts not only provide forest products, but also offer employment opportunities to local communities. The implementation of the National Fire Plan (NFP) and the President's Healthy Forest Initiative has given Forest Products added emphasis and recognition for its role in accomplishing these initiatives.

The 2002 Forest Service reorganization combined the agency's forest lands and rangelands vegetation management programs with the soil, air, and watershed improvement programs to create the Vegetation and Watershed Management Program. This organizational change not only increases the efficiencies in program development and budgeting, but also improves the effectiveness of the management of noxious weeds, reforestation, and timber stand improvement treatments.

By fostering the development of mineral resources within a framework of sustainable forest management, watershed health, and public safety, Minerals and Geology Management develops energy resources in national forests and grasslands; inspects, monitors, and ensures proper bonding and reclamation of active operations; reclaims abandoned mine sites; protects geologic and paleontologic resources; and is constructing a national energy and minerals database system.

RESERVOIRS RESTORED TO PROVIDE HABITAT FOR SENSITIVE SPECIES

A partnership among Forest Service, Department of the Interior Bureau of Reclamation, Great Outdoors Colorado, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and local county and State agencies is redesigning and rebuilding three of seven dams and reservoirs on Battlement Mesa, on the White River National Forest in Colorado. Once used for irrigation, the 1800s-era reservoirs and dams—having long ago been abandoned—were in poor condition.

Partners collaborated to provide needed new habitat for the Colorado River cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki pleuriticus*), which is a sensitive species. The first dam has been completed, nonnative fish species have been removed from the reservoir, and native Colorado River cutthroat trout were stocked in 2003. Soon two other dams will be restored.

An additional reservoir will be converted into a shallow wetland, to provide habitat for many amphibian, shore bird, and other wildlife species, and to reduce the hazard rating of the dams.

This project is one of many done on National Forest System lands nationwide to improve habitat conditions for "at-risk," sensitive species, and to prevent such species from needing further protection through listing under the Endangered Species Act.

To provide for the public's future use and access to national forests and grasslands, Landownership Management protects NFS lands and resources through marked and legally defensible land boundaries, secure title and ownership, land adjustment, and land acquisition.

Finally, Capital Improvement and Maintenance improves, maintains, and operates the Forest Service's multibillion-dollar infrastructure—the facilities, roads, and trails—necessary for recreation, research, fire protection, administration, and other uses on national forests and grasslands. A backlog of maintenance has led to a deterioration of Forest Service's assets in recent years. To alleviate this backlog, increased emphasis has been placed on collocation of facilities where appropriate, the disposal of deteriorated or otherwise unneeded facilities, and a master planning process.

To minimize the conflict typical of access and travel management across ownerships, the 2003 Access and Travel Management Report recommended that the agency consider it an integral part of the land and resource management planning process.

State and Private Forestry

The S&PF Deputy Area has responsibility for a broad scope of programs within the S&PF and Wildland Fire Management appropriations, as well as Tribal Relations, Sustainable Forest Management, and Conservation Education activities. S&PF is the Federal leader in providing technical and financial assistance to landowners and resource managers to sustain the Nation's forests and to protect communities and the environment from wildland fires.

In 2003, S&PF programs brought cost-effective forest stewardship through nonregulatory partnerships to a diversity of landowners, including small woodlot, tribal, State, or Federal landowners. Because S&PF coordinated efforts among management, protection, conservation education, and resource use, these programs facilitate sound forest stewardship on a landscape scale; yet enable individual forest landowners, communities, and cities to pursue more local objectives.

Wildland Fire Management faces the challenge of managing wildland fire within its natural place on the Nation's landscape, while reducing the risk of catastrophic loss to the Nation's rural communities and watersheds. To do this effectively, wildland fire man-

BUILDING A FIRE CONSERVATION EDUCATION PROGRAM

What started as a Smokey Bear program for youngsters has become a fire education program in Montana for all ages. Recognizing the importance of building public understanding of natural resources and the management of public lands, especially pertaining to wildfire, the Gallatin National Forest updated its approach. In 2001, with the aid of National Fire Plan (NFP) funds, two fire Conservation Education (CE) coordinators were hired to create such a program.

In fiscal year 2003, the CE coordinators presented 36 wildfire-related programs, reaching more than 1,760 people. Many programs were coordinated with other forest resource areas, such as fisheries, timber, and wilderness, to give people the big picture of forest ecology. The coordinators worked with partners, such as area schools, youth camps, scout and civic organizations, and rural fire departments, to reach a broader audience.

Partners: Area schools, youth camps, scout and civic organizations, and rural fire departments partnered with the USDA Forest Service to reach a more diverse audience.



Smokey has an up-close and personal conversation with a friend at the Belgrade Fall Festival.



A worker engages in a task to mitigate the risk of fire on the Gallatin National Forest.

agers identified priority work and specific field-level projects in 2003 to mitigate future fire behavior. For example, the Forest Service, State foresters, and local fire departments worked with community property owners in the wildland-urban interface to prevent fires or, in the event of a wildland fire, increase the likelihood that people's homes would survive.

The Office of Tribal Relations was established as a result of recommendations to the Chief and the staff in the Report of the National Tribal Relations Program Implementation Team (August 2003).

In FY 2003, FSM 1563, American Indian and Alaskan Native Relations, and FSH 1509-13, American Indian and Alaskan Native Relations were added to the Forest Service Manual and Handbook, respectively. Also, a yearlong effort to develop agency policy for sacred sites was undertaken. Approximately \$250,000 worth of project grants were funded from the Office of Tribal Relations throughout the Forest Service regions.

The Forest Service continued its leadership role in the Sustainable Resource Management Roundtables, which included—Sustainable Forests, initiated in 1998; Sustainable Rangelands; Sustainable Minerals; and Sustainable Water Resources.

For the Roundtable on Sustainable Forests and for the Montreal Process Working Group on Criteria and Indicators, the Forest Service produced the first *National Report on Sustainable Forests—2003*. Continuing in its role as co-chair of the Sustainable Forests Roundtable, the agency offered the opportunity for dialogue about the forest criteria and indicators discussed in this national report to diverse audiences at workshops and meetings.

For the Rangelands and Minerals Roundtables, the Forest Service led the development of First Approximation Reports, demonstrating its ability to report on criteria and indicators for those resources.

Forest Service S&PF provides leadership for the Conservation Education program through national program staff, created in 1999.

In FY 2003, over 1 million students, teachers, forest visitors, and others participated in educational programs delivered by the Forest Service. Nearly 30 million Americans participated in teacher-delivered education programs that were assisted by the Forest Service or by partners using agency materials and resources.

A special edition on wildland fire in the *Natural Inquirer*—the Forest Service science journal for junior high students—was distributed to almost 250,000 students and teachers by the Forest Service and key education partners, including USDA's Agriculture in the

Classroom, the Bureau of Land Management, and the American Forest Foundation's Project Learning Tree.

Budget and Finance

Since the agency's reorganization in 2002, the programs in the Budget and Finance (B&F) Deputy Area have significantly improved the financial and performance credibility of the Forest Service. The agency received its first unqualified opinion for the FY 2002 financial statement, as reported in the *Report of the Forest Service FY 2002*. This unqualified opinion reflects the intense commitment to long-term finance and performance accountability by agency leadership, the financial management staff, and all employees.

In 2003, a newly chartered Budget and Financial Management Team developed three options to create an agencywide budget and financial management organization, defining roles and responsibilities for all levels in the organization. This information will be used in the upcoming Business Process Reengineering effort. A road map to the reengineering effort was submitted to USDA, addressing the profound changes needed to ensure sustainable improvements to the financial management organizational structure and financial systems.

The establishment of the B&F Deputy Area has resulted in major improvements in incident financial management procedures, including:

- Enhancement of incident management software, increasing the speed and accuracy of obligation reporting.
- Establishment of centralized incident payment centers, reducing the need for the number of disbursing officers from four to one. The first National Emergency Firefighter Payment Center was opened in Ogden, UT, in March 2003.
- Establishment of four centralized payment centers for emergency equipment rental agreements. The mandatory use of the centers improves the accuracy of all documented incident obligations and ensures efficiency as obligations are entered into a department-wide accounting system, the Foundation Financial Information System, within 3 days of the beginning of an incident.
- Development of two procedure guides and a matrix to provide technical assistance to the staff responsible for incident fire obligations, accruals, and payments.

The B&F Deputy Area had other successes as well. In the past year, the Forest Service consolidated cost pools for all units into one national pool to reduce transactions, thereby reducing costs. As a result, the number of Foundation Financial Information System

transactions was reduced from 150 million to less than 13 million in the first year.

The agency also reduced or eliminated the requirement to establish job codes for each work activity. Minimizing the number of job codes necessary for payroll and other expenditures reduces system impacts by decreasing the sheer volume of transactions.

Finally, the implementation of WorkPlan provided the field level with a project work tool that enables field project managers to plan, manage, and report accomplishments for projects, while also providing a source of internal financial management information.

Research and Development

The R&D Deputy Area contributes to the mission of the Forest Service by developing and implementing the best and most effective scientific, developmental, and technical information through the following programs:

- Vegetation Management and Protection.
- Wildlife, Fish, Watershed, and Atmospheric Sciences.
- Resource Valuation and Use.
- Forest Resources Inventory and Monitoring.
- Forest Inventory and Analysis.

After the 2003 publication of USDA's "National Range and Pasture Handbook," R&D provided guidance for more ecologically based tools for management of public and private grazing lands. In collaboration with other USDA agencies and with the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management, ecological site descriptions for portions of the Southwestern United States were revised to be consistent with new theories. These southwestern ecological site descriptions will now be the model for revisions on the remainder of the Nation's grazing lands.

Also in 2003, to mitigate the adverse effects of greenhouse emissions on the Nation's pasture lands, researchers examined the net effects of species diversity within the plant community on long-term carbon sequestration in soils. Results from these studies showed that perennial grasslands in western Oregon function much like buffer strips and are highly effective in preventing nutrient movement into ground and surface waters.

Business Operations

The Business Operations Deputy Area builds a network of underlying support for the mission of the USDA Forest Service, ensuring cost effective, timely, and quality business processes. Although these business processes are often out of view to the public, without them the Forest Service would be unable to deliver the natural resource values that the American people expect.

The 2003 focus for Business Operations included:

- Supporting the Forest Service's efforts to improve and maintain financial accountability and integrity, as demonstrated through an unqualified audit opinion.
- Providing business operational support as the Forest Service implements the National Fire Plan.
- Continuing the electronic Government (e-Gov) and competitive sourcing initiatives.
- Providing for the diversity, fairness, and equal opportunity needed for the agency's employment and program delivery.
- Assisting the agency in being an employer of a diverse workforce, with the appropriate skill mix and with a high rate of retention.
- Providing for the safety, health, and homeland security considerations in the day-to-day lives of the people of the Forest Service.

SPACE SHUTTLE RECOVERY

Nine Forest Service Civilian Conservation Centers sent more than 300 Job Corps students to Texas to participate in recovery of debris from the Columbia space shuttle. Incident Command personnel trained all the students involved in the effort and extensively briefed them on what to do in case they encountered shuttle debris. Incident Command personnel instructed the students to locate shuttle-debris items and to tag them only, not to touch them. Crews reported they worked under arduous, unseasonably cold and icy weather conditions. When shuttle debris was brought to the camp, students and staff had an opportunity to review and discuss the contents with the astronauts there. The astronauts signed autographs and T-shirts for the students. All the students were grateful to have this opportunity to be a part of history in assisting the National Aeronautics and Space Administration in this effort.

Programs, Legislation, and Communication

The Programs, Legislation, and Communication (PL&C) Deputy Area creates the vision needed in the Forest Service to accomplish its mission through four existing programs and one new program. PL&C oversees Strategic Planning and Resource Assessment (SPRA), Legislative Affairs (LA), Policy Analysis (PA), the Office of Communication (OC), and a new National Partnerships Coordinator position.

As required by the Government's Performance and Results Act, staff completed the 2003 Update to the USDA Forest Service 2000 Strategic Plan, continuing the linkage to the criteria for sustainable forest and rangeland management. Also, responsibility for the *Forest Service Performance and Accountability Report—Fiscal Year 2003* was reassigned to SPRA, forging the

critical connections identified in GPRA among the agency's strategic planning, annual performance planning, and annual performance reporting functions. Finally, after an assessment of Forest Service legacy data systems, a prototype of a performance accountability system was designed to better integrate agency budget planning with performance accountability.

The Legislative Affairs Staff coordinated the agency's activities pertaining to the Administration's FY 2004 legislative proposals, analysis of introduced legislation, and development of Administration positions. In 2003, the staff addressed issues related to the Healthy Forests Initiative, NFP, wilderness proposals, stewardship contracting authority, partnership authorities, recreation fee demonstration program, administrative site conveyance authority, and numerous public lands transaction proposals. Legislative Affairs also informed Congress of program activities such as the President's Management Agenda Senior Community Service Employment Program and the livestock grazing program.

For Forest Service initiatives, such as The Process Predicament and The Four Threats, staff developed and cleared testimony through the agency, Department, and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB); prepared background materials and witnesses; scoped activities with committee staff; and developed responses to questions for the record.

The OC Staff was integrally involved in every program within the agency to educate and inform its various publics. The staff prepared the White House and Department for field visits in support of the President's Healthy Forests Initiative and the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003, including developing a wide range of complementary products for national distribution.

Additionally, OC has been involved in strategic communication planning to support the agency's work on the President's Management Agenda, most notably

competitive sourcing. The OC Staff has been the impetus behind the Chief's Four Threats, developing information and supporting communication products. Other examples of communication strategies include the Planning Regulation, Recreation Fee Demonstration Project, Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Celebration, Working Capital Fund, Stewardship Contracting, NFP, and Sierra Nevada Framework. OC published the bi-weekly FS Today and the agency's Weekly Report, used by USDA for its weekly report to the White House.

In addition to the hundreds of agency publications designed and published by the Executive Services Team, 2003 marked the publication of *10 Things You Didn't Know About the Forest Service* and a Forest Service historical planner highlighting key facts about the agency.

The agency's national information center, managed by OC, hosted 32,000 visitors in 2003.

Also in 2003, PL&C:

- Established a National Partnerships Coordinator position and developed products to improve agency's responsiveness to current and future partners.
- Focused on the impacts of USDA policies to the Hispanic population by supporting the newly developed Hispanic Leadership Institute—a partnership with Texas A&M at College Station and the University of Texas at San Antonio—which admitted 15 graduate students.
- Coordinated Forest Service input to USDA's Annual Performance Plan and USDA's Performance and Accountability Report, as well as contributed to Department-wide budget and performance integration.

FINANCIAL SERVICES AND THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT RENTAL AGREEMENT PAYMENT CENTER

The Incident Financial Services (IFS) Enterprise Team, based in the Pacific Southwest Region, has an innovative approach to providing a rapid response to the high-volume, seasonal payment needs during fire season. IFS offers cooperators and contractors a single point of contact with consistent processing procedures, specifically developed by IFS for the National Emergency Equipment Rental Agreement (EERA) Payment Center. The Forest Service uses the EERA center to hire all emergency contracted equipment for fire suppression efforts, such as water tenders, dozers, pickups/drivers, fallers, sanitation facilities, buses, and engines. The EERA center also handles land use agreements needed during fire emergencies.

In fiscal year 2003, IFS serviced 35 national forests in six of the nine regions and three regional offices. The IFS also provided centralized billing and payment services under Cooperative Agreements with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services for fire incidents.

As interagency coordination and response to fire incidents increase, IFS fills a critical niche in improving business operations and financial accountability for the Forest Service. In July through October of 2002, IFS processed EERA payments in excess of \$115 million, using up to 60 permanent employees to assist during a critical fire season.

IFS is also responsible for implementing the National EERA Centralized Payment Strategy in four payment center locations: Albuquerque, NM; Missoula, MT; Ogden, UT; and Placerville, CA.

- Signed a memorandum of understanding with the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management to develop a knowledge management working group that will address the capturing and sharing of retiring employees' expert knowledge.

National Fire Plan

The NFP completed the third year of providing significant benefits toward reducing the impacts of catastrophic wildland fire to communities and the environment.

To accomplish this outcome in 2003, hazardous fuels were reduced on more than 1.4 million acres, of which more than 1 million were in the wildland-urban interface areas. Firefighting resources supported 10,480 firefighters, 995 engines, 97 helicopters, 397 prevention specialists, 95 dozers, 70 tractor plows, 8 boats, 65 hotshot crews, and 277 smokejumpers.

The availability of NFP funding has enabled the Forest Service to increase the level of State and local fire prevention and protection capability through grants and cooperative agreements, respectively. State, volunteer, and rural fire assistance grants have enabled the Forest Service to train and equip thousands of volunteer and rural firefighters, serving rural areas of the country and assisting Federal resources with wildland fire management activities.

State Fire Assistance grants exceeding \$64 million in FY 2003 funded 6,800 mitigation and education campaigns, plans, and risk assessments, and 4,500 hazard mitigation projects. In addition, grants funded training for 32,300 rural and volunteer firefighters.

Funding for Volunteer Fire Assistance was \$14.3 million in FY 2003. This funding assisted 6,139 volunteer fire departments and communities to organize, train, and equip firefighters. In addition, these grants funded training for 20,900 firefighters.

One of the most recognizable results of the NFP is the increase in collaboration between all levels of the Forest Service; the U.S. Department of the Interior agencies; and partners in fire management at Federal, State, and local levels. Many grassroots organizations have come together, working to reduce the risk of wildland fire to their communities.

Also, as part of a diligent effort to reach out to the many Hispanic-owned small businesses, contractors, and individuals living in rural areas who depend on public lands for their livelihood, the entire NFP Web site has now been translated into Spanish. Spanish-speaking individuals and business owners are now able to easily find NFP information on such topics as employment leads, contracting opportunities, available grants, and State and local fire programs. This Spanish translation effort is a first for Forest Service Web sites and can be visited at www.fireplan.gov.

The Wildland Fire Leadership Council

Consisting of senior-level U.S. Departments of Agriculture and the Interior officials representing all five wildland firefighting agency heads, the Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC) was established to eliminate existing interagency and/or interdepartmental differences in the effective and efficient delivery of a national wildland fire protection program. This group has been instrumental in bringing together all the Federal wildland firefighting organizations for the common purpose of implementing the Federal Wildland Fire Policy and the 10-Year Comprehensive Plan.

The WFLC laid the groundwork in 2002 for success in 2003 by:

- Adopting a standardized fire management plan template that ensures consistency in project planning by all Federal wildland fire management agencies.
- Developing a common database for reporting 10-Year Plan accomplishments—the common performance measures that align with GPRA and the OMB's FY 2003 performance measures and standardize fire cost accounting protocols to improve accountability.
- Developing action plans and monitoring mechanisms for each task in the 10-Year Implementation Plan, inviting greater stakeholder involvement.
- Executing a memorandum of understanding among States and Federal agencies for standardized priority setting for hazardous fuels projects.

10-Year Comprehensive Strategy

The Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior and 17 western governors signed the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy and its complementary 10-Year Implementation Plan in 2002.

The 10-Year Implementation Plan represents a commitment to collaborate with a wide variety of stakeholders to reduce the impacts of catastrophic wildland fire to communities and the environment. This plan establishes five tasks for monitoring and evaluation that include quarterly WFLC meetings, reports to Congress, monitoring plans, site-specific monitoring, and evaluation of performance measures.

In addition, progress of the NFP is monitored and recognized through reports to Congress, the <http://www.fireplan.gov> Web site, site-specific monitoring tours, and evaluation of selected performance measures. The NFP staff monitors these action items to ensure ongoing progress and completion.

While the successes of the NFP have made great strides in fire management in the past 3 years, many challenges remain ahead.

Civil Rights Program

The Forest Service is committed to developing a diverse workforce through promoting the trust and mutual respect needed for employees to explore innovative and effective ways to better manage the national forests and grasslands.

The Civil Rights program provides for diversity, equal opportunity, and fairness in employment and program delivery.

The 2003 focus for this program has been to:

- Improve the management and processing of complaints.
- Improve compliance and equitable access.
- Identify and remove systemic barriers to diversity.
- Enhance capacity building and recruitment.
- Improve collaboration among Civil Rights, Human Resources Management, and the Early Intervention Program (EIP).

This focused approach is not only returning short-term results, but also has potential for aggressively addressing systemic civil rights issues in the longer term. Gradually, Civil Rights is achieving strategic goals in addressing employment complaints processing as a result of the stronger emphasis on accountability.

For example, the Forest Service has increased the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in an attempt to reach resolution early, and often. Forest Service Leadership has committed to dispute resolution (except in extreme and/or rare circumstances) by issuing a new ADR policy and defining roles and responsibilities for Civil Rights, Human Resource Management, and EIP. This new policy has led to a 50-percent reduction in complaints, compared to those in 2002.

Two other 2003-issued Prevention of Sexual Harassment policies, developed specifically for fire incidents, demonstrate the Forest Service's commitment to a "zero tolerance" by:

- Prohibiting sexual harassment by any manager, supervisor, employee, or contractor.
- Ensuring a work environment free from discrimination in the form of sexual harassment.
- Identifying 10 behaviors that will not be tolerated in the fire-related activities or in the office.

The Chief has promoted Forest Service Leadership accountability, emphasizing that all leaders must "play a personal role in increasing the overall diversity of the organization."

With an estimated 212 million people visiting the national forests and grasslands in 2003, the Forest Service has only 3 percent of USDA Program Complaints pending in the Department. The agency attributes this low percentage to the focus on accountability, preventive training, guidance, closely monitored processing, and collaboration between Civil Rights and NFS, particularly related to disability complaints. Agency guidance and direction for managing program results and integrating diverse community perspectives in decisionmaking processes can be found in the *USDA Forest Service Strategic Public Outreach Plan*, available at <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/cr>.

NFS invested more than \$69 million on more than 868 recreational facilities, making accessibility improvements to outdoor developed recreation areas and ensuring access for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, as well as for those with impaired vision. Also, the Forest Service began honoring the Interagency Golden Passports at more than 1,150 national forest recreation sites—a dramatic increase from only 17 sites in 2002. These passports include Golden Age passports for citizens 62 years in age and older and the Golden Access passports for citizens who are blind or permanently disabled. These new benefits are significant for those who qualify and may increase their participation in outdoor recreation activities at national forest recreation fee sites.

The Forest Service continues to improve program participation data collection and survey systems to determine the demographically diverse user groups of the national forests and their related satisfaction. By using this data, the Forest Service has begun to analyze trends, interpret management implications, and take action to increase access and service delivery to underserved communities.

Finally, the Forest Service continues to be a major contributor to USDA procurement accomplishments with small disadvantaged businesses, both 8(a) and non-8(a) firms; women-owned businesses; and HUB zones. In these areas, the Forest Service more than doubled its 2002 accomplishments, and nearly doubled USDA and Forest Service targets.

In 2003, Civil Rights also accomplished the following:

- Completed and disseminated several affirmative employment initiatives, including the Agency Affirmative Employment Program (AEP), People with Disabilities, and Disabled Veterans.
- Integrated the AEP underrepresentation index information into the Agency Work Force Management Plan and short- and long-term outreach and recruitment goals.
- Advised leadership on key workforce management decisions and strategies to achieve a skilled diverse workforce at quarterly meetings of the Chief's Workforce Advisory Group and adopted

several measurement tools for capacity building and recruitment.

- Established the Forest Service Leadership Success Program and prepared a 2-year strategic plan to capitalize on the unprecedented opportunity to build diverse leadership in line with workforce planning and affirmative employment program strategies.

Law Enforcement and Investigations

The Law Enforcement and Investigations (LEI) Program contributes to the Forest Service's mission by protecting natural resources and other property under the agency's jurisdiction and providing a safe environment for employees and the public on NFS lands. LEI staff cooperate with Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies to achieve enforcement activities, investigative activities, and drug enforcement.

The LEI Program is establishing a Homeland Security Coordinator to facilitate efforts to collect and disseminate information and intelligence and to help prevent, enforce laws against, and investigate terrorist acts. LEI is developing an internal response plan to include response capability, continuity of operations, and an internal-external contact matrix. LEI staff continue to provide facility security assessments, primarily for highly vulnerable research labs.

Working collaboratively with external entities allows LEI to better accomplish its mission. Those who cooperated include:

- Office of National Drug Control Policy to enforce the President's National Drug Control Strategy.
- FBI, in coordinating anti-terrorist activity, particularly ecoterrorist activity.
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
- U.S. Department of the Interior agencies for support in field operations.

A memorandum of understanding was drafted with the National Sheriffs' Association to begin jointly developing crime prevention materials for forest visitors. This effort will allow our customers to better understand the rules and regulations affecting NFS lands and hopefully decrease minor criminal activity.

International Programs

In 2003, the Forest Service International Programs Staff and the town of Cordova, AK, coordinated in planning for the Annual Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival. Planned activities included environmental education activities, such as the live interactive Web-cast linking more than 500,000 students along the shorebirds' flyway of Canada, United States, Mexico, and Costa Rica. Festival activities for all ages included

field trips, birding presentations, guest speakers, children's workshops, and a parade.

Over the past few years, the Forest Service, including the Pacific Northwest Research Station, the Alaska Region, and the International Programs Staff, has joined with Ducks Unlimited (in Canada, the United States, and Mexico) on the Copper River International Migratory Bird Initiative. From the Copper River Delta in Alaska to Mexico, these cooperators are working with local communities along the flyway to help restore habitats of shorebirds to ensure their survival.

In spring 2003, war in Iraq left thousands of people in need of emergency relief. The United States sent a Disaster Assistance Response Team to Iraq, Kuwait, Turkey, Jordan, Cyprus, and Qatar to assess relief needs and coordinate a response. A disaster response specialist from International Programs joined the effort to assess the situation in northern Iraq. The specialist headed a U.S. Government civilian unit responsible for providing information and programmatic recommendations for disaster activities to the core Disaster Assistance Response Team based in Kuwait City. The local team coordinated with representatives from other nongovernmental and international organizations, the United Nations, and Coalition Civil Affairs forces in northern Iraq to ensure that humanitarian needs were being met.

The Forest Service's expertise in emergency response is being tapped worldwide through the International Programs Staff's Disaster Assistance Support Program, with funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance Program.

In 2003, the United States and Madagascar have worked on developing a vision for the island nation of Madagascar, off the southeastern coast of Africa. Madagascar has some of the most spectacular and unique biodiversity in the world, with 80 percent of the nation's flora and fauna found nowhere else in the world.

In May, a Forest Service team met with counterparts at the Madagascar Ministry of Water and Forests, a forest zoning team, a local nongovernmental organization, and the Director of the Andohahela National Park to assess the needs of the ministry and what further expertise the Forest Service might provide. Later in 2003, the International Programs Staff planned to:

- Organize a team to visit Madagascar to address these technical and management needs.
- Advise their Malagasy counterparts on the development of a transparent permitting system, which would approve and distribute permits for wood harvest in Madagascar.
- Facilitate discussions on managing information and forest policy.

In May 2003, a Forest Service International Programs Staff member joined the U.S. delegation at the 34th Session of the International Tropical Timber Council in Panama City. Governmental delegates and observers from around the world gathered for the council meeting to deliberate on several issues, including future actions by the International Tropical Timber Organization, and to further develop and promote phased approaches to certification.

During the past year, three workshops were held in each of the tropical timber-producing regions to discuss the potential role of phased approaches to certification. The workshops produced several recommendations, which were presented to the council. As a result, the council decided to develop procedures on how phased approaches to certification might be implemented, and to analyze the costs and benefits of certification in select producer member countries. The decision also authorized an international workshop on phased approaches to certification so that the results of the work can be disseminated and discussed.

At the session, the council also discussed nontariff barriers in relation to product standards and requirements. This discussion resulted in a decision to undertake a study to identify and assess possible impacts on tropical timber-producing countries in meeting existing and evolving product standards, quality or grading requirements, building codes, and technical regulations. The study would also identify where capacity-building gaps exist and ways to address them.

Delegates also negotiated a decision that provides support for five developing country participants from the civil society and the trade advisory groups to attend the renegotiation of the International Tropical Timber Agreement in 2004. The decision also authorized the preparation of an overall background paper on internationally traded and potentially tradable environmental services to inform the renegotiation discussion.