

**United States
Department of
Interior**

**Bureau of
Land
Management**

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**Forest
Service**

**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

Reply Refer to: 6740(BLM-WO330)/2520(FS)

Date: March 20, 1996

Subject: Accelerating Cooperative Riparian Restoration and Management

To: State Directors and Regional Foresters

The following approach to riparian management provides an opportunity to show that we can work together across agency and administrative boundaries to accomplish our common goal of providing for healthy, productive lands and public benefits. We recognize, and want to emphasize, the importance of riparian health to the well-being of the communities dependent on the land for multiple benefits. In July 1995, we asked for a proposal to accelerate the restoration and improved management of riparian areas in the Western United States. The proposal focused on lands managed by the USDI Bureau of Land Management and USDA Forest Service. That proposal was sent to us on

September 25, 1995. On November 8, 1995, at a briefing of the Forest Service national Leadership Team, we formally announced the two agencies would move aggressively to refine and implement a cooperative management strategy.

This national riparian management effort includes the formation of a core team to act as a catalyst, focusing resources on providing training and technology transfer, consulting and advisory services, and program review. Other individuals will assist part-time with consultation and training. Another important element of the approach is the establishment of a network of riparian program coordinators throughout each agency. The approach will build on the success of existing programs and efforts, providing additional opportunity to work together more effectively.

This undertaking is important to us. It represents an opportunity to work together on one of the most significant resources charged to our care, and to involve communities connected by the "riparian zone." The USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service will be a principal partner as we begin to implement riparian restoration on a watershed scale in cooperation with all landowners. It is time to "fix the creeks!" Over the next few weeks, we will be asking State Directors, Regional Foresters, Washington Office Staffs, and others to help us develop an implementation plan. This will include detail on items such as budgeting, personnel actions, reporting, and accountability.

We will work collaboratively to implement this program. This approach requires the integration of ecological, economic, social factors, and participation of affected interests. These are the elements proven effective in successful demonstration areas throughout the West.

/s/ Mike Dombeck /s/ Jack Ward Thomas

MIKE DOMBECK JACK WARD THOMAS

Acting Director Chief

Bureau of Land Management Forest Service

Enclosure

COOPERATIVE RIPARIAN MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

March 1996

BACKGROUND

Riparian areas typically are a reflection of the overall health of the watershed and are critical to the well-being of the communities who depend on the land for jobs, clean water, food, wood products, recreation, and many other benefits. The USDI Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and USDA Forest Service (FS) have placed a high priority on caring for the health of the land. Both agencies have recognized that riparian areas present an important opportunity to demonstrate a new approach to multiple-use management because:

- riparian areas are among the first landscape features to show damage from improper management;
- they make up a small percentage of the total land area in the West but provide tremendous public benefits in the form of wildlife, grazing, recreation, wood products, fish, clean water, aquifer re-charge, and others;
- a significant portion of national forest and public land riparian areas are below their potential, and therefore their capability to provide benefits is limited; and,

- they often pass through or are shared by numerous landowners. A collaborative approach applied at the ground level is the only avenue to successful restoration and management.

These riparian areas are in need of help to restore them to their former productivity. This will not happen by regulation, changes in the law, more money, or any of the normal bureaucratic approaches. It will only occur through the integration of ecological, economic, and social factors, and participation of affected interests.

To be effective, riparian restoration and management must:

- be based on common goals, objectives, and management direction for riparian areas, and perhaps, most importantly, on common sense;
- promote establishment of a common vocabulary and definitions, and methods for evaluating the health and condition of riparian areas;
- focus effort on those opportunities where there is a high probability for positive change with a reasonable investment;
- encourage voluntary restoration of private lands; and,
- ensure management and problem resolution at the ground level, by the people most affected by success or failure.

This effort focuses the best interdisciplinary expertise and local interests, on results!

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

To meet these criteria, the program includes two elements.

I. Riparian Service Team. The team will be composed of 5-7 highly credible professionals with a broad range of interdisciplinary expertise. Team members will possess a strong background in FS and BLM policy and programs, be skilled at facilitating problem solving in the public interest, have a strong ground-level orientation, and a bias for action. The team will focus on results, rather than process, and work to streamline or eliminate existing process requirements. The team leader will report to the Director of the BLM and the Chief of the Forest Service, or their designees.

The Riparian Service Team is charged to provide:

- (1) Technology transfer and training.
- (2) Consulting and advisory services.
- (3) Program review and evaluation.

Primary responsibilities for the team include:

A. Training/Technology Transfer:

Establish and coordinate activities of an interagency training cadre.

- Provide interdisciplinary training sessions on riparian assessment, interpretation, and management applications. Ensure training is accessible to Federal, State, and local agencies, tribes, conservation and industry interests, and affected communities.
- Serve as a clearing-house and source for literature on riparian management.
- Facilitate development of a common vocabulary and definitions.
- Facilitate development and application of common assessment and monitoring tools.
- Sponsor interagency "internships" (i.e., temporary details) to accelerate development of skills within the work force.
- Help identify priority research needs.

B. Consulting/Advisory Services:

- Provide strategic consulting/advisory services at the request of national/Regional/State leadership, including technical support on:

- controversial issues;
- policy (e.g., establishing common goals and objectives, performance measures); and,
- program development and priority setting.

- Provide tactical consulting/advisory services at the request of national forests and BLM districts, to:

- trouble-shoot/problem solve;
- mediate disputes; and,
- assist in design/implementation/application of riparian assessments.
- Establish a clearinghouse for available skills to meet field needs.
- In cooperation with Natural Resources Conservation Service and other agencies, respond to requests for technical riparian management assistance from the private sector.

C. Review:

- Respond to national/Regional/State/Field Unit requests for review, and recommend adjustments to riparian management programs and actions as

appropriate.

- Facilitate involvement of other Federal, State, and local agencies, affected industries, and interested publics in review of riparian management efforts.
- Promote accountability for, and recognition of, excellence in riparian management by agency employees and partners.

II. Coordination Network: The second element involves designation of riparian coordinators for each FS and BLM organizational unit. These coordinators will be selected on the basis of their interest, technical capabilities, and interpersonal communication skills. As part of their ongoing duties, they will serve as an important extension of the Riparian Service Team by:

- Working with the multi-agency training cadre.
- Facilitating participation of individuals from outside agencies, conservation and industry groups, and the affected communities.
- Helping guide priority setting, project implementation, and monitoring.

PROGRAM CONSIDERATIONS

Communication: Strong support for this collaborative approach to riparian management must be obtained to extend the success of past efforts. The support must be broad based, including:

- national, Regional, and State BLM/FS leadership.
- Interested groups, including other State and Federal agencies, tribes, professional societies, and conservation and industry groups.
- Key Congressional members and committee staff.

Integration With Existing Efforts: The Riparian Service Team will work closely with related agency teams (e.g., national Aquatic Monitoring Center, Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Center, Stream Team, Range Management Technical Support Group, and many others) to ensure coordination of ongoing programs.

Facilities: The Riparian Service Team will be located in the BLM office in Prineville, Oregon.