

Stewardship Contracting Inquiry Team Report and Proposed Action Items July 2008

Introduction

A team of Forest Service employees was assembled in early April 2008 to conduct a mid-point review of stewardship contracting authority. Section 323 of Public Law 108-7 (16 U.S.C. 2104 Note, as revised February 28, 2003) grants the Forest Service authority until September 30, 2013, to enter into stewardship contracting projects for up to 10 years with private persons or public or private entities, by contract or by agreement, to perform services to achieve land management goals for the national forests or public lands that meet local and rural community needs. There are many examples of successful use of stewardship contracting authority. Many barriers and challenges have been overcome in the first five years of this authority; however, some remain as impediments to agency and partner use.

During a number of interdisciplinary team and key partner discussions that occurred from April through July 2008, emphasis was placed on the current status of stewardship contracting in the Forest Service, the desired future condition, and the approaches needed to achieve the desired future condition. Based on what the Forest Service has learned about stewardship contracting during the last 5 years, and from what we heard from our partners during this inquiry, the team identified 4 major objectives and several action items needed to meet these objectives.

There is a sense of urgency in accomplishing our objectives. The Forest Service must show significant accomplishments under the stewardship contracting authority to maintain partner involvement/assistance and receive congressional support for reauthorization or permanent authorization.

As the Forest Service moves forward, it is imperative to have a multitude of leaders at all levels of the organization that

1. recognize, understand and value the opportunities derived from stewardship contracting,
2. provide staffing and financial support,

3. motivate their employees to integrate their efforts and use stewardship contracting/agreements to achieve multiple objectives, and
4. are held accountable for accomplishments.

Commitment from leadership is absolutely necessary to improve our agency's use of stewardship contracting and agreements in the next 5 years. In addition, all agency personnel and partners must be thinking and working at an ecosystem management level and jointly working on stewardship contracting and agreements.

Purpose

The team was asked to work with partners to diagnose barriers and challenges and propose actions to enhance agency use, community collaboration and results from stewardship contracting. The team was also asked to identify and develop strategies to resolve identified barriers.

Shared Objectives

The following shared objectives reflect the collaborative nature our partnership and shared vision for stewardship contracting, while maintaining separate organization and agency identities.

Objective 1. Provide stewardship contracting/agreements training that will emphasize a) the philosophy behind the stewardship contracting authority, b) the value and benefits of its use, and c) effective use of tools and mechanisms for implementation.

- Revise/Create training modules (incorporating existing materials if/where beneficial) with field level (experienced people) inside and outside of the agency. Use lessons learned, identify how to handle existing funds (salvage, BD, KV, road maintenance), identify the differences in agreements and contracts, stress the concept of end results, best value, use of receipts, and collaborative monitoring process. Emphasize that training should be complete on all units by December 2010. Community members, contractors and other stakeholders should be

encouraged to participate with Forest Service staff in training sessions, both to increase their own understanding of stewardship contracting and to ensure that their perspectives and concerns are understood and addressed.

- As a result of stewardship training, increased numbers of line officers at all levels of the organization (and their staff) will better understand the philosophy and value of stewardship authority (contracts and agreements) and more frequently and effectively implement comprehensive stewardship projects and embrace stewardship philosophy.

It is expected that stewardship training will not be viewed as a one-time event but as a continuing program of learning and improvement which will be updated to address new procedures and techniques.

Objective 2. Develop a comprehensive communication effort that provides consistent messaging and communication among internal and external “players”. We will strive to effectively communicate the purpose, value, and philosophy of stewardship contracting and focus on end-results.

- A communication strategy will also be incorporated into future training.

Objective 3. Reduce barriers to successful implementation of stewardship contracting including resolving technical issues, clarifying policy direction and identifying where additional legislative authority may be needed.

Objective 4. Accomplish more on-the-ground implementation of stewardship contracting nation-wide.

Accomplishing these objectives will result in:

- Use of Stewardship Contracting Authority to its fullest extent to meet Forest Plan ecosystem restoration objectives through a collaborative process.
- Active involvement of non-FS staff, agencies, and partners working with the Forest Service in meeting ecosystem restoration objectives.
- A change in Forest Service culture that allows the agency and community members, stakeholders, concerned organizations and individuals to reach shared mutual goals, in an integrated fashion, through stewardship contracting.

Proposed Action Items

Specific Action Items proposed for 2008-2009 are identified for each Objective. Completion of priority Action Items approved by the Forest Service Executive Leadership Team (ELT) will move the Agency towards accomplishment of our Objectives.

The inquiry team suggests that a Responsible Party (RP), be assigned for each objective. The RP will ensure that the action items will be developed, monitored and accomplished for their objective by the assigned due date. The team also strongly recommends that the RP be a line officer. An implementation team (IT) will be assembled to actively work on each action item. Assignments to the IT will be at the discretion of the RP and should be coordinated with the supervisor of each team member. Partners that wish to contribute their time and effort to specific action items should be represented on the IT. We suggest that a team leader be assigned to each action item by the RP. "Deliverables" (products) expected from each action item are identified, however, some deliverables will need to be further defined by the Responsible Party and/or the Implementation Team. Proposed due dates are estimated based on a combination of factors including commitment from the ELT for staff and resources as well as partner interest and availability. Comments/Suggestions for action items listed in the tables below have been tracked during team development of this draft report and may be useful to the implementation team. The responsibility for overall accomplishment of action items rests with the Chief and/or the Deputy Chiefs for National Forest System, Business Operations and State & Private Forestry.

Objective 1 – (Suggested Responsible Party – Tom Peterson/Ron Hooper)

Provide stewardship contracting/agreements training that will emphasize the philosophy behind the stewardship contracting authority, the value of it, and how to use it.

Objective 1 Action Items	Suggested Implementation Team (IT)	Deliverable(s) [Product(s)]	Proposed Due Date(s)	Comments/Suggestions
1. Review existing training as it relates to objective	Wildlife/Partnership staff; interested stakeholders	Brief summary of what current training is available.	August 15, 2008	Consolidate current FS training opportunities. Minimal emphasis – but use lessons learned to assist in development of new modules.
2. Incorporate Modules 1-6 into future training:	RMEF, NWTF, RVCC reps, Faye, Tim, Andrea, Sandy, Rex, Regional Stewardship Contracting Coordinators, Patti Palmer	Package Training program (Modules 1-6) Begin Implementation	December 1, 2008 January 15, 2009	Major emphasis – key is to develop and use new training to advance our use of stewardship contracting/agreements Verify that existing materials and new information were incorporated into each module. Suggest active visits by an integrated team (including partners) to selected Districts/Forests/Regions. Presentations designed for integrated staffs – not for functional units.
a. Module 1	AI - RMEF Dave – NWTF Gordy Sanders – Pyramid Lumber Ted – NWTF/USFS	Philosophy & value of stewardship authority	September 15, 2008	Integrate other resource groups in this training, landscape restoration Existing materials and new information to be incorporated as appropriate. Teleconference/Video conference Continue to integrate Landscape scale; ecological restoration; working within capabilities; may need to start small on some units Recognize what a great tool this is for public land management

Objective 1 Action Items	Suggested Implementation Team (IT)	Deliverable(s) [Product(s)]	Proposed Due Date(s)	Comments/Suggestions
				Include testimonials from FS personnel re: projects that have been successful
b. Module 2	Rex Ennis - Wildlife; Rich Lasko Fuels & Fire Ecology (Wildlife and fuels need to be involved & at WO level)	Stewardship Contracting – an integrated tool for land stewardship and restoration.	October 1, 2008	Cover best value, goods for services, end results Integrated strategy is the program; stewardship contract is the tool Existing materials and new information to be incorporated as appropriate. What's the benefit of using this? "Myth Busting" – like responding to FAQ's. Intended use.
c. Module 3	RMEF NWTF R1/R6 staff..... Rick Svlich Bill Wickman (both with NPI) Patti Palmer Ron Hooper Tim Dabney	Stewardship Agreement – an integrated tool for land stewardship and restoration	October 1, 2008	Cover retained receipts. Using partners, leveraging dollars. Implementation Team will need to refer to notes from May 2008 conference calls with partners – 3 pages of notes on this subject not adequately captured here. Complete internal review. Get OGC concurrence on template developed in R1 and use as multi-region or national template (bottom line – achieve consistency). Existing materials and new information to be incorporated as appropriate. Integrated strategy is the program; stewardship agreement is the tool.
d. Module 4	Andrea RVCC rep NFF TNC	Getting Started and maintaining momentum: Collaboration process	October 1, 2008	Roles for Agency employees and partners. Existing materials and new information to be incorporated as appropriate. Approval of stewardship projects

Objective 1 Action Items	Suggested Implementation Team (IT)	Deliverable(s) [Product(s)]	Proposed Due Date(s)	Comments/Suggestions
e. Module 5	Andrea Partners with interest	Monitoring	October 1, 2008	What you should monitor and how to market your success Existing materials and new information to be incorporated as appropriate. A significant piece of this module should deal with multiparty monitoring
f. Module 6	Selected Regional PAOs with Regional Stewardship and Regional Partnership Coordinators	Communication strategy	October 1, 2008	See Objective 2. Action Item 2. Existing materials and new information to be incorporated as appropriate.
3. Train the trainer	Regional AQM/FM staff Andrea & Tim Partners with interest	Contact list for each Region	March 1, 2009	Include Partners in train the trainer
4. Create Guidebook : Stewardship Contracting/Agreements	Barbara Menzel, Ft. Collins Team with make up similar to what R6 used to create their version?	Similar to R6 guide	April 1, 2009	Computer based tutorial exists
5. Create Mentor program	Andrea NFF – Karen	Possible Cost Share Agreement between agency & partner(s) may be needed to support the mentor program over the long-term?	January 1, 2009	Set up mentors to help new units learn from others NFF possibly interested in providing staff support and funding 7/6/08 email from Andrea Bedell-Loucks (from Karen Dibari, NFF) includes more detailed proposal for “peer learning.”

Objective 2 – (Suggested Responsible Party – Anne Zimmermann)

Develop a comprehensive communication effort that provides consistent messaging and communication among internal and external “players”. Communicate purpose, value, and philosophy. Focus on end-results.

Objective 2 Action Items	Implementation Team (IT)	Deliverable(s) [Product(s)]	Proposed Due Date(s)	Comments/Suggestions
1. Identify spokes-people (key partners and agency reps) for communicating Stewardship Contracting Authority	Team of integrated specialists from each region, community members, RVCC	Develop suite of key messages and sound bites.	Identify spokes-people by September 1, 2008 Develop key messages and sound bits by December 1, 2008	Craft specific messages for audience (contractor, Congress, Tribes, agency, leadership, conservation community, and general public).
2. Include communication tactics as part of line officer training (specific to stewardship contracting).	Selected Regional PAOs with Regional Stewardship and Regional Partnership Coordinators	Communication module development. Material development (example press releases, outreach notices, website development, etc.)	September 1, 2008	Linked to Objective #1, Action Item 2f, Training Module 6 (above).
3. Improve sharing and dissemination of all reports related to SC (ensure responsiveness to partner contributions and public inquiries) Programmatic reports Ecological/administrative reports Multi-party reports	Sharon Nygaard-Scott	Timely Programmatic reports Reports to show Congressional Reps accomplishment	Initial Programmatic Report – October 1, 2008?? Ecological/ Administrative Reports - 2/year? Multi-party reports – Already a schedule in place?	Develop and implement a process to ensure that monitoring and accomplishment reports are widely available and read and that the reports' findings/recommendations are used in adaptive management. This is critical for success. Reports need to contain specific accomplishment detail: ex: number of projects with NEPA completed; number of projects that produce wood fiber. Adopt a pro-active vs. reactive approach by establishing reporting guidelines

Objective 2 Action Items	Implementation Team (IT)	Deliverable(s) [Product(s)]	Proposed Due Date(s)	Comments/Suggestions
4. Develop process for finding & marketing stories (media, public, websites, newsletters, annual summits or meetings, etc.)	Partnership (WO) Office of Comm.(WO)	Initiate process for collecting stories and lessons Produce Glossy Yearly Report.	Initiate process by December 1, 2008 Produce 1st Annual report March 1, 2009	Template, timeline, reward or incentives? Include contextual information behind stories, including state of local industry, contemporary logging systems and technology, involvement partners, etc. Ask closeout questions, lessons learned? Include testimonials from FS personnel re: projects that have been successful
5. Regional Foresters, Forest Supervisors, WO and RO Directors promote and recognize stewardship contracting as an integrated tool for land management. (Include regional awards as means of recognition)	Tim Dabney Stewardship BOD	Letter signed by Regional Foresters promoting Stewardship Contracting This letter would be of value only if there is follow-up to ensure that those receiving the letter are enabled to act on it.	TBA	Leadership commitment to stewardship contracting/agreements is reinforced within the agency and local communities. Includes promotion of better integration of specialists to design and implement stewardship contracts/agreements (emphasize that "stewardship" does not equal "timber") Clearly articulate that promoting stewardship has to be considered along with other action items. Without good understanding of philosophy, proper training, clear policies, accurate reporting etc. we won't achieve the desired end-results.

Objective 3 – (Suggested Responsible Parties – Ron Hooper/Tom Peterson)

Reduce barriers to successful implementation of stewardship contracting including resolution of technical issues clarifying policy direction and identifying where additional legislative authority may be needed. The specific technical, policy and legislative issues that arose during the discussions between the inquiry team and our partners in May 2008 are listed in Appendix A (List of Identified Barriers to Stewardship Contracting). The action items in the table below were selected as highest priority in each category (technical issues, policy direction or legislative authority) based on the FS/Partner discussions in May 2008 and comments received from some of those partners on the 6/23/08 draft Inquiry Team Report.

Objective 3 Action Items	Implementation Team (IT)	Deliverable(a) [Product(s)]	Proposed Due Date(s)	Comments/Suggestions
1. Address top priority technical Issues				
a. Stewardship agreement template is needed for nation-wide consistency	Tim Dabney, Patti Palmer, Michele Wasienko-Holland selected regional specialists and interested partners	Complete a standardized template for agreements	December 1, 2008	
b. Focus on end results (Incorporate designation by description and designation by prescription in projects).	Tim Dabney, Rex Ennis, Fuels Manager	Will be encouraged through new training modules. Other steps?	Due dates based on specific accomplishments to be identified	See RVCC comments (7/1/08 to Faye Krueger), Reducing Barriers (focus on end results) pg 4. and comment from Bill Imbergamo, email to Faye 7/3 (pg.2)
c. Simplify contracts	Tim Dabney, Selected Regional Stewardship Coordinators	Implementation team to Identify specific accomplishments	Due dates to be based on specific accomplishments to be identified	See RVCC comments (7/1/08 to Faye Krueger, Reducing Barriers (simplify contracts) pg 4.
d. Increase flexibility in determining appropriate	Tim Dabney, Ron Hooper	Implementation team to Identify	Due dates based on specific	See RVCC comments (7/1/08 to Faye Krueger, Reducing Barriers (increase

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methods of product appraisal.		specific accomplishments	accomplishments to be identified	flexibility.....) pg 4.
2. Address top priority policy direction	Stewardship BOD, Patti Palmer, Interested Partners	Resolve the disposal of timber under agreements.	November 1, 2008	
3. Address the top priorities for additional legislative authority	AQM assisted by Legislative Affairs rep. - and Stewardship Contracting Coordinator (Tim) Lead Team Member	See a. & b. below	See a. & b. below	See a. & b. below
a. Resolve cancellation ceiling issues for multi-year contracts	AQM assisted by Legislative Affairs rep. – and Stewardship Contracting Coordinator (Tim) Lead Team Member	Continue working on resolution of ceiling Next step: Congressional Field Trip in R2/R5 in September 2008	May not achieve resolution in the first year of work. Create a FAQ document re: cancellation ceiling.	- o Apache-Sitgreaves, White Mtn. approach, Fremont-Winema Lakeview Sustained Yield IDIQ approach - o DOD has solved their issues... can we learn from them? - o BLM does not face same issues. They issue IDIQ contracts w/tasks. - o Without resolution, there is a continued discentive for Forest Supervisors to offer multi-year contracts where infrastructure is lacking
b. Payment to States	AQM assisted by Legislative Affairs rep. – and Stewardship Contracting Coordinator (Tim) Lead Team Member	Continue working on resolution of payment to states	May not achieve resolution in the first year of work.	Clarification of Stewardship Contracting “volume” and contributions to the 25% fund is needed.

Objective 4. Accomplish more on-the-ground implementation of stewardship contracting nation-wide. (Suggested Responsible Parties, as proposed by partners: Chief, Deputy Chiefs (NFS, Business Ops and S&P, and all RFs).

Objective 4 Action Item	Implementation Team (IT)	Deliverable(s) [(Product(s)]	Proposed Due Date(s)	Comments/Suggestions
1. Have Agency leadership recognize the use of stewardship authority by supporting the Objectives 1-3 above.	Stewardship Board of Directors (Tom Peterson, Tim Dabney, Anne Zimmermann, Ron Hooper, Tom Harbour)	See Objectives 1-3 above.	On-going	Make allowances for areas that don't have "something to sell" (no "goods") and therefore feel that they aren't in a position to use the authorities. – OR – provide allocated funds to assist with stewardship projects in these areas.

Partnership Progress Reports

Agency and partners that are part of the Stewardship Contracting Inquiry Team will meet (in-person or by conference call) on a regular basis to discuss overall progress on the approved Action Items. Note: Communications of accomplishments to Congress are included in Objective 2, Action Item 3.

Abbreviations in Team Report

AQM – Acquisition Management	NWTF – National Wild Turkey Federation
BD – Brush Disposal	OGC – Office of General Counsel
DOD - Department of Defense	PAO – Public Affairs Officer
ELT – Executive Leadership Team	RMEF – Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
FAQ – Frequently Asked Question	R1 – Northern Region (Region 1), Forest Service
FM - Forest Management (Forest Service Staff Unit)	RO – Regional Office
FS – Forest Service	RP – Responsible Party
IDIQ – Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity	RVCC – Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition
IT - Implementation Team	TNC – The Nature Conservancy
KV - Knutson Vandenberg	WO – Washington Office, Forest Service
NFF – National Forest Foundation	