

Forest Service Implementation during FY 2005 of the Stewardship Contracting Authority provided by Section 323 of the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2003 (as contained in division F of P.L. 108-7; 16 U.S.C. Note)

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

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PREFACE

Section 323 of the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2003 (as contained in division F of P.L. 108-7; 16 U.S.C 2104 Note), grants the Forest Service (FS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) authority until September 30, 2013, to enter into stewardship contracting projects with private persons or public or private entities, by contract or agreement, to perform services to achieve land management goals for the national forests or public lands that meet local and rural community needs. This legislation expands the stewardship contracting authority that Congress had previously provided, through passage of Section 347 of the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1999 (as contained in section 101(e) of division A of Public Law 105-277; 16 U.S.C. 2104 Note). One of the requirements of Section 347, contained in subsection (g), is that the FS and BLM must report annually to the Appropriations Committees of the U.S. House and Senate on: 1) the status of development, execution, and administration of agreements or contracts; 2) the specific accomplishments that have resulted; and 3) the role of local communities in development of contract plans. The purpose of this report is to satisfy this requirement for FY 2005.

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Executive Summary

In Fiscal Year 2005, the Forest Service continued to provide direction for implementing Section 323 of the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2003 (as contained in division F of P.L. 108-7; 16 U.S.C. Note) by improving resources available to implement stewardship contracting. During FY 2005 the interim stewardship contracting direction was revised and American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes were consulted on the draft policy for implementation of the Tribal Forest Protection Act of 2004 (P.L. 108-278). This work culminated in the issuance of the final directive on stewardship contracting (FSH 2409.19 Chapter 60) on December 12, 2005 and the issuance of an interim directive (FSH 2409.19 Chapter 60) on implementation of the Tribal Forest Protection Act on December 13, 2005.

The number of stewardship contracts/agreements continues to increase; 86 projects were approved by Regional Foresters during FY 2005. Projects approved met one or more of the following objectives: reducing hazardous fuels, restoring aspen, improving wildlife habitat, improving forest health, creating more late structural stands, and reducing the spread of pine beetles.

During FY 2005, 45 contracts and agreements were awarded and a total of 35,478 acres were treated using stewardship contracting. A list of accomplishments from these awarded contracts and agreements is included in this report.

Local and rural communities continue to play a substantial role in the development of stewardship contracts and agreements. In order to illustrate the role of local communities in developing stewardship contracts, five case studies are included.

Chapter 1 Background and Introduction

1.1 Background

Section 323 of the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2003 (as contained in division F of P.L. 108-7; 16 U.S.C 2104 Note), grants the Forest Service (FS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) authority until September 30, 2013, to enter into stewardship contracting projects with private persons or public or private entities, by contract or agreement, to perform services to achieve land management goals for the national forests or public lands that meet local and rural community needs.

1.2 Introduction

This report focuses solely on the activities and accomplishments of the Forest Service in FY 2005; however, the FS and BLM have continued to work closely together while refining policy and direction for stewardship contracting under Section 347 as amended by Section 323. Both the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management are continuing to expand their use of the stewardship contracting authority. This report outlines the activities the Forest Service undertook in FY 2005 as well as including information on community involvement in the development of stewardship contracting projects.

Chapter 2 Current Status

2.1 Handbook revision

During FY 2005, the Forest Service Handbook (FSH 2409.19 Chapter 60) on stewardship contracting was revised and finalized. The final direction was published on December 12, 2005. The handbook chapter is available at http://www.fs.fed.us/im/directives/fsh/2409.19/2409.19_60.doc.

2.2 Information Resources

Websites are continually updated to provide current information concerning stewardship contracting. Updated sources of information include: the Stewardship Contracting website (www.fs.fed.us/forestmanagement/projects/stewardship/index.shtml); the Healthy Forests website (<http://www.healthyforest.gov.html>); the National Partnership Center website (www.partnershipresourcecenter.org/resources/index.php); and the Office of Tribal Relations website (<http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/tribalrelations/regs.shtml>).

2.3 Guidelines on Tribal Forest Protection Act (TFPA) implementation

The Tribal Forest Protection Act of 2004 (P.L. 108-278) authorizes the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior to give special consideration to tribally-proposed projects on agency lands bordering or adjacent to Indian trust land. The draft policy to implement the Tribal Forest Protection Act (TFPA) was sent out to the Regional Foresters, who coordinated the review, comment, and consultation period with the tribes.

An interim directive to FSH 2409.19 Ch 60 implementing TFPA was issued on December 13, 2005. The Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management are beginning to receive proposals from Tribes under TFPA. Some of these TFPA projects will use stewardship contracts/agreements to implement the proposals. The FS and BLM have also offered several stewardship contracting workshops with Tribes and intertribal organizations and will be offering additional workshops in the future.

2.4 Collaboration Training

The Forest Service continues to provide direction and information concerning collaboration, incorporating lessons learned from various stewardship projects. The following website was created to provide additional information to field personnel about collaboration:

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

This website also contains lessons learned from stewardship contracting projects on National Forests across the country.

The agency contracted with the Pinchot Institute for Conservation to provide five training sessions on collaboration and stewardship contracting across the country during the summer and fall of 2005. The purpose of these one-day workshops was to build and expand the agency's capability for collaboration in the context of stewardship contracting. These workshops had over 130 participants, including line officers, key forest and regional staff, BLM employees, and community members with stewardship contracting expertise.

Chapter 3 Specific Accomplishments

3.1 Projects approved

During FY 2005, 86 projects, which aim to treat approximately 195,000 acres, were approved for implementation under the authority provided by Section 323 of P.L. 108-7. Here is a sampling of the objectives of the projects approved in FY 2005:

- The Custer Peak Fuels project (Black Hills National Forest, SD) will treat approximately 2,250 acres with the objectives of reducing both hazardous fuels and the spread of mountain pine beetle infestations.
- The Happy Camp Fuels Reduction (Eldorado National Forest, CA) will reduce approximately 700 acres of fuels within the wildland urban interface.
- The Star Ranch Fuels Reduction (Boise National Forest, ID) will reduce fuels on approximately 4,480 acres within the wildland urban interface.
- The Harden Loop Salvage (Salmon-Challis National Forest, ID) Project's objectives are to remove dead and dying trees from a beetle epidemic, reduce further spread of pine beetles, and reduce hazardous fuels on approximately 126 acres.
- The Clover Flat Vegetation Treatment (Fishlake National Forest, UT) will restore approximately 30 acres of aspen.
- The Sumpter Interface Vegetation Fuels project (Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, OR) will treat approximately 22 acres to create resilient ecological conditions and ultimately move the landscape towards more historical conditions. This project is a joint endeavor with the Bureau of Land Management.
- The Trig Stewardship Project (Deschutes National Forest, OR) will reduce hazardous fuels on approximately 760 acres in the wildland urban interface.
- The Deadman Stewardship Project (Colville National Forest, WA) will create late structural stands and improve forest health on approximately 12,000 acres.
- The Winn Biomass Project (Kisatchie National Forest, LA) will improve approximately 1,680 acres of red cockaded woodpecker habitat.
- The Hyampton Fuels Project (Shasta Trinity National Forest, CA) will treat approximately 360 acres within the Hyampton Fire area in order to bring about ecosystem restoration.
- The LC Wildlife Improvement Project (Francis Marion & Sumter National Forest, SC) will treat approximately 8,039 acres to improve forest health and increase wildlife habitat.
- The Kane Gap Stewardship Project (George Washington & Jefferson National Forest, VA) will improve wildlife habitat on approximately 466 acres.
- The Upper Brushy Stewardship Project (Bankhead National Forest, AL) will treat approximately 18,249 acres to enhance wildlife habitat.

3.2 Projects awarded

In FY 2005 a total of 45 contracts and agreements were awarded and a total of 35,478 acres were treated using stewardship contracting. These 45 contracts and agreements were all awarded for stewardship contracting projects approved by Regional Foresters in FY 2005 or previous fiscal years.

3.3 Forest Service 2005 Stewardship Contracting Accomplishments

FY 2005	Nation-wide
Stewardship contract/agreement awarded acres	35,478
Hazardous fuels in Condition Class 2 or 3 in fire regimes 1, 2, or 3 treated outside the WUI (acres)	4,015
Hazardous fuels in fire regimes 1,2, or 3 moved to a better condition class (acres)	19,605
WUI high priority fuels treated (acres)	29,324
Total biomass used for energy (green tons)	37,464
Reforestation (acres)	1,264
Timber Stand Improvement (acres)	6,108
Timber Volume offered salvage sale (CCF)	72,129
Timber Volume offered - appropriated (CCF)	350,831
Timber Volume sold (CCF)	196,079
Miles of trail improved	20
Noxious weed treatment (acres)	2,769
Number of watersheds where condition improved due to stewardship contracting	5
Streams restored/enhanced (miles)	42
Terrestrial wildlife habitat restored/enhanced (acres)	4,988
Lakes restored or enhanced	35
Miles of road improved	18
Miles of road decommissioned	90
Percent of mechanically treated acres with byproducts utilized	56

Chapter 4 The role of local communities in development of agreements and contract plans

The Forest Service is continuing to work on increasing community involvement in stewardship contracting at all levels – national, regional and at the project level. At the national level, the Forest Service has contracted with the Pinchot Institute for Conservation to conduct the programmatic multiparty monitoring process for FY 2006 through FY 2009.

In Region 6 (Oregon and Washington), a Stewardship Contracting Roundtable Series was commissioned to fine-tune the Region's approach to stewardship project development and implementation. The purpose of the 2005 Roundtable on Stewardship Contracting was to assess how stewardship projects are being developed and implemented, and to identify barriers and possible solutions to ensure that stewardship authorities in Region 6 are as effective as possible at meeting ecological, community, and administrative objectives. The Roundtable series was hosted by the National Forest Foundation in partnership with Sustainable Northwest and supported by a region-wide group of technical advisors.

Notes from the field

To illustrate the role of local communities in the development of stewardship projects, five case studies, produced by the implementing National Forest, are included: the Star Valley Stewardship Project, the Middle Fork Stewardship Project, the Cloak Stewardship Project, the Kirtland's Warbler Stewardship Project, and the Sims Mesa Stewardship Project.

4.1 Star Valley Wildland Urban Interface Fuels Reduction Stewardship Project, Bridger-Teton National Forest (WY)

Project Description

The Star Valley Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Fuels Reduction project is reducing fuels and restoring aspen, native grasses, and sagebrush meadows on National Forest lands that border private lands. This project has demonstrated fuel reduction activities to the local community and has prompted several adjacent private land owners to do similar treatments on their forested land. Private landowners in other parts of the valley are beginning to collaborate with the Forest Service, other federal land management agencies, and city governments to design more WUI fuel reduction treatments. This project has stimulated the use of biomass as a viable forest product and has sparked interest in creating local markets for these products.



Figure 1. Unit before Treatment

Role of Interested Individuals and Organizations

The State of Wyoming Forestry Department and the Lincoln County Emergency Planning Committee identified the Star Valley area as the second highest priority in Lincoln County for fuels treatment as part of the *Communities At Risk in Western Wyoming* report. The Bridger-Teton National Forest and State fire personnel, along with the local rural fire department, met with citizens of Star Valley Ranch and Bedford, WY to discuss options for reducing wildfire risks.



Figure 2. Fuel Reduction Unit After Treatment

As part of the collaborative effort, the participants hosted a biomass utilization workshop in 2004 to highlight the local opportunities for commercial use of woody biomass for energy. In January 2005 an additional meeting was held to connect federal and state land managers with private enterprises specializing in biomass or small wood utilization. This meeting had over 80 participants and focused on: stewardship contracts, financial assistance available through state and federal grants, and economic development opportunities.

4.2 The Middle Fork Ecosystem Restoration Project, Ozark-St. Francis National Forests (AR)

Project Description

The Middle Fork Ecosystem Restoration project will restore 5,100 acres to healthy fire-resistant conditions, using a combination of thinning, mechanical treatments, and prescribed fire.

Collaboration with Interested Parties



Fifteen agencies, organizations, and universities have participated in this project. By including them early in the process, our partners, including The Nature Conservancy, Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, and Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, gained a sense of ownership in this project. Specifically, they assisted in developing desired future conditions, appropriate fire regimes, and the size, scale, and best location for a successful restoration project.

District personnel and our partners have used school programs, talks to local, regional, and international groups, an article published in a regional magazine, a project pamphlet developed with, and distributed through, our partners and Forest Service outlets, six interpretive sites, and television to improve understanding and support for the project. By having our partners involved, we were able to maximize our audience and give our message credibility to a wider audience. As a result, the project enjoys broad public support.

Over the past three years, our partners have assisted us with prescribed burn plans, preparation and implementation of prescribed burns, provided \$20,000 for contract work from their organizations, and assisted in acquiring over \$500,000 from other sources. The National Wild Turkey Federation is assisting us in developing a market for stewardship contracts by offering assistance to timber contractors in understanding stewardship contracts, writing technical proposals, and building relationships with the various service contractors. They also successfully submitted a proposal and were awarded a stewardship contract. The Nature Conservancy is working with the ranger district to monitor the effects of this project on plant communities. This information is used to calibrate state vegetation transition models.



4.3 Cloak Stewardship Project, Mt. Hood National Forest (OR)

Project Design

The Cloak Stewardship Project is designed to enhance and restore biological diversity in 10 - 40 year old plantations, using thinning techniques to create snags and down wood, and accelerate the development of mature forest conditions within riparian reserves. The project will also precommercially thin 1,284 acres of 10 to 15 year old plantations within late successional reserves and create 1,400 additional snags within plantations that were commercially thinned about 10 years ago. The project will treat around 2,000 acres of plantations using three related contracts.



Role of Interested Individuals and Organizations

The Clackamas Stewardship Partners, including the Clackamas County Economic Development Commission, local business leaders, the Oregon Natural Resources Council (ONRC) and BARK – a local grassroots environmental organization, recommended this stewardship project to the agency. The collaborative group’s objective was to test out stewardship contracting in Clackamas County and get something done fast. Local industry representatives provided input and advice on designing a viable project.

The Clackamas County Commissioners played a central role in developing and supporting the Clackamas Stewardship Partners group, including working meetings with the Forest Service on stewardship contracting options and opportunities.

During 2005 the Clackamas Stewardship Partners also worked on developing future stewardship restoration projects. In the fall of 2005 the Clackamas Stewardship Partners (CSP) adopted a charter, which included this vision statement:



Contractor creating wildlife snag

Enhance ecosystem/natural resource health and economic viability of local communities within the Clackamas River Ranger District through collaboration with diverse stakeholders that employs stewardship contracting and other tools to meet restoration goals.

4.4 Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Stewardship Project, Huron-Manistee National Forests (MI)

Project Design

The Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Project uses stewardship authorities to assist in the recovery of the federally endangered Kirtland's warbler. This project was originally submitted and approved as a pilot stewardship contracting project in FY 2002.



The Kirtland's warbler requires young jack pine, generally between the ages of 8 to 16 years, for breeding and nesting habitat. It is very specific in its breeding habitat requirements, requiring a minimum of 1,450 trees per acre for successful breeding. Breeding populations are only found in a few counties of the northeastern portion of Michigan's Lower Peninsula and an even smaller area of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. It winters in the Bahamas. The habitat was historically maintained by natural fires. Habitat management for Kirtland's Warbler today typically involves timber harvest followed by planting Jack pine.



The Huron-Manistee National Forest's goal is to create about 1,600 acres of new breeding and nesting habitat annually to help fulfill about 42% of the habitat needs for the Lower Peninsula of Michigan. Since 2004 the forest has created about 794 acres of breeding and nesting habitat for Kirtland's Warbler through this project.

newly planted breeding and nesting habitat

The Role of Interested Individuals and Organizations

Collaboration has been an essential element in Kirtland's warbler recovery over the past 30 years, including this stewardship project. The Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Team members consist of personnel from the U.S. Forest Service, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, University of Pennsylvania, and a Bahamian representative. The majority of restoration efforts are on National Forest System and Michigan Department of Natural Resources lands. Interested publics participate in recovery team meetings.

The habitat management activities, including timber harvest and subsequent reforestation are usually accomplished by local contractors. Increased tourism and retail business has been generated by hundreds of birding enthusiasts coming to glimpse this rare bird and participate in the annual Kirtland's Warbler festival, guided tours, and the annual ten-day census.



4.5 Sims Mesa Stewardship Project, Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forest (CO)

Project Description

The project involves commercial thinning of 215 acres of ponderosa pine and roller chopping 308 acres in the Gambel oak and pine community.

Role of Local Interested Individuals and Organizations

The Sims Mesa Stewardship Contracting Project is the natural outcome of a larger community collaboration effort known as the Uncompahgre Plateau Project.

The Uncompahgre Plateau Project is a partnership effort for landscape restoration. Partners include the Bureau of Land Management; Colorado Division of Wildlife; the Public Lands Partnership of Delta, Montrose, Ouray, and San Miguel Counties; and the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison (GMUG) National Forest.

The Sims Mesa Stewardship Project was the result of a cross boundary ecological assessment of the 256,000 acre Spring Creek /Dry Creek landscape near Montrose, Colorado. This landscape was selected for treatment prioritization because it contains the largest wildland-urban interface zone on the Uncompahgre Plateau. It also represents the geographic area with the clearest trend in lightning caused wildfires resulting in the majority of the large wildfire events on the GMUG National Forest. The landscape area was also identified as the key area for mule deer winter range improvement on the Plateau.



The project has entailed working with all participants to implement comprehensive treatments across the 256,000 acre Spring Creek/Dry Creek landscape through agency and private sector mechanisms.

The Sims Mesa Stewardship Project is an initial effort to take advantage of stewardship contracting authorities including the “goods for services” and best value contracting elements.

