

# USDA Forest Service Update

## March 2014

### Subject: Accelerated Restoration

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**Topic:** Increasing the Pace of Restoration and Job Creation on our National Forests.

**Issue:** In 2009, Secretary Tom Vilsack laid out a vision for the Forest Service (FS) to work collaboratively to ensure national forests are conserved, restored, and made more resilient to climate change, while enhancing water resources. The Agency recognizes the pressing need to treat many more acres of land by accelerating the pace of treatment. Nationwide, there are currently 72,400 communities at risk for wildfires; more than 3,500 homes were lost to wildfires in 2012 alone. Nationally, approximately 80 million acres of trees are projected to be at risk of widespread mortality because of insects and disease. Over the past 10 years in the West, approximately 44.8 million acres across all land ownerships have been affected by 20 different species of bark beetles. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the FS continue to take steps to respond to this nationwide emergency.

**Key Points:** In February 2012, Secretary Vilsack released the “Increasing the Pace of Restoration and Job Creation on Our National Forests” report (Accelerating Restoration report) that outlined management actions that land managers could utilize to step up the pace and scale of restoration activities on the ground.

In November 2012, Agency leadership, including the Associate Chief, Deputy Chiefs and Associate Deputy Chiefs from National Forest System (NFS), State & Private Forestry (S&PF) and Research (R&D), National Directors, and Regional Foresters and several Regional Directors met in Denver to discuss how the Agency is responding to the challenge outlined in the Accelerating Restoration report. Harris Sherman, Undersecretary of Agriculture joined for part of the meeting. The Agency’s goal of restoration is more than a long lasting commitment and the strategy outlined in the Accelerating Restoration report is part of the bigger restoration picture. At this meeting, the Agency committed to moving forward with next steps for accelerating restoration:

- Define the Restoration Vision and creating restoration guidance for field units;
- Develop strategic program direction and budget allocation to facilitate restoration;
- Capture restoration activities through appropriate performance measures;
- Conduct a gap analysis that realistically depicts our current organizational capacity to achieve our restoration goals; and
- Hold quarterly meetings for leadership to continue the restoration dialogue.

Agency leadership is scheduled to meet again to continue the dialogue on these actions in spring of 2014.

To ensure that restoration is sustainable, restoration’s role in the overall Agency mission needs to be distinguished and long-term restoration capabilities assessed. Five challenges to achieving long-term restoration goals were identified at the Denver meeting and the Agency is committed to meeting these challenges:

- Generating public policy support for restoration;
- Realizing successful science delivery to achieve restoration;
- Establishing principles for making strategic investments to achieve restoration;
- Making the cultural shift towards restoration;
- Achieving successful delivery of the restoration objective.

The USDA and FS will utilize a wide variety of strategies to overcome these challenges, including:

- Continue to work with partners at all levels of the agency to increase our efficiency and leverage funds.
- Continued use of the tools, initiatives and programs designed to aid in identification of priority work, improve efficiencies and involve partners, such as those identified in the Accelerating Restoration report (Cohesive Strategy, Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program, Watershed Condition Framework, Integrated Resource Restoration, Stewardship, etc.).
- Concerted effort between S&PF, R&D and NFS to work together to integrate ongoing actions and initiatives, develop tools, identify additional strategies and pool resources.
- Identify opportunities to work with other agencies at the national level to work across all lands.

**Restoration Accomplishments for FY 2013 and Planned for FY 2014**

<b>Measures<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>FY 2013 Actual</b>	<b>FY 2014 Planned</b>
Number of watersheds moved to and improved condition class	12	15
Acres treated annually to sustain or restore watershed function and resilience	2,533,121	2,700,000
Volume of timber sold (MMBF) (Unified Accomplishments) <sup>2</sup>	2,607	2,800
Miles of roads decommissioned	1,491	1,200
Miles of stream habitat restored or enhanced	4,168	3,262

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<sup>1</sup> Actual and planned accomplishments listed are national IRR accomplishments and were not limited to just regions under the pilot authority.

<sup>2</sup> This performance measure also includes accomplishments funded through permanent and trust authorities.