
A Mandate To Work Effectively and Efficiently

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Another winter and spring are almost over, and the field season is here. Before you begin your field duties, I ask you to revisit how you can do your jobs efficiently, effectively, and safely. Your safety and that of your fellow workers always must be your number one priority. Please always take that additional moment to think about your safety and to ensure that you have the proper equipment with you.

This issue of *Engineering Field Notes* represents an exciting first—EFN now is coming to you electronically. As we continue to look for ways to free additional funds for other uses, we all must search for areas in which we can be more efficient. We are being more efficient and saving precious funds by distributing *Engineering Field Notes* electronically, and we are meeting one of the Presidential Management Agendas: E-Government. Also in this issue, we are introducing two new columns: Engineering Bulletin Board and EFN Forum. I encourage you, as you look at the new format and media, to provide us with some honest feedback. For *Engineering Field Notes* to continue to be successful, we need your participation. I know many of you are doing work that is significantly different or on the cutting edge. Please consider writing about your experiences so that others can learn from you and the USDA Forest Service can become more effective and efficient.

In this issue we formally announce our national award recipients for the year. Again, we had a tough time deciding who the national winners should be. The competition was extremely competitive, representing the top employees from each region. I wish we could give each nominee an award! We did bestow an unprecedented “Special Recognition” award this year to Raleigh Meadows from Region 8 for his longtime, outstanding engineering career. I urge you to read about this year’s winners on page 27.

Just as I have stressed our efforts to become more effective and efficient in providing high-quality public service, I am also stressing a big challenge we have this year: the President’s Management Agenda item “Competitive Sourcing.” When the National Leadership Team made the decision to submit a portion of the maintenance function for competitive sourcing, we became actively involved in this process. To compete now and in the future, we need to determine how we can become more efficient and effective. You can help determine how best to attain and keep a competitive edge by providing input to your regional engineers. Now is the time to think outside the box and envision how our organization can be more effective in helping you do your jobs better.

The Washington Office (WO), regions, and forests are working hard to position our maintenance units so they can be the competitive winners in this competitive sourcing process. We are working hard to ensure that we have a better, stronger, and more appropriate organization at the end of this activity.

I also mentioned the need to become more effective and efficient because our scorecard from the Office of Management and Budget for management of USDA Forest Service infrastructure was not what we wanted it to be. Although we did well in overall management, planning, and purpose, we received less than satisfactory grades for results and accountability. As a result, our fiscal year (FY) 2004 budget has been decreased by \$28 million in our construction and maintenance categories. We must direct more of our funds to accomplishing work, not just to paying for organization and planning. The Chief's focus on process predicament should help significantly in moving us in a more positive direction.

This spring and summer, we are facing the following two additional challenges:

- Sustaining the audit by getting our inventory and condition survey databases up to date
- Awarding and accomplishing projects delayed by funding fire season demands along with FY 2003 projects

I urge you to consider carefully how you plan your work. Focus on the priorities. Position your region, your district, or your forest to accomplish priorities early in spite of disruptions that are sure to come.

Take an active role in addressing the challenges I have mentioned. Help us have a safe, satisfying, and productive field season.