

# BRIEFING PAPER



LOLO NATIONAL FOREST  
BUILDING 24, FORT MISSOULA  
MISSOULA, MONTANA 59804

## TOPIC: STEWARDSHIP CONTRACTING

DATE: May 23, 2003

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**BACKGROUND:** In 1999, Congress passed legislation granting us temporary pilot authority for Stewardship contracting. Stewardship contracting originated out of the need to identify new and innovative options to achieve national forest management goals more efficiently and effectively. The overall objectives for the new effort included:

- ◆ Finding new ways to accomplish vegetation treatments, particularly ecological restoration, more effectively and efficiently
- ◆ Allow contractors to bring their creativity and expertise to bear in achieving Forest Service management objectives
- ◆ Demonstrate the role of vegetation management in proper resource stewardship
- ◆ Allow the exchange of goods for services, which in turn provides local employment and increased opportunity for resource improvement; and
- ◆ Demonstrate the advantages of collaboration in national forest management.

The 1999 Appropriations Act granted the Forest Service temporary authority to explore new processes and procedures such as:

- ◆ Exchange of goods for services
- ◆ Retention of receipts by the national forest in which the work occurred
- ◆ Awarding of contracts based on a “Best Value” basis
- ◆ Designation of timber for cutting by prescription or description, rather than up front tree marking by the Forest Service.

Stewardship contracting has allowed the Forest Service to work in new ways. With the exchange of goods for services we have been able to undertake important restoration projects and use the revenue for recreation and restoration projects that were not otherwise funded. This pilot authority has empowered local individuals and groups to become involved in managing the resources upon which their community depends. This has helped build trust and credibility between the agency and communities. The Act states that multiparty monitoring and evaluation groups access each individual stewardship project.

Four projects on the Lolo National Forest have been authorized to use this new temporary Stewardship authority: Clearwater, Knox Brooks, Game Range, and Frenchtown Face.

**CURRENT STATUS:** The **Clearwater** project, on the Seeley Lake Ranger District, is one of the nations first stewardship contracts. It was designed to test “best value” awarding, designation by description, retention of receipts, exchange of goods for services and multi-year contracts. The specific objectives of the Clearwater project include: reduction of road densities and motorized access to improve grizzly bear habitat; reduction of sediment sources and improvement of water quality in a primary bull trout watershed; noxious weed treatment; improvement of wildlife habitat through low intensity burning; and contribution to the local economy through job creation.

**Clearwater Project**—Work completed this past winter. Note complete lack of ground disturbance



The best value bid was awarded to Pyramid Mountain Lumber Inc. of Seeley Lake in the fall of 2001. The entire project calls for select cutting of timber on 640 acres to reduce susceptibility of lodgepole pine stands to mountain pine beetle; obliterating 12.8 miles of system road and removing 38 miles of non-system road; reconditioning or reconstruction of about 15 miles of road; graveling about 1 mile of road and re-routing a segment of road that is currently within a streamside management zone. Additional land management projects include 12.6 miles of roadside noxious weed treatment; design and installation of 7 small to moderate bridges or arch pipes; rehabilitation of a gravel pit; installation of 18 SST vault toilets in area campgrounds to protect water quality; and reconstruction of the Clearwater Lake Trailhead and Old Alva recreation facilities. Logging was done in the winter to reduce conflicts with grizzly bears and prevent soil disturbance

Stands have been thinned to improve forest health conditions by reducing their overall susceptibility to mountain pine beetle. This past summer half of the land management activities, such as road reconstruction & improvement; and improvements in developed and dispersed recreation sites, were accomplished. The remaining land management activities will be completed this field season. Ten different local subcontractors have been employed to work on this project, keeping the funds in the community.

A multi-party monitoring committee has been formed, as prescribed by the legislation, to evaluate the project and to provide an annual report for Congress. The monitoring committee has reported their satisfaction with the progress of the project, quality of work performed and the numerous benefits to the National Forest and local community.

The **Knox Brooks** project, on the Superior Ranger District, was awarded in July to TriCon Lumber Company, of St. Regis, Montana. Like Clearwater, this project contains a full array of land management activities. Thus far, some roadwork has been accomplished, but no vegetation management has occurred.

The **Game Range** project, on the Plains/Thompson Falls Ranger District, had a Record of Decision signed in early August and is currently in the appeal period. If no appeals are post marked by September 28, 2002 then implementation of the decision can begin five business days after the 28<sup>th</sup>. (See Game Range Briefing Paper for more information on this project.)

**Frenchtown Face**, on the Ninemile Ranger District, is actively working with local communities and groups to identify current and desired conditions, and where opportunities for projects may exist to help restore the landscape to a healthier more sustainable ecosystem. This project is scheduled for a decision in early summer, 2003. (See Frenchtown Face Briefing Paper for more information.)

We are excited to see the successes that Stewardship contracting has brought to our communities, forests, and the multitude of resources we charged with managing. We have seen results with increased local employment and stronger relationships among people involved in forest management. And the results on the ground are truly impressive. We are supportive of having this land stewardship contracting authority move from temporary to permanent.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:** About Stewardship Contracting contact **Tim Love**, District Ranger, Seeley Lake Ranger District, 406-677-3905. Or for additional information on Stewardship authorities visit this web address: [www.fs.fed.us/land/fm/stewardship/index.php](http://www.fs.fed.us/land/fm/stewardship/index.php)