

size multi-year, multi-task and results-oriented projects, can also be explored. Such contracts can be designed to expedite the accomplishments of near-term projects, while increasing the capacity of local community-based firms over time by encouraging capital investment and the development of an experienced, highly-skilled workforce. Finally, new partnerships can be forged to help defray the costs of implementation and planning and build networks of support for necessary work.

SUMMARY

As stated by the Forest Service in the public release of its new strategy, large wildfires will continue to occur despite focused efforts in planning and implementation. However by concentrating treatments where human communities, watersheds, and sensitive species are at the highest risk, the new strategy will likely reduce future losses and damage typically associated with wildland fires. Involving communities in these efforts will enhance the level of cooperation and trust between the agency and stakeholders; thereby improve the health of public lands and the communities that rely upon them. For more information, contact Andrea Bedell Loucks at (202) 939-3455 or at andreabedell@pinchot.org.

Congress Authorizes 28 New Stewardship Contracting Pilot Projects

In the recently signed FY2001 Interior Appropriations Bill, Congress officially authorized the Forest Service to enter into 28 new stewardship and “end-results” contracts as part of its on-going pilot program (bringing the total to 56 projects, nationwide).

The Stewardship Contracting Pilot Program was originally established in 1997 as part of a major reinvention effort of the Forest Service. Shrinking federal budgets, reduced personnel and increased multi-purpose demands forced the Agency to re-think its procedures and management practices—slowly evolving into the concept of stewardship contracts. Operating initially under existing authorities, the Forest Service asked for a nomination of pilots designed to test new and innovative approaches to land/resource management through rural community development, improved financial accountability/efficiency, and collaborative stewardship. In 1998, Congress authorized the Forest Service to enter into 28 stewardship “end-results” demonstration contracts—expanding the existing authorities for selected demonstration projects as part of Sec. 347 of the FY99 Omnibus

Appropriations Act (P.L. 105-277). Specific new authorities tested in these pilots include: exchange of goods for services, retention of receipts, “best value” contracting, and designation of timber for cutting by prescription. As part of this authorization, Congress also required designated pilots to be monitored and evaluated on a multi-party basis, with annual reports submitted to Congress. According to the brief language provided in the FY Appropriations Bill, the new pilots are subject to the same terms and conditions as those established under Section 347 of the FY 1999 Omnibus Appropriations Act (P.L. 105-277).

As of yet, no projects have been selected to be a part of this new pilot effort and no timeline has been designated for selection and/or implementation. It should be noted, however, that language within the Interior Appropriations Bill does indicate that of the 28 new pilots, nine shall be located in Region 1 (Northern Region) and at least 3 will be located in Region 6 (Pacific Northwest). For more information, please contact Andrea Bedell Loucks (202) 939-3455 or at andreabedell@pinchot.org.

Restoring Faith in Forest Service Decision Making

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elected. History indicates, however, that Jefferson was taking the time necessary to build a broad consensus for such change—broad enough to persuade many Federalists of the validity and efficacy of his approach.

There is an important lesson here for our new political leadership that will govern the conservation and sustainable management of America's

forests. There is an opportunity for building a broad consensus for national-level policies that conserve forests, protect biodiversity, and provide ample opportunities for public review of potential environmental consequences, while still affording local decision makers the flexibility to work out solutions that fit local conditions and local goals for environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

¹ A Vision for the U.S. Forest Service: Goals for Its Next Century, Roger A. Sedjo, ed. (Washington, DC: RFF Press, 2000), 273 pp.

² The Forest and Rangelands Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (RPA), 16 USC 1600-1614.

³ The National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA), 16 USC 1600 (note).

⁴ National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 USC 4321 (note).

⁵ Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), 16 USC 1531.

⁶ 36 CFR Part 219.