

## Letter from Former Forest Service Chiefs

September 19, 2011

The Honorable Jack Reed  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Reed and Ranking Member Murkowski,

As the Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies considers the Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 budget for the United States Forest Service (USFS) and the Department of the Interior, we as retired USFS Chiefs request your support for extension of the Stewardship Contracting authority as part of FY 2012 appropriations process. First enacted as a pilot program in the FY1999 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, and then reauthorized for another 10 years within the 2003 Omnibus Public Lands bill, Stewardship Contracting authority has provided public land managers with an important tool in achieving forest management objectives, and increasing and diversifying job opportunities in rural communities.

Although initial use was limited, now more than a decade after this authority was provided, stewardship contracting is rapidly becoming the contracting “tool of choice” throughout the USFS. Treatments authorized under these contracts promote healthy forests, reduce wildfire hazards, increase watershed resilience, and increase business and job opportunities. Stewardship Contracting encourages collaboration and long-term commitments among agencies, contractors, local communities, and other interested stakeholders. Organizations across the “political spectrum” collectively agree that Stewardship Contracting authority extension is needed at this time to support public land management agency activities.

Between the FY 1999 and FY 2010 fiscal years, the Forest Service has awarded approximately 854 contracts, resulting in thousands of acres of better managed forests and the establishment of jobs, expanded forest products markets, and improved watershed resiliency. Successful collaborative efforts across the nation have relied on this authority as a cornerstone of agreements for future planned activities in major watersheds.

We urge the Subcommittee to extend Stewardship Contracting authority through inclusion in the FY 2012 appropriations process. It has provided many successes to federal agencies and rural communities alike. Extending this authority will continue to build on successes already achieved while expanding positive impacts to our national forests and other public lands.

Thank you for consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

R. Max Peterson  
*Chief, Forest Service*  
1979–1987

F. Dale Robertson  
*Chief, Forest Service*  
1987–1993

Jack Ward Thomas  
*Chief, Forest Service*  
1993–1996

Michael P. Dombeck  
*Chief, Forest Service*  
1997–2001

Dale N. Bosworth  
*Chief, Forest Service*  
2001–2007

Abigail R. Kimball  
*Chief, Forest Service*  
2007–2009