



The Role of Communities in Stewardship Contracting

FY 2014 Programmatic Monitoring Report and Project Case Studies to the USDA Forest Service

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Cover Photo: Field Tour on the Tongass National Forest. Perry Edwards, USDA Forest Service.

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1. Background

1.a Introduction

Combined, the USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) of the Department of the Interior manage 438 million acres of federal public land. These agencies have a challenging mission. Entrusted with the responsibility of managing these natural resources for the good of the American public, the Forest Service and BLM must balance multiple and often competing uses and values. Over the last decade Stewardship End-Result Contracting (stewardship contracting) has become an increasingly popular means for the agencies to deliver multiple benefits to the communities of place and communities of interest they serve. Stewardship contracting is believed to offer efficiencies to the agencies to help them meet multiple management objectives and address the interests of communities.

Table 1. Stewardship Contracting Authorities.

Best-value contracting	Requires consideration of other criteria in addition to cost (e.g. prior performance, experience, skills, local business) when selecting awards.
Multi-year contracting	Allows for contracts and agreements to be up to 10 years in length.
Designation by prescription	Specifies within a contract the desired end-results of a project, while giving the contractor operational flexibility to achieve results.
Designation by description	Specifying which trees should be removed or retained without having physically marked them.
Less than full and open competition	Allows for contracts to be awarded on a sole-source basis in appropriate circumstances.
Trading goods for services	The ability to apply the value of timber or other forest products removed as an offset against the cost of services received.
Retention of receipts	The ability to keep revenues (timber receipts) generated by a project when product value exceeds the service work performed and then applies the funds to service work that does not necessarily need to occur within the original project area.
Widening the range of eligible contractors	Allows non-traditional bidders (non-profits, local governmental bodies, etc.) to compete for and be awarded stewardship contracts. Also allows for the agency to enter into stewardship agreements.

With passage of the 2014 Farm Bill, the United States Congress permanently authorized the use of stewardship contracting by the Forest Service and the BLM (Agricultural Act of 2014). This permanent authorization specifies stewardship authorities to be used for implementing projects that address multiple natural resource objectives specifically identified in the legislation as: road and trail maintenance or obliteration, maintenance of soil productivity, habitat and fisheries management, prescribed fires, vegetation removal, watershed restoration, and control of invasive plants (USDA Forest Service, 2014 and BLM, 2014).

Along with permanent authorization, the legislation also includes a requirement that the agencies report annually to Congress on:

- (a) the status of development, execution, and administration of agreements or contracts under subsection;
- (b) the specific accomplishments that have resulted; and
- (c) the role of local communities in the development of agreements or contract plans.

In the decade leading up to the permanent authorization of stewardship contracting the Pinchot Institute for Conservation systematically monitored 25% of active stewardship contracting projects for the Forest Service and BLM as part of a similar Congressional requirement to report on the role of communities in stewardship contracts and agreements. Monitoring activities included completing multiple interviews for more than 100 BLM projects and interviews for 340 Forest Service projects, interviewing both agency and non-agency respondents involved in each project.

The methodology for this monitoring program included a standardized survey instrument and annual reporting of data in aggregate nationally, with regional monitoring teams and case studies (just in 2013) also providing regional context in reporting. These annual monitoring reports provide a learning opportunity for the agencies to identify ways to increase community engagement in stewardship projects and to develop training materials for agency personnel.

Previous monitoring reports are available at: www.pinchot.org/gp/stewardship_contracting

1.b Purpose of this Report

The Forest Service and BLM are exploring new questions related to the role of local communities and non-agency stakeholders in the development of stewardship contracts and agreements from project origin through project implementation. The agencies' objective is to improve the use of stewardship contracting and to better understand the ways in which the

agency can work with various non-agency (i.e. not BLM or Forest Service) stakeholders to carry out stewardship contracting projects. More specifically, in 2014 the agencies asked the Pinchot Institute to help explore five questions of importance to them.

Figure 1. Key Questions from the Forest Service and BLM about Non-Agency Stakeholders

1. How are non-agency stakeholders, including local communities and tribes, engaging in the development of stewardship projects from project origin through contracting?
2. Has the way that non-agency stakeholders, including local communities and tribes, interact with the Forest Service and BLM changed as a result of their participation in one or many stewardship contracting projects? Conversely, has the way that the Forest Service and BLM interact with non-agency stakeholders changed as a result of implementing one or many stewardship contracting projects?
3. Are local non-agency stakeholders as involved in stewardship projects as they would like to be? If not, what aspects of stewardship contracting would non-agency stakeholders, particularly local communities or tribes, like to be more involved in?
4. Are there differences between projects in places with established collaboratives and places that do not have established collaboratives in terms of how they interact with the Forest Service and BLM on stewardship projects?
5. Is involvement of non-agency stakeholders, including local communities and tribes, influencing the scope and scale of stewardship projects, i.e. are there more projects at landscape scale?

A case study methodology was used to explore these questions in a defined set of projects. This approach allowed the Pinchot Institute and the agencies to “*collect open-ended, emerging data with the primary intent of developing themes from the data*” (Creswell, 2003). Given the diversity of stewardship contracting projects, relationships, and collaborative interactions that exist, this approach can offer improved understanding of influential factors in specified situations. The multiple-case study approach uses replication design where specific variables of interest are selected and cases are selected purposefully. The questions of interest are explored in each case (Yin, 2009).

This report presents results of fifteen (15) Forest Service written case studies of stewardship contracting projects, drawing out themes from the data collected for the purpose of providing context and a clearer understanding of the roles non-agency stakeholders are playing in stewardship contracting projects, how they are interacting with the agencies, and inferences into the influences on these relationships and ultimately how they affect project outcomes (i.e. the scope and scale of projects). Themes drawn from the data are presented in Section 3.b and summary information about each project listed in Table 2 is presented in Appendix A.

2. Methodology

To address the five questions related to the engagement of non-agency stakeholders in these projects, the Pinchot Institute and its partners (Michigan State University, The Watershed Research and Training Center, and West 65 Inc.) worked with the agencies to develop (a) criteria for selecting case study projects, and (b) a methodological approach for conducting interviews and developing case studies.

This approach was used to identify common themes across case study projects that relate back to the five questions posed by the agencies. Case study themes are less focused on project structure, purpose, and outcomes, and rather relate instead to the interactions of individuals and interests within individual projects. While the results should not be generalized beyond the 15 case study projects, themes identified through these projects are useful in grounding inferences made about the roles non-agency stakeholders, agency personnel, and collaborative processes play in stewardship contracting projects beyond these 15 fifteen case studies. The goal is to provide a glimpse into the type of relationships that exist between agency personnel and their non-agency counterparts.

2.a Criteria for Project Selection

The Forest Service and BLM provided the Institute with a list of stewardship contracts and agreements from 2011, 2012, and 2013 and projects were selected from this population with a few notable exceptions (e.g. the Cisco Camp project) which included projects that are older but have particular relevance for the agency questions.

As with the 10-year programmatic monitoring cycle under the previous stewardship contracting authorization, geographic regions of the country were defined with the goal of identifying a diversity of projects within each region. These regions are:

- **Northern Rockies:** ID, MT, ND, SD, WY
- **Rocky Mountain/Southwest:** AZ, CO, KS, NE, NM, NV, OK, TX, UT

- **Pacific Coast:** AK, CA, HI, OR, WA
- **Southeast:** AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA
- **Northeast/Lake States:** CT, DE, IL, IA, IN, MA, ME, MD, MI, MN, MO, NJ, NH, NY, OH, PA, RI, VT, WI, WV

The selection of case study projects was based on a simple principle: representing as many project types and combinations of agency and non-agency stakeholder interactions as possible within a limited number of projects. Project selection criteria were developed in consultation with agency personnel in National Headquarters and with guidance from regional Stewardship Contracting Coordinators. The project team's existing knowledge of stewardship contracting projects also contributed to the identification of case study projects.

Case study projects were selected to represent a mix of the following criteria:

- Projects represent a broad geographic distribution;
- Projects are either of small scale (less than 1,000 acres) or of a larger scale (over 1,000 acres);
- Projects are either a stewardship agreement or a stewardship contract;
- Projects operate with a standing collaborative group(s) or without a standing collaborative group(s).

Table 2. Selected Forest Service Stewardship Case Study Projects.

Project Name	Region	Agreement or contract	Project size (acres)	Collaborative Group Present
Babione	Northern Rockies	Contract	Large	No
Hardy	Northern Rockies	Contract	Small	No
Southfork Fish	Northern Rockies	Contract	Large	Yes
Escalante	Southwest	Contract	Large	Yes
East Mountain	Southwest	Agreement	Small	Yes
Pinaleño Restoration	Southwest	Agreement	Large	No
Jazz Plantation Thin	Pacific Coast	Contract	Large	Yes
Mill Creek A to Z	Pacific Coast	Contract	Large	Yes
Hopper Coral	Pacific Coast	Contract	Small	No
FM Cainhoy	Southeast	Contract	Small	No
Pittfork	Southeast	Contract	Large	No
Hogback	Southeast	Agreement	Small	No
Brush Hollow	Northeast	Agreement	Small	No
Crawford	Northeast	Contract	Small	No
Cisco Camp	Northeast	Contract	Small	No

A descriptive overview of each case study project is provided as Appendix A.

2.b Case Study Interviews

A case study question guide (see Appendix B) was developed by the project team to guide data collection and to ensure consistency. This questionnaire was designed to elicit information pertaining to the five questions posed by the agencies. Interviews were semi-structured and focused on project scope and history, collaborative interactions and community engagement, and overall project outcomes and lessons learned. A minimum of three interviews were conducted for each project. A “snowball sampling” approach was used to identify stakeholders and project participants (meaning that an agency representative was interviewed first followed by the non-agency stakeholders that were identified by the agency representative first interviewed).

Interviews were conducted by the Pinchot Institute’s partners after interviewees indicated their consent to proceed. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Transcribed interviews were then analyzed by the Pinchot Institute and Michigan State University for inclusion in case studies. Multiple interviews were used to ground truth and triangulate interview data. To the extent that project information was available on the internet, the Pinchot Institute also completed a web-based review of project documentation to help verify information and provide additional project context.

3. Results

3.a Description of the People Interviewed for Case Studies

Across the 15 case studies, 44 semi-structured interviews were conducted using the research questionnaire in Appendix B. Of these 44 interviews, 21 were conducted with Forest Service personnel and 23 were with conducted with non-agency stakeholders.

Non-agency respondents were asked how many stewardship contracting projects they had been involved in. A total of 18 responses were recorded. Most respondents had been involved in three or fewer projects. For a third of non-agency stakeholders interviewed, the project was their first stewardship contracting project.

Table 3. Prior Experience of Non-agency Stakeholders with Stewardship Contracting Projects.

Number of previous projects (n=18 responses; 3 not asked; 2 declined to answer)	
This is my first stewardship contracting project	6
I have been involved in 2 - 3 stewardship projects	6
I have been involved in 5 - 6 stewardship projects	2
I have been involved in 8 - 10 stewardship projects	3
I have been involved in more than 20 stewardship projects	1

Most non-agency stakeholders interviewed report that their involvement began at the beginning of the project. The vast majority reported that they have been as involved with the project as they would like to be, while some report that they would have liked to have been more involved if they had more time. Most of the non-agency stakeholders interviewed also considered themselves to be a “local stakeholder” to the project area.

Table 4. Do Non-agency Stakeholders Consider Themselves Local?

Do you consider yourself local to the project area? (n=18 responses; 5 not asked)	
Yes	17
No	1

Table 5. Are Non-agency Stakeholders as involved as they would like to be?

Are you as involved as you would like to be? (n=17 responses; 4 not asked; 1 did not answer)	
Yes	15
Would like to be more involved if they had more time	2

3.b Discussion of the Themes

A variety of themes related to the engagement of non-agency stakeholders and their relationships with their agency colleagues emerged in the analysis. These are discussed in this section and are listed in order of importance.

(1) Just because a collaborative group is present does not mean it collaborates well and is effective in precipitating stewardship activities.

The Forest Service is interested in understanding whether there are differences between projects in places with established collaborative groups and places that do not have established collaborative groups. Five out of 15 case study projects were identified to have collaborative groups associated with them. These included: Southfork Fish, Escalante, East Mountain, Jazz Thin, and Mill Creek A to Z. A web search also revealed that the Pinalaño project had a collaborative group associated with it; however, we do not include this project here because a collaborative group was not identified as being present by those interviewed about the project. Each of the five collaborative group case studies have different characteristics, and the groups themselves appear to have varying levels of effectiveness as measured in their ability to achieve agreement on land management priorities and to subsequently induce land management activities.

It is worth noting that each of these collaborative group projects are considered to be large projects with the exception of the East Mountain project, which is nearly large enough to be considered a large project by our metric of being greater than 1,000 acres in size. Those interviewed from the East Mountain project also identified that it aspires to grow to over 10,000 acres.

All of the collaborative group projects are also located in the Western US and many of these projects are focused primarily on reducing tree densities in fire-prone forests within or close to the wildland urban interface. In these projects, the Forest Service, to some degree, plays a role in providing a platform in which all stakeholders can interact.

In these projects, it is clear that the existence of a collaborative group does not always guarantee functional collaboration. In the Southfork project, a large collaborative process fluctuated in its effectiveness over the lifespan of the project. As leadership changed, communication broke down, and some relationships changed for the worse as what was thought to be an agreement on the project design was not honored. Respondents also identified that “collaboration fatigue” has set in during some periods of time.

Collaborative dysfunction was also evident in the Jazz Plantation Thin project. In this case, an environmental group that had participated in several projects with the collaborative group dropped out of the project – and the collaborative group as a whole – in protest when they

felt that their continued participation in the group constituted “rubber stamping” of activities they did not agree with. Individuals interviewed from this organization felt that the Jazz Thin project had been planned and actions decided by the Forest Service prior to it reaching the collaborative group.

Conversely, some collaborative group participants involved in projects like East Mountain report tremendous success and optimism. For instance, a tribal representative involved in East Mountain stated: “*Before this collaboration on this project they [historical relationships between the tribe and the other partners] were virtually non-existent as far as working relationships, but now working on this project it’s brought everyone to the table and now everyone relies on working with each other to get the project done.*”

However, even with projects that are not universally viewed through a positive lens by participants, partnerships and working relationships grew on a personal level between parties. This was a frequently identified type of interaction in both projects with collaborative groups and those without such associations. Often times it is this type of interaction that moves projects forward.

(2) Interactions with the agency vary widely across the case study projects.

Accomplishing work on-the-ground has been the most often and highest rated benefit of stewardship contracting projects that was identified in the programmatic monitoring surveys conducted over the past 10 years. These case studies reflect that there is no singular mode in which non-agency stakeholders interact with the agency that results in work being accomplished on-the-ground. Highlighted below are a few of the observed interactions as described by those interviewed for the 15 case studies.

- One way that agency to non-agency interactions take place is through direct interactions like those in the Pittfork project. In this project, the agency interacted with contractors to get specific work done. This one-on-one interaction would not be considered collaborative using commonly accepted definitions of collaboration and the work was done nonetheless.
- In the Cisco Camp project, the agency and the Lac Vieux Desert Tribe were the only participants. The Tribe was the contract holder. On the surface this might appear to be a project with little collaboration. However, unlike Pittfork, both the agency and the Tribe indicated that the project changed relationships and built trust. Brush Hollow is another example similar to Cisco Camp. The number of participants was limited to the agency and the school district and the project was successfully completed, leading to new positive relationships and the possibility of additional projects being entered into by the project cooperators.
- In projects like Hardy and Pinaleño respondents did not identify any consistent collaborative group per se, but there are a wider variety of stakeholders involved than

in the projects just described above. In projects like Hardy and Pinaleño stakeholder engagement is limited to primarily commenting on agency proposals or to implementation as a contractor.

- Some projects such as the Babione project do not have a collaborative group while there may be a variety of interested stakeholders. These projects engage some but not all interested stakeholders in project activities throughout the duration of the project—planning, scoping, NEPA, implementation, monitoring, etc. Some stakeholders are relegated to commenting only, while others are involved in what they identify as collaborative planning.
- Other projects without collaborative groups engage all interested stakeholders in a much broader range of project activities (e.g. the FM Cainhoy and Crawford projects) such as scoping, proposal development, planning and monitoring.
- Finally, as discussed under Theme 1 earlier in the report, five projects had existing collaborative groups that had worked on other stewardship contracting projects. These collaborative groups serve as the heart of the projects in terms of stakeholder involvement, meaning that there were no stakeholders outside of these collaborative processes who were identified by respondents.
- The Mill Creek A-Z project presents a unique approach to agency-non-agency stakeholder interaction. While there is an existing collaborative group, two of the members of the coalition serve as primary players. The NEPA analysis was contracted out to one of these participants and that party maintains that participant roles are clearly defined and there can be no variation from them. This has resulted in other non-agency participants believing that they have the opportunity to comment only on the alternatives developed by the sub-contractor and that they have no influence on the development of the project.

(3) Change of agency staff during the life of a project presents challenges to collaboration.

Programmatic monitoring surveys over the past 10 years have documented concerns stewardship contracting participants have with the impacts on collaboration of changing agency staff during the term of a project. This concern is also expressed in the case study interviews this year. In the East Mountain and Mill Creek A-Z projects, local Forest Service leadership changed during the project and the new leadership did not have adequate facilitation skills and/or the institutional knowledge of their predecessors. The Southfork project also went through changes in agency leadership which impacted communication. In this project, respondents identified that collaboration “ebbed and flowed” based on non-agency stakeholder engagement which has had “high points and low points.”

(4) Perceived influences of non-agency stakeholder engagement on project scale sometimes depends on where a participant is standing.

Table 6 illustrates the effect of non-agency stakeholder engagement on project scale as described by both agency and non-agency respondents. In two of the case studies, both the agency and some of their non-agency collaborators expressed that they view working together through collaborative groups as a means to expanding the scale of projects. In a number of projects (e.g. Southfork Fish, Jazz) it was reported that some non-agency stakeholders actively try to constrain the scale of projects. Project scope is differentiated from scale in that changes in scope only reflect small alterations of project design without the net area of the project affected, as opposed to changes in scale which reflect the area of the project increasing or decreasing.

Table 6. Effect of Non-agency Stakeholders on the Scale and Scope of Projects

Project	Got Bigger	Got Smaller	Scope Change	No Noticeable Effect
Southfork Fish		A		
Babione			N	A
Hardy				A
Escalante	A, N			
East Mountain	A, N			
Pinaleño			N	A, N
Mill Creek A to Z	A		A	N
Jazz Thin		A		N
Hopper Corral			N	A
FM Cainhoy				A, N
Pittfork				A, N
Hogback			A	N
Brush Hollow				A, N
Crawford			A, N	
Cisco Camp				A,N

A = Agency response, N = Non-agency response

(5) There is a change in participants from the early days of stewardship contracting. There are very few unaffiliated ordinary citizens or community members participating.

Table 7 illustrates who is involved in the case study projects. State agencies and environmental groups appear to dominate the working relationships in these projects.

Table 7. Who Is Involved in these Projects. (15 projects)

State agencies	8 projects
Environmental groups	8 projects
Existing collaborative group/partnerships ♦	5 projects
Forest industry/logging contractors	4
Local government	4
Tribes	3
Homeowners/cabin associations	3
Recreation groups	2
Other feds	2
Fire groups	2
Conservation districts	1
University	1
Other	3
School district	
Ski area	
Great Lakes Commission	

♦ Note that specific group representation is not unpackaged from collaborative groups/partnerships.

(6) Agency and non-agency participants do not always see relationships and relationship changes the same way. Agency personnel tend to be much more positive about the nature of their relationships with individuals external to the agency. When relationships do change it is often because something has gone poorly or because someone has made an exceptional effort.

- Babione—in this project, agency representatives actively acknowledge that their non-agency counterparts are unhappy. Non-agency stakeholders whose self-identified participation in the project consisted only of providing comments are not happy (ranging from *really unhappy* to *unhappy but still willing* to work on projects). State agency personnel who participated in collaborative planning think everything is fine.
- In a couple of projects, Southfork and Jazz, respondents stated that relationships soured because expectations were not met, resulting in issues of trust developing.

- Where relationships improve it is often the result of an action agency personnel initiated. The Cisco Camp project is perfect example of this as told by someone representing the tribes in the Great Lakes region:

That day when the Regional Forester literally grabbed the agreement and signed it, there was an element of trust and honor that I had never seen in the modern era of treaty rights....So with this relationship with the Forest Service the tribes across the table, you know, you just saw the pride of the parties that the tribes at that point in time, that would have been about 2000, the tribes were just so used to people being wimps but when [the Regional Forester and Forest Supervisor for the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest] stood up and said, "No, we know this is the right thing to do we will go talk and stand up to that member of Congress. If they have some questions they want us to address we will," and in fact the parties amended the MOU after a year-long period of getting some additional input, but they signed it that day, so at that point on the tribes can take a "No" from the Forest Service from other agencies because they know there is trust....Therefore when it does get rocky you have this basis of trust to fall back on rather than a basis of divisiveness.

- Sometimes projects simply maintain existing relationships. For example in the Hardy project there is little collaboration, no collaborative group, and individuals participate only by commenting. Hogback, Cainho, and Escalante are other examples where projects themselves did not change relationships. On the other hand, projects like Cisco Camp provide examples where agency staff invested in relationships over a long period of time.
- As evidenced by the Hopper Corral, project perceptions of relationships and relationship changes depend on the historical relationships with individual stakeholders, as well as the perception that the agency plays favorites with stakeholders. Because of the long-term relationships there was a sense that the Forest Service favored certain groups by taking them on field tours, etc. to which other stakeholders were not invited.
- In the evolution of some projects, roles become redefined for practical or even legal purposes. In the Mill Creek A-Z project, roles have become progressively more rigid as the stakes have risen. The collaborative started as a loose connection of partners, evolved into a tight collaborative chartered organization with regular meetings, and has evolved even further into a situation where a central figure in the group has limited the ability of other group members to participate in the collaborative process around NEPA because of the perception of potential conflicts of interest.

- Many of these projects are quite lengthy from the time the idea is first conceived to when a contract is actually enacted. People often disengage or drop off. The Southfork project was one in which collaboration fatigue was identified as manifest.

(7) There is a need for flexibility on part of the agency. Different projects have different stakeholders with different needs.

Because stewardship contracting projects are a blend of many various activities, they often involve diverse sets of implementers (i.e. contract and agreement holders) and this variation requires flexibility on behalf of the agency. Two agreements explored in these case studies, Cisco Camp and Brush Hollow, directly engage two non-traditional implementers for Forest Service projects: a tribe and a school district respectively. In the Cisco project the Forest Service did a good job of being flexible and accommodating the tribe's needs, requiring significant investments of time by agency personnel. Likewise in the Brush Hollow project, Forest Service personnel went out of their way to work with the school district. They invested in building relationships that they will continue. Additionally, the Mill Creek A-Z project required a whole new level of flexibility due to programmatic and policy innovations in the name of increasing the pace and scale of restoration activities in the Colville National Forest. There are mixed participant reactions to the outcomes of this flexibility as discussed in Theme 6 above.

Appendix A: Case Study Project Descriptions

The following project descriptions are based on the results of 44 interviews conducted with project participants and to a lesser extent on project documentation that is available on the internet, which was used only as an additional way of verifying interview data.

Northern Rockies Region

Southfork Fish Creek Stewardship Contract, Lolo National Forest, Montana.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Southfork of Fish Creek Stewardship Project includes harvesting of commercial sawtimber and pre-commercial thinning on approximately 675 acres, road maintenance and decommissioning, recreational trailhead improvements, and stream habitat restoration. Project objectives include: improving forest health, reducing hazardous fuels near rural homes, improving fish and wildlife connectivity, maintaining water quality, and improving recreation access. This was the first Integrated Resource Service Contract (IRSC) the Lolo National Forest had undertaken. It took more than a year (2007/2008 – Fall 2009) to get the contract in place, and the first part of the contract was not implemented until another year had passed. Respondents expressed frustration with the pace.

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

A local collaborative group, the Lolo Restoration Committee, is the main non-agency stakeholder involved in the project. The Forest Service brought the project idea to the collaborative group and after some discussion the group agreed that it was a good idea to get involved in the project. The following groups were identified by respondents as being members of the collaborative group: Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Pyramid Mountain Lumber, University of Montana, Wild West Institute, and the Great Burn Study Group. Additionally, local homeowners were engaged as part of the collaborative group during scoping, planning, and implementation, with at least four or five homeowners engaged during the early design and formulation phase of the project. The homeowners were identified by respondents as mainly being concerned with the mitigation of fire risks.

The collaborative group engaged the Forest Service during project planning, NEPA scoping, implementation, and monitoring. Collaborative group members report monitoring project implementation closely, while agency respondents report that this level of close monitoring was inconsistent throughout the term of the project. In large part, monitoring was described as

keeping an eye on contractors and the agency rather than monitoring to determine ecological outcomes.

RELATIONSHIPS OF AGENCY AND NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

Collaboration ebbed and flowed over the project duration coinciding in some ways with membership changes in the collaborative group and progression of the project phases. Agency personnel identified that as many as 20 individuals participated in the collaborative group early in the project and that as few as 10 individuals participated later-on. One non-agency participant described this as “*just normal attrition somewhat due to the slow pace of these collaborative projects.*” This same interviewee suggested that Southfork Fish was the first project the collaborative group had worked on together and that early on there was “*a really good cross-section....from the community*” and that expectations were high for the collaborative process to deliver. An agency employee stated that relationships changed due to the role of specialists on committees in the collaborative who did not like how some of the activities were completed during implementation, whereas non-agency respondents expressed a feeling that the agreements arrived at during collaborative work on the planning phase were not honored during implementation.

The length of time the planning process took left all interviewees with frustrations. Agency personnel involved with the project stated that relationships changed due to: collaborative fatigue, the role of specialists on committees in the collaborative, extensive environmental analysis because of a fear of litigation, and a lack of follow-through on verbal agreements made during the collaborative process from field tours on through to the NEPA analysis and ultimately to the contract.

One non-agency stakeholder stated that there was some lack of communication between the pre-planning collaborative work and implementation. Specifically the layout of the landing and the intensity of logging near a trailhead are issues on which collaborators disagreed and where some felt that agreements made during planning were not honored. Still, a non-agency stakeholder suggested that relationships changed for the better as people involved in the collaborative group were able to work through issues of trust resulting from a disconnect between pre-NEPA planning and logging of this particular unit.

Turnover in the leadership of non-agency stakeholders in the collaborative occurred as well. One non-agency stakeholder an environmentalist, suggested this may have contributed to “*some hard feelings over a particular unit,*” which “*was an example where they did not follow our recommendations, and so there was some heartache over how the unit was logged, they also modified the contract to expand the unit, but the big issue was they ended up taking all of the lodge pole out of the unit [regardless of] whether it was alive.*”

EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIPS ON THE SCOPE AND SCALE OF THE PROJECT

The two agency representatives interviewed about the Southfork Fish Project felt that in general the scale of projects they have been involved with or observed are reduced from the time they are first proposed to the time they are implemented. One agency employee interviewed about the Southfork Fish Project stated that he did not feel that the scale of the project was influenced by non-agency stakeholders but that “*in general people want to make projects smaller.*” The other agency interviewee cited that the scale was influenced by non-agency stakeholders, stating that the agency started out trying to implement a larger project because the agency considered it necessary to achieve economic and ecological objectives, but that this project and others he had been involved with “*got pared way down*” because of social and economic constraints. This agency employee suggested that projects are made smaller to appease potential litigants.

An environmentalist engaged in the collaborative group felt that the project has been a good learning exercise on how to work together. Stating that he felt non-agency stakeholders were able to bring forth criticisms through “*constructive channels*” to the agency about activities they did not want undertaken in the contract which they admittedly recognized would be difficult for the agency to hear.

Babione Stewardship Contract. Bighorn National Forest, Wyoming.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Babione Stewardship Contracting project has been in development for more than 13 years. First conceived of as a timber sale in 2001, the original project was reduced to half of the proposed size because it contained inventoried roadless areas under the 2001 Roadless Rule. Following this the Forest Service reconfigured the project into a 9,800-acre stewardship contracting project, which included 1,600 acres of mechanized hazardous fuel reductions around a private club, an inholding consisting of more than 20 private residences. The Bighorn National Forest has emphasized stewardship contracting in the Forest Plan as “*one of the approaches we should be trying to do on every project,*” remarked one agency employee interviewed about the project. Fire risk reduction activities in the stewardship contract were first identified in the Sheridan County Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

The environmental assessment for Babione was completed and an alternative selected under NEPA in 2009. The contract was awarded in 2014 to a Montana company and an agency respondent recognized that the project benefited from Montana sawmills lacking a local timber supply and being willing to pay for timber produced in Wyoming during the Babione project. As such, the Forest Service expects to have significant receipts retained at the end of the project. The project area is dominated by Lodgepole pine (77% of the total project area) with Spruce stands comprising an additional 17%, and the remaining 6% of the project area being grasses and

rock. Goods for services and retained receipts are the stewardship authorities that will be used to at least partially cover the expense of pre-commercial thinning and biomass removal, mastication, or piling of biomass.

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

This project does not have a standing collaborative group associated with it. Rather, the Forest Service engages non-agency stakeholders with immediate interests in the project area through individualized communication channels (e.g. one-on-one conversations) and joint communication (e.g. scoping letters and two scoping meetings). At the time this project was first conceived, the Bighorn National Forest was undergoing a Forest Plan revision and many of the stakeholders engaged in this project were also engaged in the Forest Plan revision process. This was the initial basis for non-agency stakeholder engagement. Non-agency stakeholders engaged in this project include:

- Private inholding club: pre-NEPA scoping, NEPA scoping, subsequent discussions
- Range permittees: NEPA scoping
- Owners of a reservoir in the project area: NEPA scoping
- ATV groups: NEPA scoping
- County Fire Warden: NEPA scoping and project planning
- Wyoming State Forester: NEPA scoping and project planning
- Wyoming State Forestry Agency: NEPA scoping, project planning, development of a Forest Stewardship Plan for the private inholding,
- Wyoming Game & Fish Department: NEPA scoping and project planning (examined hunting access and possible impacts to elk populations)
- Wyoming Recreation and Trails: NEPA scoping and project planning

RELATIONSHIPS OF AGENCY AND NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

Agency personnel suggest that the project got the Forest Service into discussions with several non-agency cooperators each identifying specific interests of their own. The agency addressed each of these interests through the NEPA scoping process. Beneficial outcomes of this interaction as cited by agency personnel included that non-agency personnel became more informed about the rules governing National Forest management and the purpose and benefits of management activities.

Still, some non-agency stakeholders were not happy with the project. The ATV group was displeased by some of the proposed actions but recognized the need for the project. The most significant interaction centered on the relationship between the members of the club comprising the private inholding and the Forest Service. The agency suggests that the club had been involved from very early on pre-scoping and that until this project this stakeholder had not engaged the Forest Service before. Respondents suggested that during scoping the club members cited visual concerns related to cutting right up to the boundary of the inholding. A formal

objection was filed by one club member. The Record of Decision selected an alternative that cut up to the National Forest boundary.

Agency personnel stated that within the club there is not universal agreement on the proposed activities of the project with a majority being supportive and a minority opposing the cut design. Those opposed question the need for all proposed actions and these individuals oppose harvesting of trees directly adjacent to their private property. As a result, an objection was filed after the EA was released.

EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIPS ON THE SCOPE AND SCALE OF THE PROJECT

Agency personnel do not feel that non-agency stakeholders have affected the scale of the project although it is clear that certain non-agency stakeholders are attempting to alter the scope of the project. Misgivings were expressed through a formal objection and through subsequent communications following the Record of Decision for the selected alternative under the NEPA process.

Hardy Stewardship Contract, Black Hills National Forest, South Dakota.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This project was a relatively small timber driven stewardship project. The project did not have a standing collaborative group associated with it.

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

There is no collaborative process associated with this project and public outreach consisted of a scoping letter. According to the agencies' NEPA coordinator there were six parties that submitted comments during the scoping period: two state agencies, the county, one tribe, and two trade organizations. There was an administrative appeal filed by the Biodiversity Conservation Alliance (an environmental group). According to agency personnel interviewed for the project the Wyoming State Forestry Division also participated in monitoring activities.

RELATIONSHIPS OF AGENCY AND NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

According to respondents agency to non-agency relationships existed prior to the project and the project has not measurably changed these relationships. Projects on the Black Hills National Forest have a history of appeals. The timber industry is fairly strong in the region and projects tend to be timber oriented. One agency respondent noted that, "*the bigger companies have not shown an interest in going into stewardship.*"

EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIPS ON THE SCOPE AND SCALE OF THE PROJECT

Agency personnel stated that non-agency stakeholders do have an impact on the scale of projects and that the agency will add or subtract acreage depending on the comments they receive through NEPA scoping.

Southwest Region

Escalante Forest Restoration Project, Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forest, Colorado.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This is a large IRSC with a very active collaborative group called the Uncompahgre Partnership. The project area is considered to be high departure from historic fire regimes and has experienced multiple insect infestations over the last decade. Activities such as mechanizing thinning, timber harvesting, seeding, weed treatments, managed fire, and decommissioning of roads are intended to allow the use of fire as a management option for the Forest.

Scoping for the project began in 2012 and project implementation began in 2013. The project is a component of a 2010 Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) project. Monitoring by the collaborative group has been integrated into the design of treatments. Under this project both mechanical thinning and controlled burns are to occur across 136,079 acres of National Forest within portions of 39 separate watersheds. The project also involves treatments on more than 5,000 acres of private land.

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

Non-agency stakeholders interviewed for this project consider themselves to be local to the project area. One individual interviewed has been involved in three separate stewardship contracting projects including Escalante. For this project the individual is involved with monitoring ecological indicators and coordinating the collaborative group. This non-agency stakeholder remarked that their organization lacks capacity to further engage in other stewardship contracting projects beyond participating in NEPA scoping, writing grants for coordination of the collaborative group, and participating in monitoring activities.

The other non-agency respondent had not been directly involved in stewardship contracting projects, but has been involved in collaborative meetings and through purchasing saw logs being made available from the project. This individual possessed a negative view toward the concept of stewardship contracting on a philosophical basis.

The main non-agency stakeholder identified is the Uncomphagre Partnership. This group, which was established in 2001, has engaged in the Escalante project through NEPA, monitoring the project, and providing funds for non-agency coordination. Individual organizations represented through the partnership and their associated roles in the project as identified by interviewees include:

- Uncomphagre Valley Association: planning, NEPA scoping, implementation, and monitoring.
- Colorado Forest Restoration Institute of Colorado State University: planning, NEPA scoping, implementation, and monitoring
- Western Colorado Congress: planning, NEPA scoping, implementation, and monitoring
- Public Lands Partnership: steering project outputs, bringing together wide spectrum of people, scoping, planning, implementation, monitoring
- Mule Deer Foundation
- Colorado Wood Company: implementation
- Old Time Timber: implementation
- Timber industry: planning, NEPA scoping

RELATIONSHIPS OF AGENCY AND NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

When asked if relationships between the Forest Service and non-agency stakeholders changed as a result of the Escalante project, a representative of the collaborative group suggested that new stakeholders have gotten involved as the project progressed and that agency and non-agency cooperators are listening to each other. This non-agency stakeholder suggested that by working together the collaborative group is getting to know, trust, and respect the different partners for their respective knowledge, skills, and input and that the relationships have improved the more time the partners spend working together. He also cited more scientific research being active in the landscape as a positive development because it is having a role in informing agency decisions and the direction of the project.

Conversely, the representative from the timber industry who was interviewed suggested that stewardship contracting strains relationships with the timber industry, but stated that otherwise, working relationships are good and that he is encouraged by the progress of the collaborative group. Agency personnel interviewed suggested that each individual organization engaged in the project as well as the project itself, is growing stronger because of the time spent working together.

EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIPS ON THE SCOPE AND SCALE OF THE PROJECT

An agency interviewee who has been involved in the Escalante project for two years suggested that the involvement of non-agency stakeholders impacts the scale of the project and has made it larger, saying it “*definitely gives us some more buy-in and trust, I think, from the public when*

they see our different external cooperators kind of behind us saying similar things to us, and maybe even encouraging us to do more.”

Non-agency personnel involved in the project and the collaborative group responded that yes, indeed the scale had increased and that the project had grown larger due to the involvement of non-agency stakeholders in the project. They also stated that when the Forest Service has listened, relationship dynamics and what subsequently happens in the project are affected. The interviewee from the timber industry suggested that in general other stakeholders (environmental rather than timber interests) tend to make most projects smaller.

East Mountain Stewardship Agreement, Cibola National Forest, New Mexico.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Following a NEPA process that began in 2009, implementation for this project began in summer 2014. The project is on 810 acres, but there are plans to expand it to more than 10,000 acres. The project is promoting forest health and reducing wildfire hazard in Pinion-Juniper and Ponderosa Pine forest types in the Manzano Mountains east of Albuquerque, New Mexico. It is one of USDA’s Joint Chief’s (NRCS and Forest Service) Initiative landscapes, meaning that additional funding is coming from other sources. The project area is also a high priority for The Nature Conservancy’s Rio Grande Water Fund, which will allow for further additional funding from this payment for watershed services program to be included in the agreement.

The project has a robust collaborative group behind it, originating in a multi-stakeholder developed Community Wildfire Protection Plan from 2006 that lays out the planning process, community context, history of the area, a fire hazard assessment, and desired implementation activities, some of which are now being implemented through the stewardship agreement (i.e. prescribed fire, mechanical thinning, fire and thinning combined, monitoring/evaluation). The agreement is with the New Mexico Forest Industry Association. One agency interviewee described this non-traditional agreement holder making the project a “*proof of concept type of project to see how the forest industry association can function as a partner, a fair, transparent entity, putting out bids and getting logging contractors.*”

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

Agency personnel interviewed identified the following non-agency stakeholders involved in the project and their associated roles in the project:

- Calunsh Pinto Soil and Water Conservation District: a major partner; scoping, project planning, implementation, NEPA, monitoring
- Eastcon, Edgewood, and Iugas Soil and Water Conservation Districts: scoping and project planning

- The Nature Conservancy: funding via the Rio Grande water fund, scoping, and project planning
- New Mexico Forest Industry Association: agreement holder (has had an agreement with NM, a master agreement for three years.), scoping, project planning, implementation, NEPA, monitoring
- Chililli Land Grant Association: scoping, project planning, implementation, NEPA, monitoring
- Retired foresters: certified by the USFS to do NEPA work (cruising) under contract with NMFIA
- Pueblo Isleta: scoping, project planning, implementation, NEPA, monitoring; partner on implementation
- New Mexico State Forestry Division: mentioned briefly in interviews, role not defined
- Homeowners associations: mentioned briefly in interviews, role not defined

Among non-agency stakeholders, the New Mexico Forest Industry Association wanted to see a “*smoothing out*” of contract offerings and larger projects. The role of the Industry Association is as project manager and agreement holder. As such they put out the work of the agreement for competitive bids, handle administrative paperwork for the contractors, operate as technical support, and write task orders, RFPs, contracts, etc.

RELATIONSHIPS OF AGENCY AND NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

When asked whether the relationships between the agency and non-agency stakeholders had changed as a result of the project, agency interviewees suggested that already positive relationships had grown and evolved with partners now seeing and understanding the benefits of working together on the project. When asked whether the relationships between the agency and non-agency stakeholders had changed as a result of the project a representative from The Nature Conservancy said that the relationships are strong and that the forest supervisor had gone out of his way to remove barriers to progress.

Other non-agency interviewees recognized that agency personnel had come and gone and that it takes time to develop new relationships/working relationships, but that relationships are currently strong. Relationships between the agency and some non-agency stakeholders (e.g. a tribal group local to the project area) were described as “*working relationships*” that were historically not “*collaborative relationships*,” but that as a result of the project and related activities, relationships had bloomed into strong collaborative relationships beneficial to all stakeholders. For example, the local tribal workforce of Isleta Pueblo has become strong and active, benefiting all stakeholders wishing to see the project progress. An interviewee from Isleta Pueblo said, “*Before this collaboration on this project they [historical relationships between the tribe and the other partners] were virtually non-existent as far as working relationships, but now working on*

this project it's brought everyone to the table and now everyone relies on working with each other to get the project done."

EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIPS ON THE SCOPE AND SCALE OF THE PROJECT

When asked about the scale changing as a result of non-agency participation, an agency employee cited the opportunity to bring more money into the project (e.g. Rio Grande Water Fund) and an already functioning collaborative process as being key to their ability to scale the project up. Non-agency interviewees also suggested that the project had been able to be expanded as a result of the collaborative process (i.e. the ability to include more people and address their issues). Other reasons why the project was able to scale up as identified by non-agency stakeholders include that agency personnel are especially focused on getting the NEPA completed and that the agency lead recognized the momentum and foundation that the collaborative group built, and he made working with this group a priority.

Along these lines, in their own words, the agency leader suggested:

"So when I got here 6.5 years ago and saw the momentum and foundation those groups had built, really to be honest with you, the missing part was activity on the National Forest. There was a lot of activity and initiative on private and state land. When I got here our priority was to start to become more active with those partnerships, become a bigger player with landscape scale restoration with cross jurisdictional emphasis, trying to tag on to all the great work they have done already and become a more active partner at the table with those groups.

"So obviously we started going down that road we had to first build a reservoir of NEPA-approved opportunity so even those we looked at these mountains as a landscape scale project, for financial management and the ability to start treating and building capacity we broke the landscape into smaller sub projects so that we could work with NEPA approved in a certain location while working on outward year NEPA simultaneously and you know heritage surveys and biological surveys, etc. So we looked at it as a landscape but took a staggered project approach to it. That's what led us to today."

Pinaleño Ecosystem Restoration Stewardship Agreement, Coronado National Forest, Arizona.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Pinaleño Ecosystem Restoration Project is envisioned as a 10-year project on 3,705 acres. The impetus for fuel reduction and restoration activities in the project goes back to the mid-1990s and early 2000s when large wildfires and progressive insect infestations reduced wildlife

habitat in the area. The Mexican spotted owl and a Mount Graham red squirrel – both species are endangered – have viable habitat on the mountain. After years of discussion, the current implementation vehicle for the project is a stewardship agreement with the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf). NWTf is accomplishing the timber unit layout and cruising with a sub-agreement with a regional Apache tribal group that the Forest Service certified to do the cruising. The project will use skyline logging at a reported cost of \$1800/acre.

A 2010 CFLRP proposal for the Pinaleño project area identified a long-term trend in partnerships toward collaborative restoration originating from the creation of the Pinaleño Partnership in 2006. The partnership convened around the idea of using the by-products of forest restoration as a means to offset treatment expense. A related collaborative effort between scientists is also cited as important to the overall project.

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

The following entities (and respective roles) were specifically mentioned by respondents as non-agency stakeholders in the project:

- Graham County Commissioner: mentioned in interviews but role not defined
- Graham County Community Investment Fund: implementation
- Eastern Arizona Small Business Development Center: implementation
- Cecil Logging and Joe's Logging: contractors, implementation
- National Wild Turkey Federation : implementation partner, contract holder
- Arizona Department of Transportation: mentioned in interviews but role not defined.
- Sky Island Alliance: scoping, project planning, NEPA, implementation
- Gila Woodnet/Restoration Technologies: project planning, implementation
- Western Apache Tribe: wood utilization, scoping, project planning, NEPA, implementation, and monitoring
- National Network of Forest Practitioners/Center for Cooperative Forest Enterprises: implementation
- Arizona Game and Fish Department: scoping
- US Fish and Wildlife Service: scoping
- Homeowners Association: scoping, NEPA
- Gila Watershed Partnership: scoping, NEPA, planning, implementation
- Pinaleño Partnership: planning, NEPA, implementation, monitoring

RELATIONSHIPS OF AGENCY AND NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

One non-agency stakeholder stated that relationships between the agency and its non-agency collaborators “*get better all the time,*” and that there have been long-term contacts with the Forest Service over the last eight or nine years as the project has developed. Other non-agency interviewees characterize relationships with the agency and non-agency stakeholders as being “*positive interaction*” with a focus on “*a lot of common ground.*”

At least two non-agency interviewees remarked that they would like to be involved in the collaborative process if they had more time to do so. A Forest Service representative interviewed suggested that as the project has changed from the planning phase, through NEPA, and now on to implementation, there is a need for different roles which has created opportunities to bring in new partners.

EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIPS ON THE SCOPE AND SCALE OF THE PROJECT

An agency employee interviewed expressed that the scale of the project was restricted by the Record of Decision and the complexity of the project and that it has been difficult to deviate from this during implementation. They noted that other projects related to this specific project have occurred under the branding of “Firescape,” a more landscape-level approach to managing fuels in other areas of the Coronado Forest that have fewer issues with endangered species habitat. Non-agency interviewees stated that the scale was determined by the NEPA EIS and that scale is further limited by time and funding available to conduct treatments.

Pacific Coast Region

Jazz Plantation Thin, Mt. Hood National Forest, Oregon.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This project focuses on variable density thinning of 30 – 60 year old Douglas-fir plantations across 2,000 acres of the Mt. Hood National Forest. Nearly four years in development through the local collaborative group, the goals for the Jazz project were to create a more diverse mix of habitat features across the landscape and to restore watershed conditions. The project is located on the Clackamas River Ranger District which has had a local collaborative group working for several years on restoration-oriented projects including several stewardship contracting projects.

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

Clackamas Stewardship Partners is a local collaborative group which includes membership from the following organizations:

- Clackamas River Basin Council: scoping, planning, NEPA
- Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District: scoping, planning, NEPA
- Gifford Pinchot Taskforce: scoping, planning, NEPA
- Interfor: scoping, planning, NEPA
- High Cascade: scoping, planning, NEPA
- American Forest Resource Council: scoping, planning, NEPA , appellant
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife: scoping, planning, NEPA

- Oregon Wild: scoping, planning, NEPA, commented on EA independently from the Clackamas Stewardship Partners
- Oregon Hunters Association: scoping, planning, NEPA
- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation: scoping, planning, NEPA, commented on EA independently from the Clackamas Stewardship Partners
- Pacific Rivers Council: scoping, planning, NEPA
- BARK: scoping, NEPA, appellant, litigant.
- Poage Black, Inc.: scoping, planning, NEPA

The Clackamas Stewardship Partners is a collaborative group that meets regularly and had advanced relatively non-controversial projects until the Jazz project. The group includes several environmental groups (Oregon Wild, BARK, and Pacific Rivers Council) as well as timber industry organizations (Interfor, High Cascade, American Forest Resource Council) with several other conservation organizations and government agencies comprising the balance. One environmental group, BARK, left the collaborative because of the project but has since rejoined.

RELATIONSHIPS OF AGENCY AND NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

Many of the non-agency stakeholders interviewed have been involved with a number of (8 – 10) stewardship contracting projects, including BARK, which ended up suing the Forest Service over the project. When asked if the relationships of agency and non-agency stakeholders had changed as a result of the project respondents gave different answers. A Forest Service representative involved in the project said no, everything is pretty much the same for all groups except for BARK, which has participated in collaborative group meetings around three additional projects since Jazz.

BARK was one of the early members of the collaborative group but left the group over the Jazz project, suggesting that the project has “*caused enormous tension and relationships that were once positive, or at least cordial, have gotten really crunchy.*” BARK felt that the project had been planned and actions decided by the Forest Service before it reached the collaborative group and that their participation in the group was a “*rubber stamping*” of a project they did not agree with.

The Forest Service suggested that relationships with the other environmental groups engaged in the project had not changed as a result of the Jazz project or other projects they had worked on together, with the exception of BARK. Still, a representative from Oregon Wild suggested that working together had shifted their organization’s relationship with the Forest Service from poor to moderate. This individual also recognized the relationship between the Forest Service and timber interests as “*up and down*” with the fluctuations in the timber market.

EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIPS ON THE SCOPE AND SCALE OF THE PROJECT

When asked about whether non-agency stakeholders shaped the scope and scale of projects, responses were mixed. The Forest Service respondent did not feel that this was the case, while a representative from Oregon Wild suggested that all interests—timber companies, conservation groups, hunting groups, did in fact shape the scope and scale of projects. BARK felt that the scope and scale was not changed as a result of their efforts or the work of the collaborative group, which they view as a “*rubber stamp*” on agency plans.

Mill Creek A to Z Stewardship Project, Colville National Forest, Washington.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This large 10-year contract aims to complete restoration work on approximately 54,000 acres utilizing an innovative approach integrating environmental analysis through NEPA and project implementation into a single stewardship contract. The project was birthed out of the work of a local collaborative group called the Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition which has worked on more than 30 stewardship contracting projects across 150,000 acres prior to the Mill Creek A to Z project. This group received a CFLRP grant in 2012 and has leveraged that momentum into the A to Z project since 2013.

The contract was awarded to Vaagen Brothers Lumber Inc., which is subcontracting the NEPA analysis to Cramer Fish Sciences as the first task order beginning in 2015. The concept is to build local capacity and not involve the local Forest Service specialists, or involve them minimally, because they have limited staff and they already have their hands full with existing projects.

Vaagen Brothers is taking a big risk on the project by investing in the NEPA analysis knowing full well that the project could be delayed or canceled for any number of reasons. However, they trust that the efforts of the collaborative group will work and that they will be able to recoup their investment in the project through increased logging activity on the Colville National Forest.

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

The Colville National Forest has implemented a number of stewardship contracting projects; individuals in the Mill Creek A to Z project possessed a mix of experience regarding stewardship contracting projects. For some, this was their first project whereas other participants have been a part of as many as 20 stewardship contracting projects. Likewise, interviewees varied to the extent that they considered themselves to be local stakeholders.

The Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition formed in 2001 as a loosely connected group of environmental and timber interests that came together to initially address only hazardous fuels

reductions in the wildland urban interface. For this ambitious project, interviewees identified the following members of the coalition and their corresponding roles in the project:

- Vaagen Brothers Lumber: Contract holder who contracted NEPA out to Cramer Fish Services. Also participated in NEPA, scoping, collaboration
- Cramer Fish Services: contracted to do NEPA analysis, planning, and scoping
- Conservation Northwest: NEPA, scoping, collaboration
- Spokane Lands Council: NEPA, scoping, collaboration
- Washington State ex-state forester: NEPA, scoping, collaboration
- American Forest Resource Council: NEPA, scoping, collaboration
- Cattlemen's Association: NEPA
- Tri County Motorized Recreation Association: NEPA, scoping, collaboration
- County commissioners: facilitated scoping and project design process

As a major player in the Coalition, Vaagen Brothers won the contract for the A to Z project. Because this project has a unique structure with NEPA analysis being essentially contracted out twice (first by the agency and then by Vaagen Brothers) the project has rigid roles for both Vaagen Brothers and Cramer Fish Services. Cramer was clear that there is a tight legal separation between themselves and Vaagen related to the production of NEPA documentation.

RELATIONSHIPS OF AGENCY AND NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

Vaagen entered into an MOU with the Colville National Forest about 10 years ago to focus on a collaborative approach to identifying hazardous fuel reduction and forest restoration projects in second growth roaded forests. This coincided with the development of the Northeast Washington Forest Coalition. A representative from Vaagen Brothers has chaired the group for some time.

When asked whether the involvement of non-agency stakeholders in the Mill Creek A to Z project had changed relationships that these stakeholders had with the Forest Service, agency interviewees replied that they did not think relationships had changed as a result of this project but rather that there had been an evolution of relationships over a longer timeframe.

Environmental groups have gone from an adversarial position to a cooperative one, as a result of strong collaboration around several stewardship contracting projects. Interviewees with Cramer Fish Services did not consider themselves a stakeholder to the project but that they were merely an unbiased third party doing environmental analysis work as a subcontractor to Vaagen Brothers.

EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIPS ON THE SCOPE AND SCALE OF THE PROJECT

Interviews yielded information about views on how respondents perceive non-agency stakeholders as influencing the scope and scale of projects. A representative of the Forest Service

suggested that Vaagen Brothers is a major force in the Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition and that Vaagen Brothers had influenced the scale of projects through their work with the Coalition. This same respondent suggested that environmental groups also affect the scale of projects by pushing for tighter sideboards as projects get more complex. This person described the interaction of the timber industry and environmentalists as “*opposite poles*” that balance each other. Other respondents expressed that they did not feel there was much influence on the scope and scale of projects due to the actions of non-agency stakeholders engaged in the project.

Hopper Coral Stewardship Contract. Plumas National Forest, California.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Since 2008, this project in the Sierra Nevada Mountains has been modified several times before it was eventually sold as a stewardship contract. The project was appealed by Sierra Forest Legacy, an active environmental group in the region. Despite having a longstanding collaborative group (Quincy Library Group) in the region, the Hopper Coral stewardship contract is identified as having few cooperators engaged, although respondents stated that they did have prior experience with a number of stewardship contracting projects.

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

Non-agency stakeholders (and corresponding roles) listed by respondents as being engaged in the Hopper Coral project include:

- Plumas County Fire Safe Council: planning, monitoring
- Quincy Library Group (QLG): planning
- Sierra Forest legacy: planning
- Contractor: implementation

RELATIONSHIPS OF AGENCY AND NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

Responses were mixed when interviewees were asked about the historical and current relationships between the Forest Service and the non-agency stakeholders engaged in the project. A Forest Service interviewee suggested that these relationships are generally good relationships and that the Hopper Coral project had not affected them. The local Fire Safe Council also stated that relationships had not changed but that they were trying to grow relationships to get more involvement upfront to help encourage other non-agency stakeholders to generate and advance projects rather than be reactionary.

Another non-agency stakeholder stated that relationships between the Forest Service and non-agency stakeholders had not changed as a result of the project with the exception of the Quincy

Library Group. The interviewee believes the Group has continued to erode its relationship with the Forest Service, saying that it is:

“Oh, it's never been real positive and it's always a struggle. You know everyone is trying to increase pace and scale [of restoration] and we all know it isn't happening, you know it's frustrating when you see what happens every year we see more and more ground burn up and have larger impacts on habitat than logging would ever have. I know QLG has been trying to push this forward and it just goes nowhere...On the actual Hopper Coral project I had conversations with [Forest Service employee] about the basal areas that were in the NEPA and what was actually being done on the ground. There was a pretty good disconnect on what the expectations were and what the actual treatments were. There was some discussion there but nothing has come out of it.”

This same interviewee alleged that the Forest Service gives favored treatment (private tours) to Sierra Forest Legacy which this stakeholder believes is a problem because he feels it gives a single interested stakeholder, an environmental group, undue influence on agency decisions.

EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIPS ON THE SCOPE AND SCALE OF THE PROJECT

Interviewees disagreed as to whether the agencies' relationships with non-agency stakeholders had an impact on the scope and scale of project. An agency representative said that these relationships did not have an effect on the scope and scale of the project, while one non-agency interviewee felt that the Quincy Library Group had an effect by pushing to increase the scale of projects. Another non-agency respondent felt that Sierra Forest Legacy depressed the scale and the scope (residual basal area) of projects. The Fire Safe Council was identified as not influencing the scale of the project, but it was suggested that it has influenced the scale of other projects.

Southeast Region

FM Cainhoy Stewardship Contract, Francis Marion National Forest, South Carolina.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The FM Cainhoy Stewardship project includes approximately 80 acres of mid-story vegetation treatments, 50 acres of non-native invasive species treatments, 75 acres of early successional habitat restoration and enhancement, and feral hog control. This is a small project with no clearly defined collaborative group but with several cooperators engaged.

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

Non-agency respondents report being engaged off and on since the inception of the project. The organizations identified as playing a role in the project and their corresponding roles include:

- Quail Unlimited: developing proposals, planning, providing labor to assist the Forest Service in managing habitat, limited monitoring
- South Carolina Department of Natural Resources: scoping, development of proposal, planning, limited monitoring.
- US Fish & Wildlife Service: development of proposal, planning
- South Carolina Native Plant Society: providing labor to assist the Forest Service in managing habitat

RELATIONSHIPS OF AGENCY AND NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

Relationships between the various stakeholders are described as being strong with overlapping interests.

EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIPS ON THE SCOPE AND SCALE OF THE PROJECT

Those interviewed identified no effects of relationships on the scope and scale of this project.

Pittfork Stewardship Contract, Ouachita National Forest, Arkansas.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This Integrated Resource Timber Contract (IRTC) occurring on 2,500 acres of the Ouachita National Forest bundled the sale of merchantable timber on 1,769 acres with a variety of wildlife-focused activities. Service work included 730 acres of wildlife stand improvement and development of a two acre wildlife opening with a small wildlife pond. All net revenue will be collected as retained receipts to conduct prescribed burning on 9,326 acres in another project.

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

Non-agency personnel included a contractor (West Fraser) and two subcontractors, BU Forestry & Landscaping and Ouachita Rock. West Fraser managed subcontracts for service work and completed the timber related activities. West Fraser reported that all subcontractors are local.

RELATIONSHIPS OF AGENCY AND NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

Relationships with the agency were described as positive and did not change as a result of the project. West Fraser would like to see more timber put up for sale from the forest (consistent with the Forest Plan) than is currently happening. West Fraser also stated that the Forest Service told them that the shortfall of sales from the Plan is caused by a lack of boots on the ground due to budget shortfalls.

EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIPS ON THE SCOPE AND SCALE OF THE PROJECT

Respondents identified no effect of relationships on the scope and scale of the project. This was the first stewardship project attempted on the particular district and two additional projects have been accomplished since Pittfork was initiated. The agency employee interviewed stated that, “*Pittfork itself was pretty much geared towards timber, timber things. We did some wildlife habitat improvement with the mid-story and doing the pond, but it was just a straightforward, simple project to get us going.*”

Hogback Stewardship Agreement, Cherokee National Forest, Tennessee.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Hogback Mountain Restoration Stewardship Project is the first stewardship agreement between the National Wild Turkey Federation and the Forest Service on the Cherokee National Forest. The project thinned 140 acres, resulting in open forest to improve wildlife habitat, and conducted prescribed burns.

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

The following non-agency stakeholders, and their associated roles, were identified as being involved in the project:

- National Wild Turkey Federation: project planning, implementation
- Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency: scoping, NEPA, implementation
- Tennessee Exotic Pest and Plant Council: no clear role identified
- Tennessee Ornithological Society: no clear role identified
- Polk County: no clear role identified
- Partners of Cherokee: no clear role identified
- University of Tennessee: no clear role identified

RELATIONSHIPS OF AGENCY AND NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

Forest Service personnel report being encouraged by additional working relationships they developed with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources agency. The National Wild Turkey Federation reports that they were able to build upon existing relationships to make them stronger.

EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIPS ON THE SCOPE AND SCALE OF THE PROJECT

Agency and non-agency interviewees differed with respect to whether they felt that non-agency stakeholder engagement in the project modified the scope or scale. Agency personnel felt that it had while non-agency personnel said no, it had not.

Northeast Region

Brush Hollow Stewardship Agreement, Allegheny National Forest, Pennsylvania.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Brush Hollow Biomass stewardship agreement between the Kane Area School District and the Allegheny National Forest salvaged timber on approximately 500 acres of the Allegheny National Forest that blew down during a 2003 storm. The project was intended to facilitate the reforestation of the area and to provide a biomass supply for the Kane Area High School and the Elk Regional Health Center (ERHC).

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

The following entities (and their roles) were identified as active non-agency stakeholders involved in the project:

- Kane School District: implementation, post-NEPA planning
- New Growth Resources: implementation. They harvested the material and supplied the school.
- Elk Regional Hospital: implementation (very minor role of purchasing biomass from Kane School District)

RELATIONSHIPS OF AGENCY AND NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

When asked how the project changed as a result of non-agency stakeholder involvement the School District suggested that the project led to new relationships and that the early success is leading towards new discussions about another agreement with the Forest Service. The agency reported that relationships have changed for the better.

EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIPS ON THE SCOPE AND SCALE OF THE PROJECT

Respondents identified no effects of relationships on the scope and scale of the project; however, they are pursuing an additional agreement.

Crawford Stewardship Contract, White Mountain National Forest, New Hampshire.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This Integrated Resource Timber Contract combines activities including maintenance and improvement of existing recreation facilities, wildlife habitat improvement, timber harvesting, timber stand improvement, and watershed improvement. Stakeholders had concerns about visual impacts of harvests, impacts to ski trails, and other issues. Project activities included: road

decommissioning, facility improvements/construction, forest vegetation improvements, facility maintenance, trail management, road maintenance, travel management, and timber harvesting. The project does not have a collaborative group but rather interfaced with several individual interests.

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

Non-agency stakeholders, and their roles, as identified by interviewees include:

- Bretton Woods Ski Area: planning, implementation, monitoring, adjacent landowner
- Town of Carroll Conservation commission: planning, implementation
- Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC): scoping, project planning
- New Hampshire Department of Transportation: planning, implementation
- New Hampshire Fish and Game Department: project planning, NEPA
- US Fish & Wildlife Service: project planning and NEPA
- Ammonoosuc River Local Advisory Committee: planning

RELATIONSHIPS OF AGENCY AND NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

The AMC and Bretton Woods have existing long-term relationships with the Forest Service as special use permittees and adjacent landowners. These long-term relationships helped with communications about the project as it progressed. The AMC suggested that their organization is useful for helping the Forest Service communicate its stewardship message to the public. The AMC also expressed disappointment that a historical dam that was originally slated to be restored as part of the project was left off the list of work items due to the cost of restoring it. This disappointment was minor however and did not change their relationship with the Forest Service.

Agency personnel stated that overall communication has increased with Bretton Woods Ski Resort and the AMC and that the agency has developed a new relationship with the Ammonoosuc River Advisory Committee but that these increased communications have yet to generate additional projects.

EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIPS ON THE SCOPE AND SCALE OF THE PROJECT

Interviewees report that minor changes in the scope of the project occurred as a result of agency to non-agency relationships. A representative of Bretton Woods reported that some of his apprehensions around visual impacts were mitigated by minor changes to the project. It was also identified that cooperating non-agency stakeholders liked the project as proposed but that some trail relocation work, money for a new bridge, and money for the dam were not available, so the scope of the project changed. The agency interviewee said that this stewardship project was possibly a bit more than the agency could manage in that it took more time and energy to prepare and required more coordination than others they had handled. As the project broadened, the

agency respondent stated that the Forest Service has to be more sensitive to more interests, saying:

“It didn’t force the scale of the project, I think we took a little broader look a few more detailed type projects involved nested within the project, and I think that’s what caused us to do, is on our projects that we’ve started to develop after the Crawford project we’ve been sensitive to the fact that sometimes the more folks that you have involved the more complicated a project can be. With that complication comes a little more time and energy that needs to be invested. So we’ve been very conscious about trying to keep the scale of projects manageable.”

Cisco Camp Stewardship Project, Ottawa National Forest Michigan.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This stewardship contract was with the Lax Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians. The project included two parts: (1) red pine thinning of approximately 15 acres, and (2) a watershed improvement project to mitigate existing resource damage. Goods-for-services (IRTC or IRSC) were used and the Tribe used the logs to construct a traditional roundhouse requiring 150 twenty-five foot logs. The Forest Service and the Tribe agreed to pursue the use of stewardship contracting as a short-term option to meet Tribal request for logs, with the understanding that this would not resolve Tribal treaty rights issues that existed between the two parties. There is no collaborative group present.

The Forest Service used stewardship contracting as a tool the Tribe had been wanting for a long time under their treaty rights. The treaties in the Lake States said that the use of products for traditional uses was acceptable but legal precedent specified that tribes could not harvest merchantable timber under their treaty rights, so the Forest Service could not find a way to legally allow the Tribe the use of round logs for long house logs. Stewardship contracting at that time was a fairly new tool and additionally it took a little bit longer and a bit more work for the Forest Service, they *“were able to supply them with a thing that was really a right of theirs and so using this tool was a compromise of sorts to allow them to get to have logs and so it just built relationships and we were able to work with them to get them something they really wanted.”*

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

- The Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission: Primary drafter, negotiator, and facilitator of MOU between the Tribe and the Forest Service
- Tribe (Lac Vieux Desert): implementation
- Voight Tribal Task Force: consulted by Tribe

RELATIONSHIPS OF AGENCY AND NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

Since this project there have not been others with the Tribe, although the Forest Service is working toward additional projects now. There is another tribe the agency is trying to work with, to less success. The agency employee interviewed felt that the project helped build trust between agency and the Lac Vieux Desert Tribe, citing that relationships have gotten more positive with the Tribe and that the agency goal was to help build local capacity with the Tribe and to start improving the agency-Tribal relationship.

EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIPS ON THE SCOPE AND SCALE OF THE PROJECT

The project scope and scale were not affected by agency to non-agency relationships and interactions.

Appendix B: 2014 SC case studies. Semi-structured interview questionnaire

Interview Questions

Background questions for non-agency stakeholders:

1. How many stewardship contracting projects have you been a part of?
2. What is your role in THIS project?
3. How long have you been involved with this project?
4. Would you consider yourself a “local” stakeholder to the project area?

Main questions:

1. Who are the non-agency stakeholders in the project? (ask agency people and get contact information; then read that list to non-agency folks and ask if there is anyone they would add; be sure to get contact information.)

For each interviewee, list non-agency folks in table and then ask about involvement in project stages.

Example: You listed Tribal Nation X as a non-agency participant in the project. What project stages were they involved in...read the list (scoping, monitoring, etc.) Note: This table is meant to organize the information we gather and to organize our questioning.

Affiliation	Scoping	Project Planning	NEPA	Implementation	Monitoring	Other (provide a brief explanation)

2. We are interested in whether relationships between the USFS (BLM) and non-agency stakeholders have changed over time as a result of this project.

List non-agency stakeholders (name, affiliation, phone number and/or email address)

For each non-agency stakeholder, ask about the **historical** and **current** relationship between the agency and that stakeholder.

Then, for each non-agency stakeholder, **if the relationship has changed**, ask

Do you feel it was as result of this project? Please explain.

Then, for each interviewee ask

Has the involvement of non-agency stakeholders influenced the scale of this project and others that you may have been involved in?

3. This question is for non-agency stakeholders only...

Are you as involved in this project as you would like to be? If no, please explain.

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