PROGRAMMATIC MONITORING OF
THE ROLE OF COMMUNITIES IN STEWARDSHIP CONTRACTING

FINAL REPORT TO THE USDA FOREST SERVICE
FY 2006

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Photo by N. Rana

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**PINCHOT INSTITUTE
FOR CONSERVATION**

About the Pinchot Institute for Conservation

Recognized as a leader in forest conservation thought, policy and action, the Pinchot Institute for Conservation was dedicated in 1963 by President John F. Kennedy at Grey Towers National Historic Landmark (Milford, PA) – home of conservation leader Gifford Pinchot. The Institute is an independent nonprofit organization that works collaboratively with all Americans – from federal and state policymakers to citizens in rural communities – to strengthen forest conservation by advancing sustainable forest management, developing conservation leaders, and providing science-based solutions to emerging natural resource issues. Each year, the Pinchot Institute conducts policy research and analysis; convenes and facilitates meetings, workshops, and symposiums; produces educational publications; and provides technical assistance on issues that affect national-level conservation policies and the management of our national forests and other natural resources.

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Collaboration has become an important part of federal land management and planning decisions—not only because it is often required by law, but also because the commitment and participation of stakeholders, interest groups, and community members can help achieve effective large-scale, long-term restoration and/or management objectives. For most of the history of federal land management agencies like the USDA Forest Service (USFS) and the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM), there have been informal opportunities for the public—particularly citizens in communities adjacent to federal lands—to discuss issues or concerns with the agencies and share local knowledge to inform land management decisions. Passage of the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) began formalizing this citizen participation by requiring formal public involvement and review (under the National Environmental Policy Act) for USFS and BLM management planning and decisions.

Attention to the value and role of collaboration in federal land management decisions has been a mainstay in discussions of current or pending policy. One example can be found in the Consolidated Appropriations Act for FY 2003 (P.L. 108-7 § 323), which was passed in February 2003. This law contains provisions allowing the USFS and the BLM to enter into any number of stewardship contracts over a 10-year period. Subsection (g) of the legislation further provides that the agencies establish a *programmatic* multiparty monitoring and evaluation process, specifically designed to assess the use of new and expanded contracting authorities and the roles local communities are playing in the development of stewardship agreements or contracts.[1] This more general, programmatic level of monitoring differs from prior monitoring efforts in that it does not incorporate project-level data from each existing stewardship contracting project.

In 2005, the USFS awarded the Pinchot Institute for Conservation (PIC) a five-year contract (AG-3187-C-05-0012) to complete the initial requirements of that part of the Congressional direction regarding reporting on the role of local communities in the development of stewardship agreements or contract plans. This report meets the requirements defined in Line Item 0002 of the aforementioned contract ("Stewardship Monitoring Program, Annual Fiscal Year Reports") as they pertain to stewardship contracting projects on USFS lands during 2006. Cooperating with PIC in this effort are several partner organizations (in alphabetical order): The Flathead Economic Policy Center in Columbia Falls, MT (FEPC), Michigan State University in East Lansing, MI (MSU), the Watershed Research and Training Center in Hayfork, CA (WRTC), and West 65, Inc. in Cortez, CO.

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[1] From the USFS handbook (Chapter 60: Stewardship Contracting, page 21): "While the enabling legislation does not specifically mention collaboration in stewardship contracts, the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture have directed the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management to involve States, counties, local communities, and interested stakeholders in a public process to provide input on implementation of stewardship contracting projects. Effort should be made to involve a diversity of local interests and engage key stakeholders in collaboration throughout the life of the project, from project design through implementation and monitoring."

This section of the report describes the data collection and analysis methods utilized for the first year of programmatic monitoring of stewardship contracting on USFS and BLM lands. In cooperation with the federal agencies, PIC and the partner organizations decided that a uniform telephone survey should be the vehicle for data collection in this monitoring effort (see Appendix A for the survey template). These surveys were administered as telephone interviews to a variety of participants in various stewardship contracting projects throughout the U.S. It was hoped that this one-on-one approach could more accurately capture the nature of local community involvement in stewardship contracting than a written survey or other monitoring method.

Development of Survey Sample

An important first step in this national programmatic monitoring effort was the development of a reliable and statistically viable sampling strategy. For the USFS portion of this work, PIC and its partners obtained a list of current projects from the agency's Washington Office.

Utilizing a process of stratified random sampling, researchers at MSU determined which projects to survey. In order to accomplish this task, projects were differentiated according to managing agency (either USFS or BLM) and region (as defined below). Within these strata, projects were assigned a number, and the sample was selected using a random number generator. A maximum of 25% of the projects for each sub-category were chosen.

Defined Regions of the United States:
Northeast/Lake States:	CT, DE, IA, IL, IN, MA, ME, MD, MI, MN, MO, NJ, NH, NY, OH, PA, RI, VT, WI, WV
Northern Rockies:	ID, MT, ND, SD, WY
Pacific Northwest:	AK, CA, HI, OR, WA
Southeast:	AL, FL, GA, KS, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA
Southwest:	AZ, CO, KS, NE, NM, NV, OK, TX, UT

Survey Administration and Data Collection/Analysis

Project partners and the federal agencies collaboratively developed the survey template in December 2005, which was used to collect all data relevant to this annual evaluation. This template was developed using data from the survey that was administered in a 2004 monitoring effort looking at the role of communities in stewardship contracting.[2] For each project in the sample, the intent was to interview three people: the agency project manager, the contractor, and a community member. Unfortunately, in reality, it was not possible to conduct three interviews on every project. The reasons for this situation varied from non-response to no more than two parties involved in a project.

PIC and the partner organizations began interviewing federal employees in May 2006 but did not begin interviewing non-agency project participants until an Office of Management and Budget (OMB) number was issued for the survey instrument (as prescribed by the Paperwork Reduction Act) in June 2006. As

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[2] See Appendix B of the Pinchot Institute's report, "The Role of Communities in Stewardship Contracting: A Programmatic Review of Forest Service Projects – FY 2004 Report to the USDA Forest Service" (February 2005).

previously mentioned, all surveys were conducted over the telephone and took approximately 30 minutes to an hour per individual. Interviewees received the survey prior to their actual phone interview – most commonly via email.

The determination of agency interviewees was based upon the contact information furnished by the managing agencies. Agency project managers were the first people interviewed on any given project because the PIC and the partner organizations relied on these individuals to provide the names and/or contact information for contractors, community members, and others involved in the project. With this information in hand, PIC and its partners determined (randomly if necessary) who else to interview to provide a broad overview of community involvement in the project.

PIC and the partner organizations utilized the survey to guide interviews and collect information in a uniform manner. At the conclusion of each interview, the interviewer forwarded a completed survey form to MSU. Researchers there coded responses and entered this information into a statistical analysis software program (SPSS), producing quantitative results. These outputs were then submitted to PIC for further analysis.

Comparison of Regional Perspectives

To help differentiate any trends that may emerge among projects when they are considered by region -- and to foster a multiparty aspect of this monitoring effort -- a series of regional teams were assembled (see Appendix B for lists of the regional teams' members).   Each team met once in person over the past year (see dates and locations of meetings below). The teams include representatives of a diversity of interests from the pertinent region, many of whom have firsthand experience with stewardship contracting. For consistency's sake, it is hoped that the membership of each regional team will remain constant for the duration of the five-year programmatic monitoring effort.

The regional teams were asked to assess the data collected from a regional perspective. As such, each regional team meeting centered around a review of the aggregated effects of individual projects -- including a comparison of the results to what was happening in their region and a discussion of conditions affecting project outcomes. Recommendations and insights offered by the regional teams are included in a later section of this report.

Regional Team (RT) Meeting Dates and Locations:
- Northeast/Lake States RT meeting: January 24, 2007, Burlington, VT.
- Northern Rockies RT meeting: January 9, 2007, Spokane, WA.
- Pacific Northwest RT meeting: January 17, 2007, Troutdale, OR.
- Southeast RT meeting: December 14, 2006, Asheville, NC.
- Southwest RT meeting: October 12, 2006, Bryce, UT.

ANALYSIS

This section of the report presents the USFS-relevant data collected and processed by MSU in table format, accompanied by narrative explanations and analyses. The highest percentage response in each category of a table is highlighted in yellow, and the numbers in parentheses after the percentages indicate either the number of respondents or number of projects reflected by the percentage. Also, it should be

noted that several of the tables demonstrate situations other than a one-to-one question-to-response correlation for each question. In some cases, respondents may have provided more than one answer, and in other cases not everyone responded to the question at hand. Additionally, there are a few tables that provide combined results from USFS and BLM surveys because they were inextricably linked and/or there were too few responses from a single agency to present separate tables.

In an attempt to organize the discussion of the survey results, the data have been sorted according to the following general topic areas: (1) Perceptions of Stewardship Contracting; (2) Community Involvement in Stewardship Contracting; (3) Personal Involvement in Stewardship Contracting; (4) The Collaborative Process in Stewardship Contracting; (5) Benefits of Stewardship Contracting Projects; (6) Support for Stewardship Contracting; and, (7) Lessons Learned.

Overall, 51 USFS projects were surveyed as part of the 2006 programmatic monitoring effort. 121 people involved in these projects were interviewed (see Table 1), with a split of 52 USFS employees (referred to as "agency" in the tables to follow) and 69 non-federal agency representatives (referred to as "non-agency" in the tables to follow).

Outside of the USFS, respondents were classified as contractors, community members, or "other." In most cases, the difference between community member and "other" was determined according to why the individual was involved in a project. If someone's involvement was due to personal interest rather than being a duty of one's job, he/she was characterized as a community member.

Table 1. Who was interviewed? (USFS)

	Overall
	N=121 people
Agency	43% (52)
Contractor	23.1% (28)
Other Interested Party	20.7% (25)
Community Member	13.2% (16)

PERCEPTIONS OF STEWARDSHIP CONTRACTING

Explanations of Stewardship Contracting

In an attempt to assess whether or not people's understanding of what stewardship contracting is might affect their participation or outlook, interviewees were asked to explain it. The most common definitions generated are listed in Table 2.

Overall, most people characterized stewardship contracting as "a way to get work done on the ground." Following fairly close behind were definitions of stewardship contracting as "goods for services" and/or "a contracting mechanism." People were not asked to limit their answers to only one choice.

When respondents are divided along agency/non-agency lines, however, it is evident that a greater percentage of agency representatives view stewardship contracting as goods-for-services than non-agency representatives, the majority of which defined stewardship contracting as a way to get work done on the ground. In fact, the second most common response among non-agency interviewees was the

characterization of stewardship contracting as simply a contracting mechanism, with the goods-for-services option coming in third place.

Table 2. If someone asked you to explain stewardship contracting, what would you say? (USFS)

	Overall	Agency	Non-Agency
	N=121 people	N=52	N=69
A way to get work done on the ground	43.2% (51)	30.8% (16)	50.7% (35)
Goods for services	35.6% (42)	46.2% (24)	26.1% (18)
A contracting mechanism	33.9% (41)	28.8% (15)	37.7% (26)
Community collaboration	25.5% (30)	28.8% (15)	21.7% (15)
Don't know	8.3% (10)	8.6% (3)	10.1% (7)

Given that the goods-for-services provision is only one of the several authorities that can be utilized under stewardship contracting,[3] it is interesting that agency employees see it as the most defining aspect. Perhaps this is a reflection of the fact that goods-for-services is a widely used authority. In fact, the Pinchot Institute's monitoring of the USFS pilot experience with stewardship contracting (1999-2004) consistently indicated that goods-for-services was the most commonly used authority among stewardship contracting projects nationally.[4]

Views of Stewardship Contracting Over Time

It was also deemed important to gain a sense of people's perceptions of stewardship contracting over time, particularly whether or not their views of it changed since becoming involved in a project. Overall, people's views of stewardship contracting did not change as result of project participation (see Table 2a).

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[3] Other stewardship contracting authorities include: the retention of receipts; the designation of timber for cutting by prescription or description; the awarding of contracts on a "best value" basis; multi-year contracts (including six to 10 year service contracts); offering contracts with less than full and open competition; and non-USDA administration of timber sales. (Directly quoted from the Pinchot Institute's report, "Stewardship Contracting: A Summary of Lessons Learned from the Pilot Experience," May 2006, but also outlined in: USDA Forest Service. Forest Service Handbook 2409.19 – Renewable Resources Handbook; Chapter 60 -- Stewardship Contracting. December 2005).

[4] Pinchot Institute for Conservation. "Implementation of Mulitparty Monitoring and Evaluation: Final Perspectives on the USDA Forest Service Stewardship End Results Contracting Demonstration Program. – FY 2004 Report to the USDA Forest Service." March 2005. Page 23.

Table 2a. Has your view of stewardship contracting changed since you became involved in this project? (USFS)

	Overall	Agency	Non-Agency
	N=121 people	N=52	N=69
Yes	36.4% (45)	42.3% (22)	33.3% (23)
How?			
More positive/encouraged	35.6% (16)	26.1% (6)	45.5% (10)
Less enthusiastic	31.1% (14)	39.1% (9)	18.2% (4)
Too much community involvement	11.1% (5)	21.7% (5)	4.5% (1)
Too agency driven/more collaboration needed	8.9% (4)	4.3% (1)	13.6% (3)
Other	13.3% (6)	9.1% (2)	17.4% (4)
No	60.3% (73)	55.8% (29)	63.8% (44)
No response	2.5% (3)	1.9% (1)	2.9% (2)

Interestingly, the percentage of non-agency respondents who felt this way was greater than that of agency respondents. For those whose views did change (agency and non-agency), however, most had a more negative perception of stewardship contracting. The most common reasons cited as to why people felt this way were varied and not reflective of a consistent viewpoint. They included: (1) a lack of enthusiasm; (2) frustration over an attempt to incorporate "too much community involvement;" and, (3) a feeling that the process was too agency-driven and not collaborative enough.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN STEWARDSHIP CONTRACTING

Project Initiation

Of the 51 USFS projects surveyed for this monitoring effort, more than half (28 projects) were initiated by the federal agency, and an additional 15 projects (almost 30% of the total) were jointly initiated by the agency and another entity (see Table 3).

Table 3. Who initiated the project? (USFS)

	Overall
	N=51 projects
Agency	54.9% (28)
Joint (agency/non-agency entity)	29.4% (15)
Non-agency entity	13.7% (7)
Don't know	2% (1)

These results seem to reflect a proactive approach by the USFS to get stewardship contracting projects up and running on their forests; however, they do not explain why there were so few projects initiated by non-federal agency parties. Whatever the situations are, it is important to keep these numbers in mind when assessing the corresponding involvement of non-agency stakeholders in these projects – if they were not involved in initiating the project, then their engagement relies more heavily on the efforts of the agency to pull them in.

Outreach Efforts

During the interviews, people were presented with a number of different options regarding outreach efforts (to involve non-agency entities in stewardship contracting) on the part of the USFS. Given the final numbers, it appears that multiple approaches were used in most cases (see Table 4).

Table 4. What outreach efforts are being used specifically to get people involved in the project? (USFS)

	Overall N=51 projects
Meetings	90.2% (46)
Direct Mail	88.2% (45)
Personal Contacts	86.3% (44)
Field Tours	86.3% (44)
Presentations to Existing Groups	68.6% (35)
Presentations to Organizations	62.7% (32)
Other*	49% (22)
None	5.9% (3)

*"Other" includes: radio interviews, newspapers, press releases, email, brochures/flyers, advertising, public notices/announcements.

The most common ways the agency interacted with the public were through meetings, direct mail, personal contact, and field tours. Except for direct mail, all of these approaches are in-person methods, which probably held a greater potential for inclusion than some of the mass media angles listed under "other" in Table 4.

Stakeholder Involvement

The following table (Table 5) is a compilation of participant data from both the BLM and USFS projects that were included in the first year of this programmatic monitoring survey. The reason the data are not split by federal agency is because of cross-agency participation in various stewardship contracting projects.

Table 5. Who has been involved? (USFS and BLM)

	Overall
	N=69 projects
USDA Forest Service	89.9% (62)
Project contractors	88.4% (61)
Adjacent landowners/residents	87% (60)
Local government interests	84.1% (58)
Fire interests/organizations	73.9% (51)
Environmental conservation groups	73.9% (51)
State agencies	66.7% (46)
Community business interests	65.2% (45)
Recreation interests and users	56.5% (39)
Wildlife and fisheries groups	53.6% (37)
Other federal agencies*	44.9% (31)
BLM	40.6% (28)
Educational interests	37.7% (26)
Tribal interests	36.2% (25)
Other**	26.1% (18)

*Other federal agencies mentioned: US Fish & Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA Rural Development, National Park Service, USDA Forest Products Lab, US EPA.
**Other entities mentioned: handicapped access group, local NGOs, RACs, county weed and pest district, local homeowners' association, Congressional staff, consulting forester, watershed council, lake association.

Interviewees were presented with the options listed in Table 5, but a number of additional categories of involved stakeholders emerged (see "Other federal agencies" and "Other" categories). While only 51 stewardship contracting projects occurring on USFS lands were surveyed, the agency was involved with 62 of the 69 projects surveyed in total (18 BLM projects and 51 Forest Service projects). This indicates that, when appropriate and/or necessary, the USFS is engaged in stewardship contracting projects that are taking place on BLM lands. Likewise, the BLM has been involved in projects on USFS lands (the BLM was involved in 28 of the projects surveyed). Overall, these results seem to reflect a notable amount of cross-agency collaboration occurring on stewardship contracting projects in areas where both agencies (USFS and BLM) are operating.

Beyond the federal agencies, the next most commonly involved groups were: contractors, adjacent landowners/residents, and local government interests. The large number of projects with contractors involved seems to indicate a strong interest within the contracting community to at least find out more about stewardship contracting, if not actually bid on a contract. In addition, the fact that projects are commonly engaging adjacent landowners, community residents, and local government entities reflects a notable component of *local* involvement, which is a central tenet of stewardship contracting.[5] Outside of these classes of stakeholders, projects involved a variety of different groups spanning from environmental organizations to local community businesses.

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[5] USDA Forest Service. Forest Service Handbook 2409.19 – Renewable Resources Handbook; Chapter 60 -- Stewardship Contracting. December 2005.

Scale of Involvement

Table 5a (see below) provides further definition regarding who was involved in the projects surveyed. Again, this table includes both the BLM and USFS projects. Not surprisingly, an overwhelming majority of USFS participation in projects was at the local level, as was the participation of most other involved groups.

Table 5a. What is the scale of involvment? (USFS and BLM)

	Local	Regional	State	National
USDA Forest Service (62)*	93.5%	24.2%	0	4.8%
Project contractors (61)	80.3%	24.6%	0	3.3%
Adjacent landowners/residents (60)	78.3%	10%	0	0
Local government interests (58)	84.5%	0	0	0
Fire interests/organizations (51)	70.6%	17.6%	0	0
Environmental conservation groups (51)	68.6%	45.1%	2%	3.9%
State agencies (46)	76.1%	41.3%	19.6%	0
Community business interests (45)	73.3%	6.7%	0	0
Recreation interests and users (39)	76.9%	20.5%	0	5.1%
Wildlife and fisheries groups (37)	62.2%	48.6%	0	10.8%
Other federal agencies (31)	74.2%	32.3%	0	0
BLM (28)	78.6%	10.7%	0	0
Educational interests (26)	65.4%	46.2%	0	0
Tribal interests (25)	80%	8%	0	0
Other (18)	44.4%	0	0	0

 *Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of projects with which these entities were involved.

The only interests engaging at the national level were: the USFS, some project contractors, some environmental conservation groups, some recreation interests and users, and some wildlife and fisheries groups – and the percentages operating at this level were relatively low. Notable numbers of stakeholders were involved at a regional level but very few at the state level besides state agencies.

Role of Local Community

When asked directly about the role of local communities in stewardship contracting (and presented with the options listed in Table 6), survey respondents (agency and non-agency) most commonly cited "becoming informed."[6] This result seems to indicate that the communities covered by this survey were largely in the learning stages regarding stewardship contracting. This is also supported by the second most common response of the role of local communities being that of subjects of "public outreach and education."

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[6] The data in Table 6 are presented on a project basis – therefore, if 1 out of 3 people interviewed on a project gave a certain response, then the project was credited with that situation.

Table 6. What is/was the role of the local community in the project? (USFS)

	Overall N=51 projects
Becoming informed	78.4% (40)
Public outreach and education	70.6% (36)
Planning and design	64.7% (33)
Representation of local interests	62.7% (32)
Comments and recommendations	56.9% (29)
Monitoring	56.9% (29)
Development of alternatives	52.9% (27)
Funding	51% (26)
Implementation	51% (26)
NEPA	45.1% (23)
Technical information	45.1% (23)
Other	15.7% (8)
None	13.7% (7)

However, when total numbers are considered, more than half of the USFS projects surveyed had local communities involved in a number of different ways, ranging from project design to the provision of technical information. While slightly more projects involved communities at the front end of the process in terms of project planning and design and developing alternatives, a significant number of projects also had communities providing comments and recommendations and implementing activities on the ground. Additionally, more than half of the projects surveyed received some funding from local communities.

PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT IN STEWARDSHIP CONTRACTING

Method of Engagement

When people were asked how they got involved in stewardship contracting, several responses emerged. Overall, the majority interviewed claimed their involvement was a result of their jobs, however this was more often the case for agency respondents (see Table 7). Among non-agency respondents, other common ways in which they became involved in projects were because of their role in the community or because the USFS asked them to be involved.

Table 7. How did you personally get involved? (USFS)

	Overall	Agency	Non-Agency
	N=121 people	N=52	N=69
Job	53.7% (65)	84.6% (44)	30.4% (21)
Due to role in the community	14% (17)	5.8% (3)	20.3% (14)
Initiated by agency	13.2% (16)	0	23.1% (16)
Contractor/bid on project	7.4% (9)	0	13% (9)
Initiated the project	4.1% (5)	3.9% (2)	4.3% (3)
Live here	4.1% (5)	3.9% (2)	4.3% (3)
Other	2.5% (3)	0	4.3% (3)
No answer	0.8% (1)	1.9% (1)	0

Reason for Engagement

A question closely related to "how did you get involved" is "why did you get involved," and this was also asked as part of all interviews. Again, the largest percentage of people claimed to be involved because of their jobs, particularly on the part of agency employees (see Table 7a).

Table 7a. Why did you personally get involved? (USFS)

	Overall	Agency	Non-agency
	N=121 people	N=52	N=69
Job	35.5% (43)	50%	24.6%
Live here	17.4% (21)	9.6%	23.2%
Interested in SC/collaboration	14% (17)	25%	5.8%
Fulfill role of organization	9.9% (12)	5.8%	13%
To get work done on the ground	7.4% (9)	7.7%	7.2%
Opportunities for local contractors	5% (6)	0	5%
Other	8.3% (10)	1.9%	13%
No answer	2.5% (3)	0	0

Interesting, though, is the fact that a quarter of the agency respondents reported that their involvement came about as a result of their personal interest in stewardship contracting and/or its emphasis on collaboration. Among non-agency respondents, almost equal numbers of people were involved because of their jobs as they were because they live in the area where the project was occurring.

Nature of Community Involvement

In an attempt to assess whether or not collaboration has truly been occurring with the use of stewardship contracting, survey respondents were directly asked the question, "Was community involvement collaborative?" (see Table 8).

Table 8. Is/Was community involvement in the project a collaborative effort? (USFS)

	Overall	Agency	Non-agency
	N=51 projects	N=52 people	N=66 people
Yes	41.2% (21)	59.6% (31)	66.7% (44)
No	0	40.4% (21)	33.3% (22)
Disagreement	58.8% (30)		

The results indicate that there was more often disagreement between agency and non-agency respondents than there was a definitive answer. "Disagreement" is defined as cases when not all the people interviewed in reference to a certain project had the same answer. Overall, though, the numbers demonstrate that most people felt projects were collaborative in nature (59.6% of the agency respondents and 66.7% of the non-agency respondents). However, it is interesting to note that a greater percentage of non-agency respondents reflected this viewpoint than agency respondents. Perhaps the agency was looking for greater involvement from a variety of entities.

Interviewees were also asked to characterize the involvement of the local community pertaining to the project with which they were/are engaged (see Table 8a). Most often, respondents cited that a broad spectrum of interests were included. At the same time, though, a number of scenarios depicting less than comprehensive community involvement were listed and classified as "other." These included everything from a history of discord within a community to no attempts made to involve the community.

Also of interest is the fact that there are projects that are only employing community involvement in a traditional public involvement manner, such as through the NEPA process; but, in almost as many cases, it was mentioned that the agency responded to input provided by the community (and a larger percentage of non-agency versus agency respondents reflected this sentiment). Whether or not these situations can be classified as true collaboration, though, is debatable.[7]

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[7] According to the USFS handbook (Chapter 60: Stewardship Contracting, pages 21-22), the principles of collaboration in stewardship contracting include: "identifying and involving relevant stakeholders; designing a strategy to conduct an open, inclusive and transparent process; and, planning for implementation and evaluation as part of the collaborative effort."

**Table 8a.   Please explain your answer to: Is/Was community involvement
in the project a collaborative effort? (USFS)**

	Overall	Agency	Non-agency
	N=121 people	N=52	N=69
Broad spectrum of interests included	28.1% (34)	26.9% (14)	28.9% (20)
Traditional public involvement	11.6% (14)	13.5% (7)	10.1% (7)
Agency responded to community input	9.9% (12)	3.8% (2)	14.5% (10)
Lots of outreach	5.8% (7)	3.8% (2)	7.3% (5)
Involved local people	5.8% (7)	5.8% (3)	5.8% (4)
Meetings were held	5% (6)	5.8% (3)	4.3% (3)
Not at the beginning but became so	2.5% (3)	1.9% (1)	2.8% (2)
Tried but failed	0	0	0
Other*	19.8% (24)	21.2% (11)	18.8% (13)
No response/response unrelated to the question	16.5% (20)	19.2% (2)	14.5% (10)

*"Other" includes: project too small to bother; only do collaboration during NEPA;
 no community involvement; it's required; collaboration was with professionals,
 not community; community invited but did not come; community history precluded collaboration;
 fluctuated throughout projects; community not contacted early enough.

Non-engaged Parties

When interviewees were asked if anyone was missing from the collaborative process, the most common
response overall was "no" (see Table 9). However, when the data are split along agency/non-agency
lines, it is revealed that agency personnel were more conflicted over this issue than non-agency
respondents. Among those outside the USFS, a majority did not feel that anyone was missing from the
process. Among agency respondents, though, it was almost an even split between those who felt people
were missing and those who did not. These results seem to correlate with the feelings among some USFS
respondents that community involvement may not have been truly collaborative in nature (see Table 8).

**Table 9.   Are there individuals/interests you believe should be/should have been involved in
the project that aren't/weren't? (USFS)**

	Overall	Agency	Non-agency
	N=121 people	N=52	N=69
Yes	34.7% (42)	48.1% (25)	24.6% (17)
No	47.9% (58)	46.2% (24)	55% (34)
Don't know	14.9% (18)	3.8% (2)	21.7% (15)
No answer	2.5% (3)	1.9% (1)	2.9% (2)

Those who felt that certain interests were missing most commonly cited the absence of
environmental/conservation groups (see Table 9a).[8] Also commonly noted for their absence were project
contractors and tribal interests. These results may reflect the stage of the project (in terms of contractors)
as well as the location (in terms of tribal interests).

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[8] The response data for Tables 9a and 9b were compiled into one table each for both agencies (USFS and BLM)
because only 53 people total (agency and non-agency respondents) answered this question.

Table 9a. Who are the individuals/interests that should be/should have been involved in the project that aren't/weren't? (USFS)

	Overall
	N=42 projects
Environmental/conservation groups	40% (17)
Project contractors	24% (10)
Tribal interests	14% (6)
Local government	12% (5)
Recreation interests	10% (7)
Community business interests	7% (7)
Adjacent landowners	7% (3)
Other federal agencies	5% (2)
State agencies	5% (2)
Educators	5% (2)
Wildlife groups	5% (2)
Right to access groups	5% (2)
Other*	5% (2)
USFS	2% (1)
Fire interests	2% (1)
BLM	0

*"Other" includes: grazing community, timber industry interests.

To further probe into this issue of excluded and/or absent parties, interviewees were asked why the missing entities should be included. They were presented with the options listed in Table 9b. The most commonly mentioned reasons for inclusion of missing parties by those who responded were: "to avoid misunderstanding," "because they are potentially affected," and "because they have valuable expertise to share."

Table 9b. Why do you believe they should be/should have been involved? (USFS and BLM)

	Overall
	N=53 people
To avoid misunderstanding*	56.6% (30)
Because they are potentially affected	56.6% (30)
Because they have valuable expertise to share	54.7% (29)
A need to be inclusive	37.7% (20)
A need for local knowledge	35.5% (19)
Because they use the area	28.3% (15)
Constraint to implementation*	15.1% (8)
To avoid appeals*	13.2% (7)
Other**	11.3% (6)

*29 people responded that the reasons environmental groups should be/should have been
 involved are: to avoid misunderstanding (34.5%), to avoid appeals (24%), and because
 they would otherwise be "constraints to implementation."
**"Other" includes: to get work done; increase interest in the contracting community.

More specifically, though, some respondents felt that environmental groups in particular should be involved to help avoid appeals and because they could otherwise be "constraints to implementation."

Local Benefits of Stewardship Contracting

As articulated in the USFS handbook (Chapter 60: Stewardship Contracting), the general purpose of stewardship contracting is "to achieve land management goals for National Forest System lands while meeting local and rural community needs," so interviewees were asked specifically about the local benefits that may have accrued as a result of the stewardship contracting project with which they were involved. A majority of respondents named "specific project outcomes" and "improved public trust" as the most common local benefits of stewardship contracting when presented with the options listed in Table 10. "Increased collaboration" was also cited by more than half of the people interviewed. When split along agency/non-agency lines, the results basically mirror those of the overall picture except that a significantly larger percentage of non-agency respondents versus those from the USFS claimed that increased collaboration was a notable local benefit. Among other things, this finding highlights the importance of collaboration to those outside the federal agency.

Table 10. What have been the local benefits of the project? (USFS)

	Overall	Agency	Non-agency
	N=121 people	N=52	N=69
Specific project outcomes	67.8% (82)	67.3% (35)	68.1% (47)
Improved public trust	66.9% (81)	69.2% (36)	65.2% (45)
Increased collaboration	59.5% (72)	50% (26)	66.7% (46)
Improved efficiency	43.8% (53)	36.5% (19)	49.3% (34)
Economic	43% (52)	40.4% (21)	44.9% (31)
More local jobs	44.6% (54)	36.5% (19)	50.7% (35)
More on the ground work by local contractors	48.8% (59)	36.5% (19)	58% (40)
Greater opportunity to use local contractors	47.1% (57)	42.3% (22)	50.7% (35)
Other*	9.1% (11)	7.7% (4)	10.1% (7)

*"Other" includes: specific project outcomes, experience/new skills.

Also of interest is the fact that much greater percentages of non-agency interviewees pointed to the economic benefits of stewardship contracting as having local impact, such as the wider use of local contractors and the creation of local jobs.

Benefits of Community Involvement

When people were asked specifically about the benefits of community involvement in stewardship contracting (and were presented with the options listed in Table 11) the results were mixed. Overall, respondents indicated that a broader understanding of the concept of stewardship contracting, coupled with the participation or engagement of diverse interests, has been the most common benefit of community involvement. At the same time, though, the other benefits listed were cited almost as often.

Table 11. What are/have been the benefits of community involvement in the project? (USFS)

	Overall	Agency	Non-agency
	N=121 people	N=52	N=69
Broader understanding/diverse interests	57% (69)	55.8% (29)	58% (40)
Increased opportunity for public input	54.5% (66)	53.8% (28)	55.1% (38)
Improved trust	51.2% (62)	53.8% (28)	49.3% (34)
Support for agency	50.4% (61)	61.5% (32)	43.5% (30)
Sense of ownership	46.3% (56)	50% (26)	43.5% (30)
Other	6.6% (8)	5.8% (3)	7.2% (5)

Among the agency representatives' responses, there is little distinction regarding what types of benefits might have been realized, with "support for agency" garnering only a slighter higher percentage than the others. However, it is interesting to note that less than half of the non-agency respondents claim that support for the agency is a major benefit of community involvement. In fact, their top two choices ("broader understanding/diverse interests," and "increased opportunity for public input") reflect an appreciation for the collaborative process and the engagement of parties outside the federal agency.

SUPPORT FOR STEWARDSHIP CONTRACTING

Support within the Community

Whether or not the concept behind a stewardship contracting project is accepted within a community as a good thing could have bearing on the extent and type of community involvement in the effort. Therefore, interviewees were asked for their opinions on how widely supported the project with which they were involved was within their local community. Overall, the majority of respondents inside and outside the USFS felt the projects had community support – and, in more than half the cases, the support was characterized as "wide" (see Table 12). Simultaneously, a very small number of people said that communities opposed stewardship contracting projects -- but a notable percentage of respondents claimed that communities were unaware of these efforts in some cases.

Table 12. How widely supported do you believe this project is/was in the community? (USFS)

	Overall	Agency	Non-agency
	N=121 people	N=52	N=69
Widely	52.1% (63)	50% (26)	53.6% (37)
Somewhat	23.1% (28)	15.4% (8)	29% (20)
Indifferent	6.6% (8)	13.5% (7)	1.4% (1)
Unaware	13.2% (16)	11.5% (6)	14.5% (10)
Opposed	0.8% (1)	1.9% (1)	0
Don't know	4.1% (5)	7.7% (4)	1.4% (1)

Support within the Agency

Among all respondents, there seems to be the perception that stewardship contracting projects are equally as supported by the USFS as they are by the local communities (compare Table 12 to Table 13). However, there are greater overall percentages of people claiming that the USFS was opposed to projects (when compared to the number of communities opposed to projects) in some situations. Based on the numeric results only, it is unclear why this is the case.

Table 13. How widely supported do you believe this project is/was in the agency? (USFS)

	Overall	Agency	Non-agency
	N=121 people	N=52	N=69
Widely	52.1% (63)	53.8% (28)	50.7% (35)
Somewhat	31.4% (38)	38.5% (20)	26.1% (18)
Indifferent	1.7% (2)	1.9% (1)	1.4% (1)
Unaware	2.5% (3)	1.9% (1)	2.9% (2)
Opposed	7.4% (9)	3.8% (2)	10.1% (7)
Don't know	5% (6)	0	8.7% (6)

Availability of Needed Resources

In order to assess the actual, on-the-ground support for stewardship contracting projects, people were asked: "What kinds of resources, if any, does/did community members need to facilitate their participation in the projects?" From the percentages and numbers presented in Table 14, it is clear that not everyone who was interviewed answered this question.[9] For those who did answer, though, it seems that there is/was a fairly equal need for multiple types of resources (training, in-kind, technical, and financial). In a majority of cases, people received the assistance they needed, particularly regarding the contribution of in-kind resources. However, the greatest lack seems to be in the area of training, where 25% of the 40 projects that indicated they could benefit from training did not receive it (see Table 14a for elaboration on what types of training are/were needed).[10]

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[9] Although Tables 14, 14a, and 14b do not include agency/non-agency breakdowns, the corresponding questions were asked of *all* people interviewed.

[10] While 60% of the projects that needed "other" resources did not receive them, this is a smaller number of project overall than the number that needed training and didn't receive it – hence, the mention of training as the greatest need.

Table 14. What kinds of resources does/did community members need to facilitate their participation in the projects? (USFS)*

	Needed	Received	Receieved some	Did not receive	Will need in the future
Training	78.4% (40)	62.5% (25)	0	25% (10)	12.5% (5)
In-kind	76.5% (39)	89.7% (35)	0	2.6% (1)	7.7% (3)
Technical	74.5% (38)	78.9% (30)	2.6% (1)	18.4% (7)	2.6% (1)
Financial	74.5% (38)	76.3% (29)	0	10.5% (4)	13.2% (5)
Other**	19.6% (10)	20% (2)	10% (1)	60% (6)	10% (1)
None	0	0	0	0	0

*N=51 projects

**"Other" includes: time to talk; openness to collaboration; education; paid coordinator; field tours; better communication.

Purpose of Needed Resources

Two follow-up questions were asked regarding resources: (1) For what? and (2) From whom? The answers to the first question are broken down in Table 14a. The options listed reflect the most common responses that emerged from the interviews.

Table 14a. If resources are/were needed, what are/were they needed for? (USFS)

	Financial N=38 projects	Training N=40 projects	In-Kind N=39 projects	Technical N=38 projects	Other N=10 projects
On the ground activities	42.1% (16)	7.5% (3)	30.8% (12)	5.3% (2)	0
Meetings	7.9% (3)	7.5% (3)	35.9% (14)	0	0
Technical information	0	7.5% (3)	0	31.5% (12)	0
Explain stewardship contracting/project	0	20% (8)	2.6% (1)	2.5% (1)	0
Collaboration	7.9% (3)	7.5% (3)	0	0	30% (3)
Monitoring	0	0	2.6% (1)	10.5% (4)	0
Facilitation	5.3% (2)	0	0	2.5% (1)	0
Contracting help	0	5% (2)	0	0	10% (1)
Training	0	0	0	0	20% (2)

Based on these results and the results presented in Table 14a, it seems as though financial assistance to support on-the-ground activities was one of the greatest needs. After that, people were looking for more in-kind assistance for meetings and the provision of more technical information – among other things. In terms of the training need cited above, it seems as though a greater effort needs to be made on the front end of the process to simply explain what stewardship contracting is and what a given project is all about. Simply based on the numbers, though, it is not possible to tell whether or not this particular training need exists only outside the agency or within it as well.

Provision of Needed Resources

As for the second follow-up question ("From whom?"), the results not only reflect who may have provided resources in some cases but also who is expected to provide resources for the situations in which it has been indicated that resources will be needed in the future (see Table 14b).

Table 14b. Who provided or should provide the needed resources? (USFS)

	Training N=40 projects	In-kind N=39 projects	Technical N=38 projects	Financial N=38 projects	Other N=10 projects
USFS	40% (16)	25.6% (10)	42.1% (16)	18.4% (7)	70%(7)
Nonprofits	17.5% (7)	20.5% (8)	26.3% (10)	26.3% (10)	0
State	2.5% (1)	0	5.3% (2)	7.9% (3)	10% (1)
Local government	2.5% (1)	5.1% (2)	5.3% (2)	7.9% (3)	0
Local people	0	12.8% (5)	0	0	0
Other*	0	0	0	0	0

*"Other" includes: federal government, Firewise, Universities, Resource Advisory Committees, contractors, Congress, tribes, fishing club.

Based on the results, the USFS is providing or should be providing the most resources in the realms of training, technical assistance, and "other." In the areas of in-kind and financial assistance, though, nonprofits are playing a notable role.

Repeat Participation

In an attempt to determine whether or not there is support for stewardship contracting among those who have actually been involved in projects, people were asked if they would participate in another project. Overwhelmingly, the answer was "yes" (see Table 15). The numbers for responses of "no" or "maybe" were relatively the same and very low compared with the percentages of people who would participate again. These results seem to demonstrate certain levels of commitment on the part of the USFS and its non-agency partners to actually implement stewardship contracting on the ground. Simultaneously, they seem to indicate a feeling that stewardship contracting is worth trying out.

Table 15. Based on your experience in this project, would you participate in another stewardship contracting project? (USFS)

	Overall N=121 people	Agency N=52	Non-agency N=69
Yes	90.9% (110)	90.4% (47)	91.3% (63)
No	4.1% (5)	5.8% (3)	2.9% (2)
Maybe	4.9% (6)	3.9% (2)	5.8% (4)

The reasons why people would get involved in another stewardship contracting project are varied (see Table 15a). These reasons were generated by respondents rather than provided as options during the interviews. Overall, people were most encouraged to continue their involvement in stewardship contracting because it is seen as the "best approach to getting work done." This sentiment is echoed among non-agency respondents to a similar degree as it was overall, but agency respondents seemed to

feel slightly stronger about stewardship contracting as a great tool than simply as an approach to getting work done. Within the USFS, stewardship contracting is marketed as one of several tools available for achieving various land management goals.

Table 15a. Please explain why you would/would not participate in another stewardship contracting project. (USFS)

	Overall	Agency	Non-agency
	N=121 people	N=52	N=69
It's the best approach to getting work done	20.7% (25)	15.4% (8)	24.6% (17)
It's our job/it's the way we do business	13.2% (16)	13.5% (7)	13% (9)
It's a great tool/good concept	12.4% (15	17.3% (9)	8.7% (6)
It's already doing more	10.7% (13)	15.4% (8)	7.2% (5)
Collaboration is good	8.3% (10)	1.9% (1)	13% (9)
It's a more positive way to work with communities	5% (6)	3.8% (2)	5.8% (4)

Also of interest is the fact that a much greater percentage of non-agency versus agency respondents cited "because collaboration is good" as the reason why they would participate in another stewardship contracting project. According to the interviews conducted, it seems that the agency respondents are generally more concerned with what's happening on the ground than the exact way in which this occurs.

LESSONS LEARNED

The survey concluded with two open-ended questions: one about lessons learned and one about additional comments. The enquiry about lessons learned pertained specifically to community involvement in stewardship contracting. Not everyone answered this question; however, for those that did, some of the most common responses are listed in Table 16.

Table 16. Lessons learned about community involvement (USFS)

	Overall N=90 people	Agency N=37	Non-agency N=53
Early involvement of local interests is critical	15.6% (14)	21.6% (8)	11.3% (6)
Use SC and collaboration more	8.9% (8)	0	15% (8)
Keep community more informed/better involved	7.8% (7)	5.4% (2)	9.4% (5)
Took longer than expected/more complicated	7.8% (7)	10.8% (4)	5.6% (3)
Process improved trust/trust is important	6.7% (6)	5.4% (2)	7.6% (4)
Collaboration is hard work	4.4% (4)	8.1% (3)	1.9% (1)
Importance of contractor education	4.4% (4)	8.1% (3)	1.9% (1)
Treat people fairly and be honest	4.4% (4)	8.1% (3)	1.9% (1)
Collaboration helps projects be successful	4.4% (4)	0	7.6% (4)
Importance of clear communication	3.3% (3)	0	5.6% (3)
Need for community education	3.3% (3)	2.7% (1)	3.8% (2)
Difficult when agency staff change	3.3% (3)	0	5.6% (3)
Need a neutral facilitator	3.3% (3)	5.4% (2)	1.9% (1)
Collaboration reduces conflict	3.3% (3)	2.7% (2)	1.9% (1)

Generally speaking, respondents seemed to feel that the early involvement of local interests was very important to the process of involving communities in stewardship contracting. Agency respondents identified with this sentiment slightly more strongly than non-agency respondents, but both groups cited many other lessons learned as well – including some that were not included in Table 16 in order to keep the table a manageable size. When considered in their entirety, the lessons shared by respondents reflect several key themes regarding community involvement: (1) stewardship contracting can seem complicated to those who are not that familiar with it – therefore, outreach and education at the early stages of project conception are very important; (2) honoring some of the ways in which collaboration differs from traditional public participation processes may be critical to gaining community support and involvement in a project – this includes having an appreciation for the time and effort collaboration requires and respecting community input as a genuine contribution to decisionmaking. Additionally, some non-agency respondents highlighted the disruptive effect of agency staff changes on collaboration, which ties back to feelings of trust and support associated with the process.

Additional Comments

Like the "lessons learned," the additional comments provided by respondents were fairly individualized -- but some of the more common responses are displayed in Table 17.

Table 17. Additional Comments (USFS)

	Overall N=95 people	Agency N=41	Non-agency N=54
SC is a good tool	17.9% (17)	21.9% (9)	14.8% (8)
Collaboration is critical	14.7% (14)	4.9% (2)	22.2% (12)
Contracting issues/specific conflicts	9.5% (9)	17.1% (7)	3.7% (2)
SC should be used more often	9.5% (9)	4.9% (2)	12.9% (7)
Allows work to get done that wouldn't otherwise	9.5% (9)	7.3% (3)	11.1% (6)
SC should not be forced on agency or community	7.4% (7)	4.9% (2)	9.3% (5)
Contracts are too difficult	6.3% (6)	9.8% (4)	3.7% (2)

These comments, as well as the many others received, may reflect feelings about stewardship contracting generally or may pertain to specific experiences on a project. Either way, there were both positive and negative things shared. On the positive side, a number of people interviewed expressed that stewardship contracting is a good tool and one that should be used more often; this was a sentiment that the largest percentage of agency respondents reflected. At the same time, the collaboration component of stewardship contracting was cited as critical to making it work, but a much larger percentage of non-agency versus agency respondents seemed to feel that way. On the less positive side, there were a number of people who raised issues pertinent to the stewardship *contracts* themselves – in part, that they can be difficult to put together and/or explain, and that sometimes they are not attractive to potential bidders in local communities for any number of reasons (e.g., project size, duration of contract).

REGIONAL TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Below are summaries of the sets of recommendations offered by the previously mentioned regional teams.[11] The recommendations from the Northeast/Lake States Regional Team and the Southeast Regional Team are only pertinent to the USFS and/or stewardship contracting on USFS lands since there were no BLM projects surveyed from their regions; however, the comments from the Northern Rockies, Pacific Northwest, and Southwest Regional Teams are pertinent to the USFS and the BLM, since project occurring under both ownerships were surveyed in those regions.

The teams' comments reflect *regional* issues and priorities, which often differ from region to region. Additionally, not all regional team members have the same level of hand-on experience with stewardship contracting and that, in some cases, has manifested as differences across the regions in terms of the nature of comments made.[12] At the same time, though, there are some common themes within the total collection recommendations, which seem to indicate the particular importance of certain issues at a national scale. These similarities fall largely into the following categories: the need for more information and training on stewardship contracting (both inside and outside the agency); the need for incentives (or more support) for agency personnel to use stewardship contracts and agreements to get work done on the ground; the need for a more *proactive* and constructive approach on the part of the agencies to engage interested outside parties.

Regional teams were asked to consider three main questions regarding the role of local communities in stewardship contracting: (1) What are the predominant problems in engaging communities in stewardship contracts? What are suggestions for improving the current situation? (2) What successes have emerged within this region for engaging communities in stewardship contracting? What fostered these successes? and (3) What are the major benefits of stewardship contracts to communities within this region? In large part, the regional teams generated recommendations that respond to question #1; however, consideration of questions #2 and #3 are apparent but perhaps not directly addressed.

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[11] See the "Methods" section of this report for a more in-depth discussion of the regional teams.

[12] Regional team members from the Northern Rockies, Pacific Northwest, and Southwest generally have had more direct experience with stewardship contracting than those team members from the Northeast/Lake States and the Southeast. Additionally, there were substantially more projects located in the Northern Rockies, Pacific Northwest, and Southwest regions included in the first year of the programmatic survey than from the other regions.

Northeast/Lake States Regional Team

The Northeast/Lake States Regional Team was primarily concerned with the need for more education and training (inside and outside the agency) on what stewardship contracting is since it has not been widely used in their region to date. Particularly, team members felt it would be helpful to have some case studies showing how stewardship contracting works in the East to achieve resource and community goals. In their region, there is a perception that stewardship contracting is a Western thing (marrying fuels reduction and restoration work), so case studies illustrating specifically how stewardship contracting can be used beyond the goods-for-services authority would be informative. The team members also suggested that the national forests in their region should present communities with lists of the types of projects they potentially want to collaborate on, and then sit down with them to determine which ones might work well as stewardship contracts.

Northern Rockies Regional Team

The Northern Rockies Regional Team focused many of their recommendations on the collaborative process itself. Overall, team members felt that community involvement in stewardship contracting should be part of a broader strategic plan for public engagement that is collaboratively developed and carried out on each national forest. In order to achieve this, they expressed the need for basic training in stewardship contracting both within and outside of the land management agencies. In regards to such training, the team suggested that, whenever possible, collaboration/public involvement and other stewardship contracting-related training should be open to agency partners, contractors, and other stakeholders, and their participation should be actively encouraged.

Additionally, this team highlighted the importance of certain skills to a good collaborative process, and suggested ways in which this could be capitalized upon and/or encouraged. For example, team members indicated the need to identify and engage the agencies' naturally skilled communicators and collaborators (working at various levels and in various positions) in developing appropriate training and mentoring programs to help pass their skills on to others. They also suggested that performance measures should be developed (within the agency) to encourage the development and utilization of collaborative skills. Looking outside the federal land management agencies, the team encouraged the use of capable local entities (such as local community forestry groups and watershed councils) to help lead or facilitate collaborative community involvement efforts. The team also cited communication as key to building a successful platform for collaboration. In particular, team members suggested that the agencies keep non-agency stakeholders informed of how their involvement has helped achieve projects goals (i.e., as measured through monitoring), so as to encourage their participation in future collaborative efforts.

The team also commented specifically on Resource Advisory Councils (RACs) and that, if they are reauthorized in 2007, they should be kept informed of and involved in stewardship contracting opportunities wherever appropriate because they can provide a good venue for soliciting input from a broad spectrum of stakeholder interests, and can also provide funding for stewardship contracting projects.

Pacific Northwest Regional Team

The Pacific Northwest Regional Team offered a number of different recommendations. Like the Northern Rockies Team, this team highlighted the need for the federal land management agencies to provide real incentives for staff to collaborate with outside partners, such as personnel evaluations that respond to this issue. Building on this issue of incentives and support for collaboration, team members strongly encouraged the provision of designated agency funding for public outreach and collaboration,

which could then be used to hire local outside groups to convene/facilitate the project development process (as was also suggested by the Northern Rockies Team).

In addition, this team called for the agencies to produce a 5-year action plan and hold public meetings to discuss the long-term role of stewardship contracting in order to keep partners involved over time. This recommendation is similar to one posed by the Northeast/Lake States Team aimed at encouraging proactive dialogue between agencies and communities on how stewardship contracting can implemented to further advance regional restoration goals.

More specifically, team members asked that the agencies offer stewardship contracts during the first and second quarters of the year instead of the fourth when they have to compete with timber sales for contractor attention. They also cited that it would also be helpful to give 60 rather than 30 days to respond to RFPs and to conduct pre-bid field tours and trainings with potential contractors. Additionally, they stressed the need for proposed contract activities to be matched to local contracting capacity and equipment.

Southeast Regional Team

The Southeast Regional Team's recommendations reiterate many of the suggestions offered by other regional teams. Similar to the Pacific Northwest, team members in the Southeast felt strongly that the capacities of the local industry and contracting community should be evaluated before beginning a project. Their reasoning for this is that many agency project managers have found themselves discouraged with stewardship contracting because they attempted projects too large and/or complex for the capacities of the industry and the national forest. The team also highlighted the need for dedicated funding for stewardship contracting, even if it is promoted throughout the agencies as a "tool" (rather than a program).

More specifically, this team also commented on some of the conditions particular to their region. Team members cited that a notable trend in the Southeast region is the rising leadership of private non-profit organizations -- representing both conservation and industry – who are stepping up to fill needed broker/facilitation type roles. They also discussed the fact existing disagreement between representatives of various environmental groups and agency resource manager over how to address some of the significant forest health issues facing the region (e.g., gypsy moth, hemlock and oak die-off) presents an opportunity for dialogue and collaboration in the realm of stewardship contracting.

Southwest Regional Team

Like several of the other regional teams, the Southwest Regional Team felt that the land management agencies should start with small projects, based on local industry capacity and the level of willingness within the agency to make stewardship contracting happen. According to team members, in their region, the most significant barrier to the expanded use of stewardship contracting is the lack of the business components that make up a viable timber industry. In a similar vein, the team stressed that local businesses bidding on stewardship contracts would like to see more contracts that extend into the 5-10 year threshold in order to feel more confident regarding product markets and to build good employee relationships. Stewardship contracting in this region hinges on timber value being traded for services, and the current value of the small diameter timber being removed through stewardship contracting remains low.

In terms of collaboration, team members referenced the importance of strong leadership in this area within the agencies, as well as significant non-agency support. Regarding non-agency support, this region has seen a number of businesses or other type of organizations form specifically to work along-

side the agency in developing and/or implementing a project, and this turned out to be very helpful to the process of achieving project goals.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

This first year of the programmatic monitoring survey of the role of communities in stewardship contracting projects has yielded some interesting results, but whether or not these results are indicative of any overall trends can only be assessed after comparison to the monitoring results over the next five years.

Below is a breakdown of some of the overall results (general agency and non-agency responses) that speak particularly to the role of communities in USFS stewardship contracting projects:

Stakeholder Involvement
- Most projects were initiated by the agency.
- The agency is using a number of different outreach methods to inform and/or engage communities in regards to stewardship contracting (methods include: meetings, direct mail, personal contact, and field tours).
- Many of the projects involved one or more of the following stakeholder groups: USFS, project contractors, adjacent landowners/residents, local government interests, fire interests/organizations, environmental conservation groups, state agencies, community business interests, recreation interests/users, wildlife and fisheries groups.
- Communities are most often involved at the stage of becoming informed about stewardship contracting, but more than 50% of the projects surveyed also had community involvement in project planning and design and monitoring, too.
- The large majority of agency staff are involved in stewardship contracting because of their jobs, but the reasons why communities are involved are more varied – including because they live in the project area and/or because the agency asked them to be involved.

Nature of Collaboration
- There is more often disagreement than agreement between agency and non-agency respondents over whether or not community involvement in a project was collaborative.
  - For those who felt that involvement was collaborative, the most commonly cited reason for feeling this way was because a broad spectrum of interests was included.
- A slight majority of respondents felt that no one had been excluded or missing from the project.
  - Those who did feel that parties were missing most often cited the following reasons for why missing parties should be included: to avoid misunderstanding, because they are potentially affected, and/or because they have valuable expertise to share.

Benefits of Projects and Community Involvement
- The most commonly cited local benefits of projects were: specific project outcomes (often ecologically-related) and improved public trust, followed by increased collaboration.
- The most commonly cited benefit of community involvement was a broader understanding among a diversity of interests (but agency respondents more strongly supported this sentiment than non-agency respondents).

Support for Projects
- Overall, communities and the agency have been supportive of projects.
- There is a need for a variety of resources (technical, financial, in-kind, training) to facilitate community involvement in projects. The greatest need seems to be for training, particularly in the realm of explaining stewardship contracting -- but another great need is for financial assistance to help with the accomplishment of on-the-ground activities.
- Overwhelmingly, people said they would participate in another project, and the most common reason for this was because stewardship contracting is seen as one of the best way to get work done on the ground.

As the number of stewardship contracting projects on national forests continues to increase over time, hopefully the strength of the collaborative efforts upon which these projects are supposed to rely will also increase. Progress in this area would involve any number of things, including: more engaging, upfront, and inclusive outreach efforts on the part of the federal agencies; greater involvement of non-agency interests in all aspects of projects – from project design to monitoring; better support for community involvement (in terms of training, financial and technical assistance, etc.); and the generation of truly meaningful and measurable benefits (related to process and outcomes) for all parties involved.