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**Programmatic Monitoring of the Role Local Communities  
Play in Developing Stewardship Contracts**

**FY 2007 Report to the USDA Forest Service**

**January 2008**

*Leadership in Forest Conservation Thought, Policy and Action*



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**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.

For more information on the Pinchot Institute for Conservation, visit [www.pinchot.org](http://www.pinchot.org).

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Rural communities—particularly in the western United States—have long relied on economic activity generated by natural resources on nearby federal lands. Over the past two and a half decades, a number of issues—including protection for endangered species and old-growth forests—have necessitated decreases in wood production and other economic uses on National Forest System lands. In many cases, decreases in forest management and stewardship activities have contributed to forest health issues including high risk of disease and insect outbreaks, catastrophic fire and—in some cases—loss of key habitat features for certain endangered species. Stewardship and ecosystem restoration activities were made more difficult by limitations in the authority of federal land management agencies to contract for land management services outside the context of a timber sale.

Congress authorized the USDA Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to enter into stewardship contracts designed to achieve land management goals while meeting the needs of rural, forest-dependent communities. This was done on a pilot basis starting in 1998 until long-term authority for stewardship contracting was granted in 2003. At that time, Congress authorized stewardship contracting through September 2013 and provided the agencies contractual flexibility to accomplish needed ecosystem restoration activities by allowing:

- ☞ The exchange of goods for services;
- ☞ The retention of receipts;
- ☞ Designation of trees to be removed or retained by prescription or description;
- ☞ The awarding of contracts on a “best value” basis;
- ☞ Agencies to award contracts which do not exceed 10 years in duration;
- ☞ Offering contracts with less than full and open competition

As part of granting the above stewardship contracting authorities, Congress required both agencies to report on the role of local communities, cooperating local, state and/or tribal governments, and any other interested outside parties in the development of stewardship contracts. Since 2005, the agencies have looked to the Pinchot Institute to facilitate the programmatic-level review incorporating a diversity of interests in local communities at the regional and national levels. Past programmatic monitoring efforts have shown that the USFS and its external partners were building their understanding of stewardship contracting and its authorities. The collaborative process was perceived by some to require significant amounts of time and energy, but frequently resulted in benefits to the forest (e.g., fuel reduction and restoration), agency (e.g., improved public trust), and local community (e.g., greater opportunity to use local contractors). In most cases, the agency and its external participants expressed a strong interest in collaborating on future projects conducted under the stewardship contracting authorities if provided the opportunity.

This report reflects results from the FY 2007 multi-party monitoring effort designed to fulfill the Congressional mandate to monitor the role local communities play in the development of stewardship agreements or contract plans.

## 2.0 METHODS

The Pinchot Institute worked closely with four regional partner organizations to conduct telephone interviews, facilitate regional team meetings and synthesize collected data as part of the annual, programmatic-level review of the role local communities play in the development of stewardship contract or agreement plans. The four partner organizations included:

- *Flathead Economic Policy Center* (Carol Daly)
- *Michigan State University* (Maureen McDonough)
- *Watershed Research and Training Center* (Nick Goulette, Lynn Jungwirth, Rosalyn Jungwirth)
- *West 65, Inc.* (Carla Harper)

### 2.1 Telephone Survey

A telephone survey of Forest Service personnel, community members and local contractors was conducted to determine the extent to which local communities were involved in the development of stewardship contracts. To complete the national-level monitoring effort, the Forest Service Washington Office provided a list of authorized stewardship contracts on National Forest System (NFS) lands. From this list, 25% of stewardship contracting projects in each of five regions were selected using a stratified random sampling protocol set forth by Michigan State University. The five defined regions of the United States included:

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

A questionnaire was developed collaboratively between the Pinchot Institute and its partners, the Forest Service and BLM in December 2005 and was used to collect all data relevant to the programmatic monitoring effort (See Appendix A). As interviews were completed, resulting data was compiled into uniform reports and shared with Michigan State University (MSU). MSU coded all questions and responses for applications in a software program used for quantitative and qualitative analyses. MSU compiled the summarized results from these analyses to the Pinchot Institute for regional and national level review.

### 2.2 Response Rate

Michigan State University's sampling protocol identified a total of 58 Forest Service projects—across all regions—for inclusion in this year's programmatic monitoring effort. For each project, the agency project manager and two external participants were to be interviewed. Agency project managers for each selected project were asked to provide a comprehensive list of community members and contractors involved in the project. From the project manager's list, the Pinchot Institute randomly selected two external participants to interview. This resulted in a total of 174 potential interviewees (58 projects x 3 interviewees per project). A total of 125 agency personnel and non-agency partners participated in the survey resulting in a 72% response rate.

## 2.3 Regional Vetting Analysis

In granting long-term authority to the Forest Service and the BLM to enter into stewardship contracts or agreements, Congress directed both agencies to include any cooperating county, state, federal or tribal governments—along with any other interested individuals—in a multiparty monitoring and evaluation process of stewardship projects. To meet this mandate, the Pinchot Institute and its partners organized, convened and facilitated five separate regional team meetings which included representatives from the Forest Service, BLM, forest products industry, research and higher education, state, county and tribal governments, land trusts, environmental and conservation organizations and many others.

The dates and locations of the regional team meetings included:

- Northeast/Lake States Regional Team meeting: November 7, 2007, Washington, D.C.
- Northern Rockies Regional Team meeting: October 24, 2007, Missoula, MT.
- Pacific Northwest Regional Team meeting: December 4, 2007, Portland, OR.
- Southeast Regional Team meeting: September 18, 2007, Tuscaloosa, AL.
- Southwest Regional Team meeting: October 10, 2007, Boulder, CO.

The regional teams were responsible for: synthesizing regional data provided by MSU, analyzing the effects of regional conditions on the success and outcome of stewardship projects, exchanging any lessons learned in the region, and highlighting the benefits and obstacles of engaging communities in stewardship contracts in their region.

## 3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Forest Service Handbook (Chapter 60) describes the general purpose of stewardship contracting as a tool “*to achieve land management goals for National Forest System lands while meeting local and rural community needs.*” Better understanding local needs often involves intensive outreach and engagement efforts by the agency. Survey participants provided insight into the level of community involvement in the development of stewardship contracts or agreements.

### 3.1 Survey Results

#### 3.1.1 Perceptions of Stewardship Contracting

Respondents were asked to explain stewardship contracting in their own terms. Many (44%) viewed it as a tool to help accomplish more work on-the-ground (Table 1). Agency respondents were more likely than non-agency respondents to view stewardship contracting as a way to exchange goods for services. Goods-for-services is one of several authorities extended to the Forest Service and BLM under Section 347 of the FY 1999 Omnibus Appropriations Act (P.L. 105-277). Non-agency respondents appeared more likely than agency respondents to highlight stewardship contracting as a way to get work done on-the-ground. Approximately one-quarter of non-agency partners also defined stewardship contracting based on its ability to provide benefits to the local community.

*“It’s an excellent tool that we can use to include stakeholders in our process and it allows us to get the project that bests fits the ground and you can’t ask for more than that from a program”*

Table 1. Respondents’ definitions of stewardship contracting.

<b>Definition</b>	<b>Total Respondents (n=125)</b>	<b>Agency Respondents (n=58)</b>	<b>Non-agency Respondents (n=67)</b>
Getting work done on the ground	44.0% (55)	39.7% (23)	47.8% (32)
A new contracting mechanism	26.4% (33)	22.4% (13)	29.9% (20)
Goods for services	24.8% (31)	55.2% (32)	29.9% (20)
Community benefits	22.4% (28)	18.9% (11)	25.4% (17)
Other	1.6% (2)	3.5% (2)	0.0%
No answer	8.8% (11)	3.5% (2)	13.4% (9)

\*Respondents were allowed to provide more than one response.

Over 60% of all respondents indicated their view of stewardship contracting did not change as a result of their participation in a project (Table 2). Agency personnel were more likely to have changed their opinion than non-agency participants. Nearly 45% of Forest Service respondents—as compared to 16% of non-agency participants—indicated their view had changed after participating in a stewardship contracting project. Three-quarters of non-agency respondents indicated their view was similar both before and after their participation in the stewardship contracting project.

Table 2. Changed views of stewardship contracting since involvement in project.

<b>Changed views</b>	<b>Total Respondents (n=125)</b>	<b>Agency Respondents (n=58)</b>	<b>Non-agency Respondents (n=67)</b>
No	63.2% (79)	51.7% (30)	73.2% (49)
Yes	29.6% (37)	44.8% (26)	16.4% (11)
Maybe	3.2% (4)	1.7% (1)	4.5% (3)
Don’t know	4.0% (5)	1.7% (1)	5.9% (4)

Thirty percent of all respondents indicated their view had changed as a result of their participation in a project. Thirty-seven respondents (n=37) further defined how their views had changed. For some, their views had become more positive and included:

- ☞ A better understanding of stewardship contracts (21.6%);
- ☞ More encouraged by the tool’s potential (21.6%); and
- ☞ The tool’s ability to facilitate more collaboration (8.1%);

Others’ views had become more negative with some respondents indicating stewardship contracts make the work of the Forest Service more complicated (18.9%) and that they were overall less optimistic (5.4%).

*“ In essence, the implementation is more difficult than you would anticipate from the conceptual”*

### **3.1.2 Local Community Involvement in Stewardship Contracting**

#### **Project Initiation**

Participants expressed differing views on whether the agency or an external organization had initiated a given stewardship contracting project. In over half the total responses, the Forest

Service initiated the stewardship contracting projects (Table 3). Joint initiation was also common in many projects (38%).

Table 3. Entity which initiated the stewardship contracting project.

<b>Project initiator</b>	<b>Total Respondents (n=125)</b>	<b>Agency Respondents (n=58)</b>	<b>Non-agency Respondents (n=67)</b>
Agency	52.0% (65)	67.2% (39)	38.8% (26)
Non-agency	4.8% (6)	5.2% (3)	4.5% (3)
Joint	37.6% (47)	24.1% (14)	49.3% (33)
Don't know	4.8% (6)	3.4% (2)	5.9% (4)

In some instances, there was disagreement as to which entity initiated the project. Agency and non-agency respondents involved in 21 separate projects disagreed which entity initiated the project. Of the remaining 37 projects, there was agreement on the following: 1.) the USFS initiated the project (25 projects); 2.) the project was jointly initiated (11 projects); and 3.) a non-agency entity initiated the project (1 project).

### **Outreach Efforts**

The agency employed a number of outreach methods to garner participation in stewardship contracting projects. The most common included personal contacts, traditional public meetings, field tours and direct mail (Table 4). Other methods used in over half the projects included collaborative meetings, emails, presentations to existing community groups and the media.

Table 4. Outreach methods used to involve local communities in stewardship contracting projects (n=58).\*

<b>Method of Outreach</b>	<b>%</b>
Personal contact	88.0
Traditional public meetings	81.0
Field tours	81.0
Direct mail	79.3
Collaborative process meetings	67.2
Email	56.9
Presentations to existing community groups	55.2
Media	51.7
Presentations to other organizations	44.8
Other (e.g., workshops, open houses, training)	12.1

\*Respondents were allowed to provide more than one response.

### **Stakeholder Involvement**

Survey respondents were asked to indicate which entities participated in their stewardship contracting project. Participants in most stewardship contracting projects (greater than 75%) include the USFS, environmental organizations, contractors, state agencies and local government interests (Table 5). Most of these participating entities were organized at the local level. Primary participants involved in at least half of the surveyed projects included local business interests, landowners, wildlife and fisheries groups and fire interests.

Table 5. Participating entities and scale of involvement in stewardship contracting projects.\*

Participating Entities	%	-----Scale of Involvement-----			
		% Local	% State	% Regional	% National
USFS (n=58)	100	100	8.6	34.5	10.3
Environmental interests (n=46)	79.3	84.8	34.8	41.3	10.9
Contractors (n=45)	77.6	93.3	11.1	16.6	---
State agencies (n=44)	75.7	90.9	43.2	11.4	---
Local government (n=44)	75.7	100	2.3	2.3	---
Community business (n=40)	69.0	100	7.5	12.5	---
Landowners (n=38)	60.3	100	2.6	2.6	2.6
Wildlife and fisheries (n=32)	55.2	78.1	28.1	18.8	9.4
Fire interests (n=29)	50.0	93.1	24.1	20.7	---
Education interests (n=24)	41.4	75.0	29.2	12.5	4.2
Recreation interests (n=22)	37.9	90.9	54.5	22.7	4.6
Tribal interests (n=21)	36.2	95.2	9.5	4.8	---
Other federal agencies (n=19)	32.8	68.4	47.3	26.3	---
BLM (n=11)	18.9	81.8	9.1	18.2	---
Right to access groups (n=10)	17.2	90.0	20.0	---	---
Other (n=21)	36.2	71.4	33.3	14.3	4.8

\*Respondents were allowed to provide more than one response.

State-level organizations involved in stewardship contracting projects primarily included recreational, environmental and educational interests, state and federal agencies and others. Regional organizations often included environmental interests, the USFS Regional Office and other federal agencies. National representation came from the USFS, environmental interests and wildlife and fisheries groups among others.

Other participants named by the respondents—but not listed on the questionnaire—included watershed councils, state forestry associations, energy, timber, mining and grazing interests, local land trusts, Resource Advisory Councils and soil and water conservation districts.

### **Role of Local Communities**

Survey participants were asked to provide their thoughts on the role the local community played in the stewardship contracting project. As part of this question, respondents were to explain their definition of “local community.” While their definitions were broad, respondents most often understood the local community to be the *counties* surrounding the National Forest System (Table 6). One in five agency and non-agency respondents defined the local community as the *communities or towns* that are situated within or near National Forest System lands.

Table 6. Respondent definitions of “local” community.\*

<b>Definition of “local” community</b>	<b>Total Respondents (n=125)</b>	<b>Agency Respondents (n=58)</b>	<b>Non-agency Respondents (n=67)</b>
Counties/parishes around forest	37.6% (47)	43.1% (25)	32.8% (22)
Communities/towns around forest	20.0% (25)	20.7% (12)	19.4% (13)
Whole state/large region of state	10.4% (13)	8.6% (5)	11.9% (8)
Adjacent landowners/neighbors	8.0% (10)	5.2% (3)	10.4% (7)
Watershed/valley	5.6% (7)	3.5% (2)	7.5% (5)
Forest users	4.8% (6)	1.7% (1)	7.5% (5)
No answer	12.8% (16)	20.7% (12)	6.0% (4)

\*Respondents were allowed to provide more than one response.

Most (greater than 75%) suggested the local community’s role included providing comments and recommendations, becoming informed, and representing concerned or affected local interests (Table 7). A majority of respondents suggested the community’s responsibilities also included: participating in the planning and design of the project, monitoring project results, and providing outreach, education and technical assistance.

Table 7. Role of local communities in stewardship contracting projects (n=58 projects).\*

<b>Role of local community</b>	<b>%</b>
Comments and recommendations	89.7
Becoming informed	82.7
Representation	75.9
Planning and design	65.5
Monitoring	56.9
Public outreach and education	55.2
Provision of technical information	50.0
Development of alternatives	46.6
Implementation	44.8
Funding	34.5
NEPA analysis	27.6
Other	3.5

\*Respondents were allowed to provide more than one response.

### 3.1.3. Personal Involvement in Stewardship Contracting

#### **Circumstances Surrounding Participation**

Survey participants explained the circumstances leading to their participation in a stewardship contracting project. In many cases (48%) respondents’ involvement was part of their job responsibilities (Table 8). This was more true among agency (66%) than non-agency (33%) respondents. Agency personnel were more often involved as a result of initiating the stewardship contracting project (22%) than non-agency participants (6%). Non-agency participants were more often involved as a result of bidding on the contract (15%) or due to their role in the community (9%).

Table 8. How respondents personally first became involved in stewardship contracting projects.

<b>How participants become involved in projects.</b>	<b>Total Respondents (n=125)</b>	<b>Agency Respondents (n=58)</b>	<b>Non-agency Respondents (n=67)</b>
Part of their job	48.0% (60)	65.6% (38)	32.8% (22)
Initiated the project	13.6% (17)	22.4% (13)	6.0% (4)
Bid on the project	8.0% (10)	0%	14.9% (10)
Previous experience	5.6% (7)	6.9% (4)	4.5% (3)
Due to role in the community	5.6% (7)	1.7% (1)	9.0% (6)
Live near project	4.0% (5)	0%	7.5% (5)

### **Reasons for Engagement**

Circumstances may have led some survey respondents to take part in stewardship contracting projects, but participants also had their own personal reasons to participate. Agency respondents were often involved because it was part of their job responsibilities (Table 9). Others—including 31% of non-agency respondents—participated because of their interest in accomplishing more work on-the-ground. Nearly one-fifth of the agency respondents were involved as a result of their interest in using stewardship contracting. Non-agency respondents were more likely to participate because they live near the project.

Table 9. Reasons why respondents decide to be involved in stewardship contracting projects.

<b>Reasons why participants become involved in projects.</b>	<b>Total Respondents (n=125)</b>	<b>Agency Respondents (n=58)</b>	<b>Non-agency Respondents (n=67)</b>
Part of their job	40.0% (50)	60.3% (35)	22.4% (15)
To get work done	23.2% (29)	13.7% (8)	31.3 (21)
Interested in using Stewardship Contracts	12.0% (15)	19.0% (11)	6.0% (4)
Live near project	8.0% (10)	0%	16.4% (10)
Organizational role	4.0% (5)	0%	7.5% (5)
Opportunity for small contractor	2.4% (3)	0%	2.4% (3)
Other	4.8% (6)	3.5% (2)	6.0% (4)
No answer	5.6% (7)	3.5% (2)	7.5% (5)

## **3.1.4 The Collaborative Process in Stewardship Contracting**

### **Nature of Community Involvement**

Respondents were asked to rate the degree to which community involvement in their stewardship contracting project was collaborative. As part of this question, participants were to provide interviewers with their own definition of “collaboration.” For many (45%), collaboration meant working with others while one-quarter view it as achieving a common goal (Table 10). Some view collaboration as an opportunity to gather and provide input into land management decisions. Only a few both inside and outside the agency indicated there was no need to collaborate.

Table 10. Respondent definition of collaboration.\*

<b>Definition of Collaboration</b>	<b>Total Respondents (n=125)</b>	<b>Agency Respondents (n=58)</b>	<b>Non-agency Respondents (n=67)</b>
Working with others	44.8% (56)	41.4% (24)	42.3% (31)
Achieving a common goal	24.8% (31)	24.1% (14)	25.4% (17)
Commenting/gathering input	14.4% (18)	17.2% (10)	11.9% (8)
Level of public involvement/decision making	11.2% (14)	12.1% (7)	10.4% (7)
Diverse people	9.6% (12)	12.1% (7)	7.5% (5)
No need to collaborate/people not interested	5.6% (7)	8.6% (5)	3.0% (2)
Talking	4.8% (6)	3.5% (2)	5.9% (4)
No answer	15.2% (19)	13.8% (8)	16.4% (11)

\*Participants were allowed to provide more than one response.

Survey participants were asked to rate whether community involvement was collaborative on a five-point scale (1=Very collaborative; 5=Not at all collaborative). Over 40% of all participants rated the development of their stewardship contracting project as very collaborative in nature (Table 11). Over 10% of agency and non-agency participants were unsure whether the process was collaborative suggesting some unfamiliarity remains with collaborative decision-making principles.

*“I have a hard time claiming it was a true collaborative effort. There was a significant amount of involvement but in my mind collaboration would be the Forest Service sitting at the table as one player along with everyone else trying to hammer out the issues. It was more an intensive public involvement effort.”*

*“We need to continue to work on what collaboration is and using it more frequently as a tool.”*

Table 11. Degree to which community involvement in stewardship contracting is collaborative.

<b>Degree of Collaboration</b>	<b>Total Respondents (n=125)</b>	<b>Agency Respondents (n=58)</b>	<b>Non-agency Respondents (n=67)</b>
Very collaborative	43.2% (54)	39.7% (23)	38.8% (31)
Somewhat collaborative	36.0% (45)	39.7% (23)	32.8% (22)
Not at all collaborative	7.2% (9)	8.6% (5)	6.0% (4)
Don't know	13.6% (17)	12.1% (7)	14.9% (10)
Mean*	2.09	2.16	2.04

\*Responses based on a five point scale: 1=Very collaborative, 5=Not at all collaborative.

### **Non-Engaged Parties**

Table 11 (above) suggests that many survey participants believed the development of their stewardship contracting project was somewhat to very collaborative in nature (mean=2.09). While the process may have been perceived as collaborative, it is important to know if respondents believed there were interests missing from the collaborative process. According to many respondents (60%), all necessary groups were part of the collaborative process (Table 12). According to agency respondents nearly one-third of the projects had groups missing. Others were uncertain whether any interests were left out of the collaborative process.

Table 12. Groups missing from the collaborative process.

<b>Were groups missing from the collaborative process?</b>	<b>Total Respondents (n=125)</b>	<b>Agency Respondents (n=58)</b>	<b>Non-agency Respondents (n=67)</b>
Yes	25.6% (32)	32.8% (19)	19.4% (13)
No	59.2% (74)	55.2% (32)	62.7% (42)
Don't know	15.2% (19)	12.1% (7)	17.9% (12)

Twenty-five percent of all participants indicated groups were missing from the collaborative process (Table 12). These respondents were asked to provide the types of groups they believed were absent. The most common groups believed to be left out of discussions were environmental interests (Table 13). Other common groups missing from the process included recreational groups, local, state and tribal governments, and contractors.

Table 13. Types of groups missing from the collaborative process (n=32).\*

<b>Groups missing from the collaborative process</b>	<b>%</b>
Environmental	31.3
Recreation	18.8
State agencies	18.8
Local government	15.6
Tribal	15.6
Contractors	15.6
Community business	9.4
Wildlife	9.4
Fire	6.3
Landowners	6.3
Other	15.6

\*Participants were allowed to provide more than one response.

Survey participants who indicated groups were missing from the collaborative process offered reasons all parties should be included in the collaborative process. Table 14 shows that respondents believe involving all interests in the development of stewardship contracts will help to avoid misunderstanding (72%) or project appeals (63%). Over half suggested that including all parties will help prevent losing valuable expertise or leaving out those who are potentially affected.

Table 14. Reasons all parties should be involved in the collaborative process (n=32).\*

<b>Reason all groups should be involved</b>	<b>%</b>
To avoid misunderstanding	71.9
To avoid appeals	62.5
Valuable expertise	56.3
Potentially affected	56.3
Because they are users	37.5
Local knowledge	31.3
Constraint to implementation	12.5
Inclusive	12.5

\*Participants were allowed to provide more than one response.

### **Resources Needed to Participate**

Forty of the 58 surveyed projects (69%) indicated additional resources were needed to facilitate community participation in stewardship contracting projects. Survey participants provided insight into the types of assistance needed and whether it was received (Table 15). The greatest need was for financial assistance (65%). Among those needing financial support, 65% were able to secure the funds necessary to participate. Participants also indicated technical assistance would help facilitate their participation. This information was provided in 60% of the cases where it was needed. Training and in-kind donations were often needed and—in many cases—received.

Table 15. Needed resources by community members to facilitate their participation in projects.

<b>Assistance</b>	<b>Needed (n=40)</b>	<b>Received*</b>
Financial	65.0% (26)	65.4% (17)
Technical	42.5% (17)	58.8% (10)
Training	32.5% (13)	69.2% (9)
In-kind	27.5% (11)	90.1% (10)
Other	15.0% (6)	83.3% (5)

\* Percentages calculated using: (# who received assistance) / (# who needed assistance).

### **3.1.5 Local Benefits of Stewardship Contracting Projects**

Survey participants were asked to rate on a five point scale how important various benefits resulting from stewardship contracting projects have been to their local community. As many as 65% identified accomplishing specific project outcomes—such as forest restoration, fuels reduction and wildlife habitat improvements—as having high importance (Table 16). The ability to use local contractors, accomplish more on-the-ground work, increase collaboration and improve public trust were all regarded as important benefits of stewardship contracting. A number of respondents were uncertain of the local benefits resulting from the stewardship contracting project in which they were a part.

Table 16. Importance of local benefits to local communities resulting from stewardship contracting projects.\*

<b>Benefits to local communities from stewardship contracts</b>	<b>High Importance</b>	<b>Medium Importance</b>	<b>Low Importance</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Specific project outcomes (n=93)	64.8% (81)	5.6% (7)	4.0% (5)	25.6% (32)	1.55
Ability to use local contractors (n=105)	57.6% (72)	12.8% (16)	13.6% (17)	16.0% (20)	2.23
More on the ground work (n=103)	52.8% (66)	15.2% (19)	14.4% (18)	17.6% (22)	2.28
Increased collaboration (n=105)	54.4% (68)	14.4% (18)	15.2% (19)	16.0% (20)	2.29
Improved public trust (n=99)	51.2% (64)	12.8% (16)	15.2% (19)	20.8% (26)	2.33
Other economic benefits (n=95)	40.8% (51)	15.2% (19)	20.0% (25)	24.0% (30)	2.57
Efficiency (n=88)	36.0% (45)	12.0% (15)	22.4% (28)	29.6% (37)	2.70
More local jobs (n=105)	41.6% (52)	17.6% (22)	24.8% (31)	16.0% (20)	3.08

\*Responses based on a five point scale: 1=Very high importance, 5=Very low importance.

Accomplishing specific project outcomes was often a benefit to the resource, but stewardship contracting frequently provides benefits to local communities as well. Survey participants were asked to comment on the importance of local benefits resulting from community involvement in stewardship contracting projects. Over half of survey respondents indicated an improved sense of project ownership was of high importance (Table 17). Other highly rated benefits from

community involvement included an increased opportunity for public input (mean=2.25), increased support for the agency (mean=2.26), and improved public trust (mean=2.30).

Table 17. Importance of local benefits resulting from community involvement in stewardship contracting projects.\*

<b>Benefits of community involvement</b>	<b>High Importance</b>	<b>Medium Importance</b>	<b>Low Importance</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Project ownership (n=95)	50.4% (63)	11.2% (14)	14.4% (18)	24.0% (30)	2.24
Public input (n=100)	52.8% (66)	11.2% (14)	16.0% (20)	20.0% (25)	2.25
Support for the agency (n=99)	52.8% (66)	10.4% (13)	16.0% (20)	20.8% (26)	2.26
Improved trust (n=99)	51.2% (64)	12.0% (15)	16.0% (20)	20.8% (26)	2.30
Diverse interests (n=101)	52% (65)	12.8% (16)	16.0% (20)	19.2% (24)	2.35

\*Responses based on a five point scale: 1=Very high importance, 5=Very low importance.

### 3.1.6 Support for Stewardship Contracting

Survey participants provided information on their level of support for stewardship contracting projects in their communities. In very few cases did respondents indicate their local communities were opposed to the stewardship contracting project (Table 18). In fact, over 80% of the projects were somewhat to widely supported. There were no significant differences between agency and non-agency participants in their responses.

Table 18. Support for stewardship contracting projects in local communities.

<b>Level of support</b>	<b>Total Respondents (n=125)</b>	<b>Agency Respondents (n=58)</b>	<b>Non-agency Respondents (n=67)</b>
Widely	59.2% (74)	62.1% (36)	56.7% (38)
Somewhat	22.4% (28)	24.1% (14)	20.9% (14)
Indifferent	12.8% (16)	12.1% (7)	13.4% (9)
Opposed	<1%	0%	1.5% (1)
Don't know	4.8% (6)	1.7% (1)	7.5% (5)

\*Responses based on a five point scale: 1=Widely supported, 5=Opposed.

Survey participants were also asked whether the same support for projects was found within the agency. Table 19 suggests that over 85% of the projects were somewhat to widely supported within the USFS according to both agency and non-agency respondents. While there were no agency respondents who expressed a perceived lack of support for projects, 12% of non-agency respondents suggested there was opposition.

Table 19. Support for stewardship contracting projects in the agency.

<b>Level of support</b>	<b>Total Respondents (n=125)</b>	<b>Agency Respondents (n=58)</b>	<b>Non-agency Respondents (n=67)</b>
Widely	55.2% (69)	53.4% (31)	56.7% (38)
Somewhat	32.0% (40)	36.2% (21)	28.4% (19)
Indifferent	3.2% (4)	3.5% (2)	3.0% (2)
Opposed	6.4% (8)	0%	11.9% (8)
Don't know	<1%	1.7% (1)	0%

\*Responses based on a five point scale: 1=Widely supported, 5=Opposed.

### 3.1.7 Lessons Learned Among Participants in Stewardship Contracts

Survey participants were provided an opportunity to share open-ended responses regarding any lessons they learned about community involvement during the development of their stewardship contracting project. Forty-one participants provided feedback and their responses were coded. Some of the common lessons learned included:

- ☞ The process of developing a stewardship contract took longer than expected and is often more complicated than other existing contracting mechanisms.
- ☞ Early and continuous involvement of all interests is critical.
- ☞ Collaborating is often difficult and requires additional time and financial resources, but helps reduce conflict and make projects successful.
- ☞ The use of a professional, neutral facilitator and clear communication among participants is essential during collaboration.

*“ I like the opportunity to collaborate with diverse groups. There’s a lot of good ways to get jobs done. If we got more diverse ideas, it would be useful.”*

*“ We involved just about everyone that was there and wanted to be involved. We even involved some people who didn’t want to be involved. They just got sucked into this thing, you know.”*

Respondents were also asked whether they would participate in another stewardship contracting project if given an opportunity. Over 80% of respondents indicated they would (Table 20). There were no significant differences between agency and non-agency respondents’ interest in developing another stewardship contract.

Table 20. Respondent interest in participating in another stewardship contracting project.

<b>Interest in participating in another project</b>	<b>Total Respondents (n=125)</b>	<b>Agency Respondents (n=58)</b>	<b>Non-agency Respondents (n=67)</b>
Yes	82.4% (103)	82.8% (48)	82.1% (55)
No	8.0% (10)	10.3% (6)	6.0% (4)
Maybe	9.6% (12)	6.9% (4)	11.9% (8)

Survey participants were asked to provide the reasons they would (or would not) be involved in another stewardship contracting project. Most often, respondents believed it was a great tool and the best approach to get work done (Table 21). Non-agency respondents more often suggested it was the best approach to accomplish work on-the-ground. As a whole, agency and non-agency participants seem to share similar reasons to participate in additional projects.

*“ It is a tremendous tool that Congress has afforded the local communities and we want to avail ourselves of that opportunity”*

Table 21. Reasons respondents would participate in another stewardship contracting project.

Reason to participate	Total Respondents (n=103)	Agency Respondents (n=48)	Non-agency Respondents (n=55)
Great tool/good concept	16.5% (17)	18.8% (9)	14.6% (8)
Best approach to get work done	9.7% (10)	6.3% (3)	12.7% (7)
Already doing more	7.8% (8)	4.9% (5)	5.5% (3)
Stewardship contracts work	2.9% (3)	2.1% (1)	3.6% (2)
It's the way to do business	1.9% (2)	2.1% (1)	1.8% (1)
Other	4.8% (5)	4.2% (2)	5.4% (3)
No answer	56.3% (58)	56.3% (27)	56.3% (31)

### 3.2 Regional Vetting Analysis

Each regional team meeting dialogue centered on providing answers to the following three questions:

1. What are the predominant problems in engaging communities in USFS stewardship contracts? BLM stewardship contracts? What are suggestions for improving the current situation for both agencies?
2. What successes have emerged within this region for engaging communities in USFS stewardship contracting? BLM stewardship contracting? What fostered these successes for both agencies?
3. What are the major perceived benefits of USFS stewardship contracts to communities within this region?

Regional team members relied on the regional team data supplied by MSU—along with their own experiences—to provide summaries of responses to the above three questions (See Appendix B for each regional team meeting summary). The following is a discussion of common challenges, successes and perceived benefits identified by many of the five regional monitoring teams.

#### 3.2.1 Conditions preventing full community engagement in stewardship contracting

Members of the five regional teams shared their observations of predominant problems associated with engaging local communities in USFS stewardship contracts or agreements. Conditions preventing full community engagement and potential solutions include:

**Agency line officers, local contractors and communities are unfamiliar with stewardship contracting.** Agency line officers are unfamiliar with stewardship contracting and its expanded authorities (e.g., best value contracting, exchange of goods-for-services, retention of receipts). This general lack of understanding has prevented Forest Service personnel from communicating the potential opportunities stewardship contracting provides to local contractors and communities.

Suggested improvements from the regional teams include:

- ☞ *Diversify training opportunities for line officers.* Peer-to-peer learning or internal mentorship programs—in addition to classroom or web-based training—can provide creative opportunities for line officers less familiar with the contracting authorities to

learn from those who have developed successful stewardship projects. Training should be mandatory for contracting officers, financial management staff and forest planners and should be made available to any interested agency employee.

- ☞ *Provide line-officers with stewardship contracting decision tools.* Line officers are requesting “decision-trees” or other references to clarify how and when to use stewardship contracting authorities.
- ☞ *Communicate expanded opportunities stewardship contracting can provide to local communities and contractors.* Line officers should consider non-traditional ways of communicating the agency’s expanded contracting authorities. For instance, local government boards (e.g., economic development authorities, chambers of commerce) and non-governmental gatherings (e.g., homeowners’ association meeting, local conservation clubs, fire safe councils) provide potential venues to demonstrate the agency’s commitment to community involvement. While these groups may not be interested in the contracting tool itself, they do share concerns regarding rural economic development, reducing fire risk (i.e., public safety), watershed improvements and other local, forest dependent issues—topics stewardship contracting is often well-suited to help address.
- ☞ *Develop customized training materials for key non-agency audiences.* Training materials specific to key external audiences (e.g., potential contractors, community development organizations, environmental organizations, fire departments, tourism and recreation related businesses) should be developed to communicate how they can be involved in stewardship contract development, selection of “best-value” criteria, and project monitoring.

**Agency line officers are unclear about the role collaboration plays within the stewardship contracting authority.** Collaboration between the Forest Service and interested outside parties is a central component of stewardship contracting. It requires additional time and money increasing the challenge for line officers to meet more targets with less funding. Line officers remain unsure how to meet the agency’s loosely defined expectations for collaboration while their own definitions range from believing input is unnecessary to fully engaging community interests at the outset of a project. Staff turnover—in some instances—has resulted in lost or broken relationships and negative impacts to collaborative efforts. Agency managers are often unable to capture individual community members’ (i.e., those not representing a professional organization) interest in project planning even after intensive outreach campaigns.

Suggested improvements from the regional teams include:

- ☞ *Provide increased collaboration training opportunities for agency managers.* Forest Service personnel who have demonstrated an ability to collaboratively develop successful stewardship contracts should be encouraged to mentor other agency staff with less ability. These opportunities should be included in addition to existing web-based and in-class training opportunities.
- ☞ *Partner with and engage diverse organizations in stewardship efforts.* Trust is built when the agency partners with outside organizations to develop and implement stewardship contracting projects. Many of the agency’s existing partners have considerable experience with the stewardship contracting authorities and are potential sources of technical, financial and volunteer assistance. Partner organizations or intermediary groups should be engaged during initial project discussions and can serve as resources to

help in project outreach, organization and facilitation efforts. Capitalizing on existing groups (e.g., Resource Advisory Committees, fire safe councils) or other planning efforts (e.g., Community Wildfire Protection Planning) can be useful platforms to initiate community participation in stewardship contracting projects.

- ☞ *Incorporate community engagement into each national forest's strategic planning efforts.* Community engagement in stewardship contracting should be a collaboratively-defined component of each national forest's strategic plan for public participation. Varying meeting times and places should be part of this strategy to accommodate the needs of participants based on their professional or personal interest.
- ☞ *Require facilitation and "relationship-building" as part of a line officer responsibilities and performance reviews.* To be effective facilitators and collaborators, agency staff responsibilities should include time spent fostering long-term relationships and building agency trust among local communities. Agency staff should be required to demonstrate proficiency in these areas during regular performance reviews.
- ☞ *Conduct field trips and other creative outreach efforts to engage local communities.* In-field demonstrations prior to, during and following project implementation can increase interest and build trust among collaborating groups involved in stewardship contracting projects. Multiple outreach methods beyond direct mailings (e.g., field tours, phone calls) are necessary to engage local interests.
- ☞ *Communicate progress throughout entire life of a stewardship project.* Support from local communities often hinges upon clear communication regarding timelines and project progress during each phase (i.e., project design, implementation and monitoring). Local media outlets and agency websites can be better utilized in sharing progress and publicizing success stories surrounding stewardship projects.

**The stewardship contracting tool is complex and the contracting process needs streamlining before use among agency line officers and local contractors will significantly increase.** Stewardship contracts are considered by many local contractors to be overly complex and restrictive. The contracting process is often lengthy and amending existing contracts is frequently cumbersome. Large, up-front bonding requirements tie up capital needed by contractors to carry out their operations. Some contractors have chosen to forgo preparing and submitting bids until the contracting process is streamlined. Several other regional and national businesses have emerged which transport their crews and equipment to conduct restoration treatments by removing the typically low-value woody material in a short time period. These businesses are willing to engage in the contracting process and are often the only bidder.

The list of agency staff needed to develop and review a stewardship contract or agreement is long and requires significant time from resource staff, contracting officers and the regional office. This has contributed to concerns regarding the lengthy timeframe from project idea to implementation and resulted in some partners losing confidence in the tool and frustration with the agency. Agency personnel would welcome a streamlined process, standardized contracts and reduced paperwork so long as the tool's flexibility to craft local solutions remains.

Forest Service regional offices are required to bank—prior to entering into a stewardship contract—funds for cancellation ceilings as required by federal acquisition regulations. Multi-year stewardship contracts—covering numerous projects—often require the agency's local unit

to set aside significant funding which impacts its ability to complete other important management activities.

Suggested improvements from the regional teams include:

- ☞ *Maintain flexibility in stewardship contracts.* On-the-ground conditions are likely to change and new scientific information will often become available during the life of a multi-year stewardship contract. Contracting officers need the flexibility to amend stewardship contracts or agreements to adjust to changing conditions in a timely manner.
- ☞ *Revisit bonding requirements to invite greater contractor interest in stewardship contracting.* Two potential solutions include: a.) Imposing minimum versus maximum bonding requirements where appropriate. b.) Posting performance bonds by splitting units or task orders rather than requiring larger bonds for all projects included in the stewardship contract.
- ☞ *Include contractor participation early in project development.* Contractors' experience and familiarity with their equipment is central to developing projects that work operationally and economically and achieve the desired end-results on the ground.
- ☞ *Offer longer-term stewardship contracts to attract bidders and investors.* Longer-term stewardship contracts allow contractors to respond to market-related delays in conducting stewardship activities as well as time to develop employees. Longer stewardship contracts—in many instances—also provide reasonable assurance to investors interested in establishing community-scaled wood-processing or wood-bioenergy facilities.
- ☞ *Provide educational opportunities for agency staff in current harvesting techniques.* Contracting officers and resource specialists within the agency should be familiar with updated technologies and techniques used by contractors to better develop RFPs and review submitted bids.
- ☞ *Provide training opportunities for local contractors interested in stewardship contracting projects.* Training opportunities would help local contractors: a.) better understand and manage stewardship contracts, b.) navigate the contracting process and c.) develop competitive bids. Partner organizations can help in this effort and could take advantage of state logger education programs and annual logger conventions. The training would encourage contractors to further detail—in their submitted bids—the make and model of their equipment, whether it is wheeled or tracked, its width and its operational capabilities.

### **3.2.2 Successful outcomes resulting from engaging communities in stewardship contracting**

The five regional teams identified instances where the agency has successfully engaged local communities in the development of stewardship contracts or agreements. In many regions, stewardship contracting has been a tool to help accomplish fuels reduction, road decommissioning, forest and watershed restoration, and other stewardship activities. At the same time, stewardship contracts have incubated new small business opportunities for local communities situated within the NFS. Stewardship contracts have provided some existing wood product manufacturers the assurance of a long-term wood supply they need before reinvesting in their wood-processing facilities. This has helped retain—and in some cases expand—employment opportunities for their workforce.

New and existing partnerships made up of diverse interests are convening to link economic development with stewardship activities. These partnerships are playing a key role in research, outreach, and technical and financial assistance and serve as a center point for new collaborative efforts. They often identify and address emerging issues, attract additional stakeholder participation during project planning, and improve relations with local communities.

The following are factors which fostered successful stewardship contracting outcomes:

- ☞ *Relationships/partnerships with external stakeholders.* Many of the regional teams highlighted the importance of the agency’s relationships/partnerships with external stakeholders in developing (from project outset), supporting and communicating stewardship projects. These partnerships often serve as an advisory body to the agency during project development and implementation. Community wildfire protection planning efforts have been an effective platform for initiating these relationships.
- ☞ *Line-officer leadership and agency-wide support.* In many cases, an agency “champion” was needed who was willing to risk entering into a long-term stewardship contract in order to create innovative approaches to complex management challenges. The success of stewardship contracting projects—in most cases—was contingent upon a long-term commitment from those in leadership positions at the district, forest, regional and Washington offices.
- ☞ *Emergence of external participants willing to enter into stewardship contracts.* National conservation organizations, environmental groups, county governments and other non-profits dedicated to economic development and capacity building are bidding on projects and entering into stewardship contracts. In many cases, these are the only entities capable of assuming the risk and posting the performance bonds associated with stewardship contracting projects. These external organizations enter into stewardship contracts with the agency and generally complete project activities through numerous subcontracts.
- ☞ *Intensive outreach efforts.* Fully engaging local communities in stewardship contracts most often involved intensive outreach efforts. Community, stewardship and other intermediary groups—in many cases—played a lead role in the agency’s community involvement efforts. Successful outreach activities included field tours, one-on-one meetings with stakeholders, agency presentations/attendance at local meetings, specially developed maps and informational materials, public presentations and dialogues, and listening sessions. Outreach efforts were conducted early in project development to engage all potentially interested stakeholders.

### **3.2.3 Perceived benefits of stewardship contracting to communities**

The regional teams provided input into the major perceived benefits of USFS stewardship contracts to communities within their region. Common themes emerged across the five regions including:

- ☞ *Accomplishing more on-the-ground work.* Limited agency funding has prevented many needed projects on the NFS. Regional team members emphasized stewardship contracting’s utility in accomplishing more on-the-ground work—such as overdue restoration and fuel reduction treatments—with fewer financial resources.

- ☞ *Supporting local economies.* Stewardship contracting can sustain local, forest dependent economies by: 1.) creating a consistent program of work for local contractors and allowing them to build their capacity; 2.) stimulating the supply needed to attract investment into wood-processing facilities utilizing small-diameter, low-value material; and 3.) providing logs to mills to help maintain local infrastructure and a way of life for people in forest-dependent communities.
- ☞ *Building mutual trust between the agency and its partners.* The collaborative process surrounding the development of stewardship contracts can foster better communication, improved understanding, and stronger relationships between the agency, its stakeholders and the local community. It facilitates a sense of shared ownership in specific projects and outcomes.

## 4.0 CONCLUSIONS

The results from the survey and regional vetting analysis suggest a number of successes and perceived ecological, economic and social benefits have emerged from the involvement of local communities in stewardship contracting. Examples include:

- ☞ **Ecological.** Regional team members and stewardship contracting participants highlighted the tool's ability to accomplish more work on-the-ground. In many cases, stewardship contracting provided the opportunity to complete much needed forest restoration, fuels reduction and wildlife habitat improvements on NFS lands.
- ☞ **Economic.** The survey and regional analysis also suggest stewardship contracting has a significant role in maintaining existing wood products processing and manufacturing facilities. Stewardship contracting's ability to use local contractors was of high importance to survey participants. The contracting tool also invites new business opportunities which can utilize small-diameter, low-value woody material (e.g., wood-bioenergy facilities).
- ☞ **Social.** The collaborative process surrounding the development of stewardship contracts often results in improved relations between the agency and local communities. Agency and non-agency partners alike highly valued stewardship contracting's ability to increase collaboration and public trust in the agency. In most cases, stewardship contracting projects were widely supported by local communities.

While a number of successes have emerged, survey respondents and regional team members identified areas where the agency can continue to improve. For instance, agency line-officers remain somewhat unfamiliar with the stewardship contracting authorities. Most agency staff understand stewardship contracting solely as a tool to exchange goods for services—only one of many special authorities provided to the agency under *subsection (g) of Section 347 of P.L. 105-277*. Their unfamiliarity has prevented clear communication with external stakeholders and local contractors on the potential benefits stewardship contracting may bring to local communities. Survey results suggest local communities have an interest in becoming informed and providing comments on stewardship contracting projects. Potential policy or program changes to better familiarize agency staff and local communities on stewardship contracting include:

- ☞ **Support and encourage the use of stewardship contracting within the agency.** Agency line-officers need encouragement and support from others in leadership positions at the forest, regional and Washington offices before they are willing to risk entering into long-

term stewardship contracts. As stated by the Northeastern Regional Team, “A highly risk-averse agency management environment can stifle such needed innovation and creativity both internally and externally.” Line-officers demonstrating leadership in developing stewardship contracts should be recognized for their efforts.

- ☞ ***Provide a variety of stewardship contracting training opportunities for agency personnel.*** Peer-to-peer learning or mentorship opportunities provide new training options which capitalize on the experiences of those agency staff familiar with the stewardship contracting authorities and the collaborative process.
- ☞ ***Utilize non-traditional outreach methods to familiarize local communities with stewardship contracting.*** Personal contacts, field tours and collaborative process meetings were frequently used—and were often effective—as methods to involve local communities in the development of stewardship contracts. Less frequently used methods include presentations to existing community groups and other organizations. Regional team members suggested agency staff consider using additional, non-traditional outreach methods such as presentations to local government boards, homeowner associations and local chapters of environmental and conservation organizations. These (and other) organizations hold concerns about rural economic development, public safety and the integrity of nearby forest ecosystems—issues stewardship contracting is often well-suited to help address.

Many participants viewed the development of their stewardship contract as collaborative while others suggested groups such as environmental, recreational and other interests were often missing from the discussions. Agency respondents indicated collaboration frequently requires additional time and financial resources—both of which are often limited among agency and non-agency participants. Many agency staff were also uncomfortable operating under unclear agency expectations for collaborating beyond traditional public involvement requirements.

Recommendations for improving the role of collaboration in stewardship contracting include:

- ☞ ***Partner with all diverse interests in developing stewardship contracts.*** Survey results and regional teams both indicate misunderstandings are often avoided when broad interests are engaged early in the development of stewardship contracts. Resource advisory committees, watershed councils and other multi-stakeholder advisory bodies can be useful platforms to initiate community participation in stewardship contracting projects.
- ☞ ***Set clear expectations for line-officers to collaborate.*** Agency staff responsibilities should include time spent fostering long-term relationships with external partners and organizing collaborative efforts around stewardship contracting projects. Performance reviews should evaluate the extent to which agency staff are accomplishing these activities.
- ☞ ***Incorporate community engagement into NFS planning.*** Regional teams suggest that each national forest’s strategic plan should incorporate community engagement processes in the development of stewardship contracts.

Results from the survey and regional analysis suggest that stewardship contracts are often viewed as overly complex. In addition, the contracting process is frequently considered lengthy and cumbersome preventing many contractors from submitting bids. Bonding requirements

often tie up capital needed by contractors to carry out their operations. Likewise, federal acquisition regulations require the USFS to set aside significant funds in the event the agency would need to cancel out of a stewardship contract. Existing stewardship contracts are often conducted over short time periods inhibiting contractors' ability to respond to market-related delays in performing stewardship activities. Suggestions to invite more interest in stewardship contracting projects:

- ☞ ***Increase delivery of training and technical assistance to help local communities—especially contractors—navigate the stewardship contracting process.*** Agency and non-agency survey participants identified a need for increased technical and financial assistance to facilitate their participation in stewardship projects. Local contractors are requesting additional information and training (e.g., through annual logger conventions) to better understand the contracting procedures and the bidding process before submitting project proposals.
- ☞ ***Revisit bonding requirements and cancellation ceilings.*** Results from the regional vetting analysis suggest two alternatives to lessen the financial burden on local contractors and local agency management units. The first option would require contractors to post minimum versus maximum bonding requirements. The second calls for splitting units or task orders in stewardship contracts and posting bonds or cancellation ceilings for each.
- ☞ ***Offer longer-term stewardship contracts.*** Regional teams suggested that local contractors need longer-term stewardship contracts in order to respond to market-related delays in conducting stewardship activities as well as time to develop their employees. Ten year stewardship contracts can provide the woody-biomass supply assurance required by investors before establishing community-scaled wood-processing or wood-bioenergy facilities.

The number of stewardship contracts within the agency continues to grow. Accompanying this increase is the number of new participants unfamiliar with the stewardship contracting process. The FY 2007 monitoring results suggest over 80% of agency staff and non-agency partners—based on their past experiences with stewardship contracts—would participate in another stewardship contracting project. This report—which captures these experiences—can contribute to successfully involving local communities in the development of stewardship contracts and agreements.

## **5.0 APPENDICES**

## Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire

BLM/USFS:

Region/State:

Project:

Who:

Agency person

Community member

Contractor

Other:

State agency

NGO \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### FY07 PROGRAMMATIC MONITORING:

The Role of Local Communities in Development of Stewardship Contracting Agreements or Contract Plans

Participants: When Congress authorized the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management to use stewardship contracting, it also required that the agencies provide an annual report on the role of local communities in the development of agreements or contract plans under that authority. In the preparation of this report, a stratified random sample among existing stewardship contracting projects is surveyed each year, and the \_\_\_\_\_ stewardship contracting project you are involved in was one of those selected for review. We anticipate that your involvement in this telephone survey/interview will take no longer than 30-minutes.

A sample survey form has been included with this e-mail, so that you may have the opportunity to review the questions prior to the telephone survey/interview. Plans are to conduct the telephone surveys/interviews from April 2007-August 2007.

The Pinchot Institute for Conservation is coordinating this study under contract with the Forest Service and the BLM. Your name will not be associated with the interviewer's notes from the phone survey and the names of those interviewed will not be retained. The information collected in this interview will be analyzed and used by both the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to inform the agencies' yearly report to Congress on stewardship contracting implementation. The survey responses will not be shared with other organizations inside and outside the government but the results of the analysis of the survey responses, through its inclusion in the FS and BLM report to Congress, will be available for use by organizations both inside and outside the government.

Participating in the interview is completely voluntary. Your participation assumes your understanding and acceptance of this voluntary agreement. Your decision to participate or not will not affect your current or future relations with the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, the Pinchot Institute for Conservation or \_\_\_\_\_ (*insert local/ regional subcontractor name here*).

**NOTE: The entire paragraph above will be deleted on the copy that goes to the agency person.**

On behalf of the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, the Pinchot Institute would like to thank you in advance for your thoughtful and candid responses to the following questions related to stewardship contracting in your community.

*You are/have been involved in the \_\_\_\_\_ stewardship contracting project.*

1a. If someone asked you to explain stewardship contracting, what would you say?

1b. Has your view of stewardship contracting changed since you became involved in this project?  Yes

No     Maybe     Don't know

If yes, how has it changed?

*I want to ask about community involvement in your project.*

2. Who initiated the project?  Agency     Non-agency     Joint     Don't know

3. Who has been involved?

	<i>Check all that apply.</i>	<i>What is the scale of involvement</i>			
		Local	State	Regional	National
USDA Forest Service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bureau of Land Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Federal agencies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tribal interests	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
State agencies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local governmental interests	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community business interests	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental conservation groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fire interests/organizations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adjacent landowners/residents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recreation interests/users	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Educators/educational interests	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wildlife and fisheries groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Right to access groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Project contractors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4a What is/was the role of the local community in the \_\_\_\_\_ stewardship contracting project?

	<i>Check all that apply.</i>
Planning and design.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Development of alternatives.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments and recommendations.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public outreach and education.	<input type="checkbox"/>
NEPA analysis.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Implementation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provision of technical information.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Becoming informed.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing and/or acquiring funding.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Monitoring.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Representation of concerned/affected local interests	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other.	<input type="checkbox"/>

4b. What did you use as a definition of “local community” when you answered this as a question?

5. What outreach efforts are being/have been used specifically to get people involved in the project?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traditional public meetings    | <input type="checkbox"/> Media (newspaper, radio, television)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborative process meetings | <input type="checkbox"/> Field tours   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Direct mail                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Presentations to existing community groups  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Email                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Presentations to other organizations than existing community groups organizations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal contacts              | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please describe)   |

6a. To what degree would you consider community involvement in the \_\_\_\_\_ stewardship contracting project to be collaborative?

Very collaborative     
  Somewhat collaborative     
  Not collaborative     
  Don't Know

6b. How did you define collaboration when you were answering this question?

7a. How did you personally first get involved with this project (what were the circumstances)?

7b. What was the reason that you decided to get involved?

8. Are there individuals or interests you believe should be/should have been involved in the stewardship contracting project that aren't/weren't?

Yes  
 No  
 Don't know

8b. If yes, who?

	<i>Check all that apply.</i>	<i>Why should they be involved? See list below for options -Include all that apply.</i>
USDA Forest Service	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Bureau of Land Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other Federal agencies	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Tribal interests	<input type="checkbox"/>	
State agencies	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Local government interests	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Community business interests	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Environmental/conservation groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Fire interests/organizations	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Adjacent landowners and residents	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Recreation interests/users	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Educators/educational interests	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Wildlife and fisheries groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Right to access groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Project contractors	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	

- (a) To avoid misunderstanding.
- (b) Because they are users of the area
- (c) To avoid appeals and/or litigation
- (d) Because they are a constraint to implementation
- (e) A need to be inclusive
- (f) Because they have valuable expertise to share
- (g) A need for local knowledge
- (h) Because they are potentially affected by the project
- (i) Other (please explain)

**9. Are there resources that community members needed to facilitate their participation in the project?**

Yes       No       Don't know

If yes, please check the appropriate boxes in the table below:

	Check if needed	Check if received	From whom	<i>For what specific purpose</i>
Financial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
In-kind time, services, facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Technical	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Other (Please describe)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

**10. Please rate the local benefits of the \_\_\_\_\_ stewardship contracting project on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being very high and 5 being very low.?**

	Very high				Very low	Don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	
Economic benefits	<input type="checkbox"/>					
More local jobs						
More on the ground work accomplished by local contractors						
Greater opportunity to use local contractors						
Increased collaboration						
Improved efficiency and effectiveness						
Improved public trust						
Specific project outcome						
(Please list and rate)						
_____						
_____						
_____						
Other (Please describe)						
_____						

**11. Please rate the benefits of community involvement in the \_\_\_\_\_ stewardship contracting project on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being very high and 5 being very low.?**

	Very high				Very low	Don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	
Broader understanding and consideration of diverse interests						
Improved trust						
Increased opportunity for public input						
Improved sense of project ownership						

Increased support for the agency  
Other  
(Please describe)

---

12. Please rate how widely supported do you believe this stewardship contracting project is/was in the community?

- Widely supported
- Somewhat supported
- Indifferent
- Opposed
- I don't know

13. How widely supported do you believe this stewardship contracting project is/was in the agency [Forest Service and/or BLM]?

- Widely supported
- Somewhat supported
- Indifferent
- Generally unaware
- Opposed
- I don't know

14. Are there any lessons that you learned about community involvement through this project that you would like to share?

15. Based on your experience in this project, would you participate in another stewardship contracting project?  Yes  No  Maybe  
*Please explain.*

16. Are there any additional comments you want to make about either stewardship contracting generally or your personal experience with it?

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## Appendix B: *Regional Team Meeting Summaries*

### Eastern Regional Stewardship Contracting Multiparty Monitoring Team Fiscal Year 2007 Report

In preparing this report the Eastern Team considered information from a number of sources including, but not limited to:

- telephone interviews (conducted by the Pinchot Institute for Conservation and its regional subcontractors) with agency personnel, community members, contractors, and other project participants in a stratified random sample of existing stewardship contracting projects,
- presentations to the team by agency personnel and other participants in selected stewardship contracting projects; and
- team members' own personal observations of and experiences with stewardship contracting.

Based on this information, the team formulated the following responses to the three sets of questions posed to it at the beginning of the fiscal year:

***A. What are the predominant problems in engaging communities in USDA/Forest Service stewardship contracting projects? What are the team's suggestions for improving the current situation?***

The Forest Service's Eastern Region encompasses 20 states with over 43% of the nation's population, leading the Region to term its 17 National Forests "islands of green in a sea of people." Because the bulk of the population resides in or around major urban centers such as New York, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, St. Louis, and Minneapolis, most people must travel considerable distances to hike, hunt, fish, or otherwise enjoy the on-site benefits of National Forests. Thus the "communities" to be engaged in stewardship contracting projects are both communities of place (primarily rural) and communities of interest (both urban and rural, but with a preponderance of urban/suburban dwellers).

Probably due to the emphasis it places on partnerships, the Forest Service in the East has been particularly successful in engaging communities of interest, especially those represented by conservation and forest user organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, the National Wild Turkey Federation, the Ruffed Grouse Society, and many ski clubs, hiking/trail clubs, and anglers' groups. Regarding communities of place, however, there is a need to improve the ways and extent to which community members are engaged in stewardship contracting. Indeed, responses to the telephone surveys conducted as part of this year's monitoring program revealed that some Eastern projects had no local community involvement at all

Agency personnel interviewed appear to have a fairly good conceptual knowledge of what constitutes the collaboration expected in projects using stewardship contracting. For instance:

- "When you're collaborating, you need to work with the community on not only what's in the Forest Service's interests but also what's in the community's best interest."
- "[It's] where other people have input in shaping and designing the project, rather than just commenting back on our proposal."
- [It's] working in a participatory way with individuals to decide what is the best project output to develop. There would be community ownership in the project as a result."

Unfortunately, however, the approach most frequently used to engage communities in stewardship contracting is less like collaboration and more like the traditional NEPA “scoping and comment” process. The most common outreach method cited by agency personnel was direct mail. As one respondent said, “We sent mailings to the people on our normal environmental assessment list.” Personal contacts was the second most frequently employed approach, but most of those contacts appear to have been with tribal and/or local public officials and with representatives of existing organizations. Few agency respondents reported using the media, field tours, personal visits with people living in the vicinity of planned projects, presentations to community groups, discussions with forestry workers and industry representatives, and similar pro-active means of energizing a true collaborative process.

Suggestions for improvement:

- *Give people the tools they need.* Agency personnel should receive training in both collaboration and in the use of stewardship contracting to meet both Forest Service and rural and community needs. Those trained should include all staff who will be involved in stewardship contracting (including those in contracting and financial management), not just those involved in project planning. Interested non-agency persons should be welcomed and encouraged to participate in these training sessions.
- *Establish expectations and honor achievement.* Agency personnel who have received stewardship contracting and collaboration training should be expected to exercise the new skills and knowledge gained. Successful collaborative stewardship work and improvements in collaborative skills should be positively acknowledged in performance appraisals, recognition of “Forests/Districts of Excellence” in collaboration, nominations for Forest Service Honor Awards, and/or other appropriate means. Recognizing and honoring non-agency personnel who significantly contribute to increased community collaboration is also important.
- *Strengthen internal capacity.* Forest Service employees who have successfully demonstrated their ability to collaboratively engage communities in planning, implementing, and/or monitoring a stewardship contracting project should be encouraged and enabled to share their knowledge and “lessons learned” by serving as trainers, mentors, or technical advisors to others who are new to collaboration. While non-agency trainers can provide valuable expertise, agency personnel who have recent “hands on” experience in collaborative stewardship projects are likely to have greater credibility with agency staff and possess particularly useful insights into how best to implement stewardship contracting within the Forest Service’s administrative setting.
- *Build external capacity.* Some of the agency’s existing partner organizations have considerable experience with stewardship contracting and have been able to provide valuable technical assistance as well as financial and volunteer resources to Forest Service projects. It is important to continue to widen the range of non-agency groups and individuals who can catalyze and facilitate community engagement in stewardship projects. That effort would be enhanced by the development of materials and presentations customized for key audiences – potential contractors, “hook and bullet” groups, economic and community development organizations, environmental organizations, fire departments, tourism- and recreation-related businesses and groups, etc.
- *Aggressively seek outreach opportunities.* Taking advantage of events and activities hosted by others, rather than scheduling separate Forest Service functions, can be both cost effective and a clear demonstration of the agency’s commitment to collaboration and community involvement. A homeowners’ association meeting, a local Chamber of Commerce luncheon, a state loggers’ convention, and the annual meeting of a national community development organization are examples of venues where organizers might be happy to provide the Forest Service a spot on the agenda so that attendees can learn more about stewardship contracting and how it relates to their communities and concerns.

**B. *What successes have emerged within the region for engaging communities in stewardship contracting. What fostered those successes?***

The team heard presentations from two projects that together evidenced many of the characteristics a “success” might be expected to exhibit. The small (20 acres) Cisco Camp Pine Thinning and Redlight Creek Watershed project on the Ottawa National Forest grew out of the good relationship that has been developed over the years between the Forest Service and the Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians. The project was implemented through an Integrated Resource-Service contract awarded on a sole source basis to the Lac Vieux Desert Band, and provided not only needed employment for tribal heavy equipment operators, but also logs for the Lac Vieux Desert Band’s use in the construction of a new roundhouse, a culturally significant benefit. The service work performed by the Lac Vieux Desert Band for the Forest Service included pine thinning to maintain stand health, as well as road decommissioning and other watershed restoration activities. The coaching provided by the agency to tribal contractors enabled them to gain new skills in culvert installation that may lead to future employment opportunities.

The Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF) Nordic Project is one of the largest to date in the region in terms of both size (2,366 acres) and proposed volume (11,515 CCF) and is being implemented through two conventional timber sales, 14 stewardship contracts (nine Integrated Resource-Timber contracts and five Integrated Resource Service Contracts) as well as one stewardship agreement. The GMNF formed a Stewardship Contracting Activity Team that developed a charter, work plan, fact sheet, and marketing plan to help focus their intensive community involvement effort, which utilized (among other tools) specially developed maps and informational materials, field tours, public presentations and discussions, and regular meetings with local governmental bodies, neighborhood developments, contractors, recreation-related businesses, wildlife groups, and other concerned stakeholders. Although the Nordic Project is still underway, the GMNF notes that its relationships with local communities and interest groups have already significantly improved.

Recommendations for creating successful projects

- *Learn from what works and what doesn’t.* It was not possible to identify specific “successes” in the region through the telephone survey process, because the identity of the projects surveyed is confidential. The team believes that case studies would be the most appropriate means to examine a range of projects to determine how their participants and stakeholders define success, how they work to achieve it, and how successful they are perceived to be. Perhaps individual projects could volunteer to be the subjects of those studies, with the understanding that projects that don’t go as planned can sometimes provide as many valuable “lessons learned” as those that do, and that those lessons will be equally important in helping the agency and stakeholders develop more effective future projects.
- *Share lessons learned.* Wheel reinvention is frustrating and wastes valuable time for Ranger Districts embarking on their first stewardship projects. The agency can facilitate the increased use of stewardship contracting and foster more project successes by sharing widely and in a timely fashion the relevant experiences and lessons learned that continue to emerge. Almost all the participants interviewed during this year’s survey had relevant observations, experiences, and/or recommendations to pass along. Gathering, sharing, studying, and (when appropriate) acting on their first-hand information and advice is essential.
- *Encourage innovation and creativity.* Projects in which communities were most effectively engaged often used stewardship contracting’s various special authorities to enable them to implement “outside the box” approaches to meeting community needs. A highly risk-averse

agency management environment can stifle such needed innovation and creativity both internally and externally.

- *Avoid undue restrictions on the use of stewardship contracting authorities.* Many communities and other stakeholder groups in the region, for instance, would like to see stewardship projects that maintain or improve their area’s recreational assets and opportunities, among other activities. The administrative restrictions placed by the agency on recreation-related projects have resulted in considerable uncertainty at the field and community levels as to what activities are now considered appropriate, with some units taking a much more conservative stance than others, to the frustration of stakeholders and some agency staff.
- *Minimize the internal and external “overhead burden.”* Agency personnel, contractors, and project partners alike raised concerns about excessive paperwork, complicated and time-consuming procedures, and inefficient use of resources. Some contractors and agency staff would like to see more standardization in the integrated resource contracts, while others are concerned that that might limit their flexibility and the ability to craft local solutions to specific problems. There is a need to make the paperwork more streamlined, but without constricting the use of stewardship contracting.
- *Share the risk.* Capable contractors are key to project success, and the required use of “best value” criteria in considering and awarding contracts is one of stewardship contracting’s most powerful authorities. But this is a new way of doing business both for contractors and agency personnel and, as one interviewee put it, “We don’t think there will be any timber contractors that will take it on because of it being a service contract. It’s not work they would ordinarily do. It will be the first time for our timber folks too. They’re uncomfortable with their role when it’s the service contractor [procurement contracting officer] who will be getting the folks to do the timber management piece (as subcontractors).” Providing training for potential contractors in proposal preparation, imposing minimum rather than maximum bonding requirements where appropriate, being open to contractors’ suggestions for possible alternate ways (different equipment, different techniques, etc.) to achieve the desired end result on the ground, and similar positive steps can encourage more contractor interest in stewardship contracting.

**C. *What are the major perceived benefits of Forest Service stewardship contracts to communities within the region?***

“Getting work done on the ground” was by far the greatest benefit cited by Forest Service personnel, community members, contractors, and other stakeholders. Agency people usually view stewardship contracting as a tool that provides resources (particularly funding) that otherwise would not have been available:

- “[It’s] a tool that enables us to maybe get work done that we can’t get done other ways and partner with other agencies to help jointly accomplish objectives that maybe we couldn’t do otherwise.”
- “Basically, [it’s] where we work together with a group of folks to develop projects that we might not have had funding for otherwise and that we can now accomplish with the resource values that we have out there.”
- “It’s an opportunity to work with local communities to accomplish projects that may be difficult to fund otherwise, like...any kind of rehab projects.”

Non-agency interviewees tend to focus less on the financial aspects and more on working collaboratively to achieve shared land management goals:

- “I would look at [stewardship contracting] as the way the Forestry [sic] Service describe[s] partnerships that attempt to focus on the greatest good for all.”
- “[It’s] a cooperative and collaborative effort between state and federal agencies, private individuals, and private companies joining together for the common goal of enhancing or developing wildlife habitat.”
- “It’s remaining involved and being stewards of the land, to be sure we can retain this place to the best of our ability through the contractors who would come in and do work. Stewardship contracting is building, bringing all the partners together to help us develop a stewardship plan for the [area].”
- “It gives me the opportunity...to do wildlife habitat development projects on the National Forest in cooperation with them that are not tied to active timber sales...This program is unique.”

Other highly ranked benefits included: improved efficiency and effectiveness, improved public trust, broader understanding and consideration of diverse interests, and an increased sense of project ownership by the community.

- “It benefits both the agency and the community – reduces costs, meets some of our goals that we’re wanting to accomplish, builds trust with the community, helps the economy. It continues a way of life for the people in the community.”

Forest Service employees were more likely to temper their assessment of the benefits of stewardship contracting with concerns about the amount of time involved in putting them together, particularly in the area of community participation.

- “[Stewardship contracting] has a place, but being mandated to find one can be difficult, and with high output expectations. The collaboration method, you need to do that up front. It can work, but sometimes it’s not factored into the actual length and funding of the project. [It] does add layers if you do the collaboration properly, which doesn’t always coincide with having targets for doing more with less. Bottom line, there’s hidden costs that aren’t really looked at.”

The GMNF has begun calculating its “return on investment “ for the time staff spend on outreach and public engagement efforts on the Nordic Project. A major positive is that the GMNF was able to offer over 12mmbf without appeals or litigation. Further, relationships with towns, environmental organizations, and other stakeholders have significantly improved, and internal attitudes toward some of those individuals or groups are improving as well.

If other Forests keep track of the ROI on their projects as well, it may be possible to better assess the value of collaboration with communities (both of place and interest) in stewardship contracting.

## Southeast Regional Team Annual Report 2007

### Overarching Lessons Overview

SC has experienced several births beginning in the 1980s. What has changed and what has stayed the same over these almost nine years since the resurrection of SC first in the pilot and now under the ten-year extension?

There is still **confusion over how and when to use the authorities**, what is legal and what is not. SC has been treated too much like a program from the top down though this seems to be lessening. Some Forests still think they can achieve the same objectives with KV. Trainings on SC across the country have helped some in terms of understanding and comfort levels. An external training module is available through Region 8 but needs to be better advertised. The learning curve for agency personnel is still steep. “We need a sort of decision tree,” is still a common request. Managers often admit that they get so embroiled in figuring out the contract that they don’t do enough outreach, problem solving and just co-educating with partners. Ultimately, it is experience and the support of leadership that result in “figuring it out.” This goes both for agency staff and contractors. Training assistance has been offered for both in different settings yet more often than not participants (agency and operator) find the classroom training confusing. It is usually through a mentoring process coupled with personal patience and tenacity that results in a win. A SC that works encourages others and builds on the overall quality of SC.

SC has always been an **opportunity for an individual, organization, or business with a “general contractor” skill-set**: ability to multi-task, subcontract, float resources, broker products, and facilitate good relationships. This may or may not be the “local contractor.” Managers have often seen SC go “no bid” or fail because of the “kitchen sink” mentality. It is crucial to preload complex packages with outreach, ground-truth, and public meetings. Several national businesses have emerged to capitalize on SC and other contracts aimed at managing low-value material. They have equipment and crews that travel to a site and complete the work in a few weeks. These companies are often the lowest and only bidder. The NWF is working effectively throughout the southeast through the extensive networks built by their chapters as well as through their regional biologists. Their role marks positive growth for SC because they bring an important collaborative element to the project and also subcontract the work to local businesses in manageable pieces. If experienced, solvent businesses do not already exist in a community, SC does not have much of a positive impact until they begin to be longer term and larger in acreage.

SC legislation was designed with **local community benefits and collaboration** in mind. Some managers have interpreted this to mean that if they want to use a SC they need to get people organized around the contract. What has been proven over and over is that broad concern over wildlife species, noxious weeds, die-off, wildfire risks, etc. rally people providing a foundation for SC use as a tool where appropriate. Collaboration happens at a macro level where people engage over a watershed or species building trust over time. Success is not a public meeting but multiple meetings and multiple publics. Agreement over problems leads to solutions and

eventually the tools. The Healthy Forests Restoration Act has been helpful in some states because it created a reason to get people together to assess landscapes and needs.

**Ability and commitment from those in leadership positions** heavily influences the use and success of SC. In situations where Forest Supervisors or Rangers see SC as another tool for implementing management objectives with community buy-in, success follows.

#### **What are the predominant problems in engaging communities in stewardship contracts?**

- Communities and the average individuals that make them up in this region tend to be represented by organizations such as environmental, conservation, wildlife, hunting, recreation, industry, economic development, etc. Therefore, it is important to engage the appropriate organization around relevant issues. Individuals simply representing themselves as “community” members seem less inclined to engage with public land management regardless of outreach in the Southeast.
- The timeframe from idea to implementation is too long.
- Most people are interested in engaging in stewardship contracting if it can help achieve on-the-ground results.
- Ranger and other staff turnover are often excessive and relationships are lost or not carried forward. They are less interested in the tool itself.
- In many cases, the SC instruments have been seen as too complex eliminating local contractors from the bid pool.
- National Forests are relatively small in terms of overall landownership (5% or less). Many are unaware of the presence of federal land.
- Foresters that are frustrated over the increasing restrictiveness and paperwork, resist using SC

#### **What are suggestions for improving the current situation?**

- Fairs, fieldtrips and other specific educational attempts on the concept of SC as well as forest issues in general increase awareness, care for public land, and increase support for management activity.
- Local sportsman and other conservation organizations (e.g. NWTF, Ruffed Grouse Society, and Friends of the Cherokee) can play a big role in terms of raising funds through membership and grants as well as increasing understanding around USFS process and publicizing positive results when projects occur. In a couple cases, pooling resources between groups allowed for sizeable grants from outfits such as the National Forest Foundation and thus increased profile.
- When USFS projects occur in close partnership with a localized membership organization, it exponentially increases public awareness and relations. Attention is brought to something positive that improved what they care about which translates to better perceptions of agency role. Evidence exists for increased interest in public land projects once local members of a group see improvements from one project.
- Engage publics in larger questions about landscapes and prescriptions not the tool of SC. The tool part is arcane to average people. Something called “stewardship contracting” often seems like an oxymoron to partners.

- The use of SC and its success or failure seems connected to the personality of individual rangers, especially those not adverse to change or new approaches.
- Local media is not fully utilized for both engaging people and sharing progress on existing projects. Small town and rural newspapers would readily run stories about resource management issues and work. A small piece of the receipts could be used to do PSAs or press releases. Use partner organizations not internal PAOs

**What successes have emerged within this region for engaging communities in stewardship contracts? What fostered these successes?**

The collaboration and partnerships reflected in the sample projects are based on reaching out to relevant professionals that represent larger population groupings or specific interests (e.g. the Longleaf Alliance, NWTF, Game and Fish Departments, etc.). The successes seem to emerge when leadership outside the agency within one or more organizations joins forces with a Ranger or other manager to achieve a common goal. Relationships are always a key factor. The NWTF is involved frequently but there are other examples where public utilities, environmental groups and state departments of natural resources or wildlife are key prompters. These groups are playing a key role in advancing SC through technical assistance, collaboration facilitation, and bidding on projects. They also are helping bring state agencies and other organizations in to more proactive roles. The greatest multiplier effect seems to come from the local chapter engagement model with NWTF. A much larger number of people are engaged and/or know about the good work being done because they use the area, help fund the projects, and then tell people about what is happening.

District Ranger Cindy Ragland shared her experience with SC in partnership with NWTF and Alabama Fish and Game since 2003. She described management on the District in the past aptly as “stringing beads” (going from one opportunity to another rather than thinking strategically.) It is a dilemma faced by managers in many fields: doing what is urgent or what is important. The Talladega’s Oakmulgee was the last District in the National Forests in Alabama to complete a landscape level EIS charting their plan for longleaf restoration. While they had some success in the 1990s restoring longleaf on a compartment by compartment basis, they had not looked across the district to address ecological issues such as red-cockaded woodpecker habitat. They also had not engaged the public in the comprehensive thought process prior to 2003. Their efforts started with a series of meetings with some local interests. This led to a biomass partnership, Forest Products Lab grant, AL Loggers Council meetings, a successful “Landowner Field Days” event, an “Academia Day”, a biomass pilot project, a “Power of Flight” grant from the Southern Company and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and ultimately a five-year SC agreement with NWTF.

It was a long process getting to what Ragland describes as a “mature business and partnership relationship with NWTF.” The SC endeavor “yanked the covers off the problems revealing too that our partnership skills were under-developed. I had to look from the outside in and get past my fears,” she said. In addition, Ragland identified attitude as the biggest hurdle to SC but also qualified with the need to base solutions on most effective tool.

Ragland commented, “Partners must really want to work with us.” Much of that “wanting to” lives or dies based on the experience of initially trying to work with a federal manager. In most

cases, the manager holds the authority to make something happen or keep it from happening. A true leader will see the need to share power with other community leaders to achieve both of their goals even if not all are mutual. Negotiating these power sharing partnerships takes time and a good attitude.

The Talladega is modeling the spirit of solid partnering. Over a half dozen partners met at Payne Lake on a Wednesday afternoon to talk about the biomass pilot, the SC and the ways they are all working to link economic development to forest restoration. “We brought a lot of backgrounds together to make a rich partnership,” commented a local county commissioner.

Managers in Alabama are asking, “How can we be relevant to our communities?” They recognize that people often don’t care because they don’t know them. They want to be seen as proactive, go to people. During the discussion wrap-up at Payne Lake, Forest Supervisor Miera Crawford asked, “How can we make it easier to partner with us? We know it is not easy.” The question is as important as the answer to local communities.

Ray Vaughn, Wildlaw, spoke about what he calls collaborative conservation and the evolution of relationships in Alabama between environmentalists and managers. His comments and observations are universal.

- The process must be done open and collaboratively
- The projects must be legally enforceable
- The effort must be doable for agency
- The expected outcomes must have resiliency
- Let’s focus on where we agree not where we disagree

Vaughn affirmed the principle of everything rising and falling on leadership by pointing to major changes in management as the difference maker in stalemate versus progress. He spoke of the contrasts between various efforts within the state as example of how managers must be willing to start where their partners are in terms of issues. It might be recreation or climate change depending on the locale. The Talladega partnership is very informal while a long-term project and partnership, including a SC, on the Bankhead National Forest is more formalized with regular meetings, a video, brochures and interpretive signs. In places like the Bankhead “everybody has worked together for the last 17 years” in various forms and fashions. They have an on-going committee made up of professionals with working relationships. This is also the case on the Sumter National Forest in South Carolina. These committees are helpful because “when needs come up they can be addressed effectively, ideas get kicked around better, things happen faster.”

**What are the major benefits of stewardship contracts to communities within this region?**

- Habitat restoration improves the resource and has a positive environmental impact
- The quality of hunting opportunities increases having a positive social and economic impact
- Restoration of structures and natural areas of national significance (e.g. a civil war cabin and remnant grassy bald) have a positive social, economic and ecological impact
- Contribution to efforts southeast wide to restore longleaf pine

- Elevated need for and commitment to collaboration
- When partnering with other entities like state or conservation can get more work accomplished for less money.
- Increase in on-going “advisory” type groups that meet somewhat regularly and thus better communication and goal sharing.

## Rocky Mountain/Southwest Regional Team Overview 2007

### Overarching Lessons Overview

SC has experienced several births beginning in the 1980s. Change has not been significant over these almost nine years since the resurrection of SC first in the pilot and now under the ten-year extension? The problems that plague SC are the same as well as the elements that lead to success. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) became eligible to use SC under the ten-year extension. The difficulties and successes between the BLM and USFS are generally the same. A challenge for both agencies is the low value of material targeted for management and in many cases restoration. This situation is of greatest challenge to the BLM in this region because 80 percent or more of the landscape under their ownership is woodland (pinyon and juniper). Many BLM foresters are charged with a wide range of duties beyond forest management this places an extra burden on them when pursuing SC. They must overcome the learning curve while often focused on many other duties. In this years sample, only the BLM pursued several projects as a means of partnering with tribal entities.

SC continues to be plagued by a **field perception that it is treated too much like a program with a very top-down push** though this seems to be lessening. Ultimately, it is experience and the support of leadership that result in “figuring it out.” This goes both for agency staff and contractors. Training assistance has been offered for both in different settings yet more often than not participants (agency and operator) find the classroom training confusing. It is usually through a mentoring process coupled with personal patience and tenacity that results in a winning SC. Agency foresters still feel too much reporting is required, the system does not mesh well with SC, and there is a lack of adequate support and understanding from contracting.

While the region still **lacks the ideal complement of business components** of a diversified forest products industry, progress is occurring along with plans for more and larger SC. Capable businesses exist in each state. When problems or barriers arise, they link back to difficulties finding capable employees, managers or sales administrators not fully understanding how to use and implement the SC, or inflexible contracting officers. For example, contractors charge that Contracting Officers, not understanding the overall objectives, will not allow variance from the contractor’s proposal, regardless of changed or unanticipated conditions on the ground such as weather, etc. The White Mountain Project has stimulated business in Northern Arizona. In 2006, they reported 13 businesses involved and 10 product categories. A number of logging operations have developed niches in SC and other contracts aimed at managing low-value material. In many cases, this involves diversifying to include some form of processing as well. Pellet manufacturing is increasingly viewed as an economical biomass outlet, especially when operated in conjunction with other forest products manufacturing. Several national businesses have emerged to capitalize on SC, although none of the projects in the 2007 sample was awarded to business based outside the region and many are local to the project area.

Many projects continue to experience “no bids” or bad experiences during the contract because either the **contracts are too complex or the product value simply too low for a business to break even**. In some cases, agency staff has not accurately estimated product values and/or project costs. Many priority acres tend to produce the lowest value timber, especially on BLM pinyon-juniper woodlands.

Business interests continually state that **longer-term contracts with a mix of merchantable sawtimber along side the “biomass”** is imperative for making SC work. A five to ten year range allows for market vagaries and ability to develop employees. Most local business owners want to be treated as partners in management and when at the table early on tend to better understand agency objectives as well as the cost and promise of SC.

**Collaboration mostly begins at a macro level where people engage over a watershed or species building trust over time.** People rally around concern over wildlife, noxious weeds, die-off, wildfire risks, etc. This provides a foundation for SC use as a tool where appropriate. Success is not a public meeting but multiple meetings and multiple publics. Agreement over problems leads to solutions and eventually the tools.

**Projects are successful socially, environmentally and economically when a well rounded group of interests have interacted and talked through issues and where a strong partner has shared the lead.** Examples include industry as in the White Mountain Project, counties in Colorado, the Utah Center. This vetting and risk sharing process benefits the agency because conflict is foreseen, capacity within industry and community is assessed, and in some cases additional resources are introduced.

After promises for treatment and outcomes have been made, **it is imperative that work proceed in a reasonable timeframe and that communication continues.** Projects that languish, serve to actually hinder progress because people lose confidence and patience.

**Ability and commitment from those in leadership positions** heavily influences the use and success of SC. In situations where Forest Supervisors or Rangers see SC as another tool for implementing management objectives with community buy-in, success follows. The adage, “everything rises and falls on leadership” continually comes to mind when analyzing SC. Only projects with a leader or leaders engaged seem to realize success. The leadership element becomes clear early on in interviews regarding the project. It is always an individual forester, community activist, Ranger, Area Manager, Forest Supervisor, County Commissioner or some other engaged person or group that shepherded the project to fruition.

**What are the predominant problems in engaging communities in USFS and BLM stewardship contracts? What are suggestions for improving the current situation for both agencies?**

USFS Region 2 is working diligently to release an RFP for a long-term SC on Colorado’s Front Range covering parts of both the Pike-San Isabel and Arapahoe-Roosevelt National Forests. The current plan is to offer 4,000 acres a year for ten years with the potential for up to 10,000 acres a year, if funding is available. Colorado’s “Red Zone” or area at greatest risk for fire and property loss is 6 million acres. The Hayman fire in 2002 burned 130,000 acres and had an estimated price tag of \$200 million. The Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership is an alliance that formed out of the Hayman experience and serves as the collaborating body for the large SC. They recommend 45,000 acres accomplished each year. There is an obvious disconnect between what the partnership wants to happen and what the Forest Service feels they can realistically do with anticipated funding. There are a number of stumbling blocks not unique to Colorado including:

- The Forest Service must set aside money for a cancellation ceiling required by federal law. The contract package will not be offered for bid until the policy is either waived or funded. The Region has asked the Washington Office for permission to keep the cancellation clause but forego banking the anticipated \$4 million. All parties, and the Colorado Congressional delegation, support a legislative remedy, which would benefit stewardship contracting nationally.
- The closest mill is 300 miles and there are no significant biomass outlets.
- Business in the state is not seen as “working well together” though it is hoped that the landscape nature of the project will allow for discussions around larger objectives.
- State air quality constraints make for short burn windows and smoke issues.
- The Front Range is so populous it is hard to manage input.

- The majority of priority acres are challenging in terms of access and product leading to high per acre costs.

### **Public Interest**

It is apparent in nearly all interviews with non-agency “partners” that they are generally unaware of stewardship contracting (SC) as a tool to facilitate work on public lands. This is often in spite of agency efforts to explain or educate around SC. In 98 percent of the projects on this year’s list, work is aimed specifically at fuels reduction around subdivisions and towns. People are engaged by a need to get this work done and support it. Non-resource professionals are generally not interested in the tool only the outcome. People collaborate around improvement of a watershed, fire risk reduction, economic development etc. Communities, in general, care most about jobs, tax base, and public safety. These issues must be linked to SC in order to engage them.

Their complaints focus on the slow pace with which progress is made or a fear that access to the Forest will be cut-off or limited. Agency delays in implementing work supported by homeowner associations or other groups collaborated around sometimes years past foster mistrust and frustration toward the agency. Where some level of work is moving forward, collaboration is reported as high and trust in the agency on the rise. The Colorado Front Range project, though not underway, has benefited from two years of discussions in many forums. Interest in the smaller communities and awareness of forest health/fire issues has risen. Keeping people interested and supportive hinges on clear communication about timeframes along with regular progress updates.

### **Business Needs and Capacity**

Local business capacity for and interest in SC is important. A number of contractors were interviewed and all portrayed an attitude of the work as being something of a service to the forest in addition to a livelihood. They see it as a move toward greater consistency of management and thus opportunities. None seem to anticipate great profits but see it as a chance to work in their “own backyard” and develop employees. A few businesses waded into SC thinking it a profitable opportunity but found it to be much more labor intensive than reflected in their bids. They are concerned in addition, that other contracting tools such as service contracts and timber sales will be abandoned with a focus on SC.

All of the SC within this region are held by local or regionally based business. There are a handful of businesses in the region that have developed something of a niche around SC and may in fact be doing well financially despite a steep learning curve on bidding and managing SC. A number of projects have non-commercial outfits doing the work e.g. volunteer fire departments.

Scale and length are important topics for business. In general, business leans toward longer-term and flexible more so than large acreage projects. A longer project allows for businesses to both establish and flow with markets as well as develop employees. Larger projects with somewhat simple objectives are not a barrier so much as projects with a long list of tasks exceeding the ability of one small business. Region 2 reported issuing a request for information from bidders three years ago and that the industry response was that bigger and longer was preferred. The agencies are accused of focusing on small projects because they tend to escape the attention of environmental special interests yet they also fail to attract the attention of bidders and communities. Certainly, large scale projects illicit greater public attention and for some a fear of attracting large, incompatible industry.

The complexity and volume of contracts in general, not just SC, is considered a problem for small businesses. A Team member commented, “The contracts are complex and you are dealing with un-complex people who don’t want to do so much paper work.” A long-term agency forester responded, “I never had a contractor not bid because the contract was too complex. If he failed to bid it was because I

couldn't explain the contract objectives." His point being that the agency should get clear about what they want and then industry will be able to implement if the terms are fair.

Information exchange meetings or "bidder workshops" can improve businesses ability to handle SC bidding and management. These gatherings should focus on two-way communication between industry, agency and other interests along side the technical ins and outs of the SC.

### **Stewardship Contracts**

Since the pilot program ended, both agencies have imposed loose targets for SC leading to a sense from the field that it was a program without funding rather than just a new tool. Many foresters have felt frustrated over being forced to use a tool that they didn't understand, didn't fit their resource, is very restrictive and carries a demand for excessive reporting. Like business, many foresters know that SC can't contain all of their management needs and that a full mix of contracting instruments is needed.

Bonding requirements for SC have been an issue since the pilots. Businesses complain that huge bonds tie up capital needed to run their operation. The White Mountain Project and others have found ways locally to relieve some of this burden by requiring bonds by cutting units and other methods; it appears that local units could use more assistance from the Washington Office on this issue.

### **Leadership and Partnering**

The foresters charged with developing SC packages must have support from line officers at multiple layers, especially if larger or politically charged projects are to be successful. This leadership extends to active involvement in developing partnership relationships and community outreach. Too many foresters are expected to single handedly develop contracts and facilitate community partnerships in addition to existing workloads.

There is much evidence for the benefits of partnerships between the USFS and BLM with state forestry, counties, fire districts and other governmental or quasi-governmental entities. It is important that those relationships start with the leadership and trickle down throughout the ranks. These partner organizations are generally closer to the communities and their sentiments. It is important too because in this region the costs involved with the work needed are quite high – economically, socially and ecologically. Tackling the issues associated with these landscapes requires banding of federal, state, and local governments as well as non-profits and community groups. Pete Morton of the Wilderness Society submitted written comments that in essence assert that there is evidence nationally that treatments which are not followed up with prescribed burning in some cases do more harm to ecosystems. He points out the important need to match budgets with treatment plans long-term.

### **What successes have emerged within this region for engaging communities in USFS and BLM stewardship contracting? What fostered these successes for both agencies?**

The WM Project is the largest project nationally and has documented a great deal of success in terms of collaboration, monitoring, economic impact, and land treatment. See these links for detailed facts and lessons learned: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/asnf/stewardship/>  
[http://www.eri.nau.edu/joomla/files/NewsEvents/ERI\\_Bklet\\_WhiteMtns\\_S-1.pdf](http://www.eri.nau.edu/joomla/files/NewsEvents/ERI_Bklet_WhiteMtns_S-1.pdf)

Northern Arizona and the Apache-Sitgraves in particular have a long history of leadership and partnering around forest issues. A natural resources working group has been meeting and engaging communities for nearly ten years. Forest Supervisor Elaine Zieroth has been highly engaged with the project and commissioned the multi-party White Mountain Monitoring Board through a percentage of receipts from the contract.

A great deal of business growth and development around the SC and associated needs has been documented. When the project was announced, two private businesses formed a Limited Liability Corporation in order to tackle the 150,000 acre Stewardship Contract. According to handouts provided by Dennis Dwyer, Region 3 SC Coordinator, there are now 13 businesses directly involved with harvesting or receiving wood product from the WM Project.

The Greater Flagstaff Forest Partnership has been a major conduit for collaboration and research as well as managing SC throughout central Arizona since the late 1990s. [www.gffp.org/](http://www.gffp.org/)

In Southern Utah, the non-profit Center is bidding on contracts, assuming all the financial risk and then sub-contracting work in smaller chunks to those businesses capable. They have numerous projects underway and have instigated a revival of interest in wood products and economic development. The Center was created to assist with capacity building in the business community. It evolved from efforts by local governments to institute a sustained yield unit covering public lands in Southern Utah and parts of Northern Arizona. Instead they received a small earmark to get started and the promise that 20 percent of the federal offerings for management in the area would be SC.

<http://extension.usu.edu/forestry/Reading/Assets/PDFDocs/UFN/UFN0902.pdf>

### **What Fostered Success?**

- Leadership from usually more than one entity but one competent leader can get the ball rolling as well as coordination among multiple agencies and entities.
- A business, group or organization formed to walk along side the agency in developing and/or implementing the project. There is an indication that this element helps successfully move SC forward in terms of collaboration and the associated risks.
- Community Wildfire Protection Planning (CWPP) has been an excellent platform for initiating discussion, identifying risks, and engaging individual communities and subdivisions
- A history of working together and problem solving as with the Northern Arizona Natural Resources Working Group. They also have the advantage of tight-knit communities closely related geographically and culturally as well as a distinct sense of wanting to bring back a way of life.
- Consistency in staff. Staff turn-over without carrying on commitments hurts communities and collaborative efforts
- Long-term commitment at all levels
- Agencies accurately projecting what material will be removed annually and staying actively involved with key partners.
- Good relationships between agency and SC broker e.g. Southern Utah Center, LLC in northern Arizona, Jackson County in Colorado leading to flexibility in contract negotiations
- Honest brokers as listed above to help contractors wade through complexities and risks.

### **What are the major perceived benefits of USFS and BLM stewardship contracts to communities within this region?**

- Addressing issues such as ecosystem services, insect and disease, fire risk, etc.
- Getting more work accomplished for less money through partnerships.
- Better communication and goal sharing as on-going “advisory” type groups continue to meet and work through issues.
- Evolution of individual Districts or Resource Areas in understanding SC and local industry
- Growth in existing small businesses and start-ups

**Northern Rockies Regional Multi-Party Monitoring Team  
USDA/Forest Service Stewardship End-Result Contracting  
Fiscal Year 2007 Report**

In preparing this report the Northern Rockies Regional Team (see Appendix A) considered information from a number of sources, including but not limited to telephone interviews conducted by the Pinchot Institute for Conservation through its regional subcontractor, and team members' personal observations of and experiences with stewardship contracting. Based on this information, the team formulated its responses to the three sets of questions posed to it at the beginning of the fiscal year.

**A. *What are the predominant problems in engaging communities in USDA/Forest Service stewardship contracting projects? What are the team's suggestions for improving the current situation?***

"The predominant problem in engaging communities," said one team member, "is that Forest Service personnel don't know what they're trying to engage the communities for."

Overall, the roles that communities are playing in stewardship contracting are relatively limited in scope and fall well short of being collaborative, not surprising given the widely varying definitions of collaboration that the involved Forest Service personnel have:

- *"[It's] when we send the scoping letter and hold open houses and folks come in and comment – if we could address any concerns that they did have. That's collaborative in that if you could address their concerns you never heard from them again."*
- *"A meeting of the minds – where you get groups to come together and kick around the rocks a little bit and weigh different alternatives and try to come up with a solution to a common problem."*
- *"We identified opportunities, service items – things we thought we could achieve that would be workable for a bidder and not too exotic for them to be involved with – and then presented that to the [community leaders] and county commissioners."*
- *"Making their interests known and listening to use, and getting educated, and field trips. Letting them teach us, and having us carry that information forward and developing alternatives."*

The most reported types of participation (cited in 12 of the 14 Forest Services projects surveyed in the region) were "providing comments and recommendations", "becoming informed", and "representing concerned/affected interests". Only half of the projects reported communities being involved in project planning and design or in monitoring, and just slightly over 40% had communities involved in developing alternatives, provision of technical information, NEPA analysis, or project implementation. Two projects (implemented through the use of retained receipts) reported no community engagement at all.

Some agency interviewees felt there was no need for community engagement in their projects:

- *"We had the project sitting there ready to go, and were just waiting for funding. The stewardship part of this was solely for a funding mechanism."*
- *"[The collaboration] was [in preparing] the county wildfire plan."*

Others perceived the problem as a lack of public interest:

- *"The community was invited to participate. I would have liked to sit down with them, but no one was interested. It would have been a whole lot different than doing other kinds of NEPA if anyone had been interested."*
- *"They had the opportunity to comment on this project during NEPA, but they didn't."*

Sometimes there was frustration because of key stakeholders' unwillingness to participate:

- *“We tried repeatedly to get [two environmental organizations] to come on field tours [and other things]. We tried and tried and tried to engage them in a productive manner, in some say other than litigation.*

But a number felt their community participation efforts had been effective, particularly because useful information was shared between agency and community:

- *“I think there’s a real opportunity to maybe early on identify opportunities for different interests that they can achieve – work to be done on a campground, trailheads, fisheries, etc.”*
- *“I made a lot of headway with private landowners by walking on their land with them, then crossing the fence and walking on our land with them, and getting them to see the connection – understanding that just because there’s a fence there, the forest doesn’t end.”*
- *“Listening to how involved they wanted to be was really important for this group, and letting them set the tone. We said, ‘Whatever you guys want to do,’ and we tried to stay true to that.”*

### **The team’s recommendations**

1. Community engagement in stewardship contracting should be part of a broader strategic plan for public participation that is collaboratively developed and carried out on each National Forest.
2. The agency has many skilled communicators and collaborators working at various levels and in various positions. They should be identified and involved in developing appropriate training, technical assistance, and mentoring programs to pass their skills on to others. Those trained should include all personnel who will be involved in stewardship contracting, not just project planners. Non-agency participants should also be included in
3. Community members and other stakeholders should be invited to participate in stewardship-related training programs along with agency personnel. The training curricula available on the Forest Service web site should be modified to include the roles that non-agency participants can/should play in stewardship contracting, from participating in the development of contracts, to the selection/weighting of the criteria used in determining “best value”, to serving on the technical review panel and participating in project monitoring.
4. Having good collaboration skills – and having demonstrated the ability to use them – should be among the selection criteria for agency positions which are likely to involve considerable interaction with the public.
5. Effective participation in collaborative efforts should be recognized in performance appraisals, nominations for agency awards, and other appropriate means. Non-agency collaborators should be acknowledged and honored as well.
6. Collaboration in stewardship contracting (as in other venues) is a long-term process, not a box to be checked off as “done”. It requires the development and maintenance of a continuing relationship in which mutual trust and respect are forged over time among the participants. Agency participants need to be able to take the time to build those relationships as part of their job, not as another add-onto it.
7. Agency staff need not lead or facilitate collaborative efforts. There are an ever-growing number of capable entities, such as local community forestry groups and watershed councils, who can help in that and other ways. Their assistance should be sought and welcomed.
8. If the “Secure Schools/County Payments” legislation (or something akin to it) is funded by Congress, its RACs or other advisory bodies should provide a good starting point for stimulating community engagement.
9. Collaboration needs to lead to action. People must see some results of their efforts if they are to remain motivated and engaged.

**B. What successes have emerged within the region for engaging communities in stewardship contracting? What fostered those successes?**

The Hungry Horse-West Glacier Stewardship, Blankenship Fuels, Eastshore Fuels, and Holland-Pierce projects on the Flathead National Forest all were successful in engaging communities in project planning, implementation, and/or monitoring. A key factor was intensive outreach, and among the most effective activities were:

- One-on-one meetings. The project leader on Holland-Pierce went door to door to meet with people living near the project. A team member notes, *“He made huge inroads in changing attitudes towards [Forest Service land management]. When the agency actually modified project plans as a result of community input, that was very well perceived.”*
- Taking advantage of opportunities to meet with stakeholders on their own turf. The person who led the outreach on the Eastshore Project said, *“The community is agriculturally oriented and has two community clubhouses. They meet a lot, and have potlucks and stuff, and we asked to be invited to their regularly scheduled meetings.”* The agency also asked for a slot on the agenda at the annual meeting of an environmental group which has not always been friendly toward the Forest Service in order to discuss the proposed project and seek the group’s input and involvement. In all the community outreach meetings, *“Never once did we use a Forest Service building.”*
- Field tours. Tours were provided for individuals and groups, project area residents, local business people, volunteer fire chiefs, contractors, school groups, and others. The trips provided an opportunity for the agency not only to discuss its ideas, but also to tap local knowledge and experience to better inform its plans and proposed activities.
- Working with existing collaborative groups. Enlisting the aid of such groups helped the agency get more community participation in project planning, better project proposals (as a result of a contractors’ training program put together by one local group), implementation of project goals across boundaries (with several groups helping landowners in their areas get cost-share grants to do compatible fuels reduction work on private property adjacent to or near treated National Forest lands) and monitoring (with one group even raising funds to help pay for a joint agency-community monitoring program).

The American River and Crooked River projects on the Nez Perce National Forest effectively used small informational meetings and listening sessions to engage the public. Those projects also involved the Nez Perce Tribe in implementing restoration activities that address both agency and tribal goals.

Local multi-party monitoring team members and participants in the Boise National Forest’s four pilot projects met in May 2007 to share their lessons learned over the last eight years. Many related to community engagement:

- Do active outreach early so the public can be involved in project development
- Be deliberate about spending “community capital” on stewardship projects. Use people’s time wisely.
- Look for opportunities for public field trips during all phases of a project. Site visits can increase public understanding of a project and help reduce conflict among citizens and the agency.
- Include diverse/“extreme” interests in your citizens/stewardship group. That produces a better project. Handpick those people and incentivize their participation.
- Ensure key stakeholder interests are represented at every collaborative group meeting. On the North Kennedy project, *“If someone wasn’t going to be [at a meeting], the other members of the group agreed that, to the best of their ability, they would try to represent the interests of those who were not there.”*
- Document and publicly share the “stewardship story” and how projects worked. *“The Forest Service missed a real opportunity in not publicizing [the project] more widely. It was the kind of effort that people would have really appreciated, particularly now when they can go up there and see the results”.*

**C. What are the major perceived benefits of Forest Service stewardship contracts to communities within the region?**

Specific project outcomes – needed restoration work getting done on the ground – topped by a wide margin the list of benefits cited by interviewees. Forest Service people usually view stewardship contracting as a tool that provides resources (particularly funding) that otherwise would not have been available. Non-agency interviewees, in contrast, focus less on the financial aspects and more on working collaboratively to address shared land management goals. Other major perceived benefits (listed in descending order) include: more on the ground work accomplished by local contractors; increased collaboration; improved public trust; improved efficiency and effectiveness; and more local jobs.

Forest Service employees often qualified their assessment of the benefits of stewardship contracting with concerns about the complexity and time-consuming nature of putting together a successful project:

- *“A lot of people who haven’t done [a stewardship project] and general management might not really understand [the time involved]. It’s not like kicking a standard timber sale out the door.”*
- *“It reminds me of the old poster of the cowboy saying, ‘There’s a lot about this job that they didn’t tell me when I signed on.’ It takes a lot more up-front energy than the agency is used to doing or funded to do.”*

Some community members have concerns about time as well, particularly the time it takes to get work going on the ground:

- *“These projects have the potential for being good for all involved. The potential is there, but getting it out the other end is always the problem.”*
- *“I get frustrated with some of the delays. I know they have a whole different set of rules, but sometimes they trip over themselves trying to satisfy everybody.”*

## **The Team’s Comments and Recommendations**

**1. Calculating the “Return on Investment” for the time invested in the stewardship contracting process could help both agency and non-agency participants get a better sense of the value of collaboration.** The Forest Service’s Northern Region, for instance, believes it is having a higher success rate in the number of its projects being implemented through stewardship contracting, with the incidence of appeals and litigation trending downward. And the monitoring of the pilots on the Boise National Forest indicated that “work on the ground may occur more quickly – and be more visible – through stewardship contracting.”

**2. Using retained receipts to fund a project should not exempt it from seeking community involvement.** Sometimes after a community group has been engaged in multiple stewardship contracting projects, the improved trust and understanding built over the course of those projects may reduce the time members feel they need to spend in collaboration on later projects. However, most communities will want to have a voice in the selection and prioritization of project areas and activities, and in the determination of how any retained receipts will be spent. At least one Forest in the region has created a special “pool” into which retained receipts from various projects are deposited and later drawn on to fund restoration activities accomplished through stand-alone stewardship projects which have had no community engagement of their own. In one case, the contractor performing the project work did not even know he was working on a stewardship project. Members of the collaborative group(s) who were involved in the projects that generated the retained receipts should be involved in deciding how they are spent.

**3. If a RAC provided funds to a project which subsequently had retained receipts, reimbursement of the RAC’s funds should be a permitted activity,** with the RAC determining their future use. Ideally, of course, enough needed service items would be included in projects (as mandatory or optional activities) to preclude the accumulation of retained receipts.

**4. Flexibility in contract development and administration needs to be preserved.** The use of integrated resource contracts has provided a definite benefit in helping break down the “stovepiping” that previously kept timber, silviculture, fuels, recreation, and wildlife each “*working in our own little areas.*” On the other hand, there are concerns about “*just defaulting and adopting many of our stringent timber sale clauses straight across the board without a good rationale....If we’re going to successfully implement stewardship...we need a dialogue, not just, ‘You can’t do that because the manual says you can’t.’*” Some other concerns:

- When a market-related delay in harvesting commercial timber is allowed in an IRTC contract, the timing and logistics for the performance of the service items should be re-examined and, if appropriate, revised.
- Changes in on-the-ground conditions, new scientific information, or other factors may result in a service activity not originally included in the contract to become of more importance than one of the original service items. The contracting officer on either an IRTC or and IRSC should have the flexibility to drop or add items to deal with such identified needs. This is particularly critical given the increased use of multiyear contracts, where adaptive management may be essential to success.

**5. Contracting processes need further simplification.** A number of agency personnel and contractors interviewed said that their interest in doing further stewardship contracting projects has been dampened by the complexity of the process.

- From a contractor: “*The work on our end is just incredible. [Preparing a bid’s] like doing a doctoral thesis...Normally you have a little flexibility [in a contract], but they want all the specifics up front, and then if you change things, you have to go back and work with the Contracting Officer. Every time I make a change in my operating schedule, I have to go back and change all these technical reports.*”
- From a project administrator: “*There’s a lot of paperwork. You have to check the checkers. We’re not crooks. I don’t know why they think we’re trying to do something wrong. I was the contracting officer, and then the resources people would check me, and then we had to send stuff in to the regional office so that they could bless it.*”

**6. Not only timber contracting officers, but also procurement officers and agency specialists involved in designing and/or evaluating stewardship contracts need to be familiar with current logging techniques and equipment in order to be able to effectively evaluate best value bids.** Field demonstrations of state-of-the-art technologies and/or the use of videos of various types of equipment in action could be useful learning tools. Contractors should also be encouraged to be more informative in their bids. Instead of just stating that they will “machine thin and pile with a log processor”, they should include information such as make and model, whether the equipment is wheeled or tracked, its width, and its operational capabilities.

**7. Some off-Forest work should be considered for inclusion, as appropriate, in IRSCs.** In standard timber sales and in stewardship contracting agreements, some work on county roads and bridges used to access project sites on National Forests can be included in the contract or agreement. This same opportunity should be available in IRSCs.

## **Pacific West Regional Team Report 2007**

Using the regional data obtained from phone interviews and their own personal knowledge and experience, the regional team was asked to discuss and provide feedback/recommendations on the 3 following questions:

- 1.) What are the predominant problems in engaging communities in USFS stewardship contracts? BLM Stewardship Contracts? What are suggestions for improving the current situation for both agencies?
- 2.) What successes have emerged within this region for engaging communities in USFS stewardship contracts? BLM stewardship contracting? What fostered these successes for both agencies?
- 3.) What are the major benefits of USFS and BLM stewardship contracts to communities within this region?

The regional team was quite small this year (8 participants) but the participation, knowledge and insight from the group was invaluable. Each of the participating members are considered to be experts in stewardship contracting and collaboration and the information they provided is incredibly informative and useful.

### **1. What are the predominant problems in engaging communities in USFS stewardship contracts? BLM Stewardship Contracts? What are suggestions for improving the current situation for both agencies?**

The regional team immediately identified a lack of understanding about collaboration and the collaborative process as a barrier to effectively engaging communities. They also identified a general lack of understanding about the mechanism of stewardship contracting altogether.

“If the agency doesn’t know the stewardship contracting tool well enough to show the benefit to the community, then people won’t want to come to the meetings.”

“We need to do better training with our line-officers about stewardship contracting and collaboration but when we do offer trainings we get very limited participation especially from the line-officers.”

The definition and understanding of collaboration continues to be muddled for agency personnel. Often times the expectations around collaboration are unclear, and the degree to which they should be collaborating undefined. We found through the survey that collaboration can range from upfront collaboration focusing on project design, to simply using the NEPA scoping process or pre-bid meeting to satisfy the collaborative component of stewardship contracting.

In many of the projects surveyed this year the participation from the community was limited, which was reflected in the availability of additional non-agency contacts to be surveyed. In some instances the lack of collaboration stemmed from the belief that collaboration was unnecessary or not desired (because of the lack of initial participation after solicitation of the project.)

“We need to recognize that all communities are different in terms of their interest to collaborate on projects. Collaboration can not be force-fed to a community.”

In other instances collaboration had occurred at a much earlier time, during the formation of a specific stewardship group or other intermediary group, and the collaboration necessary on a project-by-project basis lessened. The restoration goals and objectives had already been set, the rules established and the trust built. This actually decreased the upfront collaboration necessary for each project and decreased the active participation of the community over time.

The regional team also identified meeting time, logistics and resources as a barrier to successful engagement of communities. Participants who are participating as part of their job often want to have meetings held during the day where as community members who are participating outside of their professions may feel like they can only meet in the evenings. This can affect the outcome of meeting participation as can meeting location. Drive time, especially in rural locations can be long and tedious and can limit the desire and ability to participate.

“Compensation for meeting participation isn’t always available. But in some instances it would really help.”

#### **THE TEAM’S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

1. There is a need for more training on stewardship contracting around collaboration, contracting, etc. In instances where agency personnel had participated in trainings the projects seemed to run smoother and be more successful.
2. Line officers need to attend these meetings. They are the people who are out working with the public and implementing the projects. They need to be educated about stewardship contracting and collaboration.
3. Be creative with the training tools that are developed. Use peer-to peer learning; connect forests that have had successful projects with those who are struggling.
4. Partner with organizations and intermediary groups who have been successful in their collaboration and let them help with the outreach, organization and facilitation of the collaborative groups.
5. Tap into existing social networks of people who care about the issues that are being addressed. (Fire safe councils, conservation/restoration groups, recreation groups, etc)
6. Use multiple outreach methods. Be creative in the way you try to engage people. It will take more than a mailing. Be prepared to do phone calls and field tours and hold meetings.
7. Help people to understand the benefits of collaboration by celebrating the successes. Post write-ups of successful projects on the FS website with quotes from the participating employees.
8. Rotate meeting times and locations to allow for different interest groups/individuals to participate.
9. The use of intermediary groups seems to be invaluable. As an example of a successful model one meeting participant explained that Australia has a federally funded natural resource facilitator’s network which has institutionalized intermediary groups and has

proven to be quite valuable. Something like that would almost certainly be valuable in the support of collaboration and stewardship contracting.

## **2. What successes have emerged within this region for engaging communities in USFS stewardship contracts? BLM stewardship contracts? What fostered these successes for both agencies?**

The regional team identified several places within regions 5 and 6 where successful collaboration has occurred and continues to occur. They are: in Oregon: on the Mt. Hood, Gifford Pinchot, Siuslaw, Lake View, and the Willamette. In Washington: on the Colville and surrounding areas. In California: on the El Dorado and the Trinity. There are certainly more successes than have been included in this list, but these have been identified for this report by the regional team.

In most instances successful collaboration and community involvement required intensive outreach efforts often times conducted by an existing community group. Community, stewardship and other intermediary groups were cited as integral to the collaborative process in most of these cases. In some instances the groups are so established that they take on a role or view and commenting on each stewardship proposal that comes up on their respective forests and the agency has come to trust them as a sounding board and very valuable partner.

It was also recognized that in most but not all of these projects a collective vision of restoration and community benefit was developed by the participants in these groups which set the foundation for the collaboration, development of trust and support for projects that followed.

In almost all instances of success an agency champion was identified. This was usually a person who was willing to take a personal interest in the success of the group, was willing to take risks and believed in the potential benefits of collaboration and stewardship contracting. The group identified that in addition to having an enthusiastic implementer, the forest supervisor must be in support of the project.

“It really just takes one level of agency leadership to not be interested/supportive to sidetrack the process – if there isn’t enthusiasm all along the FS chain, then that’s all it takes to get the project hung up. It just takes one clot to block an artery.”

## **3. What are the major perceived benefits of USFS and BLM stewardship contracts to communities within this region?**

Throughout the Pacific West regions the perceived community benefits reported in the surveys by both agency and non-agency interviewees were dominated by local economic benefit. More work being done by local contractors, more local jobs, and other local economic benefits seemed to be highlighted as goals in the design and implementation of stewardship projects and as such were perceived as potential and actual local benefit.

Specific project outcomes were seen as benefits as well, but varied between regions. Regional team members from region 5 identified community wildfire protection both in and outside the WUI as a local benefit, where as members from region 6 cited the creation of late successional habitat and aquatic restoration as beneficial outcomes.

The regional team also focused on the benefit of being able to create a consistent program of work for local contractors, which allows them to build their capacity and invest in new equipment. Stewardship contracting is also seen, in its ability to stimulate supply, as a piece of the puzzle to creating infrastructure around small diameter material and biomass removal. It also provides logs to the existing mills to help deter the continued loss of infrastructure in the west.

Agency and non-agency interviewees and regional team members recognized the potential benefit to create mutual trust and understanding among participants, increase ownership over specific projects and, through acknowledgment of both community members and agency personnel, a sense of usefulness and shared accomplishment.

#### Additional Recommendations

1. Through both the regional team meeting and surveys, we learned that there is a need to increase early contractor participation in project development. FS staff and community members cited the value of contractor's experience in developing projects that work operationally and economically, which is critical to achieving on-the-ground outcomes. This could also avoid stewardship contracts not being awarded do to unexpectedly high bids.
2. The team identified a need for funding project-level monitoring of on-the-ground outcomes. Achieved either through the use of appropriated funds or retained receipts, it is critical to building trust among collaborators and facilitating the successful development of future stewardship contracts.
3. The team saw a pressing need to correlate FS project accomplishment data (the standard data they collect and report on economic and environmental outcomes) with the data being collected by the Pinchot Institute and partners. It will better illustrate the relationships between community involvement, benefits, and other project outcomes and outputs.
4. Finally, the team saw a need to collect quantitative data on the extent and nature of community economic benefits. The surveys simply collect perceived or expected benefits. Quantitative data is necessary to evaluate the true impacts of stewardship contracts for local communities.