



# U.S. Forest Service

## Quarterly Partnership Updates

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April 22, 2016

**Topic:** Quarterly Partnership Updates for the National Leadership Council – January-March 2016

**Issue:** In the second quarter of fiscal year 2016 (FY16) numerous regions, stations, and areas (RSAs) embraced partnerships to make noteworthy progress toward achieving the Forest Service (USFS) mission. Forest Service partnerships continue generating innovative solutions, leveraging resources, and delivering benefits for both agency and partner stakeholders. A few highlights from the last quarter include:

- The Forest Service and the National Forest Foundation (NFF) have developed a new, improved forest management methodology that would generate carbon offsets for improved forest management that would prevent increased emissions from high intensity wildfire.
- Region 8 (R8) worked with a local foundation to employ Atlanta youth and improve community access to a city nature preserve.
- The Rocky Mountain Research Station (RMRS) partnered with several organizations to guarantee drinking water quality following the High Park Fire of 2012.

Brief summaries are provided below to provide more on these and other partnership successes from the second quarter of FY16 from across the agency.

### **High Performance Partnerships**

*Carbon Sequestration Partnership:* NFF, with Forest Service support, has developed a new improved forest management methodology that would generate carbon offsets for improved forest management which prevents increased emissions as a result of high intensity wildfire. This methodology will be submitted for consideration with the American Carbon Registry shortly. In addition, the Forest Service will be carrying out replanting and stocking surveys on the San Juan National Forest this summer as part of the reforestation carbon offset pilot project there.

*Baltimore Wood Project:* The Forest Service's Baltimore Field Station and the national Forest Products Lab have been working with the city of Baltimore and local partners to rethink the city's urban wood waste. The cooperative effort is designing new ways to salvage, sort, and process wood from two waste streams (deconstructed buildings and tree care activities) and advance local reuse and new markets. The Forest Service and partners launched a [Baltimore Wood Project](#) website in March to showcase the innovative thinking and partnerships involved. The Baltimore Field Station hosted three "urban field tours" in February and March that highlighted Baltimore Wood Project efforts for agency leadership, S&PF colleagues, and the Forest Research Advisory Council. Looking forward, the Forest Service will be fostering an urban wood network of suppliers and local users, including woodworkers and artisans, to create linkages, value, and information transparency where market connections are needed.

*USFS and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) executives explore partnership in urban natural resources stewardship:* On March 29, the Chief, Associate Chief, Deputy Chief Weldon and other Forest Service staff met with executives and urban staff from TNC to explore partnership opportunities to work together in cities. They agreed to prioritize nature-based approaches focusing on better health and education outcomes, connecting with youth through meaningful outdoor experiences and career ladders, influencing regional resilience activities through science and technical assistance, and promoting green industry solutions for economic development. Key interlocutors could include mayors, educators, regional

planners, and city and corporate sustainability leaders. The group agreed to use the results of this first conversation as a basis for identifying and incubating key collaborative opportunities over the next few months.

## **RSA Summaries**

*Southern Utah Sustainable Operations Partnership (SOP) in R4 is connecting communities with sustainability.* The SOP encourages the voluntary use of sustainable practices to reduce the risk of climate change. Partners benefit from the use of these practices while supporting renewable energy, water conservation, alternative fuels, waste reduction and recycling, green purchasing and sustainable leadership. The SOP is working with recycling and Green Teams in the school systems, conducting outreach at events and assisting with recycling in communities. In February the SOP team partnered with the Iron County School District to co-host a STEM Festival which was open to all 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders in the District and the general public. Partners in this initiative include the Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Utah Department of Natural Resources, Southern Utah Recycling Coalition, Southern Utah University and Dixie State University. To learn more visit <http://southernutahsop.org/>

*Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to support forest and watershed health in R5.* The Stanislaus National Forest and Regional Office partnered with the state of California to secure a \$70 million HUD grant. This grant will support a “Community and Watershed Resilience Program” in Tuolumne County, an area severely impacted by the 2013 Rim Fire. This new program will support forest and watershed health by developing a bioenergy and wood products facility and a community resilience center, which will result in long-term economically and environmentally sustainable programs that can be replicated throughout California.

*R5 participated in the first visioning session for a potential San Pablo Bay Visitor Center in January.* Meeting urban residents where they live, this center would introduce the public to local wetlands, broader watersheds, basic ecological principles, and the many public lands that are our responsibility and our heritage. Partners in this effort include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the city of Vallejo, National Audubon Society, Friends of San Pablo Bay, and the USFS R5 Regional Office.

*Full Regional Leadership Team (RLT) Signs R6 Sustainable Recreation Strategy.* On March 2 the full Pacific Northwest RLT signed the R6 Sustainable Recreation Strategy. Their 37 signatures lend strength to a strategy which provides the vision, leaders' intent and action-oriented components required to quicken the pace of the Region's cultural shift toward sustainability. Underpinning a set of tools and resources designed to help managers make sound decisions that are ecologically, economically and socially sustainable, the strategy was developed by an integrated team of professionals from across the Region, many of whom are now leading the way in implementation.

*Eleven Collaborative Groups Awarded Community Capacity and Land Stewardship (CCLS) Grants in R6.* The Pacific Northwest Region, in partnership with the NFF and regional conservation partners, has awarded CCLS grants to 11 forest collaboratives in Oregon and Washington. Now in its sixth year, the CCLS program is designed to assist forest collaborative groups and community-based organizations as they remove barriers to landscape-scale restoration projects and create forest-based jobs.

*R8 and the Greening Youth Foundation partner to employ Atlanta youth and improve community access to local nature preserve.* Five young men and women from southwest Atlanta were employed to improve hiking trails, remove exotic species, and stabilize streambanks in Cascade Springs Nature Preserve, a 135-acre oasis located in the heart of Atlanta. Many of the youth employed to improve access to the preserve

lived next to it their whole lives, yet had never been on the other side of the chain link fence surrounding it. The team's work to improve trail safety and access has enlivened the community and built connections that are expected to endure.

*“Green” bat houses connect bats, people, and public lands in R9.* The Organization for Bat Conservation, General Motors Corporation, and Forest Service were recognized at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resource Conference with the 2016 Wings Across the America's Urban Communities in Conservation Award. The packaging covers for the Chevrolet Volt's batteries, a hybrid compact car, are difficult to recycle and are often discarded as scrap waste. To reduce the amount of waste, the covers are now being used in an innovative way – as materials for bat boxes for roosting bats. Through programs developed by the Forest Service's Detroit Urban Connections initiative, community volunteers are constructing these “green” bate boxes, and they're then distributed to forests throughout the Eastern Region.

*R9 partnership advances efforts in the control of invasive feral swine across Ohio.* A newly formed partnership with the Forest Service's sister agency, the Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service, has broadened efforts to control feral swine and increases capacity, pools resources, and enhances collaboration amongst a host of partners. Feral swine have the ability to greatly affect the Appalachian ecosystem – they influence the establishment of native tree species like oaks and hickories, consume or trample sensitive plants, degrade habitat, and compete for food resources and negatively impact other wildlife as a result. To address these issues, seasonal technicians have been hired and supplies, equipment, and materials have been purchased in order to support ground elimination efforts and reconnaissance across a mix of ownerships involving both private and public lands within southern Ohio. This partnership involves a coordinated effort with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and is supported by the National Wild Turkey Federation. Funding for this effort consists of a mix of Forest Service appropriated and Joint Chief's Initiative funds for oak and hickory restoration.

*Northeastern Area S&PF Forest Legacy Program Partnership wins prestigious award.* The innovative Brule St. Croix Forest Legacy Project partnership, led by the Northeastern Area S&PF, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and The Conservation Fund, was awarded a Wings Across the Americas Habitat Conservation Award. The exceptional Brule St. Croix Legacy Forest is important for its valuable water resources and wildlife habitat and, following this partnership's successful three-year effort to secure a conservation easement, will now remain undeveloped in perpetuity. The conservation of this 65,867-acre forest is the result of an initiative started in 2012 by the state of Wisconsin. Acquisition of the conservation easement was completed in two phases: 44,678 acres were conserved in 2012 and an additional 21,189 acres were conserved in 2015. Funding for these acquisitions was provided by Wisconsin's Knowles Nelson Stewardship fund (\$13.2 million) and Forest Service Forest Legacy funding (\$3.8 million). Permanent protection of the forest supports the goal of bringing back from near-extinction the Kirtland's warbler, which has been under recovery planning since 1976.

*Long-term partnership between NRS and University of Vermont yields actionable urban tree canopy mapping.* The University of Vermont's Spatial Analysis Lab (SAL) released the Chicago Regional tree canopy dataset in February. This project, funded by the Forest Service, Morton Arboretum, American Forests and the Bank of America Charitable Foundation, is just the latest in a long-term partnership between the station and the SAL, which has developed extensive canopy cover mapping of urban areas for use by urban planners. The group will continue to expand its efforts and will next be moving to California – work on urban tree canopy assessments for San Diego will begin in April and for Los Angeles this summer. This initiative is helping Forest Service research expand its traditional urban partnership base of city arborists and parks departments to include departments of public health and transportation, public housing partners, and other NGOs.

*Through a collaborative effort, NRS, Northeastern Area S&PF and R9 have 29 projects selected for funding which will reach more than 6,200 fourth graders and 3,100 others. These Every Kid in a Park (EKiP) and More Kids in the Woods funds will allow implementation of a variety of youth and community engagement efforts through the remainder of the fiscal year, including conservation education programming on several forests, summer camps, after school programs, Canoemobile events, and the integration of EKiP and other Forest Service messages into state partner programming. Funded projects are broadly distributed geographically, supporting programming in 16 of the 20 states in R9, and will enable work on 12 national forests and in 6 of our largest urban areas. WO funds totaling \$180,000 are being matched with more than \$215,000 in partner funds from at least 33 partners.*

*RMRS partnership seeks to guarantee drinking water quality from the Cache la Poudre watershed. The High Park Fire of 2012 compromised drinking water supply to more than 250,000 homes and agricultural producers. Water supply to nearby cities was interrupted by impaired water quality and increased operational costs. Previous RMRS research on Front Range fires suggest that stream water nutrient concentrations can help identify priority areas for watershed and stream restoration and also help better assess the watershed consequences of post-fire mulching. So in partnership with the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest, the City of Fort Collins Utilities and the non-profit group Coalition for the Poudre River Watershed, RMRS is working to establish a Citizen Science Water Quality Monitoring Program. Through the local Poudre School District and other local environmental programs, this program will train volunteers to conduct water sampling in the High Park Fire area. This training and the sampling efforts that will result act upon the research RMRS has done previously, support ongoing research activities and educate the public about watershed restoration – connecting students and the community to their water source.*

*PSW grows collaborative research opportunities with California university. PSW kicked off a new partnership with California Polytechnic State University, conducting its first collaborative onsite visit this spring. The visit was a perfect first step for the partnership, allowing university faculty and PSW scientists to discuss the new initiative and opportunities to work together on the Swanton Pacific Ranch (a 3,200 acre living and learning laboratory) and in forest operations, education, and research programs. Discussions dug into facility usage and access, research priorities and collaborative potential, student opportunities, and future goals and next steps. On site visits to potential research areas were also conducted.*

*PNW continues to support restoration and youth engagement efforts in the Green-Duwamish Watershed. The Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition (DRCC), which receives both PNW staff and financial support, secured an Environmental Protection Agency Urban Waters Small Grant that will likely ensure stronger connections between communities, nature, public health, and environmental protection. In addition, the Duwamish Valley Youth Corps, which is led by DRCC, continues its work on tree planting, restoration, and other community-environment projects.*