

Topic: Leadership Intent Document on Nature's Benefits

Background: Our goal for the Pacific Southwest Region is to retain and restore the provision of a broad range of Nature's Benefits to people that come from National Forest Systems lands. To do this, we will build off the R5 Leadership Intent document on Ecological Restoration which states our commitment to restoration-based management and to a renewed focus in the sustainable delivery of ecosystem services, with a Nature's Benefits Leadership Intent document.

“Our commitment to restoration-based management includes a commitment to a renewed sustainable delivery of ecosystem services.”

Ecosystem Services refer to the benefits people receive from healthy natural systems – also known as “Natures's Benefits.” Our intent is to establish a regional vision for integrating, quantifying, and connecting Nature's Benefits into Forest Service Region 5 mission, policies and operations that guide management of CA's National Forests. National Forests provide a comprehensive suite of key benefits including:

- Clean water provision
- Jobs and economic contributions to communities
- Air quality
- Carbon sequestration
- Recreation, wildlife habitat, open space, scenic viewing, cultural and wellness opportunities
- Timber and other wood products

Connecting people and partners to forest benefits they see, feel, hear and rely on in daily lives will increase our capability to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands. Region 5 manages more than 2 million acres of forests and grasslands across California which:

- Provides approximately 50% of the State's water supply, or the equivalent of over 11 trillion gallons;
- Supports over 24,000 jobs and \$2.6 billion in labor income in local communities;
- Stores approximately one-half of all forest carbon in the State, or about 6,000 million metric tons of CO2 equivalent;
- Hosts approximately 24 million recreational visitors who spend about \$2 billion annually in local communities;
- Produces approximately \$72 million in lumber and \$117 million in forest wood products.

Sustaining these and other benefits through collaborative work at the State or landscape level with other partners to prioritize critical forest treatments to achieve common benefits, employs the Agency's Shared Stewardship vision, and connects with its core mission; “to meet the needs of present and future generations”. Furthermore, focusing efforts to increase the knowledge and practice of Ecosystem Services, the Agency established the National Ecosystem Services Strategy Team (NESST) by the Deputy Chiefs in

2013, and ratified the NESST Charter in 2016 the publication of GTR 943, *Integrating Ecosystem Services into National Forest Service Policy and Operations in 2017*. The Region seeks to continue to lead the Agency through efforts to integrate Nature's Benefits into its own policy-making and operations.

The ecosystem services concept helps make the connection to Nature's Benefits from California's National Forests insofar as it involves science, analytical tools, and collaboration to implement a more precise, transparent, and inclusive way of pursuing our mission. Measuring and reporting Nature's Benefits helps define and articulate the value of forests and grasslands to people in more broadly valued contexts. Analytical tools help discover and understand risks and benefits associated with how decisions will affect these benefits. These elements form the basis for actions and communications to create more collaborative and effective relationships with people and communities across the urban and rural continuum. Likewise these efforts allow the Region to meet the needs of a diverse range of northern, central and southern California partners, and through a Shared Stewardship vision to sustain the health of the land.

It is our intent to accomplish the following in the next 10 years:

1. Coordinate how Forest Service integrates Nature's Benefits into decision-making, analysis, and priority setting processes.
 - Incorporate Nature's Benefits information into Land Management Plans and project planning levels to better connect with the interests of a diverse set of partners;
 - Incorporate Nature's Benefits metric into Regional and Forest leadership performance;
 - Region 5 continues to be a leader and innovator in the integration and implementation of Nature's Benefits with forest stewardship within the USFS and nationally.

2. Quantify and Communicate the Value of National Forests and Impacts of Management Actions in Terms of Benefits to People.
 - Standardized tools are provided for widespread Forest Service use to quantify and communicate the values of and project effects on key Nature's Benefits;
 - Increase current Forest and Regional level data that connect and quantify Nature's Benefits to key water, recreation, and carbon stakeholders;
 - Forest leadership and staff regularly communicate the Ecosystem Service benefits from forests and forest restoration, resulting in broader stakeholder engagement and investment in forest stewardship.

3. Connect Providers and Beneficiaries of Ecosystem Services.
 - Each National Forest has a diverse portfolio of ongoing partnerships based on the desire for sustainability of Nature's Benefits;
 - Expand recognition of mutual interest and mutual benefit of forest restoration beyond the forestry sector in CA to the non-Forestry sector. (e.g. agricultural and industrial sectors);



- U.S. Congressional and State Congressional delegations understand the Nature's Benefits outcomes associated with forest restoration, the risks associated with inaction, and how it affects their constituents' well-being;
- Innovative financing tools and mechanisms have been thoroughly tested and piloted, and are increasing in use across the region as part of an established toolbox.

Focusing on Ecosystem Services offers people and communities the opportunity to become more knowledgeable about where the daily benefits they rely on come from, therefore become more interested in engaging in sustainability. By focusing our work on the integration and communication of Nature's Benefits, the Agency and State's vision of shared stewardship is strengthened and will engage more partners to see the intersection of our work as impacting their own; thus becoming part of the stewardship solution.

