

Forest Products Modernization

At A Glance – September/October 2020

Modernization Accomplishment Highlights

People

- **Career Path Resources for Foresters:** The FPM Recruitment and Retention team and Human Resources Management developed a brochure ([available here](#)) to help 462-series Forestry Technicians better understand their options for getting into the 460 Forester series. The brochure outlines the education requirements for the 460 series, guidance on details and specialized training to help you become a more competitive candidate, as well as opportunities for higher graded 462 positions if someone does not meet the education requirement of a 460. Contact Erin Smith-Mateja erin.smith-mateja@usda.gov if you have questions.
- **Silviculture Certification Updates:** This summer a national Silviculture Certification team comprised of silviculturists across the agency collaboratively developed a new, streamlined certification process to reduce the time required to certify silviculturists and to standardize the certification process across regions. The efficiencies generated with these changes are intended to care for the wellbeing and capacity of our people, and to reduce the level of effort to meet mission and target. The new process reduces the time to complete certification from more than 4 years to 2.5 years, requires the completion of the National Advanced Silviculture Program, completion of a Regional silvicultural module, the use of a Silviculture Position Task Book and demonstration of core competencies for silviculture certification. The team is developing a transition plan, a monitoring plan, FAQs and training to support the changes. Silviculture directives (FSM 2470 and FSH 2409.17 Chapter 80) are also being updated to align with the new silviculture certification process. Contact David Gwaze david.gwaze@usda.gov for more information.

MODERNIZATION IN THE FIELD: Digital Timber Sale Manager Pilot on the Coconino NF



Through the FPM effort, the agency is working to modernize timber sale layout and administration, in part by increasing the use of designation by prescription (DxP). Since 2015, the USFS has worked with the TNC Futures Project to co-develop a digital solution called DxP Plus. Early success using DxP Plus has demonstrated the benefit of a digital approaches to sale layout as well as modernizing other timber sale activities such as layout, resource surveys, silviculture walkthrough, and timber sale administration.

A new cost-share agreement with TNC seeks to build upon this success by extending the scope of this efficient digital-based approach to additional data collection and management activities within the timber sale process. Specifically, it seeks

to increase the use of enterprise GIS, modern GIS-centric field data collection tools and web-based GIS data analysis and reporting to increase the efficiency of the layout process. This will enable specialists working on timber sales to use a customized mobile application and tailored data models to efficiently collect high quality data in the field. When the specialist returns from the field, they will be able to review and analyze these data using a web-based information system, then automatically generate reports using pre-defined report templates. If successful, we hope to build on these digital approaches and have them available to all National Forests. Contact Dave Cawrse (dave.cawrse@usda.gov) for more information.

Policy

- The first batch of updates to the 2400-series Timber Management Manuals and Handbooks will be posted for public notice and comment in early October. This is a long-awaited milestone, and we appreciate our colleagues' and partners' patience as we work through a policy update process of unprecedented scope and the delays associated with an effort of this magnitude. Employees and partners will receive a notice on the day the Federal Register Notice is posted and the CARA comment tool is live. You can also find the most up to date information on the [FPM Policy page](#). Stay tuned for details on a public webinar in which we will explain the most important changes included in the first batch, how members of the public can provide comment, and information on forthcoming policy updates.

Next Steps and Actions Underway

Business Practices

- **Timber Gate System Mapping:** The FPM Program and Project Management Team – tasked with developing tools and resources to improve timber management projects on the ground- is currently mapping the entire project life cycle of the timber sale gate system for a typical 2,000-acre sale. Once complete, the project life cycle map will be shared with the field to collect best practices and identify 'pinch points' in the system. This feedback will inform development of project and program management tools and strategies to increase project efficiencies tied to timber targets. Contact Colleen (Chaz) O'Brien for more information colleen.obrien@usda.gov.
- The **Markets and Utilization (MUT) team** continues its work to collect information about forest product markets, capacity, utilization, and incentives for the field. The MUT team is signed a cost share agreement with the University of Montana's Bureau of Business and Economic Research to improving access and reporting tools for Mill Survey capacity and utilization data. The team is also in the initial stages of developing a template for a quarterly Market Intelligence Report. These tools will be shared on the FPM SharePoint as they are finalized. In FY21, the team will seek support to develop a desk guide and training materials for incorporating market information into project design and decision-making. Contact Chris Miller chris.j.miller@usda.gov for more information.
- **No-bid Action Plan:** Forest Products staff and Research and Development are working together to address one of the Chief's top priorities in FY21- to identify the key drivers of no-bid timber sales across the agency and develop strategic actions to minimize the number of no-bids. Through interviews with several regional and unit employees, R&D identified the primary drivers resulting in no-bid sales. Beginning the first quarter of FY21, the Forest Products team will host a series of webinars to share the details of a No Bid Action Plan and explore how units can take advantage of new policies, market-based appraisals tools and project management training to mitigate some of the most common factors that lead to no-bids. Contact Dave Wilson david.wilson@usda.gov for more information.