

Forest Products Modernization

Factsheet

The Deschutes Collaborative Forest Project in the Deschutes National Forest, Oregon. Photo by USDA Forest Service.

The Goals

Forest Products Modernization is an effort to improve efficiency in how the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service manages forests, delivers forest products, and carries out timber sales to increase acres treated and volume produced. We are aligning our culture, policies, and procedures to become more agile, flexible, and adaptable to better meet current and future forest improvement goals, while caring for the health and safety of employees.

The Need

Massive wildfires, changing climate, insect damage, disease, drought, and other forces require us to rethink our forest management practices, including our approach to timber production.

- More than 80 million acres of National Forest System lands are in need of restoration treatment in order to build more resilient forests and grasslands. Drinking water, homes, wildlife habitat, historic places, sacred sites, and recreation opportunities are among the many values at risk.
- Systems and policies that served us well in the past need to evolve to keep up with changing forest conditions, technology, markets, and stewardship ideals.
- In order to care for employee well-being while working to meet restoration goals, we must give employees the discretion and flexibility to select the most appropriate tools and to leverage partnerships that will increase results on the ground without increasing workloads.

Achieving the Goal

We will achieve this through innovation and risk-taking, finding efficient ways to deliver forest products and sharing stewardship of the land with States, Tribes, and industry partners.

- We are investing in **people** by improving recruitment and retention strategies and expanding training and education opportunities for employees.

- We are expanding the use of new and existing **technologies** that will save time and money.
- We are improving **business practices** to be more responsive to our employees and to customer needs.
- We are updating our timber management **policies** and directives to reflect new tools and authorities that support increased efficiency.

What Modernization Means

Forest Products Modernization is more than applying new technologies, policies, and methods. It is a cultural shift in in how we approach our work and relationships with partners.

- When we talk about reasonable risk-taking, we are encouraging employees to use their full authority to make decisions and commit to trying new tools and methods, even if it's not what they have normally done or is outside of their comfort zones.
- When we talk about innovation, we are encouraging creativity in project design and implementation, examining the full suite of tools at our disposal, asking "How can we do this better?" instead of "How do we usually do this?" Employees in every region are already innovating and sharing their lessons learned.
- By becoming more comfortable with risk and innovation, we will evolve into a learning organization. To support this new approach, we will create virtual and in-person learning networks, communities of practice, or similar mechanisms to support peer-to-peer learning so we can continue to evaluate, adapt, and grow.

Leveraging Our Workforce and Collaborators

Our ability to improve forest conditions and forest-product delivery depends on our ability to get more work done on the ground. At the same time, today's non-fire workforce is 40 percent smaller than in 1980, when it included nearly 3.5 times more professional foresters than today.

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- We are already seeing significant increases in acres treated and board feet produced, due in part to the use of new tools and authorities granted by Congress, but individual employees still bear a disproportionate burden for meeting targets.
- We are taking an approach that gives employees more discretion and flexibility to select the most appropriate tools and to leverage partnerships to maximize the impact of their projects while reducing their workloads.
- We are striving for better integration within the agency by teaming up with the related work of other groups (e.g., Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration, National Technology Development Center, and Environmental Analysis and Decision Making [EADM]) to leverage efforts and implement innovative ideas.
- We are leveraging the expertise of our external partners by establishing a partner team with representatives from private industry and other stakeholders to advance mutually beneficial actions that will support a modernized delivery system for forest products and provide benefits for rural economies.

Forest Products Modernization as a National Priority

This effort is part of a broader Forest Service strategy to create more resilient landscapes and better serve the public by focusing our land management efforts across boundaries and modernizing our internal processes to get more work done on the ground.

- The EADM effort is working to reduce the time and cost of our environmental analysis and decision-making processes to produce efficient, effective, and high-quality resource management decisions.
- The Special Uses modernization effort is working to improve service delivery and customer service by putting systems in place to efficiently manage permits for outfitting and guiding, concession campgrounds, and communication sites, among others.
- Through our Shared Stewardship Strategy, we are joining together with partners and landowners to accomplish work on the Nation's forests, working across shared landscapes and shared values so that, collectively, we can make the greatest impact.
- Together with Forest Products Modernization, these efforts are striving for efficiencies by taking advantage of new and existing authorities, promoting an innovative culture of experimentation and learning, and supporting reasonable risk-taking in decision making.

For more information, visit the [Forest Products Modernization webpage](#) or the [Forest Products Modernization SharePoint \(internal\)](#).