



MISSOURI
DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

AGREEMENT FOR SHARED STEWARDSHIP

Between

STATE OF MISSOURI
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

And

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

And

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE



This agreement is hereby made and entered into by and between the Missouri Department of Conservation hereinafter referred to as "MDC"; the Missouri Department of Natural Resources hereinafter referred to as "DNR"; the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service hereinafter referred to as "USFS"; and collectively called the "parties".

I: BACKGROUND

In August 2018, the USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) released a document outlining a new strategy for land management called *Toward Shared Stewardship Across Landscapes: An Outcome-Based Investment Strategy*. The new strategy responds to the urgent and growing challenges faced by managers and owners of forests across the Nation, among them catastrophic wildfire, invasive species, drought, and epidemics of forest insects and diseases.

Through Shared Stewardship, the State, the USDA Forest Service and other USDA agency partners such as the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) have an unprecedented opportunity to work together to set landscape-scale priorities, implement projects at the appropriate scale, co-manage risk, share resources and learn from each other. This approach addresses priority short-term needs, builds upon opportunities to advance long-term desired outcomes and collectively supports some portion of the parties' missions as follows:

The mission of the Missouri Department of Conservation is to protect and manage the fish, forest and wildlife resources of the state; to facilitate and provide opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy and learn about these resources.

The mission of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources is to protect our air, land, water, and mineral resources; preserve our unique natural and historic places; and provide recreational and learning opportunities, while promoting the environmentally sound and energy efficient operations of businesses, communities, agriculture, and industry for the benefit of all Missourians.

The mission of the USFS is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. USFS manages 193 million acres of National Forest System lands with tribal governments and other partners; supports states, communities and private forest landowners through technical, operational, and financial assistance, and maintains the largest forest research organization in the world. Being a good steward across all forested landscapes is an essential component of USFS' work.

II: PURPOSE

The purpose of this agreement is to document a mutual intent to cooperate to establish a framework for the parties to work collaboratively across jurisdictional and property boundaries to accomplish mutual goals, further common interests and effectively respond to the increasing ecological challenges and both terrestrial and aquatic natural resource concerns in the state of Missouri.

Federal, state and private managers of forest and woodlands in Missouri face a range of urgent challenges across ownership boundaries, among them catastrophic storms, droughts, flooding, insect and disease outbreaks, invasive species, conversion of forestland to other land use and a lack of adequate forest products markets which support sustainable forest management. In addition, federal and state land management agencies face the struggles of maintaining aging infrastructure with increasing public use from constituents who expect a wide array of outdoor recreation opportunities. The parties recognize that these challenges must be met with proactive measures across all lands. The parties also recognize that an effective long-term strategy for conserving working forestlands includes continual attention by actively and sustainably managing forests and woodlands and conserving mutually agreed upon high priority forest ecosystems and landscapes.

This agreement among the parties is the foundation for future collaboration with local governments, other state and federal agencies, and non-governmental groups. The intent is to collectively focus investments on the priorities identified in **IV: PRIORITIES FOR SHARED STEWARDSHIP** of this agreement. The parties will work to effectively manage risks, improve forest and woodland health and productivity, protect fish and wildlife resources, sustain cultural resources, and provide quality outdoor experiences for Missouri citizens and visiting public in both communities and rural landscapes.

III: STATEMENT OF MUTUAL BENEFIT AND INTERESTS

The parties have a mutual interest and a shared vision of healthy and resilient forest and woodland ecosystems, vibrant local economies, healthy watersheds with functional aquatic habitat, and quality outdoor opportunities for all Missourians. The parties will take an integrated approach to prioritizing investments in locally led conservation where they will have the greatest impact and will set priorities which address ecological risks and natural resource concerns across broad landscapes. A collaborative approach that addresses shared priorities for forest and woodland health and productivity across different ownership boundaries and habitat types will have direct and positive effects on the forest resources and the people of Missouri. Therefore, the parties will collaborate to carry out projects and efforts as identified under **IV: PRIORITIES FOR SHARED STEWARDSHIP**.

IV: PRIORITIES FOR SHARED STEWARDSHIP

The parties have proactively identified the following priorities for shared stewardship through facilitated discussion and brainstorming meetings held in the fall and early winter of 2019. The parties believe these are the areas where the greatest potential and opportunities can be found to address risks and challenges to maintaining healthy and productive forests and woodlands and quality outdoor recreation. The parties seek to address these priorities through greater collaboration including improved communication; prioritizing and coordination of investments where they will have the greatest impact; sharing of risks and decision-making where appropriate; and sharing resources across ownership boundaries when necessary to create positive effects on the forest resources for the citizens of Missouri; and collaborating in research in support of shared stewardship. The priorities listed below are not all inclusive and may be revised as circumstances change and need arises.

Fire Management: Missouri has a long history of both natural and human-caused wildland fire and controlled burns that have affected the health, composition, productivity and character of our forests and woodlands. The threat of damaging or catastrophic wildland fire occurs periodically when weather and fuel conditions create the potential. For this reason, it is imperative that those agencies responsible for wildland fire suppression work together to reduce the risk in both rural and urban interfaces and coordinate response when wildland fires occur. In addition, prescribed fire is commonly used as an important tool to manage natural communities that are fire-dependent and to reduce hazardous fuels in high risk areas. Often this tool can be applied with greater efficiencies at a landscape scale that may involve different land ownerships. Through shared stewardship the parties will endeavor to work together to manage the risk of wildland fire and to appropriately use prescribed fire as a management tool with an emphasis on:

- ❖ Community Wildfire Protection Plans
 - Share/collaborate and support interagency efforts to work with local communities to develop Community Wildfire Protection Plans that promote *Firewise Communities* (www.firewise.org).
- ❖ Shared Decision Making for Wildfire Incident Response
 - Better coordinate the sharing of equipment and other resources on large fires within and across agency response jurisdictions.
 - Share decisions concerning resource needs, attack strategies and communication for large fires that are likely to affect multiple agencies and response boundaries.
 - Increase interagency training efforts and use of new technology.
- ❖ Landscape Scale Prescribed Fire
 - Encourage and increase collaboration and implementation of landscape scale prescribed fire across multiple public and private ownerships – especially those with aerial ignitions.
 - Work with fire consortiums, as appropriate, to promote sharing and understanding of current research in Missouri/Central hardwoods and other habitat types.
 - Develop science-based guidelines and training materials for managers restoring and sustaining fire dependent species and natural communities
 - Engage fire councils, as appropriate.
 - Educate and engage the public to learn about the role of fire in restoring forests and to cultivate public acceptance and support for prescribed fire management.
- ❖ Hazard Fuels Reduction/Mitigation
 - Establish shared priority areas/landscapes for hazard fuel reduction work and coordinate implementation to allow for measurable reduction/mitigation of hazardous fuels.
 - Develop strategies for hazardous fuels reduction treatments in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).

Forest Products and Markets: The forest products industry in Missouri is important to the local economy of many counties as well as a state-wide economic driver. The industry annually supports approximately 46,000 jobs and contributes \$10.3 billion into the state's economy. Missouri is a leading producer of many products including white oak staves and barrels, hardwood flooring, shipping pallets and charcoal. Strong markets for forest products are an essential incentive needed to support sound, sustainable management of forests and woodlands on both public and private lands. Through shared stewardship the parties will endeavor to work together to support the forest products industry that supports forest management with an emphasis on:

Opportunities:

- Encourage opportunities to learn from each other to improve processes to better serve customers and the resources.
- Explore the development of new products and markets.
- Diversify and strengthen traditional forest products markets.
- Support forest certification programs to document sustainability and reach new markets.
- Support and promote initiatives that will address current and future impacts on forest health and the forest products industry.
- Cultivate partnerships to engage public, non-profit and private sector partners to develop financing mechanisms to fund forest management

Invasive Pests: The forest and woodland resources of the state are being threatened and damaged by an increasing number of destructive pests. Invasive native and exotic pests occur across all lands both public and private and have negative impacts on wildfire risk, forest health, wildlife habitat, water quality, the forest products industry and the safety and economic strength of private landowners and communities. Detection, management and control of forest pests demands an integrated approach for success. Through shared stewardship the parties will endeavor to work together for early detection to prevent where possible and to mitigate the damage caused by such pests with an emphasis on:

- ❖ Missouri Invasive Forest Pest Council
 - Collaborate with the Missouri Invasive Forest Pest Council to prioritize response to forest pests and coordinate research, prevention, response, treatments and mitigation activities.
- ❖ Shared Pest Monitoring
 - Develop, train and coordinate agency sponsored “citizen science” groups to expand monitoring efforts related to forest pests.
- ❖ Missouri Feral Swine Elimination Partnership
 - Continue to coordinate and support interagency efforts to eradicate feral hogs in Missouri.
- ❖ Pest Pathways
 - The Missouri Invasive Forest Pest Council should reinstitute the Firewood Task Force to engage public land managing agencies in a process to reach agreement on practices/policies related to firewood movement in public campgrounds to minimize invasive pest pathways.
- ❖ Missouri Invasive Plant Task Force

- Collaborate with the Task Force to promoting research and development into invasive plants that impact forests, and coordinating response and treatment activities.

Priority Forest Landscapes: The forests and woodlands of Missouri provide a multitude of ecological, social and economic public benefits to each citizen of the state regardless of their ownership, but the benefits are greatly improved when forestland is well-managed. However, the resources needed to support active management of forests and woodlands on both public and private land are limited. For this reason, several of the parties have identified priority landscapes including but not limited to those identified in the *Missouri Forest Action Plan* (<https://www.missouriconservation.com/sites/default/files/downloads/MoFRAS.pdf>). Priority landscapes are places to target resources where the potential for success is greatest. Through shared stewardship the parties will endeavor to work together to collectively invest in mutually agreed upon priority landscapes resulting in the greatest good with an emphasis on:

Opportunities:

- Identify shared Priority Forest Landscapes in which boundaries overlap/align, especially for priority watersheds.
- Identify known and potential threats to Priority Forest Landscapes through science-based risk assessments.
- Establish local teams to coordinate interagency management in Priority Forest Landscapes.

Privately Owned Forest Land: In Missouri, approximately one-third or 15.2 million acres of land is classified as *forest* cover and of this amount roughly 12.5 million acres is privately owned. Considering most of Missouri's forests and woodlands are controlled by private landowners, the health and productivity of our forest resource largely depends on the actions of these owners. Private forest landowners face the same threats public forest managers face including pest and disease issues, uncontrolled wildland fire, weather-related stresses, poor markets for forest products and lack of resources to sustainably manage their woods. In addition, many landowners lack information and knowledge of sound forest management practices including timber sales and a professionally developed plan for the management of their forests and woodlands. Through shared stewardship the parties will endeavor to work together to encourage and support the management of privately owned forestland with an emphasis on:

- ❖ Forest Management Planning and Management
 - Coordinated interagency efforts to reach more forestland owners through opportunities like the USFS and NRCS Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership project (<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/newsroom/features/?cid=stelprdb1244394>).
 - Expand landowner recognition programs to encourage forest management planning and management.

- Enhance/create incentives for forest management plan development and implementation.
 - Collaborate with the Missouri Consulting Foresters Association (MCFA) on forest management planning and technical assistance.
- ❖ Riparian and Watershed Management for Water Quality
- Explore opportunities to address entire watersheds in Forest Stewardship-like forest management plans spanning multiple private forest landowners.
 - Identify shared priority watersheds to plan and implement joint projects.
 - Develop robust online educational resources.
 - Cultivate partnerships to engage public, non-profit and private sector partners to develop financing mechanisms to fund forest management
- ❖ Sustainable Forest Harvesting Practices
- Continue to develop and encourage the use of programs addressing sustainable forest harvesting practices for both private lands and industry including but not limited to:
 - Professional Timber Harvester Training
 - Missouri Master Logger Certification
 - Call Before You Cut
 - Forest certification programs (i.e. Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Forest Stewardship Council, American Tree Farm System)

Recreation: The residents of Missouri and visitors to Missouri enjoy multiple opportunities for outdoor recreation on municipal, county, state and federally owned and managed lands. Nearly all public land management agencies face challenges in securing the resources necessary to maintain aging infrastructure, respond to public demand for new outdoor recreation opportunities, and mitigate negative public use impacts on publicly owned natural resources. Through shared stewardship the parties will endeavor to work together to provide a diverse array of safe and sustainable recreation opportunities with an emphasis on:

- ❖ Coordinated Recreation Planning
 - Create an interagency Outdoor Recreation Coordinating group to facilitate coordinated recreation planning.
 - Establish protocols for interagency coordinated management of trails, particularly on adjoining lands.
 - Update the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) that expires in 2022. DNR is the lead agency for the SCORP and will engage agency parties in the update.

❖ Increased Public Use

- Explore the development of an interagency Outdoor Recreation App for public land.
- Work to create a Statewide Outdoor Recreation Advisory Group/Council to complement and expand the work of the USFS forest collaborative in advising public land managers in matters related to public use.

V: THE PARTIES SHALL

- A. Collaborate on mutually agreed upon projects and other work in pursuit of the overarching goals of this agreement.
- B. Share decision space to identify priorities that are consistent with the Missouri Comprehensive Conservation Strategy, the Mark Twain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, the Northern Research Station Work Unit Plans, NRCS State Technical Committee recommendations and associated decisions by the State Conservationist and decisions by the Director of the Department of Natural Resources.
- C. Collectively evaluate and examine options for conducting research and managing ecological risks to determine the appropriate actions to implement. Realistically prioritize actions to focus and direct concerted investments for achieving landscape scale improvements.
- D. Encourage the use of applicable state and federal programs and authorities to carry out actions when available. This includes but is not limited to state and federal delivered landowner technical assistance, forest health assistance, wildland fire suppression, prescribed fire, state-delivered USFS State and Private Forestry Programs, Joint Chief's Landscape Restoration Partnerships, Good Neighbor Authority, landscape scale restoration programs and others available through the Federal Farm Bill and other authorities.
- E. Work together to develop and manage outdoor recreation opportunities to contribute to increased quality of life, economic prosperity, and the health of Missouri communities and residents while protecting natural resources and wildlife.
- F. Make reasonable efforts to achieve consistency and avoid conflicts between federal, state and private objectives, plans, policies and programs; and address issues and concerns raised by any partner consistent with applicable law.
- G. Consider and incorporate state and local expertise and data, including socioeconomic data, in development and analysis of actions.
- H. Consult with and seek input from additional units of government, educational institutions, collaborative groups, advisory groups, nonprofit organizations, and others that may be appropriate to derive the best solutions and highest benefits for the resources invested.

VI: MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AND AGREEMENT BETWEEN PARTIES

- A. The parties are bound by all applicable federal, State, and local statutes and regulation, ordinances, and rules as applicable to the organization. If conflicts arise, the parties will evaluate how authorities can best achieve the goals of the project.
- B. The parties will communicate on a regular basis to enhance and develop the institutional arrangements necessary to facilitate the purposes of this agreement.
- C. The parties will conduct business pertaining to this agreement by means of in-person meetings, conference calls, or other means and, in each calendar year, the parties will meet at least once in person, to evaluate progress on the agreement.
- D. This agreement is executed as of the date of the last signature and is effective five years past the date of its signature.
- E. Modifications within the scope of this agreement must be made by mutual consent of the parties, by the issuance of a written modification signed and dated prior to any changes being performed. Requests for modifications should be made, in writing, at least 30 days prior to implementation of the requested change.
- F. Any of the parties may terminate this agreement in whole, or in part, at any time before the date of expiration. Such termination shall be in writing.
- G. This agreement is not intended to, and does not create any right, benefit, or trust responsibility, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or equity, by any party against the United States or the State of Missouri, its agencies, its officers, or any person. The parties shall manage their respective resources and activities in a separate, coordinated and mutually beneficial manner to meet the purpose(s) of this agreement. Nothing in this agreement authorizes any of the parties to obligate or transfer anything of value. Nothing in this agreement is intended to alter, limit, or expand the agencies' statutory and regulatory authority.
- H. As a condition of this agreement, all signatory parties assure and certify that this agreement, and any agreements written pursuant to this agreement, will comply with the nondiscrimination provision contained in Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 (Public Law 100-259); and other nondiscriminatory statutes. They also will be in accordance with regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture (7 CFR 15, Subpart A and B), which provides that no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, national origin, age, sex, religion, marital status, or disability be excluded from participating in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance from the U. S. Department of Agriculture, or any agency thereof.
- I. Each party will handle their own activities and utilize their own resources, including expenditures of their own funds, in pursuing the purposes in this agreement. Each party will carry out its separate activities in a coordinated, professional, and mutually beneficial manner to meet the purpose of this agreement, and consistent with all laws

and policies. Each party shall be solely responsible for the actions of its employees and agents. Nothing herein shall be construed as creating joint or several liability.

- J. Nothing in this agreement shall obligate a party to expend or transfer any funds, services, property or anything of value. Specific work projects or activities that involve the transfer of funds, services, or property among parties and offices of the parties will require execution of separate agreements and be contingent upon the availability of appropriated funds. Such activities must be independently authorized by appropriate statutory authority. This agreement does not provide such authority. Negotiation, execution, and administration of each such agreement must comply with all applicable statutes and regulations.

VII: AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVES APPROVAL

By signature below, each party certifies that the individuals listed in this document as representatives of the individual parties are authorized to act in their respective areas for matters related to this agreement.

In witness whereof, the parties hereto have executed this agreement as of the last day written below.

United States of Department of Agriculture:

Date: 4/7/2021

By:


Victoria Christiansen
Chief, Forest Service
United States Department of Agriculture

State of Missouri:

Date: 3/1/2021

By:


Sara Parker Pauley
Director, Department of Conservation

Date: 02/26/2021

By:


Carol S. Comer
Director, Department of Natural Resources