



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

MAR 7 2011

The Honorable James Moran
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House and Representatives
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Moran:

Enclosed is the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service report on the implementation of stewardship contracting for fiscal year 2009 in response to section 347 of Public Law 105-277.

This report addresses the status of stewardship contracting, specific accomplishments that have resulted, and the role of local communities in development of stewardship contracts.

Undertaking forest management and restoration work with stewardship contracts is building public confidence in the Agency's ability to get the work done. It will ultimately result in more treated acres and improved ecologic, economic, and social outcomes for forests and communities.

In compliance with section 435 of Public Law 111-88, after 45 days this report will be posted to the Forest Service Web site at:
<http://www.fs.fed.us/aboutus/budget/congressional-directives.shtml>.

A similar letter and copy of the report are being sent to Congressman Simpson and Senators Reed and Murkowski.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Vilsack", written over a circular stamp.

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary

Enclosure



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

MAR 7 2011

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-4403

Dear Senator Murkowski:

Enclosed is the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service report on the implementation of stewardship contracting for fiscal year 2009 in response to section 347 of Public Law 105-277.

This report addresses the status of stewardship contracting, specific accomplishments that have resulted, and the role of local communities in development of stewardship contracts.

Undertaking forest management and restoration work with stewardship contracts is building public confidence in the Agency's ability to get the work done. It will ultimately result in more treated acres and improved ecologic, economic, and social outcomes for forests and communities.

In compliance with section 435 of Public Law 111-88, after 45 days this report will be posted to the Forest Service Web site at:
<http://www.fs.fed.us/aboutus/budget/congressional-directives.shtml>.

A similar letter and copy of the report are being sent to Senator Reed and Congressmen Simpson and Moran.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Vilsack".

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary

Enclosure



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

MAR 7 2011

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Enclosed is the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service report on the implementation of stewardship contracting for fiscal year 2009 in response to section 347 of Public Law 105-277.

This report addresses the status of stewardship contracting, specific accomplishments that have resulted, and the role of local communities in development of stewardship contracts.

Undertaking forest management and restoration work with stewardship contracts is building public confidence in the Agency's ability to get the work done. It will ultimately result in more treated acres and improved ecologic, economic, and social outcomes for forests and communities.

In compliance with section 435 of Public Law 111-88, after 45 days this report will be posted to the Forest Service Web site at:
<http://www.fs.fed.us/aboutus/budget/congressional-directives.shtml>.

A similar letter and copy of the report are being sent to Senator Murkowski and Congressmen Simpson and Moran.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Vilsack".

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary

Enclosure



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

MAR 7 2011

The Honorable Michael K. Simpson
Chairman, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
2312 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Enclosed is the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service report on the implementation of stewardship contracting for fiscal year 2009 in response to section 347 of Public Law 105-277.

This report addresses the status of stewardship contracting, specific accomplishments that have resulted, and the role of local communities in development of stewardship contracts.

Undertaking forest management and restoration work with stewardship contracts is building public confidence in the Agency's ability to get the work done. It will ultimately result in more treated acres and improved ecologic, economic, and social outcomes for forests and communities.

In compliance with section 435 of Public Law 111-88, after 45 days this report will be posted to the Forest Service Web site at:
<http://www.fs.fed.us/aboutus/budget/congressional-directives.shtml>.

A similar letter and copy of the report are being sent to Congressman Moran and Senators Reed and Murkowski.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Vilsack".

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary

Enclosure

REPORT TO CONGRESS

Fiscal Year 2009 Forest Service Implementation of Stewardship Contracting

October 20, 2010

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
INTRODUCTION.....	4
STATUS OF STEWARDSHIP CONTRACTING	4
SPECIFIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS.....	5
ROLE OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES	7
SUCCESS STORIES.....	8
CONCLUSION.....	16

Executive Summary

In fiscal year (FY) 2009, the Forest Service continued the implementation of stewardship contracting, in collaboration with partners, to achieve multiple land management objectives across the nation, including hazardous fuels reduction, aspen restoration, wildlife habitat improvement, forest health improvement, and nonnative invasive plant species control.

Since 1999, more than 530 stewardship projects have been approved. In FY 2009, the Forest Service awarded 141 stewardship contracts and agreements for treatments on 88,304 acres. These accomplishments are indicative of the Agency's commitment to continue and expand the use of stewardship contracting in collaboration with partners.

Projects are developed collaboratively with cooperating Federal, State, and local government agencies; tribal governments; nongovernmental organizations; and many interested groups and individuals including resource advisory committees, fire safe councils, resource conservation districts, and watershed councils. Many of the successes in the use of stewardship contracting include projects that are developed and implemented through collaborative partnerships with wildlife conservation groups, such as the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and the National Wild Turkey Federation. These collaboration efforts guide the Forest Service in determining the specific lands to be treated and the types of restoration activities to be conducted.

This year's report reinforces the importance of the stewardship contracting authority and tool. We believe we need to rely on the tool more often and are working to simplify contracting procedures. Simply put, undertaking forest management and restoration work with stewardship contracts is building public confidence in the Agency's ability to get the work done. It will ultimately result in more treated acres and improved ecologic, economic, and social outcomes for forests and communities.

Introduction

This report focuses on Forest Service activities and accomplishments in FY 2009 and provides information on community involvement throughout the development of stewardship contracting projects. The Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) have worked closely together to refine policy and direction for stewardship contracting, and both agencies are continuing to increase their use of stewardship contracting authorities.

Status of Stewardship Contracting

To promote the use of stewardship contracting, the Agency developed informational brochures, classroom training, and on-line training opportunities to ensure a common understanding of stewardship contracting and to facilitate its use in attaining land management goals while meeting local and rural community needs. Specific actions include:

Introductory Brochure

This brochure was developed to provide a basic understanding of stewardship contracting. The brochure describes stewardship contracting concepts and benefits, how stewardship contracts are used, what is unique about them, and more. The brochure is available at Forest Service offices and the following Web site:

http://www.fs.fed.us/fstoday/091106/03.0About_Us/stewardship_brochure.pdf

National Training Tools

The following classroom training modules were developed to ensure a common understanding and provide for consistent implementation of stewardship contracting across the Agency:

- Basic Stewardship Contracting
- Best Value Basis
- Collaboration
- External Stewardship Training
- Stewardship Contract Preparation
- Stewardship Contract Administration
- Stewardship Accounting
- Stewardship Agreements

In addition to classroom training, various self-paced computer-based tutorials were also developed and made available. These tutorials are posted on the stewardship contracting Web site at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/forestmanagement/projects/stewardship/index.shtml>

Peer Learning Sessions

In a partnership with the National Forest Foundation, five peer learning sessions were held to facilitate knowledge transfer of stewardship contracting concepts. The first four sessions

focused on “learning” and “mentoring” national forests that had a strong interest in increasing their use of stewardship contracts and agreements. The peer learning sessions were conducted in a webinar format and included key topics of interest, such as collaboration, benefits, bundling, cancellation ceiling, payments to states, leveraging funds and product value, contract preparation, and contract administration. The fifth webinar was an open forum and focused on stewardship agreements.

Blended Contract

In addition to the above resources, the Agency is in the process of developing a simplified blended stewardship contract. This new contract will be simpler, easier, and shorter because it balances the end result benefits of existing timber sales and service contract versions of the stewardship contract. Furthermore, development of this contract is part of U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Six-Sigma Improvement Initiative to make government work more efficiently.

Specific Accomplishments

As shown in Figure 1, the use of stewardship contracting continues to increase. This upward trend can be attributed to an increased understanding of the benefits gained through stewardship contracting as well as increased support from partners and communities. The availability of online resources and national training tools is also a key factor in gaining understanding and expertise. Stewardship contracting has proved to be a valuable tool in many locations to implement restoration activities and meet multiple land management objectives.

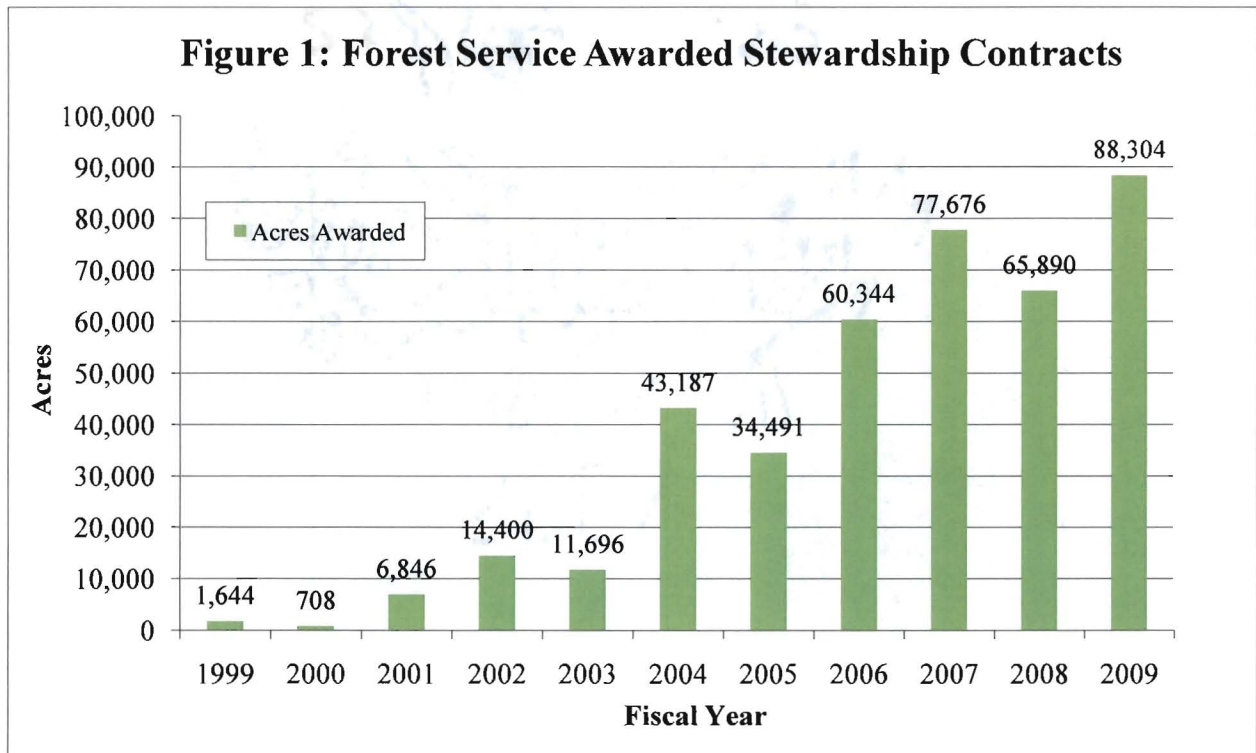


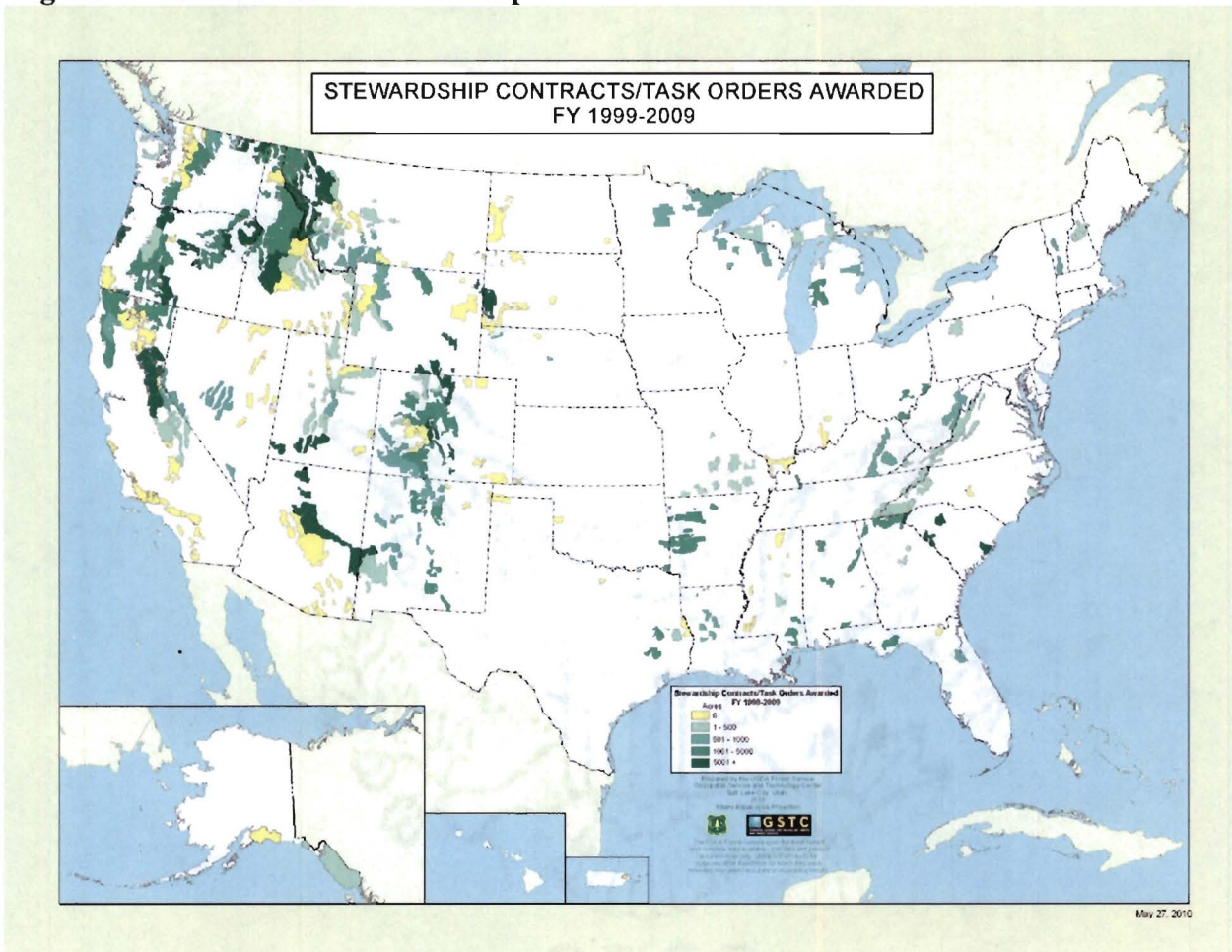
Table 1 below shows specific accomplishments in FY 2009. In many cases, multiple land management objectives were met through a single treatment activity. For example, a hazardous fuel reduction treatment can also improve wildlife habitat. These accomplishments not only result in ecosystem benefits, but forest products are also sold for manufacturing and energy production, and jobs are created for sustainable communities.

Table 1: Specific Accomplishments for FY 2009:

Fiscal Year 2009	Accomplishment
Stewardship contracts/agreements awarded (acres)	88,304
Stewardship contracts/agreements awarded during FY 2009 (number)	141
Hazardous fuels treated to reduce the risk of catastrophic fires (acres)	69,607
Wildland-urban interface high-priority hazardous fuels treated (acres)	36,858
Non wildland-urban interface hazardous fuels treated (acres)	32,749
Wildlife habitat restored or improved (acres)	36,334
Forest vegetation improved (acres)	16,338
Invasive plant species treated (acres)	6,535
Forest vegetation established (acres)	1,344
Stream habitat restored or improved (miles)	47
Roads decommissioned (miles)	9
High clearance system roads improved (miles)	116
Passenger car system roads improved (miles)	54
Volume of timber sold (CCF)	743,417
Biomass made available for energy production (green tons)	467,266
Number of stewardship contracts/agreements contributing to watersheds in fully functioning condition (number)	4

Figure 2 displays the distribution of stewardship contracting across the country from FY 1999 to 2009. The Agency is continuing to expand the use of stewardship contracting nationwide. Stewardship contracting coordinators have been designated at national and regional levels to provide support to national forests for implementation of stewardship contracts and agreements. These coordinators also provide classroom training throughout the Agency.

Figure 2: Distribution of Stewardship Contracts from FY 1999 – 2009



Role of Local Communities

Collaboration with local communities is a key component of successful stewardship contracting. Collaborative efforts start early and continue throughout project planning, implementation, and monitoring. Through collaboration, mutual understanding and trust among diverse individuals can be achieved to work together effectively to accomplish shared objectives. Collaboration during the development of stewardship contracting projects results in a sense of ownership in the project by the community, a better understanding of natural resource issues, and increased public support.

The Agency contracted with the Pinchot Institute for Conservation to conduct the programmatic multi-party monitoring process through FY 2010. The Pinchot Institute found that stewardship contracting is maturing, and its cast of supporters has grown significantly with strong support from both communities of place and communities of interest. People like that it offers increased opportunities to frame a set of collaboratively-defined desired future conditions. Stakeholders

increasingly welcome the use of stewardship agreements as a way to involve more stakeholders, increase learning opportunities, and positively influence forest management planning.

The entire report may be found at:

http://www.fs.fed.us/forestmanagement/stewardship/reports/documents/2009/FY09_USFS_ProgramReviewReport.pdf

Success Stories

Arizona - The White Mountain Stewardship Contract on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest is a multi-year Integrated Resource Service Contract with a 10-year term to treat 15,000 acres per year for a total of about 150,000 acres. The contract was awarded in 2004. As of October 26, 2009, a total of 46,476 acres had been awarded of which 35,174 acres have actually been treated. Approximately 3,000 acres of that was accomplished through funding provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

The goals of this contract are to restore forest health, reduce the risk of fire to communities, reduce the cost of forest thinning, support local economies, and encourage new wood product industries and uses for the thinned wood fiber. This contract will partially supply the Renegy Biomass Plant (25 megawatt) in Snowflake, Arizona.

Collaborators on this project include the Arizona Game and Fish Department, the Springerville and Alpine Habitat Partnership Committee, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, the Antelope Foundation, the Mule Deer Foundation, and representatives of local timber products industry, local governments, and local/regional environmental groups and others. This collaborative effort resulted in the identification community interests and needs and helped to prioritize and strategically locate the areas to be treated.

New Mexico – National efforts to increase the use of stewardship authorities at a landscape level in conjunction with other authorities resulted in the first Forest Service stewardship contract under the Tribal Forest Protection Act (TFPA), which permits the Federal Government to enter into contracts and agreements with American Indian Tribes for work on public lands bordering on or adjacent to tribal lands. The Lincoln National Forest and the Mescalero Apache Tribe signed the 16 Springs Stewardship Project under the authority of the TFPA in June 2006.

Project objectives are to reduce wildfire intensity and reduce the threat of damaging wildfire to National Forest System, private, and tribal lands, especially in the wildland urban interface as identified under the Otero County Community Wildfire Protection Plan, sanctioned by the Otero County Working Group. Treatment activities are developed in coordination with the Mescalero Apache Tribe and are adjacent to hazard reduction projects on tribal lands. These projects restore natural ecological processes across a range of forest types, enhance watershed conditions, limit the spread of insect and disease, provide forest products to the local community, and establish a fuel break around Ruidoso, New Mexico.

Arizona and New Mexico – Stewardship contracts are instrumental in accomplishing work and stimulating the economy. In February 2009, the Southwestern Regional Forester signed Master Stewardship Agreements with the National Wild Turkey Federation and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF). In August 2009, the Kaibab National Forest and RMEF signed a Supplemental Project Agreement (under the master) to treat 1,750 acres of elk habitat within the wildland urban interface.

Colorado - The Front Range Long Term Stewardship Contract on the Arapaho-Roosevelt and Pike and San Isabel National Forests is a multi-year Integrated Resource Service Contract with a 10-year term to treat a minimum of 4,000 acres per year for a total of about 40,000 acres. The contract was awarded in 2009.

The goals of this contract are to promote less hazardous fuel conditions by reducing overall biomass and canopy continuity; provide for diverse wildlife habitats and recreational opportunities; reduce the potential for loss of ecological and monetary values on public and private lands; reduce the risk of insect and disease infestations; promote sustainable, diverse forest conditions; and promote aspen regeneration to increase species diversity and reduce future fuel hazard.

Products from the contract have been sent to at least ten different mills and plants in North Central Colorado and along the Front Range of Colorado. The primary collaborator on this project is the Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership (FRFTP) composed of 32 different entities such as conservation groups, state and local governments, local community leaders, academic and scientific community user groups, and industry leaders. FRFTP was initiated following the record fire season of 2002, and was formed to reduce wildland fire risks through sustained fuel treatments along the Colorado Front Range.

As a result of this project, markets have been developed for biomass and other low value products where none existed before. Biomass products are now utilized resulting in lower treatment costs for this project as well as others. In addition, 63 new jobs have been created. Local communities are benefiting from reduced wildland fire risks, increased employment, and a healthier forest ecosystem.

California – The Eldorado National Forest has embraced stewardship contracting as a primary tool to reduce hazardous fuels and improve forest health in fire prone forests. The Eldorado awarded 25 stewardship contracts between 2004 and 2009, treating over 20,000 acres, with product value exceeding nine million dollars. This product value offsets the cost of fuel reduction treatments to remove small trees, brush, and forest floor fuels, resulting in resilient, healthy forests, able to survive catastrophic wildfire. In addition, these projects create jobs in the local communities and help maintain the forest products industry.

The Last Chance Fuel Reduction Stewardship project successfully contributed to a collaborative effort to further the goals of the Grizzly Flat Community Action Plan and the Fire Safe Council of creating a fire-safe community with projects on both public and private lands. This project thinned trees and reduced fuels on over 1,000 acres in the wildland urban interface surrounding the community of Grizzly Flats, California. Nearly \$700,000 in revenue was generated from the

forest products harvested in the Last Chance project area, which paid for all of the fuel treatments conducted as part of the stewardship contract and provided about \$350,000 in retained receipts to use on other stewardship projects.

The retained receipts from the Last Chance project and other stewardship contracts have allowed the Eldorado to survive the declining timber markets in the past few years. In 2009, the Forest was able to utilize retained receipts to award the Hartless Ridge Fuel Reduction Stewardship Project to treat nearly 1,000 acres of high risk forested land for the purpose of fuel reduction and watershed improvement. The retained receipts in addition to product value will pay for the cost of mitigating sedimentation caused by roads to improve water quality as well as the removal of ladder fuels and piling of surface fuels. The ongoing stewardship program and leveraging of retained receipts allows the Eldorado National Forest to continue to treat forested areas at high risk from wildfire, abate erosion from roads, improve forest health, and generate employment.

Oregon - In November 2008, Siskiyou Project, Lomakatsi Restoration Project and the USDA Forest Service entered into a ten year, ten thousand acre Master Cost-Share Stewardship Agreement (MSA) to achieve a variety of goals:

- Ecological Restoration and Climate Change Resiliency
- Reduce the Risk of Fire
- Community Collaboration
- Workforce Training and Jobs
- Significant Local Restoration Capacity

The project area under the Master Stewardship Agreement (MSA) is known as the Wild Rivers Ranger District and lies within the borders of the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forests. A history of wildfire suppression and timber harvesting activities, with extensive road building and associated plantations, have resulted in overstocked stands, unnatural accumulations of fuels, and excessive sediment sources. After decades of old growth clearcut logging, over 100,000 acres within the Wild Rivers District has been converted into even aged tree plantations comprised predominantly of Douglas-fir. These dense single species tree plantations lack species diversity and pose an elevated risk for large scale uncharacteristic wildfires that threaten water quality, old growth forests, human life, property, and ecosystem sustainability. Additionally, historic and current mining activities have created a network of roads and degraded streams across the landscape significantly reducing the habitat quality.

The MSA brings together distinct and overlapping skills, values, and missions. Beyond ecological restoration, the partnership works to strengthen the economic and community capacity of the Illinois Valley. Working collaboratively in and among the communities, the partnership creates jobs, provides job training, engages contractors, builds community consensus, conducts monitoring, and obtains scientific review and input.

The first project under the MSA is the Hope Mountain Stewardship Project located within the headwaters of the Wild and Scenic Illinois River. Forest restoration activities within the project area are aimed at reducing fuel hazards and enhancing structural and species diversity on approximately 1,300 acres of even aged tree plantations within Late Successional Reserves – a

Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) land designation to promote and maintain old-growth characteristics and wildlife habitat for threatened and endangered species.

Accomplishments in 2009 under the Wild Rivers Master Stewardship Agreement include:

- 1,300 acres treated
- \$951,000 in wages and salaries paid
- 32 new local workers trained
- 98 person workforce and seven subcontractors utilized
- \$1.1 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act brought into Southwest Oregon
- Nine community meetings and field trips

Vermont – The Green Mountain National Forest used stewardship contracting to assist in enhancing and restoring healthy forests in partnership with the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF).

The Apple Orchard Stewardship Contract was awarded to the NWTF, which hired local contractors to accomplish work within the Nordic Project in Peru and Winhall, Vermont. The project consisted of creating 22 acres of wildlife openings, restoring 8 acres of aspen, and selective cutting on 17 acres of 600,000 board feet of sawtimber, pulpwood, and biomass. The service work was done in exchange for the forest products and through a grant from the Wildlife Management Institute. Without use of stewardship contracting, the necessary service work in the project area would not have been completed.

Pennsylvania – The Bob’s Fork Stewardship Project on the Allegheny National Forest, a stewardship agreement with the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF), was initiated to improve forest health, watershed and water quality objectives, wildlife habitat, and reforestation treatments at the landscape scale. This project will vastly improve wildlife habitat on the Allegheny National Forest affecting wild turkeys, deer, black bear, ruffed grouse, woodcock, a suite of grassland bird species, and bats.

Projects include the removal of timber value on 180 acres in eight separate units while accomplishing mechanical and chemical site preparation to assure quality reforestation and road improvement. The road improvements correct erosion problems that contribute sediment into wetlands, spring seeps, and streams as well as improve fish passage. This agreement also includes several years of wildlife habitat enhancements and treatment of nonnative species in a large 100 acre grassland area, as well as enhancing restoration of early successional aspen habitat on the Allegheny National Forest.

The NWTF is working with the Pennsylvania Game Commission to accomplish the openlands restoration work and non-natives species control. Timber removal as well as road and stream improvements were accomplished through local timber operators. In addition, volunteers from the Ruffed Grouse Society and local Pennsylvania chapters of NWTF are engaged in accomplishing these activities.

South Carolina – The Francis Marion Wando River Biomass Stewardship Contract on the Francis Marion National Forest is a multi-year Integrated Resource Service Contract with a five year term to treat 2,000 acres per year for a total of about 10,000 acres. The contract was awarded in September of 2006.

The primary goal of this contract is to thin dense stands of loblolly pine that naturally regenerated in the wake of catastrophic forest damage caused by a major hurricane. Thinning these dense stands results in a significant reduction of fuel loading and catastrophic fire risk for communities and land owners adjacent to treated national forest land, a marked improvement in the health and growth rate of the remaining trees, and an opportunity to use an alternate source of fuel (wood chips) for energy production. The treatments also “open up” the understory to sunlight, thereby increasing the variety of plant species within the treated stands and improving wildlife habitat in general.

The harvested biomass is whole-tree chipped and transported to a large nearby paper mill where the chips are burned. The heat energy that is generated is then converted to electrical power which is used to operate the paper mill. Collaborators on this project include Santee Cooper, a local electricity supplier, South Carolina Forestry Commission, Southeastern Forest Experiment Station’s Wetlands Research Laboratory, International Paper Co., representatives of local timber products industry, local environmental groups and others.

Texas –The National Forests and Grasslands in Texas (NFGT) suffered extensive damage from Hurricane Ike in September 2008, damaging recreation areas, red-cockaded woodpecker habitat, and roads and trails. Restoration efforts using stewardship authorities focused on these damaged areas. The forest used both stewardship contracts and agreements to restore damaged areas. Through the use of the stewardship agreement authority, the National Wild Turkey Federation and Forest Service successfully removed more than 35,000 tons of salvage timber (12,752 CCF) on 1,466 acres on the Davy Crockett National Forest.

The timber value (\$389,000) resulting from this removal allowed for the treatment of non-native invasive species on 400 acres, water quality improvement projects, and 553 acres of mechanical mid-story tree removal. The timber removal and mid-story treatments are important contributors to improving habitat for wild turkey and the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker. These accomplishments also reduced hazardous fuel conditions therefore allowing continued use of prescribe fire to improve habitat conditions.

Four additional Integrated Resource Timber Contracts were awarded in 2009 totaling 11,348 CCF of timber, valued at \$615,061, to accomplish 391 acres of thinning and 54 acres of longleaf pine restoration, complete road closures to protect soil and water resources, as well as prepare fire lines for prescribed burning. Additionally, numerous red-cockaded woodpecker clusters were improved through these activities.

Mississippi – The Chickasawhay Ranger District has utilized the Integrated Resource Timber Contract (IRTC) to restore habitat for threatened and endangered (T&E) species, specifically the gopher tortoise (threatened) and red-cockaded woodpecker (endangered); improve forest health;

and eradicate non-native invasive species (NNIS) in order to restore the native longleaf pine ecosystem.

The Chickasawhay Ecosystem Restoration (Chick ER) Stewardship Project began in 2007 targeting NNIS eradication, T&E habitat restoration, and longleaf ecosystem restoration in areas across the landscape that are important for threatened and endangered species recovery. In 2009 the district awarded an IRTC that implemented 532 acres of commercial pine and hardwood overstory thinning and 1,960 acres of midstory reduction that will improve T&E habitats and restore ecosystem function. Total accomplishments to date include 41 acres of NNIS (cogongrass) eradication, 2,650 acres of midstory reduction, and 1,650 acres of commercially thinned acres, with 11.8 million board feet of timber products offered and sold. In addition to these accomplishments, this project has generated over one (1) million dollars in retained receipts which are available to seed future stewardship contracts within the National Forests in Mississippi.

The Bienville and Chickasawhay Ranger Districts have other stewardship projects that will utilize these retained receipts in for service contracts to improve habitat for threatened and endangered species and other wildlife, including 250 acres of fisheries habitat improvement, 1,500 acres of T&E habitat improvement, 23 acres of prairie restoration, as well as a stewardship agreement with the National Wild Turkey Federation that will include hazardous fuels treatments, NNIS control, wildlife opening development, and establishment of native warm season grasses. In addition, there are four additional stewardship proposals currently being developed that will use portions of these Chick ER generated retained receipts to begin project implementation in FY 2011 and 2012.

The Chickasawhay Ranger District is being assisted in this endeavor by volunteers from the Laurel Garden Club of the Garden Club of America in addition to other partners including Wildlaw, Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, University of Southern Mississippi, U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Quail Unlimited, National Wild Turkey Federation, and Mississippi Natural Heritage Program.

The National Forests in Mississippi are using stewardship contracting to leverage annual funding to accomplish T&E and other wildlife habitat enhancements, NNIS control, and ecosystem restoration while providing increased employment opportunities within local communities across the state of Mississippi.

Arkansas – The Bearcat Hollow Stewardship Project is underway on the Ozark National Forest in Newton, Searcy, and Pope Counties. The stewardship project lies at the heart of a larger Arkansas/Missouri Pine-Oak Woodlands Partnership, which covers a 350,000 acre corridor of public and private land in northern Arkansas. Oak-Pine woodlands in this region have declined due to fire suppression and insects and disease. Restoration is underway to correct these issues.

Timber removal through stewardship authority has generated an additional \$74,000 from timber damaged by the ice storm, which will be used for restoration activities. In addition, a grant from the National Forest Foundation for \$105,045 was awarded to this project as well as funding from other partners such as the National Wild Turkey Federation, Arkansas Game and Fish

Commission, Arkansas Wildlife Federation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and the Ozarks Sportsmen Association.

The two-phase project will restore pine and oak woodland habitat to benefit elk, wild turkey, northern bobwhite quail, bald eagles, red-tailed hawks, and songbirds including the indigo bunting. The endangered Indiana bat as well as state species of concern in Arkansas and a host of other wildlife will also benefit. Some of the activities to occur in this project area include treating 367 acres of mid-story trees with herbicide, controlling invasive species on 206 acres, creating 104 acres of permanent openings, developing nine woodland ponds, installing gate access, and conducting prescribe burns.

Georgia – The Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests have successfully utilized stewardship contracting and stewardship agreement authorities to implement seven distinct stewardship projects since 2005. Three of these projects are being implemented in partnership with the National Wild Turkey Federation through a Master Stewardship Agreement.

The goals of these projects have primarily been aimed at providing critical habitat for threatened and endangered wildlife species, ecosystem restoration, and forest health. On the Oconee National Forest, critical habitat for the endangered Red-cockaded woodpecker is being addressed through forest thinning projects to maintain critical stand densities. Additional work is occurring to sustain the habitat in the desired condition.

An early successional habitat stewardship contract on the Chattooga River Ranger District is providing high elevation (above 3,000 feet) habitat for neo-tropical migrants that require this condition for nesting, the majority of which is on National Forest System lands.

The Brawley Mountain stewardship project on the Blue Ridge Ranger District is focused on providing habitat conditions for the golden-winged warbler, a migratory songbird whose populations have severely declined over much of its range in recent decades. Suitable habitat for the golden-winged warbler is extremely limited on the Chattahoochee National Forest due to fire suppression and a decrease in active vegetation management. In addition to providing critical habitat, this project also assists in woodland habitat ecosystem restoration.

Wisconsin – The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest is using stewardship contracting as a primary tool for restoring a globally imperiled ecosystem. The Pine Barrens ecosystem once occupied more than 2.3 million acres in Northwest Wisconsin. Today, only about 1 percent of that remains and it is classified as imperiled by the State and globally. A project-level analysis, was completed in 2009 by the Washburn Ranger District for both commercial timber harvesting and non-commercial treatments on more than 7,000 acres with subsequent use of prescribed fire on approximately 14,000 acres.

The Northwest Pine Restoration Project was the District's first experience with stewardship contracting and its success has exceeded expectations. The contract includes timber harvest on nearly 460 acres as well as 110 acres of service work to masticate vegetation. The volume of timber to be harvested includes 9,096 CCF valued at over \$700,000. The revenue will be used to offset the cost of service work included in the contract. Excess receipts will be used to fund

service contracts to accomplish additional ecosystem restoration work such as the treatment of non-native invasive plant species and road obliteration. Slash from the timber harvest will be chipped and sold to a nearby electrical generation facility as biomass. The estimated 1,700 tons of biomass, when burned, will offset emissions of CO₂ from burning coal that would have otherwise been burned.

Conclusion

Stewardship contracting is an integrated tool to achieve land management goals while meeting local and rural community needs, including contributing to the sustainability of rural communities and providing a continuing source of local income and employment. Local communities are engaged throughout the process to help define a set of desired future conditions and accomplish shared objectives. Stewardship contracting is recognized as a valuable tool to restore and sustain forest landscapes, protect and enhance water resources, make landscapes more resilient to climate change, and create jobs and sustainable communities.