

2006 Healthy Forests Review

Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

Since 2002 the Administration and Congress have authorized a suite of administrative and legislative tools to expedite hazardous fuels reduction and the restoration of forest health. These Healthy Forests authorities include the Healthy Forests Initiative (HFI), the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) and expanded authority for stewardship contracting and agreements. These authorities call for increased collaboration with stakeholders and provide streamlined administrative processes to increase the acreage treated annually and to reduce overall treatment costs.

During the 2006 field season, the Forest Service conducted an internal review of its use of the Healthy Forests authorities. The purpose of the review was to 1) gauge Forest Service employees' understanding of Healthy Forests tools, 2) identify opportunities to improve the tools, and 3) determine how Forest Service leadership can better support the use of Healthy Forests authorities to restore forests and grasslands and to reduce hazardous fuels.

Reviewers found many successes including the leadership of states and local government in the development of community wildfire protection plans, notably in northeast Oregon and in parts of Colorado. The review also noted successful application of HFRA Title IV silvicultural assessments in the Southern Region, coordinated resource offering protocols (CROP studies) in several regions, Forest Service partnership and collaboration leaders in the Eastern Region, and the formation of intergovernmental and stakeholder groups in the northern Rockies and in the San Bernardino Mountains of California. In the Eastern Region, HFI authorities were used to treat widespread, wind-thrown and insect-infested timber to create fuel breaks that proved highly effective in the 2006 Cavity Lake Fire. Another large scale success was the Southern Region's application of HFRA to rapidly begin recovery from the 2005 hurricanes. These and other successes are noted in the report and appendices. The review's major findings and recommendations are summarized below.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Forest Service personnel feel emphasis should be placed on improving landscape conditions rather than on the use of the Healthy Forests authorities themselves. Although many field units recognize the value of the Healthy Forests tools and are experiencing success with them, they emphasize that their top priority should remain using the appropriate tool to get the work done on the ground rather than focusing on the use of a particular tool itself.

Consider the Healthy Forests authorities as tools, not a stand-alone program with targets for their use. Encourage broader use of watershed and fireshed assessments to identify priority areas for strategic placement of treatments for fuel reduction and improving forest health. Emphasize efficient accomplishment of desired condition on the landscape through appropriate use of all authorities.

Although the authorities should not be viewed as targets, the first question to ask units that are struggling to accomplish fuels reduction and forest health goals is whether they are aggressively employing the full suite of Healthy Forests, stewardship contracting, biomass utilization and related authorities. Many units are successfully doing this and they should be acknowledged as leaders, innovators and early adapters. Other units are not realizing the full potential of the Healthy Forests authorities. Recognizing successes will provide useful information and incentive to others and foster more efficient management.

Acknowledge leaders and champions. Appropriately recognize successful, effective leadership at all organizational levels in reducing hazardous fuels and restoring forest health. Reward champions who increase efficiency and effectiveness by employing streamlined processes, innovative partnerships and creative solutions.

Many review participants commented that there is not clear or consistent support and direction for the use of Healthy Forests authorities. Field personnel are much more willing to use the full range of Healthy Forests authorities when there is clear support from line officers.

Clearly articulate the scope of the Healthy Forests authorities. Develop clear and consistent guidance in the Washington Office for the use of HFI, HFRA and stewardship authorities and tools for integrated planning. Revise the HFI/HFRA Interim Field Guide to better describe the conditions where HFI and HFRA authorities should be used. Update the Decision Diagrams and post all revisions to the updated Healthy Forests and Rangelands website. Link this website to other relevant websites including stewardship contracting and agreements, partnerships, biomass utilization, National Environmental Policy Act and planning. Continuously maintain these websites with updated information and success stories.

Establish an integrated Healthy Forests team in the Washington Office. This team should be the principal resource for answering questions about Healthy Forests implementation and the team leader would serve as the primary point of contact. The team should be assembled from among existing positions in multiple disciplines and not require the creation of new positions. The team should help connect master performers with units wanting additional assistance using Healthy Forests authorities. This team must work closely with existing teams including the Washington Office Directors' Group (WODG), Executive Integration Team (EIT), Inter-regional Ecosystem Management Coordination Group (IREMCG), Restoration Framework Implementation Team, and the Woody Biomass Utilization Group (WoodyBUG.)

Most units reported that their fuels reduction and forest health treatments were well supported in the local community as long as no commercial sized trees were removed. Anecdotally, they reported that once material larger than 10-12 inches in diameter was identified for removal, collaboration became more difficult and the likelihood of objections or appeals and litigation increased. Resistance to removing trees of commercial size and value was also identified as the primary reason units are not able to recover more of the costs of treatments through stewardship contracting. Therefore, much of the fuels reduction and forest health work still relies on appropriated funds.

Forest Service units that proposed treatments to implement Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) usually found good support for their fuels and forest health programs. The

process of developing CWPPs improved working relationships in the community and increased public appreciation for maintaining healthy, fire resilient forests. Where they have adequate staffing, state and local governments played a key role in leading the development of CWPPs. Forest Service personnel can provide invaluable assistance with geographic information systems, fire and watershed assessment techniques, knowledge of fuels and fire behavior, and advice on wildlife and watershed protection.

Put priority on helping communities complete CWPPs and on implementing projects identified in CWPPs. Actively support state and local lead agencies that are assisting communities with CWPP development. Use HFI and especially HFRA authorities to analyze and document the decisions. Use stewardship contracting and agreements and innovative biomass utilization to reduce costs and leverage available funds for fuel reduction and forest health.

Improving utilization of woody biomass is central to efficient fuels reduction and forest health programs in the face of flat or declining budgets. The review found most units struggling to offset treatment costs by recovering value of the biomass removed. The Forest Service and other federal, state and local governments are working with private industry to increase utilization of biomass. The biomass utilization grants and biomass utilization research are beginning to show payoffs in certain areas and deserve continued support.

Continue to support biomass utilization grants and research. Improve communication among researchers, biomass specialists, partnership coordinators, and stakeholders about innovation and successes in biomass utilization. Approve and implement a Forest Service biomass utilization strategy.

Review participants noted that communication and marketing strategies for Healthy Forests authorities are lacking. Without effectively disseminating information about Healthy Forests processes and projects to Forest Service personnel, partners and public stakeholders the authorities are less likely to be used.

Reach out to potential stewardship contractors and partners. Many Healthy Forests projects, particularly those using stewardship contracting, can be enhanced by partnering with external individuals and groups. Forest Service personnel need to do more to communicate the benefits of collaboration, stewardship contracting and other Healthy Forests tools.

Communicate successful Healthy Forests projects. Make full use of a wide variety of communication methods including websites and workshops that encourage sharing successes. Increase employees' and stakeholders' understanding of all Healthy Forests authorities, including all titles of the HFRA.

Forest Service field personnel voiced numerous requests for diversified and updated training opportunities. Many of these training opportunities have recently been made available.

Continue training on stewardship contracting and agreements. Offer additional training in stewardship contracting to timber sale contract administrators, fuels specialists, acquisition specialists, potential partners and contractors. This will increase coordination among Forest Service personnel; promote awareness of advantages of stewardship contracting among Forest Service employees, partners and contractors; and

increase each participant's understanding of their respective roles in successful implementation.

Encourage collaboration training for employees and stakeholders.

Identify and publicize collaboration workshops and training opportunities for Forest Service personnel and stakeholders. Multiple workshops are necessary to accommodate varying community capacity and the dynamic relationships between Forest Service units and their surrounding communities.

Nearly all Forest Service personnel and stakeholders were enthusiastic about the Healthy Forests emphasis on collaboration and the use of the objection process for administrative review. The requirements for early and frequent collaboration help improve working relationships among the Forest Service, its partners and stakeholders.

Pursue the statutory or other necessary authorities to expand the Objection Process to non-HFRA Environmental Assessments. As in

HFRA, link the expanded objection process to early and frequent collaboration by all parties

CONCLUSION

The review team found that although use of Healthy Forests authorities varies from region to region, use of the authorities is generally increasing nationally. As field units gain more experience with the authorities, their comfort with and use of the tools will continue to increase. The Washington Office can facilitate both public and Forest Service employees' understanding of Healthy Forests authorities by developing clear communication tools and strategies for individuals in the field.

The Healthy Forests review spanned the 2006 field season. During the course of the review many of the concerns addressed in the Healthy Forests review recommendations were also communicated to appropriate staff and leadership in the national office. As a result, many of the recommendations are already being implemented.

On-going actions include improving stewardship contract templates; stewardship contract and agreements training; collaboration training; development of a national biomass strategy; improving interagency coordination to increase biomass utilization; updating, linking and streamlining Healthy Forests and National Fire Plan websites and stewardship, biomass and National Environmental Policy Act websites; improving integration of budgets for fuels reduction and Healthy Forests activities; updating business rules for data base management; developing the FACTS (Forest Activity Coordination Tracking System) data base and integrating it with NFPORS (National Fire Plan Operations Reporting System) and PALS (Planning, Appeals and Litigation System); clarifying direction related to use of HFI, HFRA and stewardship authorities, and increasing the emphasis on integration among staff at all levels of the Forest Service organization.

2006 Healthy Forests Review Report

US Forest Service

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INTRODUCTION

Following the exceptionally severe wildfire seasons that punctuated the past decade, the Administration and Congress authorized a suite of administrative and legislative tools to expedite the reduction of hazardous fuels and restoration forest health. These Healthy Forests authorities include the Healthy Forests Initiative (HFI), the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) and expanded authority for stewardship contracting and agreements. These authorities call for increased collaboration with stakeholders and provide streamlined administrative processes. The goal is to increase the acreage treated annually and to reduce overall treatment costs.

Although the Forest Service has strongly encouraged the use of Healthy Forests authorities over the past three years, Forest Service personnel and stakeholders have voiced frustration over their implementation. In response, the Forest Service conducted an internal review of its use of Healthy Forests authorities during the 2006 field season. The purpose of the review was to 1) gauge Forest Service employees' understanding of Healthy Forests tools, 2) identify opportunities to improve the tools, and 3) determine how Forest Service leadership can better support the use of Healthy Forests authorities. The review noted both significant barriers and challenges to Healthy Forests implementation and elements of successful Healthy Forests implementation. This report includes recommendations to address the barriers and improve Healthy Forests implementation.

Overall, the review team found few major problems with the use of Healthy Forests authorities. While some region-specific issues exist with the use of Healthy Forests tools, there are also several common trends that are applicable more broadly. This report documents the review findings and recommends actions to improve the implementation of Healthy Forests authorities nationwide.

The Executive Summary highlights the major findings and recommendations. These and some additional findings and recommendations are detailed in the Discussion section that follows. The Appendices include regional summaries, briefing papers on the threat assessment centers, coordinated resource offering protocols, strategic placement of treatments, and numerous useful references for field personnel wanting to improve the efficiency of their fuels reduction and forest health programs.

DISCUSSION

Barriers and challenges to successful Healthy Forests implementation

Aside from environmental challenges such as continuous drought, insect and disease outbreaks and overly dense vegetation, many units nationwide are also experiencing social, economic, institutional and cultural challenges.

Social

The Healthy Forests authorities strongly emphasize collaboration. While some units have successfully engaged in collaboration with local communities, others are having trouble establishing collaborative relationships for a host of reasons. For example, some communities are engaged in collaborative planning, but are unable to fully realize their goals due to challenges from outside the local area or the collaborative group. In other locations community collaboration groups have expanded their collaboration, broadening the geographic area from which to draw partners while focusing on activities on a smaller geographic area.

Economic

The declining forest products industry presents a continual challenge to the implementation of Healthy Forests activities, particularly with biomass utilization and stewardship contracting. In many regions, the milling infrastructure necessary to process biomass from hazardous fuels treatments or merchantable timber from stewardship contracts is absent or inadequate.

The shrinking availability of infrastructure has coincided in some areas with a loss of individuals with the necessary skills to perform forest restoration work. For example, the Rocky Mountain region has recently experienced a surge in the oil and gas industry; as these industries have increased their wages and workloads, individuals who once worked in the forest products industry have transitioned into the more lucrative oil and gas business.

Further, the low value of timber removed reduces economical treatment options, forcing many national forests into expensive service contracts to remove the hazardous fuels. Continuously rising fuel and transportation costs are often cited as contributing factors to the increasing costs of service contracts and as impediments to economically viable biomass utilization and stewardship contracting.

Institutional

Although external factors such as the economics and politics of a particular area affect Healthy Forests implementation, review participants also noted that procedural obstacles to the use of Healthy Forests authorities exist within the Forest Service itself. With continuously expanding workloads, many units expressed frustration with their inability to provide adequate staff and expertise to all of the projects in their program of work. In effect, Healthy Forests projects are sometimes given lower priority for staffing than forest plan revisions, major EISs for fire recovery, other large scale projects and high priority planning work.

Further, Forest Service personnel cited the lack of integration between staff areas as a major challenge to Healthy Forests implementation. Without clear communication between resource program managers, it has been difficult for units to incorporate Healthy Forests projects within their larger program of work. Many units requested strong, clear, consistent guidance from all levels of Forest Service leadership on how to integrate Healthy Forests authorities into existing policies and procedures.

Cultural

While the barriers mentioned above do not hinder Forest Service personnel from specifically using or attempting to use Healthy Forests authorities and tools, they do create a climate of frustration when Healthy Forests projects do not come to fruition, whether designed specifically with the newer authorities or with traditional ones. This is where the corporate culture of the Forest Service or of an individual can affect use of Healthy Forests authorities. In the face of this frustration, personnel who tend to take a conservative approach to accomplishing their work are reluctant to adopt new techniques and prefer to stick with tools with which they are familiar. On the other hand, the “early adopters” recognize the benefits of the newer tools and aggressively use them even if their initial attempts are not fully successful.

Elements of successful Healthy Forests implementation

The review team found three common characteristics among units where Healthy Forests tools are being successfully implemented.

Local champion

Nearly all the successful Healthy Forests projects reviewed involved a local champion--an exceptionally proactive advocate of the process who was willing to take the initiative to move the project forward. While this person was often a Forest Service employee, stakeholders also performed in this role, particularly with the development of CWPPs. In most instances, this local champion was willing to be first on the unit to use Healthy Forests authorities, and was willing to creatively adapt the tools for project specific needs. In some cases, successful units had stewardship contract coordinators or partnership coordinators who championed use of Healthy Forests tools to reduce hazardous fuels and improve forest health.

Line officer leadership

Successful implementation of Healthy Forests authorities requires substantial leadership by line officers. This leadership can take both direct and indirect forms. Although line officers themselves can serve well as the local champion of the use of Healthy Forests authorities, they can also provide invaluable support to staff members who are active champions for Healthy Forests projects. In either case, Healthy Forests implementation is most successful in areas where line officers clearly articulate their expectation that Healthy Forests tools are used whenever appropriate.

Previous successes

Once units overcame the initial learning curve associated with the new tools and experienced success with utilization of Healthy Forests authorities, they began using them more frequently. Conversely, in cases where units experienced difficulty during their first attempts with Healthy Forests authorities, they were less likely to continue using them or to try using other Healthy Forests tools.

While each of these factors were found to contribute to the success of Healthy Forests implementation, unique circumstances within specific units and their adjacent

communities also played a role in both Forest Service and public receptiveness to the use of Healthy Forests authorities. For example, units and communities that had recently experienced a major disturbance, such as large wildfires or widespread insect and disease infestations, were more willing to employ all available tools to restore landscape health.

Awareness, Use and Perception of Healthy Forests Authorities

This section discusses the specific authorities of the Healthy Forests Initiative, the Healthy Forests Restoration Act and stewardship contracting. The following section on “Managing for Healthy Forests” addresses how Forest Service units use these tools in the planning and implementation of programs to reduce hazardous fuels and improve forest health.

General Understanding of Healthy Forests Authorities

Awareness, use and perception of Healthy Forests tools among Forest Service employees are remarkably variable. The review team found that while personnel across the agency are aware that the Healthy Forests authorities exist, there is not widespread understanding of what these tools are and how they can be used.

As units identify work that needs to be done and determine which procedures to use to implement a project, Forest Service personnel generally prefer to use familiar authorities rather than Healthy Forests tools. However, as the tools are used more widely and frequently, employees’ awareness of and comfort with the authorities has increased. Specific recommendations in response to these findings are included under Managing for Healthy Forests.

Throughout the review, Forest Service field personnel emphasized that Healthy Forests authorities must be treated as tools rather than as a program. These tools are useful in supporting programs of work that aim to reduce hazardous fuels, reduce the negative effects from ice storm damage, insect and disease losses and provide protection of threatened, endangered and sensitive species habitats. Forest Service personnel objected to their use of the tools being a measure of accomplishment, rather than the acres treated and improved forest conditions across the landscape.

Forest Service units that have used the new Healthy Forests authorities believe the authorities have allowed them to be more efficient with their analysis time and funding. Use of Healthy Forests authorities has resulted in expedited analyses and decision-making processes in the restoration of sites damaged by major or catastrophic disturbances such as ice storms and hurricanes.

Collaboration

Implementation of Healthy Forests authorities has been most successful on units where line officers and staff are willing to collaborate with multiple stakeholders. However, the review team found that collaboration is not being fully used on many units. While both HFRA and the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan require collaboration at the programmatic and project levels, many Forest Service personnel expressed frustration over a perceived lack of clear direction on what collaboration actually entails. Some field personnel cited confusion over what the collaborative

process should entail and how the collaboration should be documented as barriers to implementing Healthy Forests projects.

This dilemma is perhaps most apparent in the development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs), where Forest Service employees feel that the scope and level of their involvement in the process is not well defined. While there are several useful guides to assist communities in the development of CWPPs, there is limited guidance for Forest Service employees in the field to help them understand their appropriate role in CWPP development and implementation.

Overall, the most significant complaint among field personnel regarding collaboration is the amount of time and energy it takes to do it well. While the Healthy Forests authorities are designed to shorten the amount of time it takes to complete hazardous fuels and forest health treatments, there is a perception among some Forest Service employees that these time savings are lost through the time it takes to collaborate with interagency partners and public stakeholders.

However, many units have not used the collaborative process extensively enough to realize the long-term benefits of collaboration. Although collaboration requires a high initial investment of time and resources, the relationships built through these efforts can be beneficial in the development of future projects.

On units that have experienced successful collaboration, community leaders and Forest Service line officers applauded improved direct communication and two-way dialogue with interested parties as beneficial in the development phases of successive projects.

Among Forest Service employees who expressed frustration over collaborative planning, the review team found that clear direction and support from line officers was often lacking. Many employees continue to approach collaboration as an item to be checked off among several others in the development of a project. This view fails to recognize that a primary benefit of collaboration is the establishment of long-term relationships with community members and partners. Further, this check-box approach fosters an erroneous belief that a single collaborative technique or set of communication techniques will fit a wide variety of different projects. Communication and collaboration techniques should be tailored to specific situations, stakeholders and objectives.

Recommendation: Identify a suite of collaboration workshops and training opportunities for Forest Service units and communities. Multiple types of workshops are necessary to account for community capacity and site specific needs. Line officers also need to continually emphasize the importance of the long-term benefits that can be gained through collaborative planning for fuels and Healthy Forest projects. Link collaboration training to the enhanced guidance for collaborative development of community wildfire protection plans. (See Ten Year Implementation Plan (TYIP) page 8.)

Counterpart Regulations

Endangered Species Act (ESA) Counterpart Regulations were generally well understood by those Forest Service employees who need to be aware of them, and they understand when the counterpart regulations potentially apply or should be considered. Biologists

and line officers generally are aware of the counterpart regulations, have been trained and certified to use them, and actively consider using them. There are only certain situations where the counterpart regulations potentially apply, namely where “not likely to adversely affect” determinations are made. In addition, several regions and national forests have developed other procedures such as project design criteria or “screens” to streamline ESA Section 7(a)(2) consultation and reduce the need to obtain additional regulatory agency review or concurrence.

Application and consideration of Endangered Species Act (ESA) Counterpart Regulations are generally well understood by those Forest Service employees who need to be aware of them. As of August, 2006, 319 line officers and 561 staff biologists had taken the counterpart regulations training and been certified to use the authority. Within the first two years of their release, 103 projects used counterpart regulations nationwide.

Categorical Exclusions

Forest Service units can use a variety of categorical exclusions (CEs) for hazardous fuels reduction and forest health improvement projects. These include: Healthy Forests Initiative (HFI) CEs 10 and 11; limited timber harvest (LTH) CEs 12, 13 and 14; and timber stand improvement CE 6. See Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15, Chapter 30 Section 31.2; www.fs.fed.us/emc/hfi/index.html and www.fs.fed.us/emc/hfi/index.html.

Many Forest Service units tend to use the timber stand improvement CE 6 more often than the newer HFI or LTH CEs. Some field personnel cited acreage limitations and many cited uncertainty over collaboration requirements as reasons for not using CE 10. Other review participants noted that CE 10 works well when there is an already established collaborative relationship with stakeholders. Many units reported not using any CEs because their projects required the use of pesticides to be efficient and effective.

Further, some units have started using EAs instead of CEs because they felt the requirements for public notification, comment and appeal associated with CEs had become a “moving target” after the Earth Island ruling. Rather than risk delaying a project for failing to meet these uncertain requirements they opted to use EAs. They said they felt the court ruling largely eliminated the efficiencies of using CEs.

While some field personnel felt the pesticide restrictions and acreage limits on the HFI and LTH CEs should be removed or modified, others suggested that there is a sufficient range of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) tools available for fuels reduction and forest health projects.

HFRA Title 1, Hazardous Fuel Reduction

HFRA Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Statements

In 2002, as part of the Healthy Forests Initiative, the Council on Environmental Quality provided guidance for concise environmental assessments (EAs) for forest health projects. These EAs, sometimes called “streamlined EAs”, were employed in pilot projects in several regions. Employees interviewed during the Healthy Forests review

said they do not use this process often because they do not believe it takes less time to complete compared to a “traditional” EA.

HFRA Sections 104 (c) and (d) provided additional authority for EAs and EISs with a limited number of alternatives and an “objection process” for administrative review. (See the following section for more discussion of the objection process.) The review team found only limited use of the HFRA EA to date. Similar to CE 10, these EAs and EISs have been used primarily where good collaborative relationships already exist. Most units that had used the HFRA EA said it did not save much time in field work, but did take less time to document.

Some units reported using EISs where threatened, endangered or sensitive species habitat or archaeological sites would potentially be affected by a project, or where projects would require a site specific forest plan amendment. Often, Forest Service personnel reported that focusing on the type of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation used for fuels reduction and forest health projects was placing emphasis on the tool, rather than on the outcome with regard to fuels or ecosystem health. However, all units the review team spoke with reported plans to use HFRA EAs more extensively in the coming years.

The review team also encountered several units with questions regarding the use of Title I, Sec. 102, (a)(4). Many field personnel wanted advice on how to determine and document “imminent risk” and “significant threat” of insect or disease. They wanted to know what level of expertise was needed to declare such conditions. Some of the confusion may stem from similarities in Title I, Section 102 (a) (4) and Title IV. They both deal with insect and disease, but Title IV explicitly requires the involvement of scientists and peer review.

Recommendation: Revise the Interim Field Guide to better describe the conditions when the various HFI and HFRA authorities would be useful. Update the Decision Diagrams and post all revisions to the Healthy Forests website.

HFRA Objection Process

HFRA Section 105 provides a pre-decisional administrative review process. In response, the Forest Service developed the objection process for pre-decisional administrative review (36 CFR parts 218). This pre-decisional review process encourages early collaboration among stakeholders and the decision-maker or responsible official and only applies where collaboration is used to develop and analyze the project.

Throughout site visits, the review team found vast inconsistencies in how the objection process is being used. There is a lack of consistent direction from Forest Service national and regional offices to field units about how to engage objectors in meaningful discussion to resolve objections before a decision is made. Some regions appear to have merely adapted their traditional appeal and review procedures and kept objectors, responsible officials and reviewing officers at arms length from one another, even though the objection procedures do not restrict communication among the parties.

Despite these findings, field personnel believe the objection process is potentially valuable, because it encourages collaboration and allows units to make constructive

adjustments to projects prior to signing a decision. Consequently, the review team found widespread support for the objection process, and heard repeated requests from field personnel to broaden the application of the objection procedures to all EAs.

Recommendation: Pursue statutory or other necessary authorities to expand the use of the objection process to non-HFRA Environmental Assessments. This pre-decisional review process encourages collaboration among stakeholders and the decision-maker or responsible official. The requirements for collaboration early and often help improve working relationships among partners and stakeholders. The objection process improves dialogue and support among stakeholders for Forest Service decision making.

While most Forest Service personnel and many stakeholders were enthusiastic about the objection process, some perceive that a few objectors are not responding to scoping and invitations to collaborate with good intentions. They feel that some objectors are only minimally engaged in early collaboration so they can claim standing or qualify to enter an objection to a project. Some people fear that these objectors will ultimately sue to stop a project.

HFRA Title II, Biomass

HFRA Title II provides impetus for biomass utilization. The review team found broad support and enthusiasm for the concept of biomass utilization, but also found many Forest Service personnel frustrated with the difficulty in developing markets for biomass.

Examples of biomass utilization included chipping material for animal bedding, garden mulch, compost and landscaping ground cover. One of the more capital and equipment intensive uses was converting biomass to fuel for pellet stoves. There are bright spots of innovation and learning scattered throughout the country and improved communication about lessons-learned and success stories will help advance development of markets.

An innovative project that may help with the development of biomass utilization is the Coordinated Resource Offering Protocol (CROP). CROP is a web based application that inventories the amount of biomass present in particular locations and its proximity to a processing facility. Ten interagency teams around the country are working to make this valuable information available to potential stakeholders and investors. An example of this is when a CROP study helped inform the investors' decision in January 2007 to develop a \$20 million 13 MW generating facility in Lakeview, Oregon to utilize biomass from surrounding forests.

Recommendation: Forest Service Leadership at appropriate levels needs to engage State Agencies such as Economic and Community Development Departments, Farm Bureaus and similar state and federal agencies in productive discussions aimed at enhancing the economic and geographic identification of areas most likely to succeed with biomass infrastructure investments. Coordinate these efforts with the Ten Year Implementation Plan Goal 4, Tasks 4) and 5).

A number of federal, state and local governments as well as private groups are already working to improve biomass utilization. The Forest Service recently drafted a biomass utilization strategy and actively participates in the Interagency Woody Biomass

Utilization Group (Woody BUG), which coordinates efforts to improve biomass utilization. Other examples of interagency coordination include the Forest Service's work with the Department of Energy on ligno-cellulosic conversion research for bio-fuels, and Fuels for Schools programs, which have been successful in a number of states to facilitate removal of hazardous fuels and utilize the biomass as a renewable fuel for heating schools and other public buildings.

Recommendation: Continue to foster and improve communication among researchers, biomass specialists, partnership coordinators, and stakeholders about innovation and successes in biomass utilization.

Since 2005, the Forest Service has administered about \$4.3 million of grants each year through the Forest Products Laboratory to help create markets for and improve utilization of small-diameter material and low-valued trees removed from forest restoration activities. While this is a successful program, the review team found some lack of coordination between the National Forest System, State and Private Forestry and Research and Development. For example, the review team heard of situations where a local recipient was awarded a biomass grant without the local Forest Service unit being informed that one of its stakeholders was a recipient and that there was an expectation the local unit would lay-out and administer projects to facilitate the grant recipient's biomass utilization proposals. The local units did not have the grant projects in their annual program of work or funding for implementing the experiments and using the appropriate National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis and local collaboration with no additional funding. Currently, the Forest Service national headquarters requires grant applicants to have a letter of support from local Forest Service line officers for proposed projects sited on national forests. However, communication throughout the various levels and functional areas of the Forest Service seems to be lacking at the time the grants are awarded.

Recommendation: Improve communication among Forest Service Research and Development, national and regional State and Private Forestry biomass utilization grant program administrators and National Forest personnel.

Forest Service field personnel also reported lack of coordination between special use administration and authorities for removal of biomass. The review team encountered one example where confusion over these authorities resulted in an inability to utilize biomass that had already been felled in the course of clearing under an established power line. While the review team did not have sufficient information to fully identify a problem or make a recommendation, the situation, if widespread, sounds like one where some linking of special uses to stewardship-style product removal would benefit resource management.

HFRA Title IV, Applied Silvicultural Assessment

HFRA Title IV provides for accelerated information gathering (HFRA Section 403) and for applied silvicultural assessments (HFRA Section 404.) The applied silvicultural assessments and associated research treatments are limited to 1000 acres and may be categorically excluded from documentation in an EA or EIS.

The Forest Service is currently conducting six applied silvicultural assessments nationwide. The applied silvicultural assessments are joint efforts between national forests, research stations, universities and other state and federal agencies. As the initial six assessments begin generating new information on techniques for improving forest health and pest management there will likely be more interest in implementing them elsewhere.

Three of the applied silvicultural assessments are in the Southern Region and additional information about them is in the appendix and available on host unit websites. Forest health problems in the Pacific Southwest Region, Rocky Mountain Region and Northern Region seem ripe for increased learning and development of treatment techniques through HFRA Title IV.

Recommendation: Improve communication with all regions about the potential benefits of HFRA Title IV accelerated information gathering and applied silvicultural assessments in areas of acute insect and disease. Encourage partnerships among research stations, universities, forest health and national forest organizations.

HFRA Title VI, Threat Assessment Centers

HFRA Title VI provides for improved detection of and response to environmental threats, and directs the Secretary of Agriculture to develop a comprehensive early warning system that will enable resource managers to better isolate and treat threats that could potentially devastate forests. In response, the Forest Service established two threat assessment centers: The Western Wildland Environmental Threat Center in Prineville, Oregon and the Eastern Forest Environmental Threat Assessment Center in Asheville, North Carolina. Both of these centers are now operational. Although the review team did not visit either of these centers, based on conversations with Research and Development scientists the team is optimistic about the Centers' potential for improving forest health recommendations and science for use in project identification, planning and implementation. More information on these centers is included in the appendix of this report.

Recommendation: All regions and forests need to become familiar with the vital role these threat assessment centers can play in forest management activities. Because these centers are relatively new, the review team strongly recommends they develop marketing strategies that reach line officers and those responsible for vegetation management on field units, including a concerted effort to visit forests in each region in the next 18 months.

Stewardship contracting

Discussions with review participants surrounding stewardship contracting generated both keen interest and frustration. Although many field personnel are optimistic about the potential for stewardship contracting to be an exceptionally efficient and effective means for accomplishing land management objectives, many units have had considerable difficulty getting stewardship projects off the ground.

Review participants cited multiple reasons for these difficulties, one being that the requirements for stewardship contracts are too rigid. While the enabling legislation

intended for greater flexibility in the use of stewardship contracts, the resulting process is perceived as complex, time consuming and difficult to adapt to local conditions. As a result, many units expressed a preference for continued use of traditional timber sale and service contracts. Field units feel that stewardship contracts are costly to prepare and administer. They also reported frustration with awkward and multiple upward reporting requirements for stewardship contracts. Some units reported that the cost of designating and cruising material for removal often exceeds the value of the product, and requested relief from marking and cruising requirements.

Many units have faced reluctance by the forest products industry to enter into stewardship contracts. Although there are contractors available and willing to do the identified work, the contracting process is perceived as tedious and risky. Forest Service personnel recommended a range of “short-form” stewardship contracts similar to the 2400-3, 2400-4 and 2400-6 timber sale contracts. A range of contracts would allow the Forest Service to tailor the contract to the size and complexity of the project. Field personnel also cautioned that better coordination between procurement and resource staffs is needed to increase the efficiency of the contracting process. Field personnel reported being unaware of on-going efforts in the Forest Service national headquarters to improve the stewardship contracting tools.

Recommendation: Develop a range of types of stewardship contracts for projects of various sizes and complexities. Communicate the progress of these efforts to the field personnel, especially fuels managers who have traditionally used only service contracts. Coordinate this work with the Ten Year Implementation Plan Goal 4, Task 1.

Field personnel repeatedly called for fixing the cancellation ceiling requirement for stewardship contracting and for reviewing bonding requirements. The review team understands these concerns are currently being addressed by WO Acquisition Management staff. However, this information is not getting to the field personnel, nor do field personnel feel included in the discussions to develop solutions they will be expected to implement. In a related finding, the review team noted that understanding of stewardship contracting was greater among personnel traditionally working with timber sales, there was less awareness among acquisition management, vegetation management and fuels management personnel—all disciplines more accustomed to working with service contracts. The review team encourages greater use of stewardship contracting by fuels managers especially.

Recommendation: Accelerate work by Forest Management, Acquisition Management, Fire and Fuels Management and allied staffs to communicate with field units about stewardship success stories, updated stewardship techniques and tools, and progress of work underway to facilitate stewardship contracting.

Several units the review team met with suggested that Regional Foresters should be allowed to delegate stewardship contracting authority to Forest Supervisors. Obtaining Regional Office approval takes some units a long time and is perceived as some as an affront to their professionalism to not be fully trusted with the authority. The review team found experience with stewardship contracting too varied among units to forward this as a service-wide recommendation.

The review team found that the Forest Service needs to do a better job of informing both potential stewardship contractors and Forest Service employees about the particulars of stewardship contracting. The agency also needs to improve its marketing of stewardship contracting opportunities and their potential benefits to the landscape, communities, and contractors.

The Southern Region has non-government organizations aggressively pursuing opportunities to become stewardship contractors that subcontract with skilled contractors to perform a variety of work required by stewardship contracts. Wildlaw and the National Wild Turkey Federation are two of these non-government organizations. The Intermountain Region reported exploring this idea with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. In the case of the National Wild Turkey Federation, they are also willing to provide some partial funding to finance contracts. This is an excellent innovation that should be replicated nationwide.

Recommendation: Develop training modules on stewardship contracting for non-governmental organizations to help them become stewardship general contractors subcontracting parts of projects to skilled contractors, matching federal funds with foundation funds. WO stewardship staff should continue to streamline and simplify the stewardship contract templates and sample contracts. Coordinate this work with the Ten Year Implementation Plan Goal 4, Task 1.

Through telephone interviews the Healthy Forests review team learned of the Stewardship Center. The Utah Rural Development Council (URDC) established the Stewardship Center in Cedar City, Utah to work with federal and state agencies to improve forest and rangeland health and to improve the social and economic vitality of rural communities. The Stewardship Center was founded to facilitate stewardship contracting between local businesses and national forests by helping with bonding issues and clearing hurdles between businesses and federal agencies. The Stewardship Center hopes to help local small operators by bidding on large stewardship contracts and then breaking out smaller pieces to sub-contract with local businesses. The concept of the Stewardship Center is one that holds promise for areas throughout the west.

Managing for Healthy Forests

This section addresses how Forest Service units use Healthy Forests tools in the planning and implementation of integrated programs to reduce hazardous fuels, protect wildlife and fish habitat and improve forest health.

Leadership and direction

There is widespread concern in the field that leadership and direction from the Washington Office and Regional Offices on Healthy Forests implementation is inconsistent. For example, field personnel expressed confusion over which WO and RO directors and staff are providing guidance for the use of Healthy Forests tools and authorities. In the absence of a clear point of contact, field personnel report that there is discrepancy in WO and RO interpretations of Healthy Forests authorities, resulting in informational irregularities within regional, forest and district staffs. Some units reported receiving conservative advice on the use of Healthy Forests tools from staff responsible

for NEPA implementation while simultaneously being encouraged to be more aggressive and willing to experiment with the new tools by Forest and Fuels Management staffs. To address these issues, many field units recommend that the Washington and Regional Offices appoint a single, clearly identifiable “go to” person or staff for direction on the use of Healthy Forests tools.

Recommendation: Establish an integrated Healthy Forests team in the Washington Office with personnel from multiple resource areas. The team would serve as the principle resource for questions about Healthy Forests implementation and the team leader would serve as the primary point of contact. The team should be assembled from among existing positions and not require the creation of new positions. The team could help connect master performers with units wanting additional assistance using Healthy Forests authorities. This team must work closely with existing teams including the Washington “Office Directors’ Group (WODG), Executive Integration Team (EIT), Inter-regional Ecosystem Management Coordination Group (IREMCG), Restoration Framework Implementation Team, and the Woody Biomass Utilization Group (WoodyBUG.)

Recommendation: Acknowledge leaders and champions who are successfully reducing hazardous fuels and restoring forest health. Reward champions who increase efficiency and effectiveness of management by employing streamlined processes, innovative partnerships and creative solutions.

Integrated management

Some Forest Service personnel take the approach that Healthy Forests authorized NEPA can be used for a suite of integrated treatments, so long as at least one treatment objective falls under the Healthy Forests authorities and the treatments collectively aim to improve forest health. However, some Forest Service personnel maintain a more strict interpretation of Healthy Forests authorities, believing they can be used only for fuels reduction or other narrowly defined forest health treatments. Under this stricter view, these personnel are not using Healthy Forests NEPA if the project includes associated activities that are not strictly considered fuels reduction or insect and disease treatments. Thus, to plan and analyze an integrated project, they often opt to use NEPA analyses other than those provided by Healthy Forests authorities. On units that tend toward the strictest interpretation of the Healthy Forests authorities, integration of other resource objectives was cited as the reason for not employing the Healthy Forests authorities.

Faced with continually increasing targets and receding budgets, line officers are being challenged to include multiple types of projects within one analytical process and document. On units where resource specialists are shared between staffs, district personnel feel they are competing for scarce specialist time in their project planning. Consequently, hazardous fuels reduction projects are being integrated into larger watershed-scale proposals in order to capitalize on the limited amount of specialist time available to individual ranger districts.

In effect, line officers are practicing integrated management out of necessity. In this increasingly integrated environment, some Forest Service personnel feel they are being pressured to use Healthy Forests authorities for NEPA analysis, even when those

authorities are not necessarily the most appropriate for an integrated project. Uniformly, reviewers found that land managers identified resource management objectives first, and then considered which NEPA analysis would be appropriate for those objectives.

Recommendation: Washington Office Directors need to develop distinct guidance on the use of HFRA and HFI authorities and tools for integrated planning. Update the 2004 Healthy Forests Initiative and Healthy Forests Restoration Act Interim Field Guide and post it on the internet.

Communication

Review participants welcomed the Healthy Forests review for two reasons. First, they were proud to share the work they are doing, and eagerly included community leaders and stakeholders in the review. Secondly, they were interested to learn how other regions and forests are implementing Healthy Forests projects. While each department or functional area appears to have its own network, website or newsletter to share information, many personnel were unaware of, or did not routinely make use of, national efforts such as the National Fire Plan, Healthy Forests and stewardship contracting web sites.

Recommendation: Accelerate efforts to update and integrate the Healthy Forests and the National Fire Plan website. Link this effort to the PALS, NFPORS/FACTS, stewardship contracting and the partnership websites as appropriate. Because collaboration, partnerships and transparent processes are integral to the success of Healthy Forests implementation, make this information available on the World Wide Web and minimize posting to the FSWEB where information is not publicly available.

Recommendation: Continue to use periodic national and regional forums for an exchange of information and innovation such as the 2004 Healthy Forests Workshop in Ogden. Before these sessions take place, there needs to be national agreement on the form of these workshops; regional staff can then develop tiered regional or geographic area specific workshops.

Training

Field personnel believe training on the use of updated templates, sample contracts and modules on collaboration would be particularly helpful. Further, participants interviewed by the review team requested that the training be offered to all functional areas that could potentially work in stewardship contracting; previous training efforts were perceived as only for particular staff areas such as acquisition management or timber management.

Due to the reductions in the workforce that result in a continual loss of timber sale contracting and resource-based experience in acquisition management staffing, employees suggested cross-training for acquisition management contracting officers and timber sale administrators in stewardship contracting so they could administer each other's contracts. While this may require some modifications to current authorities, this suggestion warrants further investigation.

The Pacific Northwest Region and Pacific Southwest Region have worked with Sustainable Northwest, a non-governmental organization, to jointly provide successful stewardship contracting training.

Recommendation: Continue to provide up-to-date training on the full suite of Healthy Forests authorities. Incorporate latest information about Healthy Forests authorized NEPA in appropriate training offered service-wide and at regional and local levels. Develop on-line information and training via AgLearn. Where appropriate, utilize partnerships to develop and present training to increase the number of sessions offered.

Budget allocation

Field personnel reported that the current budgeting and accomplishment reporting processes often fail to account for the complexities in both the size and costs of treatments on the ground. For example, while the strategic budget process encourages line officers to minimize costs, existing priorities emphasize the importance of doing treatments in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), which are inherently more expensive than other types of treatments. Personnel in many regions noted a perceived unfairness about having to compete with the Pacific Southwest Region earmarks for funding, especially when other regions have lower unit costs. At the same time, they reported the resulting smaller share of the national budget, without a corresponding reduction in target acres, forces them into treating acreages with low unit costs instead of implementing critically needed projects that have higher unit costs because of extreme fuels accumulations and higher values at risk.

All field personnel recognize the need to accelerate the treatment of hazardous fuels, especially in the WUI. With this in mind, they are concerned that there is a perception among Forest Service leadership and Congress that field units can continue to treat large numbers of acres without an increase in funding. Communities that have completed the CWPP process expect the treatment priorities in the CWPP will be reflected in a National Forest's program of work and that funding will come to treat these areas. In the current allocation process, such considerations are non-existent.

Overwhelmingly, Forest Service personnel feel the accomplishment reporting should not focus on the use of Healthy Forests authorities themselves rather than emphasizing improved conditions on the landscape. Review participants stressed the importance of treating Healthy Forests authorities as yet another set of available tools rather than a stand-alone program. Although many field units recognize the value of Healthy Forests tools and have begun to experience success with them, they emphasize that their top priority should remain using the appropriate tool to get the work done on the ground rather than the use of a particular tool itself.

Healthy Forests program planning

CWPPs and forest plans

Where nearby communities have completed CWPPS the national forest has an opportunity and obligation to reflect the CWPPS in its land and resource management

plan. Some units seem uncertain how they will do so. Wildland Urban Interface areas identified in CWPPs can be reflected in forest plan updates or revisions and the collaboration that occurred in CWPP development can be a springboard for collaboration and public involvement during forest plan revision.

Five-year and annual programs of work

Fuel treatments in or near national forests that are proposed in CWPPs should be given careful consideration in field units' programs of work (HFRA Section 103.) If local line officers were not involved in the development of these CWPPs, they need to engage now and work collaboratively with community groups to incorporate CWPPs in the unit's program of work. However, if the Forest Service fails to follow through on CWPP projects, or fails to communicate why certain projects are not being funded, collaborative relationships built through the CWPP process will suffer.

Recommendation: Forests and ranger districts should put priority on helping communities develop CWPPs and on implementing projects identified in CWPPs, using HFI and especially HFRA authorities to analyze and document the decisions.

The review team inquired about five-year and annual programs of work. Some units did not have five-year plans. One forest the team met with had a clear program of work for planning and another for implementation; both were well known to the forest staff areas and were used. However, the planning program of work appeared to emphasize work related to EAs and EISs. It did not include sufficient time or priority for personnel and skills needed for completing the analysis and documentation required for CEs although the majority of hazardous fuels reduction acreage is done under CEs. In another region, the planning program of work is well understood and scheduled, however implementation does not seem to be integrated and is primarily completed by the fuels and fire people with little to no involvement of the rest of the district. On some national forests, force account often continues to be the preferred method of implementation for noncommercial fuels treatment work. Other forests have moved away from using force account crews and are contracting more frequently for fuel treatment work such as pile burning, mowing, and small diameter thinning.

Landscape scale assessments

Landscape scale assessments are extremely valuable for informing the development of CWPPs and planning an annual and five-year program of work. Nationally, a significant part of Forest Service long-term restoration strategy is to treat the right acres, in the right place, at the right time. This approach, commonly called SPOTS or Strategic Placement of Treatments, aims to maximize the effectiveness of fuel and vegetation management using integrated landscape design. This consistent and systematic interagency approach will have a large-scale impact on reducing the size and severity of catastrophic wildfires. In the last two years, inter-agency pilot projects throughout the country implemented strategic placement of fuel treatments. Treatments will be monitored over the next several years to determine if they favorably affect wild fire behavior and reduce the adverse effects of wildland fires. If so, federal land managers will be better positioned to design and locate treatments to make a difference in fire size, fire behavior, fire effects and ultimately fire costs. This integrated approach will maximize the benefits from

investments in fuel treatments and allow the land managers to build more integrated fuel treatment strategies with their partners. More information about SPOTS is in the appendices of this report.

Pacific Southwest Region National Forests are using a SPOTS approach in their Stewardship Fireshed Assessments (SFA) to plan integrated vegetation treatments. Forest personnel also use the Stewardship Fireshed Assessment as a communication tool to encourage public collaboration in planning treatments and for coordinating treatments across ownership boundaries in the WUI. This process helps inform Forest Service annual and five year programs of work for vegetation management and informs development of CWPPs.

Some regions are struggling to put together landscape scale planning tools that utilize the vegetation, watershed, and other relevant data to develop landscape scale planning. Many forests expressed an interest in being able to do larger scale assessments but face challenges such as insufficient funding to create appropriate geographic information system (GIS) data layers, lack of skills and staffing to do larger scale analysis, lack of line officer commitment or direction to do integrated assessments at a larger scale. Additional barriers include inconsistent databases among national forests and adjacent private lands; poor understanding of expectations regarding collaboration; being overwhelmed by other planning events such as forest plan revisions; and an inability among project planners to think on a larger scale than the foot print of a project area.

Accomplishment reporting

Field personnel believe the Washington Office should rely more on databases rather than on data calls. However, the NFPORS (National Fire Plan Operations Reporting System) and PALS (Planning, Appeals and Litigation System) databases are inconsistently used by field personnel and the accuracy of data in them is sometimes questionable. In fact, the Washington Office and regional offices use these databases extensively, but their importance is not always well understood by field units. There is little to no oversight of the accuracy of the data entered or reinforcement of the importance of the data in reporting successful use of Healthy Forests tools.

The Forest Service now uses the Forest Activity Coordination Tracking System (FACTS) for reporting fuels accomplishments. FACTS data about NEPA authorities will be taken from PALS and, since PALS data is entered by NEPA specialists, the data on use of Healthy Forests authorities may be more accurate than when it was being reported in NFPORS by technical specialists less familiar with the differences among NEPA authorities. In moving fuels data to FACTS common data fields among the various data bases have been removed from all but one source data base. This will reduce the opportunity for conflicting data.

Recommendation: Continue to provide updated training on the use of PALS, NFPORS and FACTS. Publicize the availability of instructions, data dictionaries, and other tools to ensure accurate entry and use of the databases. Ensure data dictionaries for each of the data bases match the definitions in the legislation, WO direction, and are consistent across databases.

Recommendation: Increase accountability by directing Regions to fulfill oversight responsibilities for data being reported in the various data bases.

Review participants consistently called for additional ways to measure success and accomplishment rather than traditional methods of using acres treated and unit costs. Because strategically placed treatments can have an effect larger than their actual acre size in the face of a wildfire, some Forest Service personnel argue that acreage directly treated is not an accurate measure of success.

Further, counting the number acres treated does not estimate or characterize the quality or the duration of the effects of a treatment. High re-treatment intervals in rapidly growing vegetation may have cheap per-acre costs, but treating those same acres repeatedly over two decades may result in a higher cost than doing more expensive treatments at shorter return intervals.

CONCLUSION

The review team found that although use of Healthy Forests authorities varies from region to region, use of the authorities is generally going well on a national scale. Field units' use and comfort with the tools will continue to increase as they gain more experience with them. The Washington Office can facilitate both public and Forest Service employees' understanding of Healthy Forests authorities by developing clear communication tools and strategies for individuals in the field.

The Healthy Forests review spanned the 2006 field season. During the course of the review many of the concerns addressed in this Healthy Forests review recommendations were also communicated to appropriate staff and leadership in the national office. As a result, many of the recommendations are already being implemented.

On-going actions include improving stewardship contract templates; stewardship contract and agreements training; collaboration training; development of a national biomass strategy; improving interagency coordination to increase biomass utilization; updating, linking and streamlining Healthy Forests and National Fire Plan websites and stewardship, biomass and National Environmental Policy Act websites; improving integration of budgets for fuels reduction and Healthy Forests activities; updating business rules for data base management; developing the FACTS (Forest Activity Coordination Tracking System) data base and integrating it with NFPORS (National Fire Plan Operations Reporting System) and PALS (Planning, Appeals and Litigation System); clarifying direction related to use of HFI, HFRA and stewardship authorities, and increasing the emphasis on integration among staff at all levels of Forest Service organization.

APPENDICES

The Appendices include a Regional summaries drawing from site visits, phone calls and regional responses to the Healthy Forests questionnaire. In addition, there are briefing papers on the Environmental Threat Assessment Centers, strategic placement of treatments (SPOTS) and Coordinated Resource Offering Protocol (CROP), Review Methods, a list of review team members, and a list of relevant Training, and References.

Regional Summaries

Northern Region, R1

Background

The Northern Region provided information to help prepare for congressional hearings and to provide updates on relevant litigation. The Healthy Forests Review team did not visit sites in the Northern Region as part of the review.

The Bitterroot NF issued a decision on the Middle East Fork Project in March 2006 using HFRA Section 102(a)(1) to reduce fuels in the WUI and Section 102 (a)(4) to treat areas affected by bark beetles. The project planning included early collaboration with stakeholders and adjusting the proposal to address concerns raised during the objection process. The project was based on the 2005 Bitterroot Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

In spite of the extensive collaboration, three parties filed suit to stop the project. To date, the court rulings have supported the Forest Service use of the authorities and its efforts at collaboration and sufficient analysis and disclosure of effects. The court did criticize the Forest Service for excluding certain people from attending a press conference about the project.

Key Findings

Bitterroot NF personnel estimate that the HFRA procedures allowed the Middle East Fork Project decision to be completed a year earlier than the national average for planning timelines, and four month earlier than recent regional projects. The collaboration called for in HFRA is essential to successfully treating wildlands to reduce hazardous fuels and restore healthy forests. Even with extensive collaboration there may be law suits to stop HFRA projects in early uses of HFRA in a geographic area. Well documented, transparent processes will enhance the success of projects over the long-run.

Rocky Mountain Region, R2

Background

The review team met with Forest Service personnel and stakeholders of the Rocky Mountain Regional Office and the Pike-San Isabel, White River and Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forests. The field trip included sites on the Pike-San Isabel and the White River National Forests.

Findings

Use of the Healthy Forests Authorities and tools varies from forest to forest and district to district. Among the employees the team met with there is broad understanding Healthy Forests authorities and tools available, and a willingness to try them all.

The Forest Service enjoys strong partnerships with communities, federal regulatory agencies and the State of Colorado all of which support aggressive treatments for fuel reduction and improving forest health. In this social climate, the team was a bit surprised to find some line officers seeming to take an overly cautious approach to the level of specificity they require in the NEPA analysis.

There have been 47 stewardship contracts regionally. There is an interest in doing larger scale (acre) stewardship contracts than have been done to date. The Region expressed concerns regarding the cancellation ceiling; an issue they are seeking resolution on from the WO before moving to larger scale projects. One forest is requesting assistance in doing a larger scale stewardship contracting, such as a coach or mentor from the WO or another Region with successful experience in stewardship contracting. The Region suggests that a smaller, more efficient contract tool for smaller and quicker stewardship contracting. They would like a suite of multiple stewardship contracts types to choose from for projects of different size, complexity and product value. Forest Service field personnel would like to see better integration of the direction coming from WO about timber sale and service contracts.

The Region has limited experience with the objection process to HFRA EAs. This may be a reflection of successful collaborative relationship, such as the Front Range Partnership Roundtable and The Northern Colorado Bark Beetle Cooperative.

The current accomplishment reporting mechanism for fuels treatments and the funding allocation process are not helping the Region to address the vast acres of WUI in the Region. They would like to use a measure of success in addition to gross acres and low cost per acre.

There are several successful collaborative efforts ongoing in Colorado, notably the Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership, the Mountain Pine Beetle Task Force (www.summitpinebeetle.org/) and the Northern Colorado Bark Beetle Cooperative. Fort Lewis College is facilitating a Four Corners Partnership. Colorado communities are actively participating in Fire Learning Network workshops.

The Colorado Good Neighbor legislation (Public Law 106-291, Section 331) grants the Secretary of Agriculture authority to permit the Colorado State Forest Service to perform watershed restoration and protection services on National Forest System lands when similar and complementary watershed restoration and protection services are being performed by the Colorado State Forest Service on adjacent State or private lands. The types of services that may be extended to National Forest System lands include treatment of insect infected trees, reduction of hazardous fuels, and other activities to restore or improve watersheds or fish and wildlife habitat across ownership boundaries. [Public Law 108-447 provides for a similar arrangement in Utah and the Tribal Forest Protection Act provides for agreements with tribes about treating national forest land adjacent to tribal land. (See FSH 2409.19, Chapter 60, Section 60.6-9.)]

Partnerships with the Colorado State Forest Service are strong on districts where the Colorado Forest Service has a person dedicated to working with the US Forest Service. The use of the Good Neighbor agreement seems to be working well, especially on the South Platte project. In areas where the Colorado State Forest Service is not fully staffed, there is notably less use of the Good Neighbor authority.

Private land owners with the will and the funding are able to do the necessary fuel treatment projects on their lands; those without funds or timber value are waiting for grants to do treatments. The grant process sometimes takes 12 to 18 months. On nearby Forest Service lands, the planning horizon is sometimes longer than 12-18 months to get the funding and to complete NEPA requirements, so the coordination between adjacent projects on federal and private land is sometimes out of synch, frustrating efforts at coordinating treatments and expanded use of Good Neighbor authority.

The Region and forests are working well with community leaders to develop capacity locally for utilization and marketing of the material that needs to be removed from the forest. There is a concern that there will be competition for a workforce to support new manufacturing opportunities; oil and gas leases are currently offering higher paying jobs.

Forest Service, the State of Colorado and community leaders have worked well to develop Community Wildfire Protection Plans and the national forests are increasingly incorporating CWPP priorities into their programs of work. The review team met with people involved in the Harris Park CWPP, Teller County CWPP (www.co.teller.co.us/Commissioners/TheCWPP.pdf) and the Coalition for Upper South Platte (www.uppersouthplatte.net.)

The community leaders and the Forest Service working together in Summit County are thinking beyond the traditional co-generation plant concept to use biomass from the insect infestation. Forests and partners appropriately are looking beyond what the current forest conditions are to shape what the future forests can be decades from now, with resource management decisions that are jointly made now.

It is unclear what participation, or understanding, the Governor's Roadless Committee has with the CWPPs. Forest Service personnel are concerned that the committee will make recommendations to the governor that run counter to efforts to reduce fuels and improve forest health in some roadless areas. This concern is especially high regarding roadless areas in or near WUI.

A CROP study has been done for portions of the region and will help attract investment in biomass. The review team heard about ongoing and planned biomass utilization such as pellets for pellet stoves and heating systems; chipping at land fill to create landscaping materials.

The Forest Service funded the Pinchot Institute to do a Front Range Watershed Assessment including assessment of fuel loading. This project will help inform regional and forest planning. The Rocky Mountain Region uses its Accelerated Watershed Restoration Program (AWaRP) to make allocations at RO level to individual forests based on regional priorities for fuel reduction and forest health.

Southwest Region, R3

Background

The Healthy Forests review team did not visit the Southwest Region. The Southwest Region responded to the Healthy Forests questionnaire and several employees and stakeholders were interviewed by phone. Input from these sources is summarized below.

Categorical exclusions

Some units have not used Healthy Forests CEs much because they are trying to do landscape scale projects and the acreage limits on HFI CEs are too restrictive. Trying to deal with fire on a landscape basis, and the HFRA/HFI size limitations doesn't allow for managing fire on a landscape basis (acreages are too small).

One interviewee reported using CE 10 on several projects, but felt CE 6 would have been equally effective. The forest is also using CE 11 and CE 12.

Several people reported concern about not knowing when cumulative effects from placing several small CE sized projects too close together might be better analyzed with an EA.

There is confusion about comment periods, objections, and appeals with CEs. For example, many employees don't really understand that it is 36 CFR 215 that requires a comment period, not NEPA or the implementing regulations at 40 CFR 1500-1508). Adding to the confusion is the recent Earth Island ruling which requires that certain activities identified as categorical exclusions (including the HFI CEs) are subject to 36 CFR 215 (notice, comment and appeal procedures), yet, an HFRA EA is not subject to the 215 regulations, rather it falls under an objection process.

The efficiency of the Healthy Forests authorities has been masked by the inability of some projects to perform basic NEPA. While they were using the appropriate HFI or HFRA authority, the fundamental components of the NEPA, such as a clear, concise purpose and need were lacking.

HFRA objection process

Some units found the objection process to be valuable as they are able to make adjustments to the project prior to signing a decision. With respect to time savings, while there is a time savings related to the absence of an appeal period, this is often countered by increased efforts in collaboration.

Biomass

Biomass utilization businesses and stewardship contractors find our year to year funding of projects difficult to commit to. They face uncertainty in supply and/or demand and find the risk difficult to compensate for. There is an unwillingness to enter these markets without some assurance of a continued flow of materials and demand provided by the Forest Service year to year appropriations.

Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs)

The CWPP has provided good opportunities for grants for private lands treatment. Interest is not just in treating acres adjacent to private land but on looking further out – across the landscape.

In Arizona, almost every major community has a CWPP in place, and in New Mexico, at least half the communities already have CWPPs. The CWPPs have been helpful for Forest Service in developing treatment plans and landscape level plans.

Collaboration

The Arizona Sustainable Forest Partnership started well before the White Mountain Stewardship Project and was based on public desires to reduce fire hazard in the WUI. The partnership continues to function well in the arenas of NEPA approval and monitoring.

Both Arizona and New Mexico have formed state sponsored collaborative plans to promote collaboration on fuel reduction and watershed restoration projects between Federal, State and private entities, many Forests are actively working with these groups.

Some Stakeholders appear to expect that no decisions will be finalized until all parties agree. A more finite definition of meaningful collaboration and a minimum standard would be helpful. It would also be helpful if decision makers set timelines for collaboration efforts.

Stewardship contracting

The biggest concern is having enough industry and industry interest in utilizing small diameter material.

Stewardship contracting primarily resides with a contracting officer with procurement authority even though the work performed is more similar to logging.

Stewardship contracts are more complex than either timber sale or service contracts, require RF approval and additional upward reporting. In the Southwest Region, because the value of forest products is low, forests are nearly always in the position of cost of services being greater than the value of goods. The national forests are thus required to use a CO from the service side, even though the work is being done (cutting and removing trees) is more closely aligned with timber harvest and a timber sale CO could often be a better choice. Use of the IRSC contract with respect to Forest Products has not worked out as well as the IRTS contract (2400-13(T)).

On the White Mountain Stewardship Project stewardship contracting using the 10-year authority has enabled some reduction in costs for WUI treatments. Additionally, 13 new businesses have started up supporting 450 full time jobs including 318 in the local area. As we gain experience, efficiencies are emerging with Stewardship Contracting.

It is imperative to understand that stewardship contracts won't produce viable and defensible economics in low value areas where conditions and objective(s) cannot support removal of significant merchantable material. We are seeing more contractors seeking projects and gaining experience as time goes on. Contractor awareness training relative to stewardship contracting may also help future endeavors.

Better integration between disciplines at RO level would provide more consistent direction for forest and district planners, decision makers, and implementers. It would help if the WO could 1) simplify the stewardship contracts, and 2) provide more flexibility in choice of the CO for a contract. Also, the WO should recognize that stewardship contracting is not a new program, but a new tool that can be used in the right situations. Targets for acres (FY2007 initial budget) have the effect of forcing us to use the stewardship contract whether it is the appropriate tool or not.

Stewardship contracting does not always save money. Contractors often bid more than they would have for a project that was either a timber sale or a service contract, because they do not have experience or equipment to handle both the treatment of small trees and the larger, commercial logs. They end up sub-contracting part of the work, and since they are not always familiar with the contracting process they bid more to cover their possible risk and extra complications.

Accountability, reporting, NFPORS, PALS

There is concern that people inputting data to NFPORS or even PALS may not understand the distinctions among various types of CEs (HFI, LTH, traditional) and HFRA and therefore entering data incorrectly.

Training

The RO hosted three Healthy Forest workshops. These workshops presented information on the new tools and discussed how they could be used in meeting the Region's central priority of restoring fire adapted ecosystems. Over 200 employees representing all forests in the region attended these workshops. Following the workshops, information on HFI CEs and HFRA NEPA processes was presented at bi-annual NEPA/Planning meetings (similar messages have been provided at each meeting since the authorities have been passed). Presentations have also been provided at various fire staff meetings.

Following several objections of HFRA projects, in spring 2006, the RO planning and fuels staff presented a "Healthy Forest Workshop: Improving Fuels Reduction NEPA." The workshop was developed as a remedy to address common issues the region saw arising with the application of the HFI and HFRA authorities.

Intermountain Region, R4

Background

The Healthy Forests review team did not visit the Intermountain Region. The Intermountain Region responded to the Healthy Forests questionnaire and the review team interviewed a number of employees and stakeholders from the region. Their input is summarized below.

Use of categorical exclusions

CEs are working well, especially CE 10. Recent successes with CE 10 include the Pine/Featherville project on national forest, BLM and private lands using mechanical thinning, hand piling and burning. This project is linked to the Elmore County Wildfire Mitigation Plan. Another success is the use of CE 10 for the Uintah Highlands prescribed

burn planned and implemented with close involvement of the Uintah Highlands community, who had recently completed a community wildfire protection plan with Utah Department of Natural Resources and the Weber County Fire Warden.

Idaho City RD has success with HFRA EA and HFI CEs to implement projects identified in the Boise County Wildfire Mitigation Plan.

CE authorities were working well until Earth Island decision—now process is slowed down. CEs are less useful now that they are subject to appeal. The HFI tool was developed to streamline the CE process for project implementation. Recent rulings have removed the expediency of project completion.

HFRA EA is simpler than regular ES—fewer alternatives to analyze.

HFI CEs do not allow use of vegetation management tools such as grazing to reduce fuel loading in brushy and grassy areas.

Some specialists do not understand CEs well and they are over-analyzing projects. They need more NEPA training on appropriate level of analysis. Some units are underutilizing HFRA authorities and making project planning more complicated than it needs to be.

There needs to be clear WO/RO direction about a threshold for cumulative effects that would indicate when a project not suitable for CE but should be documented in EA or EIS for NEPA instead of CE.

Stewardship contracting

Contractors need information and training on bidding procedures for stewardship contracting. Most contractors only interested in traditional type work such as timbering and road building, not interested in other restoration work often associated with stewardship projects.

Value of material to be removed is often less than cost of all stewardship contract activities.

Some county commissioners are starting to oppose stewardship projects because of their impact on 25% funds.

R4 is exploring opportunities for stewardship contracting with groups like Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.

FS employees need training on record keeping and reporting for stewardship contracts. Specialists such as biologists and hydrologists need training and increased understanding of stewardship.

Utah Rural Development Council (URDC) established the Stewardship Center to work with federal and state agencies to improve forest and rangeland health, to improve fish and wildlife habitat, improve air and water quality, and to improve the social and economic vitality of rural communities. See http://extension.usu.edu/forestry/Business/FPB_URDC.htm

The Stewardship Center is working to help rebuild the forest products industry in Utah. It is a nonprofit 501c(4) corporation, which allows the Center to lobby on behalf of local industries. The Center was founded to facilitate stewardship contracting between local

businesses and national forests by helping with bonding issues and clearing hurdles between businesses and federal agencies. The Stewardship Center can help local small operators by bidding on large stewardship contracts and then breaking out smaller pieces to sub-contract with local businesses. Initially, a main mission of Utah's Stewardship Center is to develop a list of contractors who are interested in bidding on portions of the contracts the Center expects to be awarded.

Leadership, direction, training

R4 Pathways to Action training and website are widely praised as a helpful tool for Healthy Forests authorities.

RO direction has been to do 2 HFRA projects and 2 stewardship projects each year. Field units do not want too much direction on collaboration—they want flexibility to fit to circumstances of each project or community.

At times there seems to be some vagueness with interpreting the authorities amongst the WO and RO. Sometimes the answers we get to the same questions are not always consistent. The field needs more in-house training by the RO and WO regarding the authorities to standardize interpretation.

Field units are well integrated in project planning and implementation, but RO and especially WO don't seem to be. Vertical communication is strictly along functional lines and often the information the biologists are getting is not the same as information the fuels people are getting. In R4 the Pathways to Action has improved integration at RO level.

Some mentoring and sharing of HFRA success stories is beginning to occur, but more is needed—sharing lessons learned.

HFRA flowcharts in the interim guide are followed very closely when determining which authorities to use for fuels and forest health projects.

Collaboration and CWPPs

CWPPs have been an excellent tool for fostering collaboration. FS took an advisory and technical support role; did not lead the process. States and communities lead the CWPP process. Each FS district ranger was assigned a county to work with on CWPPs. Except for people directly brought into CWPP development, there has not been much public interest in fuels projects.

Some communities are pursuing use of Stevens grants to get funding for fuels work on private lands.

Biomass

There is little or no existing infrastructure or industry available for biomass utilization.

Pacific Southwest Region, R5

Background

A three person Healthy Forests review team visited the San Bernardino National Forest (SBNF) June 12-13, 2006 in conjunction with a Regional review of the forest's Fuels and Vegetation Management Program.

Key Findings

Opportunities for successful Healthy Forests implementation

San Bernardino NF has strong support from a broad range of stakeholders and a good working relationship with San Bernardino and Riverside Counties. SBNF, counties and communities have established task forces (www.calmast.org/mast/public/index.html), fire safe councils (www.firesafecouncil.org) and other organizations that coordinate and support fuels and forest health treatments.

The PSW Region has directed the use of stewardship-fireshed assessment (SFA) as a collaborative planning tool and supports the forests with a team of specialists to train Forest Service and stakeholders as they collaboratively develop hands-on, forest-specific prototypes. See www.nifc.gov/spots/bahro_etal.pdf and www.nifc.gov/spots/sfa.html.

Strong support from the California congressional delegation has ensured the SBNF generous funding for hazardous fuels reduction over the last several years.

Barriers and challenges to Healthy Forests implementation

Nearly the entire SBNF is in WUI and much of it condition class 3. The mix of land ownership, high density of homes and resort development makes fuels treatments and forest management complex and very expensive.

There is little infrastructure for treating fuels and improving forest health. For example, the nearest mills are more than one hundred miles away in the Southern Sierra foothills, and there are not a lot of local contractors experienced in forest management. There is very little market for timber and almost none for non-commercial products.

The San Bernardino NF has enjoyed relatively high funding for fuels treatments and consequently has little incentive to aggressively explore stewardship contracting as a way to reduce costs.

Leadership and direction

A February 4, 2005 Regional Forester memo directed Pacific Southwest Region national forests to fully integrate fuels, vegetation management and forest health projects and to use a collaborative stewardship fireshed assessment to develop a strategic, spatially explicit 5-year program of work for fuels and vegetation management on each forest. The memo included a flowchart outlining training and technical support provided to each forest and their adjacent communities.

The Region developed a format and direction for "streamlined" EAs prior to HFRA and some Regional Office staffs feel that there are no additional benefits to using HFRA EAs for which the direction is unclear about how many alternatives HFRA requires and how to fulfill collaboration requirements.

The Region was using HFI CEs extensively prior to the Earth Island rulings. Now, with CEs requiring more up-front collaboration and still subject to appeal, units feel they have less ability to expedite needed fuel treatments. Field personnel cite the lack of timely RO and WO direction on how to comply with the rulings.

Awareness, use and perception of Healthy Forests tools

There is confusion on the San Bernardino NF and lack of forest and regional direction about using the objection process as an additional opportunity to collaborate, develop relationships and improve project plans.

Fuels reduction, Healthy Forests activities and stewardship contracting are not being implemented at scales appropriate for the watershed-fireshed scale problems with hazardous fuels and declining forest health.

Review participants expressed concern that acquisition management personnel are attending Stewardship Contracting training but resource specialists and timber sale administrators are not. Consequently the pool of qualified, knowledgeable contract administrators is not large and management lacks the flexibility it needs to manage the fuels reduction and forest health programs.

There was confusion among the people responsible for entering data into NFPORS and PALS about what types of projects should be entered and how to categorize or code them.

Review participants believe Healthy Forests authorities must be treated as “tools” in a larger toolbox to be used to accomplish specific desired conditions on the ground, rather than viewing the Healthy Forests authorities as a stand-alone program devoted to using the tools.

Pacific Northwest Region, R6

Background

A 5 person Healthy Forests Review team visited the Pacific Northwest Region in June, 2006. During these three days the team met with employees, community leaders, partners and stakeholders around the three “Blue Mountain” forests in northeast Oregon. The first day was on the Umatilla National Forest in Pendleton Oregon. Day two was a field trip hosted by the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, LaGrande Ranger District and Oregon Department of Forestry, NE Oregon District, and day three was the Malheur National Forest.

Opportunities for successful Healthy Forests implementation

All three forests have used some of the Healthy Forests authorities and tools. The Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman have been active in Stewardship Contracting and AQM and vegetation management staffs seem to have worked closely together to develop Forest stewardship program that matches the land management objectives and the infrastructure and labor force of the adjacent communities. The Malheur National Forest has also used Stewardship contracting, but not as extensively as they have been focused on restoration of large wildfires from the 2002 fire season.

The Oregon Department of Forestry has provided the leadership to local communities and facilitated the development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans on a county wide basis adjacent to the three National Forests.

([http://egov.oregon.gov/ODF/FIRE/cwpp_help.shtml#How do we create a CWPP](http://egov.oregon.gov/ODF/FIRE/cwpp_help.shtml#How_do_we_create_a_CWPP)).

It was not clear to the review team how the Forest's have, or will, use these plans in developing their program of work priorities. The Forests have the opportunity with these CWPPs completed to continue the collaboration with the communities and develop longer term strategic plans to implement the CWPPs and to priorities their hazardous fuels treatments. The Forest's are currently in Forest Plan revision and seem to have given little thought as to how to incorporate the good work the CWPP collaborative groups did into the Forest Plan, and how to include the relevant parts of the CWPPs in Forest Plan revisions such as WUI boundaries, project prioritization, priority treatment areas.

The field trip provided an opportunity for rich discussion for how each forest decides where to work, and which WUI to start in or do work in. While NE Oregon is sparsely populated, there are many small communities interspersed around all three forests. This has created multiple WUI boundaries adjacent to and within the National Forest. Although the wood products infrastructure has been reduced in the past twenty years, NE Oregon still has manufacturing plants within feasible driving distance of the forests including two to four biomass utilization facilities. (One plant is relatively new and has not operated to full capacity yet; the other has been fully operational but has gone off line from time to time due to supply and market).

There is a mix of WUI and wildland across all three forests. These forests have a large percent of the wildland in wilderness or watershed with ESA listed fish species.

Several years ago in preparation for their forest plan revisions, the forests agreed to establish the same vegetation data base layer. This data now provides excellent opportunities to work across forest boundaries for planning and implementation.

The Forests are just beginning, albeit on a limited basis, to explore leveraging stakeholder funds or partnerships to accomplish landscape scale treatment, especially working with stakeholders/partners like The Nature Conservancy, Rocky Mt. Elk foundation and similar NGOs who have expressed a keen interest in these landscapes and returning fire to them. Tribal interests and contracting has also not been utilized to the degree possible considering the interest from three different tribes, one of which has acquired a significant land base adjacent to the Malheur NF, and all three tribes have a strong fire and fuels management programs of their own. (Umatilla, Warm Springs, and Nez Perce Tribes)

Some portions of Oregon have CROP studies completed. In January 2007 Oregon's Governor announced that a new biomass facility will be built in Lakeview, Oregon. The project was supported by the southern Oregon CROP study.

Barriers and challenges to Healthy Forests implementation

The three forests have a couple of key environmental organizations who are outside existing collaborative processes, and frequent appealers of project activities.

Local contractor interest in Stewardship Contracts is just starting to develop.

Multiple large wildfires in the past 6 years have caused the Forest's program of work to focus on salvage and recovery rather than starting new projects using Healthy Forests authorities.

In some communities collaboration interest is very high by community leaders and citizens, in other communities collaboration is just developing.

All three forests had stewardship contracted projects under the pilot authority and expressed frustration that the permanent authority contracts. They feel they have made it more difficult and more time consuming to use the Stewardship authority.

With the high community, and distant community, interests in these forests, multi-party monitoring could play a significant role in solidifying collaboration and trust. It was explained to the review team that multi-party monitoring is primarily a regional function with a few individual project exceptions.

Leadership and direction

All three forests have clear, strong leadership who articulate their support for using the Healthy Forests authorities and tools. (All three Forest Supervisor's are relatively new on the Forests, less than two and a half years). In general the forest employees we met with are sincere in their desire to restore the forests and strongly support working in collaboration with communities.

Awareness, use and perception of Healthy Forests tools

Community awareness of the authorities and tools is high, although perceptions about application are skewed from reality somewhat. Some the team interviewed expected much higher timber harvest levels would come from the Healthy Forests authorities, and expressed frustration with appeals and using old time consuming processes. The rich discussion during the field trip centered on how the forests decide where to treat, and how to treat. Much frustration was expressed regarding the focus for more cheap acres, yet the expectation to treat WUI acres in collaboration or partnership with adjacent landowners, which equates to the highest cost acres. The treatment areas visited on the field trip were public and private lands, with the private land making a more significant change in condition class and the federal lands not able to "go as far" due to "constraints" from the screens (CRB) which limited the size of the treatment area and the amount of vegetation that could be removed.

District and forest personnel were frustrated with a perceived regional policy to have the objection process be treated similar to the appeals process and go through a rigorous week long review at the regional office before the local line officer could meet with the objectors.

District personnel, especially on the Wallowa-Whitman have worked closely with PNW-La Grande research station, especially related to insect and disease management activities. There appears to be an opportunity to utilize the Research Station more and on other areas in the Blue Mountains in addition to La Grande. None of the Forests has yet utilized the expertise at the Wildland Risk Assessment Center in Prineville, Oregon.

Southern Region, R8

Background

A five person Healthy Forests review team visited the Southern Region October 31 and November 1, 2006. The first day included presentations and discussion at the Sewee Visitor and Environmental Education Center in Awendaw, South Carolina. The second day was a field visit to the Francis Marion and Sumpter National Forests with four of the team members. A fifth team member visited the Cold Hill Project on the Daniel Boone NF in Kentucky on the second day. The Cold Hill Project visit was in conjunction with Washington Office Research & Development site visit.

Opportunities for successful Healthy Forests implementation

The Southern Region had notable success using HFRA in post-hurricane clean-up 2006. The overwhelming size and complexity of the problem provided support from within the Forest Service, from other agencies and from affected communities.

There has been widespread social acceptance of prescribed burning to reduce and maintain appropriate fuel loads, however as new people move into the area, and housing developments are closer to the National Forests, the opposition to smoke has increased in the past 2-3 years. Costs for these treatments are relatively inexpensive as they typically have to be done in smaller acreages and with much more staffing for access management and pre-burn public awareness.

Two coordinated resource offering protocol (CROP) studies on how to provide a long-term level supply of woody biomass are being conducted in two states in the Southern Region. Several heating and/or electric generation plants that will use biomass are in development.

The Region, the Southern Research Station and their partners have recently completed the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment (SWRA) and the Southern Critical Forest Lands Assessment. These provide scientific basis for much of the planning for fuels treatments and for forest health treatments on national forests.

The SWRA identified more than 18,000 communities at risk. There are 250 community wildfire protection plans (CWPPs) completed covering about 300 communities in 13 States. An additional 311 CWPPS are in progress.

Partnerships with National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf) and Wildlaw for habitat enhancement and restoration of forest health are excellent examples of collaboration on planning with Healthy Forests authorities. The collaboration extends to funding and implementing the projects as well. NWTf is operating as primary contractor on some stewardship contracts.

Southern Region experiences 60% of the nation's wildland fires; it also accomplishes 505 of the Forest Service's prescribed burning acreage. The resulting pattern of recently burned areas means average wildland fire size is relatively small.

Barriers and challenges to Healthy Forests implementation

Approximately 17,000 communities in the Southern Region are without a CWPP.

Southern Region national forests have more intermixed ownership and WUI than is generally thought and people outside the Region do not understand the amount of WUI and how rapidly it is increasing.

Vegetation on Southern Region national forests grows very rapidly and stands can move from condition class 1 or 2 to condition class 3 in relatively few years without periodic maintenance treatments.

The Region attracts funding from the Forest Service headquarters because of its relatively low cost per acre. However, the Southern Region is perceived as having fewer fuels problems and fewer values at risk from catastrophic wildfire and therefore sometimes accused of treating acres that are not high priority.

The support for prescribed burning may be weakening with the rapid influx of new people moving into the Region, especially into areas surrounding national forests.

Southern Region typically gets significant large scale ecological disturbance from hurricanes and the effects and recovery period can be a decade or more. Hurricanes generate an immediate heavy fuel load of dead and down, and then again 15-25 years later in the form of dense re-growth (dog-hair thickets.) Numerically, about 60% of wildfires on national forests occur in the Southern Region.

Leadership and direction

The Southern Region is moving ahead with another round of stewardship contracting training, because they do not expect training to be offered by WO within near future.

There is a strong working relationship among the Region and Research Station and individual forest staffs. There are a number of research projects related to the effects of fuels treatments and wildland fire. The Deputy Chief for Research & Development, the Southern Region and Southern Research Station are implementing a variety of projects under various HFRA titles.

- Title IV Section 403: Accelerated information gathering on red oak to help resource managers develop treatments to improve forest health.
- Title IV Section 404: Applied silvicultural assessments for red oak borer southern pine beetle, and sustainable oak ecosystems. There are six of these applied silvicultural assessments nationally; three are in the Southern Region. The Healthy Forests review visited the Cold Hill Project on the Daniel Boone NF.
- Title VI Section 601. Established the Eastern Forest Environmental Threat Assessment Center (EFETAC) in Ashville NC, as one of two centers in the nation established to predict, detect, and assess environmental threats. The other is in Prineville, OR.

Awareness, use and perception of Healthy Forests tools

The Southern Region is making fairly broad use of stewardship contracting.

Review participants believe Healthy Forests authorities must be treated as “tools” in a larger toolbox to be used to accomplish specific desired conditions on the ground, rather

than viewing the Healthy Forests authorities as a stand-alone program devoted to using the tools.

Review participants expressed concern that acquisition management personnel are attending stewardship contracting training but resource specialists and timber sale administrators are not. Consequently the pool of qualified, knowledgeable contract administrators is not large and management lacks the flexibility it needs to manage the fuels reduction and forest health programs.

There was confusion among the people responsible for entering data into NFPORS and PALS about what types of projects should be entered and how to categorize or code them. Some personnel are concerned that the information required for the automated timber sale accounting system is not consistent with the information and required reporting for stewardship contracting.

Eastern Region, R9

Background

In October, 2006 a five-person review team visited the Superior, Chequamegon-Nicolet and Chippewa National Forests. The review combined in-office visits with Forest Service personnel and local community members, as well as site visits to various Healthy Forests projects.

Opportunities for Successful Healthy Forests Implementation:

The Superior NF cited successes with using HFI authorities to treat wind thrown stands including creating fuel breaks. They cited the 2006 Cavity Lake Fire as a successful test of these fuel breaks. In addition, the Eastern Region is experiencing significant insect and disease infestations. The Superior National Forest used the streamlined EA authorized under HFRA to address a gypsy moth epidemic. Overall, Forest Service personnel involved in the process were satisfied with the new procedures outlined in the HFRA EA. They commented that while the streamlined EA did not necessarily save money, it ultimately saved time because the collaborative process protected the project from appeals and litigation. Employees also applauded the relationships built both within the district and between the Forest Service and local communities through the collaborative EA.

The Chequamegon/Nicolet National Forests have been engrossed in their forest plan revisions, and have therefore had less opportunity to work with Healthy Forests authorities; however, the forests are currently working to integrate Healthy Forests projects into their forest plan implementation. Similarly, representatives from the Chippewa National Forest explained that there has been less emphasis on Healthy Forests tools in the area because they feel the forest is not particularly fire prone. However, the forest is working with Healthy Forests tools from a vegetation management perspective, and believes the tools will be used more widely as they become better understood as useful for vegetative management purposes.

Barriers and Challenges to Healthy Forests implementation:

Although the Superior National Forest has experienced success with implementing HFI CEs, staff members commented that they take the same amount of time (and in some cases more time) to complete as traditional CEs. Because the HFI CE requires upfront collaborative decision making, employees involved in implementation of these projects noted that the HFI CE does not necessarily expedite the planning process. However, they also commented that their collaborative efforts have resulted in improved relationships between the districts and their surrounding communities.

Another obstacle to Healthy Forests implementation cited by the Superior NF is a general lack of available specialists to complete necessary analysis for Healthy Forests projects. Because the forest already has a full program of work, some employees perceive national encouragement to use Healthy Forests authorities as yet another task to be completed among many others. Consequently, project planners explained that Healthy Forests projects are often delayed because the specialists necessary to analyze the project are stretched thin across multiple projects.

While the Eastern Region is one of the few in the nation with a healthy forest products industry, there has been mixed success with stewardship contracting. Forest Service personnel recognize that they need to reach out to industry groups to make stewardship contracting an attractive proposal; however, local markets are currently unable to make the contracts profitable. Biomass utilization in the region suffers from the same problem. Although plenty of biomass exists, there is currently not a market for it.

Leadership and Direction

Each of the forests visited in the region noted that they would like more direction on how to integrate Healthy Forests tools into broader programs of work. Particularly in areas where fire is less of a concern, Forest Service employees want to know how to use Healthy Forests tools for broader objectives than fuels management.

Regional personnel also voiced concerns with potential appeals and litigation. Interviewees on the Chippewa National Forest noted that they are comfortable with traditional NEPA procedures, and are concerned that as they use new tools they will open themselves to more appeals and litigation. Further, there is a concern that the publics in the region will feel that the streamlined NEPA processes authorized under HFRA circumvent their rights. Regional personnel requested more clear national direction on the scope and proper application of the amended NEPA procedures.

Awareness, use and perception of Healthy Forests tools

Overall, the review team found that regional personnel have a good working knowledge of Healthy Forests tools and procedures. However, implementation of Healthy Forests authorities varies widely throughout the areas visited; while the Superior NF has had ample opportunity to work with Healthy Forests tools, other forests in the region have experienced more hesitation to incorporate Healthy Forests authorities in their broader programs of work.

Alaska Region, R10

Background

The review team did not visit sites in the Alaska Region. The region did not respond to the regional questionnaire. Some employees and stakeholders were interviewed and input from them is summarized below.

CWPPs

The Alaska Region experiences wildfires, hazardous fuel build-up and forest health problems that can benefit from application of Healthy Forests authorities.

Many communities are adversely impacted by spruce bark beetles. Many communities are participating in Fire Wise and developing CWPPs. The Forest Service is participating in CWPP development. US Fish and Wildlife is also a large federal land manager in Alaska with responsibility for lands within WUI. There are 21 “extreme risk” communities and an additional 15 at risk with which the Forest Service is working to develop CWPPs. At least eight communities have completed CWPPs. People in CWPP communities understand the Healthy Forests authorities but general public is more removed from national forests and aren’t as familiar.

The HFRA interim field guide described WUI communities as being in or adjacent to federal lands. There is only one road in and out of the Kenai Peninsula and there are lots of homes there. The Forest Service initially identified all these homes as WUI and later changed it to be only communities with the National Forest Boundary

Collaboration

Collaboration through Healthy Forest activities has been excellent and is on-going. Government agencies developed the MOU for “all hands, all lands” plan. This has been very helpful and the group meets at least two times a year and reports accomplishments.

Biomass

Many communities are served with natural gas and have little interest in using biomass instead. One person interviewed said the federal lands near the community are FWS Wildlife Refuge with lots of dead woody material but no market for it.

Stewardship contracting

BLM has done a 40 acre stewardship project near a housing subdivision but it was hard to find a bidder there was no commercial volume in the material to be removed.

Healthy Forests NEPA

One person interviewed reported that Kenai National Wildlife Refuge abuts the community’s WUI and they’ve done what they can to reduce fuels and to coordinate with Forest Service and communities. However, coordination with the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is limited because FWS is not included under HFI and HFRA.

Environmental Threat Assessment Centers

Eastern Forest Environmental Threat Assessment Center; Asheville, NC and Western Environmental Threat Assessment Center; Prineville, OR

In 2005, the USDA Forest Service chartered two threat centers to work in tandem on common problems and yet be independently focused on issues unique to eastern forests and western wildlands. The centers were authorized by Congressional action through HFRA (2003) – Title VI which stated that the Secretary of Agriculture “shall develop a comprehensive early warning system” that will enable resource managers to better isolate and treat threats that could be devastating to forests.

The mission of both centers is to generate, integrate, and apply knowledge to predict, detect, and assess environmental threats to public and private forests and wildlands. This knowledge will then be delivered to managers in a timely and useful manner.

The threat centers are supported by the three Deputy Areas of the Forest Service (Research and Development, National Forest System, and State and Private Forestry) and will build upon the extensive expertise available throughout the Agency and from other federal, state and non-governmental organizations.

In FY 2007, some of the targeted tasks of the centers and their partners are the development of probabilistic risk assessment models for priority threats to forests and rangelands, and the coordination of regional integrated analyses of multiple threats.

Objectives of the Centers:

- Evaluate the effects and consequences of multiple interacting stresses;
- Increase knowledge and understanding of the risks, uncertainties, and/or benefits of multiple environmental stresses on ecological conditions and socioeconomic values;
- Provide science-based decision support tools for policy formulation and land management;
- Provide land managers with credible predictions of potential severe disturbance with sufficient warning to take preventative actions.

Science Delivery and Technology Development:

- Center-hosted workshops and conferences to synthesize knowledge and improve predictive modeling;
- Collaborative agreements with NASA, Universities, and Forest Service technology development units to advance remote sensing and geospatial technologies;
- Improved accessibility of threat assessment tools and data for managers;
- Advanced marketing and educational technologies to ensure rapid and effective delivery to targeted audiences.

Environmental Threat Assessment Center Contacts:

Danny C. Lee, Director, Eastern Forest Environmental Threat Assessment Center, 828-257-4854, dclee@fs.fed.us

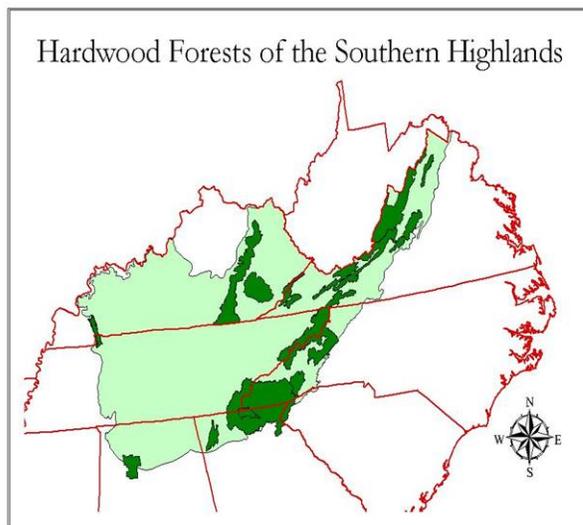
Jerry Beatty, Director, Western Wildland Environmental Threat Assessment Center, 541-416-6500, jbeatty@fs.fed.us

Healthy Forest Restoration Act Title IV Projects, Southern Region and Research Station

Maintaining Habitat Diversity, Sustaining Oak Systems, and Reducing Risk of Mortality from Gypsy Moth and Oak Decline on the Daniel Boone National Forest: Silvicultural Approaches and Their Operational Dimensions

Significance: Oak forests dominate the southern Appalachian landscape. The arrival of the gypsy moth and related oak decline over the next few decades threatens the character and integrity of these ecosystems and the benefits and ecological functions they provide on tens of millions of acres of public and private land.

Approach: The recently completed Land and Resource Management Plan for the Daniel Boone National Forest provides for a broad range of silvicultural treatments to sustain oak forests and to provide for a variety of structural habitat. A research study is being developed (currently in the stand selection/study plan development phase) to assess how



the various silvicultural treatments will affect vulnerability to gypsy moth/oak decline in both the near term and long term, as well as whether the treatments will sustain oak forests. Oak-dominated stands will be selected on sites representative of a large majority of forest land in the southern Appalachians and the silvicultural treatments will be applied using the Title IV categorical exclusion. The treatments are (1) shelterwood with reserves leaving 15 to 20 square feet residual basal area to create a two-aged stand; (2) an “oak shelterwood” leaving 65 to 80 square feet residual basal area by removing mid-story and

some lower canopy to encourage development of oak advance reproduction; (3) oak woodland that leaves about 50 square feet residual basal area and is periodically burned; (4) thinning to B-line or slightly below on Gingrich stocking chart; (5) control—no treatment. A combination of measured and modeled outcomes of the silvicultural treatments will be used to assess vulnerability to gypsy moth/oak decline, sustainability of the oak systems, and the operational aspects of the silvicultural treatments. Some results will be available soon after harvest, while others will require 10 years or more to obtain. This project is a joint effort between the Northeastern Research Station, Southern Research Station, Forest Health Protection, and the Daniel Boone National Forest.

Outcome(s): The major outcome will be knowledge of the effectiveness and the operational aspects of various silvicultural treatments to condition oak forests to withstand and recover from gypsy moth, while retaining the composition, structure and function associated with these ecosystems.

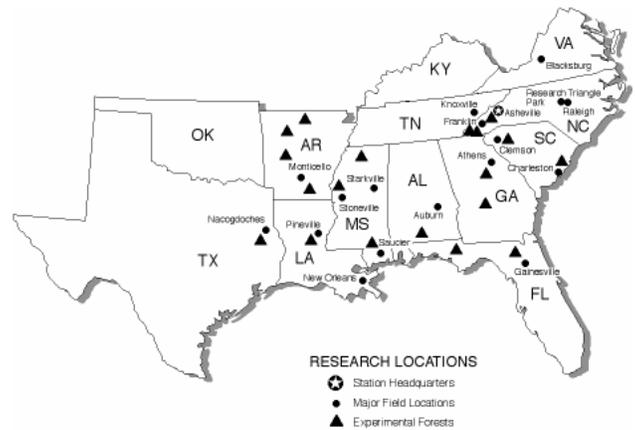
Benefits to Society: Silviculture can be used to sustain oak forests and the commodity and non-commodity benefits they provide.

Contacts: Dr. David Loftis, Dr. Bob Rummer, Dr. Callie Schweitzer, SRS; Dr. Kurt Gottschalk, NRS; Bill Jones, Forest Health Protection, R8; Rex Mann/Nancy Ross, Daniel Boone National Forest.

Applied Silvicultural Assessment of Southern Pine Beetle in Southern Pine Stands West of the Mississippi River. Monticello, AR (SRS-4106)

Significance: Outbreaks of the southern pine beetle (*Dendroctonus frontalis*) (SPB) cycle within the Southern region and we cannot anticipate when or where they will occur or predict their severity. Consequently, when outbreaks do occur the effects on forest health are devastating. Other than immediate control of SPB infestations, the silvicultural tools available to develop stands resistant to SPB and to rehabilitate affected stands are poorly understood.

Approach: Scientists at Monticello and cooperators with Texas A&M University and the University of Arkansas will impose treatments to configure pine stands of the west Gulf region to desired future condition. Those stands will then be quantified and modeled to determine SPB hazard in a stand and landscape context. Results from the ASA will be communicated to landowners and resource managers through field demonstrations and web-based visualization products.



Outcome(s): Deliverable products include new silvicultural systems to limit catastrophic tree mortality, improved ability to evaluate the efficacy of wide area treatments, specific validated silvicultural alternatives to reduce SPB impacts, and SPB hazard and risk assessment protocols improved to enable application at all relevant spatial and temporal scales.

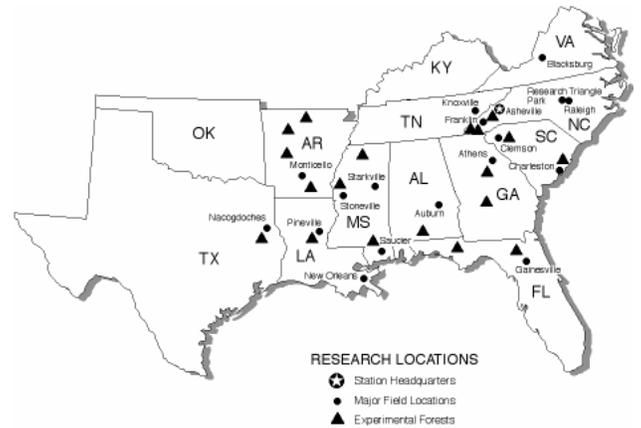
Benefits to Society: By providing better silvicultural choices to increase the resistance of southern pine stands to SPB, the economic losses and ecological impacts suffered during outbreaks can be mitigated locally and regionally. Moreover, the association of these silvicultural systems with public and private lands will be of benefit to local industry as well as to landowners in the region.

Contact(s): Dr. James Guldin- Project Leader, Upland Forest Ecology and Management, USDA Forest Service-Southern Research Station

Applied Silvicultural Assessment of Upland Oak-Hickory Forests and the Red Oak Borer in the Ozark and Ouachita Mountains of Arkansas. Monticello, AR (SRS-4106)

Significance: The goal of this applied silvicultural assessment (ASA) is to develop and test different silvicultural practices to reduce problems associated with the current outbreak of the red oak borer (ROB), and to translate that information to practicing professionals and the public.

Approach: Silvicultural treatments including thinning and brood tree removal will be evaluated using a newly-developed rapid estimation procedure by scientists on national forest lands to evaluate silvicultural mitigation of red oak borer outbreak and rehabilitation of stands that have been or are in current infestation. Associated with this field test will be a focused set of studies within the ASA stands and elsewhere on red oak borer biology, landscape assessment of red oak borer incidence, and transfer of new technology for mitigation and rehabilitation to forest landowners in the region.



Outcome(s): The products produced in this ASA will include recommended silvicultural mitigation and rehabilitation treatments for oak-hickory stands in the region, scientific findings about red oak borer biology, and web-based stand and landscape visualization products for private landowners and the professional foresters and entomologists who advise them.

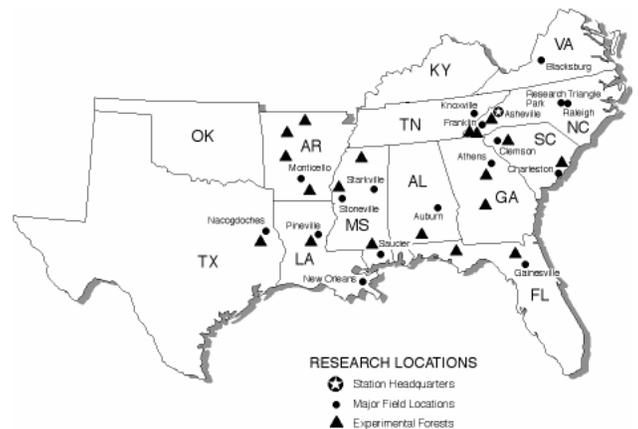
Benefits to Society: Development of state-of-the-art silvicultural strategies and tactics for mitigation and rehabilitation of affected stands, broadening the biological understanding of the insect, and getting quantitative visualization tools into the hands of landowners and resource managers, better decisions can be made to restore healthy oak-hickory forests in the region and to improve the health of forests affected by this red oak borer epidemic.

Contact(s): Dr. James Guldin- Project Leader, Upland Forest Ecology and Management, USDA Forest Service-Southern Research Station

Rapid Response Treatment Strategies for Public and Private Landowners in the South to Recover from Red Oak Borer in the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas. Monticello, AR (SRS-4106)

Significance: The red oak borer (*Enaphalodes rufulus*) is found across most of the eastern U.S. This insect is causing devastating losses to the timber industry and the ecosystem throughout the Ozark Plateau. When infestations are epidemic, the red oak borer kills trees by girdling and ruins economic value by tunneling through the wood of the tree. This rapid response work is to quickly get existing technologies and silvicultural prescriptions in the hands of forest landowners on National Forest lands, other public lands, and private lands to recover from red oak borer infestation.

Approach: Scientists at Hot Springs will spearhead the HFRA Rapid Response Training and Technology Transfer Team in the Interior Highlands of Arkansas,. The goal is to advise public and private forest landowners on forest health issues and silvicultural treatments to enable forest restoration, rehabilitation and recovery, for oak-hickory forest stands affected by red oak borer.



Outcome(s): The goal of this team will be to provide public and private forest landowners with information needed to restore and rehabilitate oak-hickory forest stands affected by oak decline and red oak borer

Benefits to Society: By providing public awareness, the public and private forest landowners will be advised on forest health issues and treatments to enable forest restoration, rehabilitation and recovery. The goal is to quickly get known technologies and silvicultural prescriptions in the hands of forest landowners on National Forest lands, other public lands, and private lands.

Contact(s): Dr. James Guldin- Project Leader, Upland Forest Ecology and Management, USDA Forest Service-Southern Research Station.

SPOTS and CROP Briefing Paper

Increasing Woody Biomass Utilization Opportunities with Coordinated Resource Offering Protocol (CROP) and the Strategic Placement of Treatments (SPOTS)

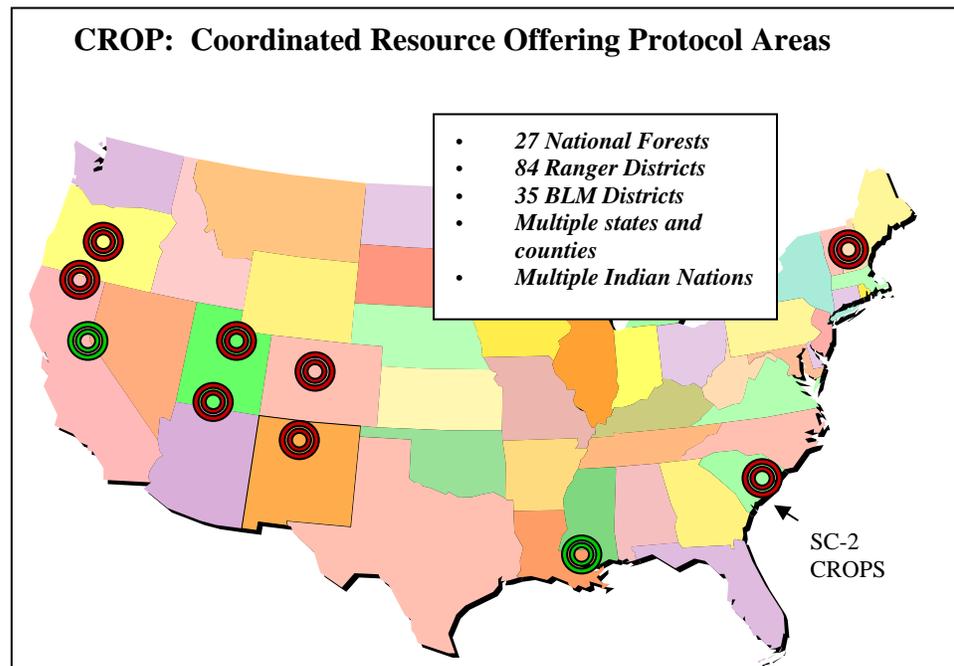
The Forest Service is attempting to increase the use of woody biomass from hazardous fuel reduction, restoration, and other management activities on public and private lands to help offset the costs of these activities, provide economic opportunities to rural communities, and enhance environmental benefits for the American public.

Interagency Coordinated Resource Offering Protocol (CROP) inventories that provide information via the internet on the amount of biomass that will be offered by species and size class within commuting distance of a processing facility. This information will encourage economic investment in the private sector that will further Healthy Forests goals, including hazardous fuels reduction.

These CROP inventories can be sharpened by use of a Strategic Placement of Treatments (SPOTS) approach in those areas where problem fires threaten communities and natural resources. SPOTS uses spatial models in a collaborative way to evaluate the best possible landscape pattern of fuels and other vegetation management efforts to maximize treatment effectiveness on the large problem fires while meeting a range of Healthy Forest objectives.

An early success came in January 2007 when Oregon's Governor announced a new biomass facility will be built in Lakeview, Oregon. The project was supported by the southern Oregon CROP study.

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Review Methods

The review examined the implementation of a broad range of Healthy Forests authorities and activities, including counter-part regulations, categorical exclusions, HFRA Titles I-IV, stewardship contracting, biomass utilization, collaboration and Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs). Methods of data collection included telephone and in-person interviews with Forest Service employees, interagency representatives and public stakeholders; site visits to ten National Forests in five regions; examination of the National Fire Plan Operations Reporting System (NFPORS) and Planning, Appeals and Litigation System (PALS) database reports; relevant Government Accountability Office and Office of Inspector General reports; and responses to a questionnaire sent to each Regional Forester. These tasks were executed by the following personnel:

Healthy Forests Review—core team

Scott Fenimore, WO Fire & Aviation Management
Marc Bosch, WO Wildlife, Fisheries and Watershed
Ed Gee, WO Forest Management and Biomass Utilization Team
Doug MacCleery, WO Forest Management
Dave Sire, WO Ecosystem Management Coordination
Bonnie Wood, Pacific Northwest Region National Fire Plan

Healthy Forests Review—site visit team

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Marc Bosch, WO Wildlife, Fisheries and Watershed
Kate D'Ambrosio, WO Fire & Aviation Management
Scott Fenimore, WO Fire & Aviation Management
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Healthy Forests Review—phone interview team

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 David Whittekiend, WO Ecosystem Management Coordination
 Melissa Zaksek, Southwest Region Forest Management

Stewardship and Related Training

Training title or topic	Delivery mode or format	Notes or references
Basic Stewardship Contracting	3 day session available from Northwest Procurement Institute	www.npi-training.com
Best Value Basis	1 day session available from Northwest Procurement Institute	www.npi-training.com
Collaboration	1 day session available from Pinchot Institute	www.pinchot.org/
Stewardship Contract Preparation	FS training cadre packet delivered by national and regional subject matter specialists	In development. First session planned for May 2007 in Region 8. Contact Tim Dabney, tdabney@fs.fed.us
Stewardship Contract Administration	FS training cadre packet delivered by national and regional subject matter specialists	In development. First session planned for May 2007 in Region 8. Contact Tim Dabney, tdabney@fs.fed.us
Stewardship Accounting	FS training cadre packet available through Lotus Notes Sametime and FSWEB.	Contact Tim Dabney, tdabney@fs.fed.us

Web-based Stewardship Presentations

From <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/fm/stewardship/training/index.shtml>

Basic Stewardship Contracting Training

[Everything You Wanted to Know About Stewardship End Result Contracting...But Didn't Know What to Ask \(.ppt\)](#)

Stewardship Contracting Agreements

[Agreements for Stewardship End Results Contracting \(.ppt\)](#)

[Agreements Training \(.ppt\)](#)

Providing Stewardship Contracting Training to Non-Forest Service Persons

[Everything You Wanted to Know About Stewardship End Result Contracting...But Didn't Know What to Ask \(.ppt\)](#) - a USDA Forest Service and BLM presentation for external audiences.

Collaboration and Monitoring

[Collaboration and Multi-Party Monitoring \(.ppt\)](#)

Financial Accounting

[Financial Accounting For Stewardship Contracts: An interim approach for implementing the financial requirements of Integrated Resource Stewardship Contracts \(.ppt\)](#)

[Stewardship Contracting: Timber Sale Financial Management \(.ppt\)](#)

Designation by Description or Prescription

[Stewardship Project Design Components \(.ppt\)](#)

[Stewardship Project Areas & Stewardship Contracting Project Areas \(.ppt\)](#)

Integrated Resource Stewardship Contracts (IRSC) and Integrated Resource Timber Contracts (IRTC)

[Integrated Resource Contracts, New Contract Tools to Complete Resource Work \(.ppt\)](#)

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