

A Message From the Regional Forester

Since Congress gave the Forest Service the authority to implement a new way of working with the public on land management projects by pairing harvest of forest products with land restoration activities, the Northern Region has experienced an increase in trust, good will and cooperation between local communities and the Forest Service. This came about through the collaborative process of implementing these stewardship projects. Implementation of these pilot projects in collaboration with communities and individuals has built trust, credibility and support by focusing on the end result, what's left on the land rather than what's taken from it. Economic benefits are occurring in the form of employment and contracts being awarded to small businesses with ties to these communities. This authority is called "land stewardship contracting."

With cooperation of local communities, we can accomplish work that may not otherwise be accomplished. We are accomplishing on-the-ground work such as forest health and hazardous fuel reduction, watershed improvement, recreation facility enhancement, road management, riparian area restoration, and educating the public on fuels reduction techniques around their homes.

The pilot program is expected to improve our work efficiency. The authorities being tested increase the contracting and financial methods available to accomplish program goals, consolidate land management activities into fewer contracts, reduce multiple entries and land disturbance, meet land management goals in a shorter time period, and afford us opportunities to conduct needed resource work over a larger area than what has historically occurred.

As we continue to implement these stewardship projects, we empower individuals and groups as they manage the resources upon which their communities depend. Relationships between the Forest Service and communities continue to improve as we build trust and credibility.

Shifting philosophies for management of forested vegetation, the numbers of acres in need of treatment, changes in types of products being utilized, decreases in size of trees targeted for removal, and lower values realized for the material all indicate the process, procedures, and tools that were appropriate a few years ago may no longer be suitable for achieving some of today's desired goals or resource conditions. Additionally, residents of rural communities are increasingly expressing their desire to participate with the Forest Service at the local level in developing and implementing projects to help the stability of their communities.

The Northern Region has determined it is critical that we engage as many people as possible in development of stewardship projects, and to monitor progress. If we continue to do this, we will be successful in the implementation of this new process. The public, the resource, and the managers will all benefit from this success.

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bradley Smith", is written below a horizontal line.