

SUMMARY: The Southwest Washington Provincial Advisory Committee will meet on Tuesday, July 20, 1999, at the Port of Skamania County meeting room, located at 70 SE Cascade, Stevenson, Washington. The meeting will begin at 10 a.m. and continue until 5 p.m. The purpose of the meeting is to present: (1) The National Forest roads policy and how that affects the roads policy on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest; (2) the timber and recreation aspects of monitoring the Northwest Forest Plan; (3) restoration monitoring; (4) an update on the timber sale plan; (5) an update on survey and manage; and (6) a Public Open Forum. All Southwest Washington Provincial Advisory Committee meetings are open to the public. Interested citizens are encouraged to attend. The "open forum" provides opportunity for the public to bring issues, concerns, and discussion topics to the Advisory Committee. The "open forum" is scheduled as part of agenda item (6) for this meeting. Interested speakers will need to register prior to the open forum period. The committee welcomes the public's written comments on committee business at any time.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Direct questions regarding this meeting to Linda Turner, Public Affairs Specialist, at (360) 891-5195, or write Forest Headquarters Office, Gifford Pinchot National Forest, 10600 NE. 51st Circle, Vancouver, WA 98682.

Dated: July 2, 1999.

Peggy Kain,

Acting Deputy Forest Supervisor.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Stewardship Contracting Pilot Projects

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Forest Service is implementing pilot projects to study whether alternate means of contracting on National Forest System lands can better accomplish program objectives. Section 347 of the FY 1999 Omnibus Appropriations Act authorizes the Forest Service to enter into twenty-eight "stewardship end result contracting demonstration projects" to pilot test an array of new authorities for giving national forest managers greater administrative flexibility to improve forest conditions and address the needs of local communities.

ADDRESSES: Questions about this notice may be sent to Cliff Hickman, via mail at USDA Forest Service, Forest Management, Mail Stop 1105, P.O. Box 96090, Washington, DC 20090-6090 or electronically to chickman/wo/@fs.fed.us. Electronic copies of Section 347 of the FY 1999 Omnibus Appropriations Act may be obtained via Internet at www.fs.fed.us/land/fm/stewardship/framework.html.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Cliff Hickman, Forest Management Staff, (202) 205-1162, or chickman/wo@fs.fed.us.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Many forests within the National Forest System are currently experiencing conditions that jeopardize long-term ecosystem health and sustainability (such as, high fuel loadings, impaired watersheds, and habitat loss). The Forest Service seeks to respond to these problems in an efficient and cost-effective manner to maximize treated acreage without undue administrative delay. In addition to natural resource benefits, local economies may benefit as a result of the Forest Service using private contractors to implement needed ecosystem restoration, maintenance, or protection activities.

The Forest Service's current contracting authorities are limited in their ability to address the agency's changing forest management challenges because those laws were originally designed to sell and remove forest products of commercial value. To address many of today's most pressing forest health concerns (such as excessive fuel loadings), the agency needs to remove material of relatively little to no economic value. Except within very narrowly defined limits, the agency's current timber sale authorities preclude the federal government from requiring purchasers to perform land management services not directly associated with removing purchased timber. This often results in making multiple entries on the same site using multiple service contracts to implement desired treatments. The need for multiple entries and contracts increases the potential for environmental degradation and adds to the administrative costs.

Stewardship contracts are generally multiserve and multiyear procurements, are end result oriented, and generally authorize the exchange of goods for services. Given these attributes, stewardship contracts may greatly enhance the agency's ability to implement needed ecosystem restoration, maintenance, or protection activities.

Background

In Fiscal Years 1992 and 1993, the Forest Service was given limited authority to experiment with stewardship contracting. Language in the appropriations act for these 2 years provided that tests could be conducted on five administrative units (the Idaho Panhandle National Forest in Region 1, the Coconino and Kaibab National Forests in Region 3, the Dixie National Forest in Region 4, and the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit in Region 5) and also authorized the exchange of goods for services. Test units conducted such work as: site preparation, replanting, silviculture activities, recreation activities, wildlife habitat improvement, and other multiple-use enhancements. These projects were funded, in part, by the products sold from the test sites.

In its final report to Congress on the results of these tests, the agency concluded that: (1) in instances where the primary reason for manipulating vegetation was to create specific resource conditions, rather than to produce fiber, stewardship contracting could be an extremely useful management tool, and (2) certain issues needed to be resolved before stewardship contracting could be applied more broadly or on a permanent basis. Key concerns identified during the study included: the handling of payments to states, the competitive disadvantage small businesses may have due to inadequate resources (such as, skills, finances, equipment), and the difficulties inherent in trying to fund multiyear contracts out of a single year's appropriated funds.

In October of 1996, in recognition of the growing need to find better ways to manage vegetation, especially material that is of little or no commercial value, the Forest Service held a national scoping workshop on the subject of "Improving Administrative Flexibility and Efficiency in the National Forest Timber Sale Program." At this meeting, a broad array of stakeholders discussed stewardship contracting and other potentially innovative ways of managing national forest vegetation within an ecosystem context. An outcome of the workshop was a new initiative with the following objectives:

- To find new ways to accomplish needed vegetation treatments more effectively and efficiently.
- To investigate how the Forest Service's existing authorities can be used more creatively to accomplish needed vegetation treatments.

- To demonstrate the role of vegetation management in resource stewardship.

- To demonstrate the role that ecosystem restoration, maintenance, and protection activities play in helping to sustain rural communities.

- To demonstrate the advantages of improved communication and joint problem solving among stakeholders concerned with restoring the diversity and productivity of forested watersheds.

This initiative is proceeding along two complementary paths: (1) determining how the agency can take maximum advantage of its existing authorities, and (2) evaluating what new authorities are needed to accomplish resource objectives. The first pathway has resulted in the publication of a booklet describing the agency's current authorities and their usefulness in implementing innovative land stewardship projects. This booklet is available from the Pinchot Institute for Conservation, Washington, DC.

In an effort to explore the second pathway, all National Forest System field units were invited in the summer of 1997 to nominate pilot projects that could test new and innovative ways of achieving diverse vegetation management goals. Field managers were encouraged to suggest useful projects that would entail applying processes and procedures beyond the scope of the agency's current authorities. A total of 52 nominations were received, including proposals from each region.

In November of 1997, an interdisciplinary team of resource specialists from both the Washington Office and the field reviewed the nominations and recommended that 22 projects be implemented as pilots. Criteria considered during the selection process included the following: the ability of the project to increase the existing knowledge of how to achieve national forest vegetative management goals more effectively and efficiently, the potential of the project to yield results applicable in a wide range of geographic and ecosystem settings, the number of committed cooperators and the level of public support for implementation of the project, and the degree to which the project would address one or more of the agency's natural resource priorities (improving water quality, riparian restoration, forest and rangeland ecosystem health, and promoting responsible recreation use).

Stewardship Pilots

Section 347 of the FY 1999 Omnibus Appropriations Act (Act) authorizes the Forest Service to implement up to 28 stewardship end result contracts, nine

of which by law must be in Region 1. This Act also enumerates the new processes and procedures that the agency may test, to include: (1) awarding of contracts on the basis of "best value;" (2) issuing service contracts up to 10 years duration; (3) exchanging goods for services; (4) retaining receipts; (5) offering sales valued at over \$10,000 without advertisement; (6) designating timber to be cut by prescription or description; and (7) collecting brush disposal and cooperative deposits when the agency conducts contract logging with subsequent sale of the cut products.

The land management goals that may be pursued through a Section 347 contract are set forth in subsection (b) of the legislation. They include, but are not limited to, the following: (1) Road and trail maintenance or obliteration to restore or maintain water quality; (2) soil productivity, habitat for wildlife and fisheries, or other resource values; (3) prescribed fires to improve the composition, structure, condition, or health of stands or to improve wildlife habitat; (4) noncommercial cutting or removal of trees or other activities to promote healthy forest stands, reduce fire hazards, or achieve other noncommercial objectives; (5) watershed restoration and maintenance; (6) restoration and maintenance of wildlife and fish habitat; and (7) control of noxious and exotic weeds or reestablishment of native plant species.

With regard to the noncommercial cutting or removal of trees, the Forest Service has interpreted "noncommercial" to mean a project where the primary purpose is to achieve some nontimber objective, established in the forest plan, that requires manipulating the existing vegetation, such as, improving forest health, reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire, or creating desired wildlife habitat conditions. Sawtimber-sized trees could be removed during such projects and sold, but the sale of such timber would be secondary to achieving the forest plan objective.

Because of the limited scope of the pilot testing, the need to provide a better basis for evaluating the exchange of goods-for-services concept, and because the focus of the authorized projects is the noncommercial cutting of trees, subsection (d)(3) of the Act states that any receipts from the pilot projects are not to be considered in determining required payments to states and counties.

Twenty-seven Stewardship Pilot Projects have been selected: North Fork Big Game Habitat Restoration Project (Clearwater NF), Three Mile Restoration

Project (Custer NF), Paint Emery Stewardship Demonstration Project (Flathead NF), Priest Pend Oreille Land Stewardship Project (Idaho Panhandle NF), Yaak Community Stewardship Proposal (Kootenai NF), Dry Wolf Project (Lewis & Clark NF), Clearwater Project (Lolo NF), Knox-Brooks Results Based Stewardship Proposal (Lolo NF), South Fork Clearwater River Stewardship Proposal (Nez Perce NF), Winiger Ridge Restoration Project (Arapaho-Roosevelt NF), Mt. Evans Collaborative Stewardship Project (Arapaho-Roosevelt NF), Upper Blue Stewardship Project (White River NF), SW Ecosystem Stewardship Project (San Juan NF), Beaver Meadows Restoration Project (San Juan NF), Grand Canyon Stewardship Project (Coconino NF), Cottonwood/Sundown Watershed Project (Apache-Sitgreaves NF), North Kennedy Forest Health Project (Boise NF), Monroe Mountain Ecosystem Restoration Project (Fishlake NF), Grassy Flats Project (Shasta-Trinity NF), Pilot Creek Project (Six Rivers NF), Baker City Watershed Project (Wallowa-Whitman NF), Antelope Pilot Project (Winema NF), Upper Glade LMSC Project (Rogue River NF), Littlehorn Wild Sheep Habitat Restoration (Colville NF), Wayah Contract Logging Service Project (National Forests in North Carolina), Nolichucky-Unaka Stewardship (Cherokee NF), and Contract Logging/Stewardship Services (George Washington-Jefferson NF).

The agency is working on a multiparty monitoring and evaluation process as required by subsection (g) of the Act. Notice of the process will be published in the **Federal Register** as a separate notice for public comment.

Dated: July 1, 1999.

Robert Lewis, Jr.,

Acting Associate Chief.

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COMMITTEE FOR PURCHASE FROM PEOPLE WHO ARE BLIND OR SEVERELY DISABLED

Procurement List; Proposed Additions

AGENCY: Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled.

ACTION: Proposed additions to procurement list.

SUMMARY: The Committee has received proposals to add to the Procurement List a commodity and services to be furnished by nonprofit agencies employing persons who are blind or have other severe disabilities.