

FOREST SERVICE
COOPERATIVE FORESTRY AND
URBAN & COMMUNITY FORESTRY

WASHINGTON OFFICE
REVIEW OF
REGIONS 1 & 4

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DIRECTOR'S COMMENT

The degree to which Regions 1 and 4 have integrated Cooperative Forestry and Urban Forestry with all Deputy Areas of the Forest Service is unparalleled. Stand-out actions contributing to this include training for line officers and hosting broad-based S&PF employees on National Forests. Positive results from this integration could be seen throughout the review. The Regions have accomplished this at the same time that they have proven a shared service area involving two Regions can be managed in a highly effective manner. They are leaders in post-fire recovery strategies, biomass utilization, and Tribal relations. The strong and productive working relationships the Regions maintain with State Foresters are exemplary.

Larry Payne

INTRODUCTION

The R1-R4 Cooperative Forestry Review was based out of Reno, Nevada and Coeur D'Alene, Idaho. Field trips visited project locations in the vicinity of each city. Representatives of programs and functions provided briefings on the overall operations, workload and significant projects underway as well as challenges the staff and partners face. Panels of partners presented their role, involvement, and observations on Regional and National delivery. Additional documentation regarding this review can be found at the Cooperative Forestry web site. Overall management review comments are listed below.

Synergy among programs: The Regions have integrated their work with National Forest Systems in a manner that complements the work of both branches. This includes using multiple CF and U&CF authorities in a coordinated way, and weaving State & Private and National Forest System work to achieve goals.








Relationships with State Foresters: The review was greatly enhanced by the full participation of State Foresters and their staffs in presentations, field visits and in core team functions. The strength, breadth and effectiveness of the partnerships between the State Foresters' organizations and the Forest Service were conspicuous throughout the review.

Combined R1/R4 program delivery: The Regions have successfully transitioned into a single, fully integrated staff group, with shared delivery of programs across all areas of R1 and R4. This arrangement functions well according to partners, staff members and Washington Office program managers. The current organization provides a significant, strategic advantage to all parties involved.

Civil Rights: While the Regions have done a commendable job in outreach overall, and with Tribes in particular, opportunities to strengthen our civil rights role have been identified.

Presidential Management Fellows: The Regions express support for CF's effort to recruit, train and actively place Presidential Management Fellows. This benefits the agency overall. Future efforts would yield significant and long lasting results.

ADDITIONAL COMMENDATIONS

-  All States have been very effective in leveraging partnerships to enhance program reach and delivery. The diversity and range of partnerships is impressive.
-  Regional program managers have strong, positive and constructive working relationships with State program managers and are well informed about how all five States operate their programs.
-  The number of Tree City USA's has doubled and among existing TC USA's many have progressed into upper levels within a seven-year period. This is an outstanding achievement given limited resources and the geographic constraints of the regions.
-  The Regions have shown an ability to outreach to diverse populations. The degree to which Tribal needs are woven into the reviewed programs is an asset for the entire Forest Service. The manner in which the Tribal coordinators function is exemplary.
-  The Regions have set a National example in collaborative post-fire recovery efforts. They have begun the process of sharing what they have developed with other regions on an as-needed basis.
-  Region 1 is a pilot for the e-gov program and has absorbed this additional work within current operations.
-  The Forest Service recognition required in all EAP grants could serve as a National model. The team admired the plaque it saw in Nevada.

FOREST STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

OBSERVATIONS & COMMENDATIONS

Resource targets and delivery mechanisms vary by State, and the State Foresters feel strongly that the program functions well largely because of its flexibility. All have active and effective Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committees. Each benefits from services of the National Agro-forestry Center. North Dakota integrates program assistance with National Fire Plan efforts to protect “at risk” counties. “Safety through Forestry” promotes the use of vegetative firebreaks to protect life, farms, ranches and forest resources.

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

- Landowner Forest Stewardship Plans in Regions 1 & 4 are as diverse as the States they were developed in. The need for consistency in these plans will continue to be balanced with the need for each plan to address somewhat unique resource and landowner needs.
- Staff and partners acknowledge a need to revise National Standards and Guidelines to better define desired program outcomes and management plan standards, while retaining flexible delivery methods.
- State Forest Stewardship Program Plans for Idaho and Nevada are due for revision. Utah’s plan is current through 2005. Montana’s revision is complete and ready for signature. North Dakota’s plan is current through 2006.
- Idaho, Nevada and Montana deliver their programs on a largely first come, first served basis. Utah develops Forest Stewardship Plans for the most part, in conjunction with Forest Legacy acquisitions. North Dakota targets “at risk for fire” counties.

FOREST STEWARDSHIP ACTION ITEMS	WHO	WHEN
Regions will encourage States to revise/update their State Forest Stewardship Plans as needed. Regions will send updated plans to WO when complete.	R1/R4 S&PF	12/31/05
R1/R4 will encourage States to think in terms of target areas and how they can better use Forest Stewardship, including Rural Forest Assistance, to promote active management in these important resource areas.	R1/R4 S&PF	12/31/05
R1/R4 will encourage all States to begin tracking and monitoring outcomes as acres actively managed due to program.	R1/R4 S&PF Dalla Rosa	06/30/05
WO will explore including vegetative fire breaks in HUD building specifications for rural properties in “at risk” counties.	Dalla Rosa Mockenhaupt	12/31/04
Form team to revise National Standards and Guidelines for more strategic program delivery and guidance, management plan standards, and content, and follow-up to track management outcomes.	Dalla Rosa	09/30/04
R1/R4 will consult with States on accountability measures to ensure CTA coordination with State objectives.	R1/R4 S&PF	As possible
Keep the States informed on HFRA, esp. Title III.	R1/R4 S&PF	On going
USFS and NASF should work together to define one cost-share program targeting forestry practices.	Payne	2007 Farm Bill Dialogue

FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM

OBSERVATIONS & COMMENDATIONS

States have an excellent track record of completing projects and the only open projects are three that were funded in 2004; these are planned to be closed by the end of the year.

Each State has clearly defined projects, and has adapted their program to implement the new Legacy Guidelines, addressing the appraisal standards and national core criteria. The States involved in Legacy have each taken different approaches yet each works well.

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

- Montana's AON is 5 years old and Utah's is 9. The new FLP Program Guidelines require that AON's be reviewed at least every 5 years.
- Monitoring is critical to ensure that projects are managed consistently with the conservation easement. However, FLP funds cannot be used for long-term monitoring. Idaho established a long-term annual monitoring fund. Utah has no dedicated funds. Montana incorporates FLP easements with monitoring of other easements.
- During project selection, projects may be rewarded if they complete much of the real estate transaction requirements prior to the national selection process. FLP guidelines allow transaction costs to be included within total project costs if the expenditure occurs within the grant life. As a result, States wanting to include transaction costs in the project cost have to incur them well after the national selection process.
- Many projects have cost-share well above the required 25 percent. Currently, this "over-match" cannot be used as cost-share for other projects.
- The States and the regions expressed concern about the adequacy of western region representation in project selection. This issue was examined in during the recent process revisions and at this time the WO does not see an adequate basis for revisiting the issue.

FOREST LEGACY ACTION ITEMS	WHO	WHEN
The Region will work with Montana and Utah to amend and/or update their respective AON's.	R1/R4 S&PF	03/31/05
Explore options of providing technical guidance to States for monitoring conservation easements. Possibly include a discussion at the next FLP National meeting on this issue.	R1/R4 S&PF Conant	03/31/05
The Region will recommend to the States ways of exploring options that will allow real estate transaction costs to be reimbursed prior to grant.	R1/R4 S&PF	03/31/05
Consider banking of non-federal match to allow project funds from over matched projects to be carried from one year to the next and from project to project.	Conant	09/30/04

FOREST LAND ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

OBSERVATIONS & COMMENDATIONS

All FY 2003 FLEP funds were quickly invested to provide technical, educational, and financial assistance to NIPF owners. The purposely-designed flexibility of FLEP has allowed states to develop individual FLEP programs that meet state and local needs and produce on-the-ground results much more rapidly and efficiently than they normally can with other federal and state cost-share programs. All states have used FLEP to assist landowners with the implementation of approved Forest Stewardship management plans. Interest in this program demonstrates that demand for FLEP cost-share dollars far exceeds availability.

URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY

OBSERVATIONS & COMMENDATIONS

One program manager manages the Urban and Community Forestry Program (UCF) in both regions. This provides effective and consistent leadership across the Great Basin and a significant portion of the Intermountain West. Overall, the program appears to be strong, well coordinated, and supported by dedicated federal and state staff. There is a high degree of on-the-job training for managers involved in grants management and conditions of Tribes in the Regions call for specialized attention with regard to community wildfire protection.

State UCF program managers had an opportunity to visit with the WO reviewer regarding budgets. They expressed concern that UCF funds have more impact on small communities than in larger cities.

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

- The logistics and expense of traveling in States of such significant size, with mountainous terrain, extensive federal land holdings, and in some cases sparsely placed highways, present special challenges for building and sustaining programs in Regions 1 & 4. The distances and terrain stretch state and federal staff members' time and budgets.
- There is a need to begin building support for a State Urban and Community Forestry Program within the state budgets to help address changing population needs and the impacts on the land and natural resources. In the meantime, States could explore ways to take some of the current workload off the staff; examples suggested include training master arborists in more local communities and better use of internet capabilities.
- This area is experiencing rapid unplanned growth. The program has a timely opportunity to help local governments establish the green infrastructure that will maintain community open space and ecological function before it is lost, particularly along riparian areas.

URBAN & COMMUNITY FORESTRY ACTION ITEMS	WHO	WHEN
Ensure that grants managers complete the courses necessary to receive certification in grants management.	R1/R4 S&PF	Ongoing
R1/R4 will provide additional emphasis on U&CF projects in R1/R4 urban areas surrounding Las Vegas and Salt Lake City.	R1/R4 S&PF	06/30/05
Use the HUD/FS MOU as a framework for joint work to protect tribal people, property and natural resources from wildfire. Pursue adding language to the Notification of Financial Assistance to include building vegetative firebreaks in new developments and homesteads built with HUD funding in at risk areas.	Mockenhaupt & Dalla Rosa	12/31/04

ECONOMIC ACTION PROGRAMS

OBSERVATIONS & COMMENDATIONS

The EAP regional strategy is current and supports targeted efforts to work with partners and launch the Fuels for Schools program. With a nearly four-fold increase in program dollars through the National Fire Plan, the Regions have had minimal staffing increases, and have chosen to meet increased demands through the expanded involvement of delivery partners. Forest Service Recognition is a condition of all grants and evidence can be seen on-site at the Garnerville Pavilion. This example has applications nationwide.

Partners are seen as equal players in achieving local results. Program funds have been diverted for priority work; this appears to be supported by various partners. The Fuels for Schools program has added additional staff and shifting of priorities by partners appears to be supported as an important short-term endeavor until other institutions can be mobilized to support the overall effort. RC&D relationships appear strong and growing. Forest-based RCA coordinators work within NFS at Forest or District level. Work with National Forest System and State Foresters is strong and balanced. Strategic priority setting helps produce tangible results. This is achieved by adhering to core program goals but emphasizing high profile projects. District Ranger Training is a positive example of outreach to line officers.

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

- Regions are using the national EAP-PMT data base. Regions report their experience with efforts to generate specific reports is highly frustrating and often unproductive, and have questions about linking with other data systems. This is an observation shared between other regions and the national office.

ECONOMIC ACTION PROGRAMS ACTION ITEMS	WHO	WHEN
More Detailed review to be conducted and FFS to capture lessons learned and future options in FS and with other agencies	Yaddof/ R1/R4 S&PF	12/31/04
Explore the FS recognition plaque as a no-cost option for grantee to apply as appropriate; incorporate option/direction in FY05 grants.	R1/R4 S&PF	01/31/05
Provide staff to the EAP-PMT core team that examining data base performance and linkage.	Yaddof	05/31/05
In Biomass Utilization:		
- Identify alternative funding sources	Yaddof/Deneke	09/30/04
- Coordinate with other agencies	Yaddof/Deneke	Ongoing
- Focus on other titles of HFRA	Deneke/Solari	Ongoing

NATIONAL FIRE PLAN

OBSERVATIONS & COMMENDATIONS

Region 1 & 4's implementation of the National Fire Plan has resulted in substantial success in the seamless delivery of pre, present, and post fire recovery, and created critical short-term and long-term benefits for the natural landscape and communities that depend on it. Partnerships within the agency and with other agencies and communities have been an essential element of program accomplishments during a reduction in availability of program funds since 2001.

- Creating key partnerships with service foresters, stewardship program managers, and NRCS administrators was a critical to the success in collaborative implementation of the NFP.
- Collaboration between partners improves delivery of programs in pre-fire, during, and post-fire recovery, and substantially addresses both ecological and community recovery needs.
- Many other programs within Cooperative Forestry were used to effectively implement the National Fire Plan. Often program management was shifted to new efforts. Funding was restructured and traditional program functions received less attention.
- Over 12,000 acres of management was implemented through Multi Resource Stewardship Program via technical and financial assistance.

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

- When MRS funding and other sources were no longer available, states like Montana utilized FLEP funding to address these needs. Now that FLEP has been nullified, there are unmet needs for wildfire threat and other conservation goals.
- Since the initial implementation of the NFP there has been an increased reliance on partners for maintaining on-the-ground accomplishments in the face of decreasing program funds
- Utilizing on-going Cooperative Forestry programs to support implementation of the NFP projects results in effective on the ground results, but has caused difficulties and confusion in reporting program accomplishments.
- The Fence and Infrastructure Reconstruction Program satisfied many needs in addition to fence replacement. Rebuilding the community and establishing strong personal relationships between community members and agency employees was a major accomplishment to this program that resulted in numerous positive externalities. It is important that the hard-to-measure accomplishments are somehow communicated to the higher levels of the agency.

NATIONAL FIRE PLAN ACTION ITEMS	WHO	WHEN
Work with partners such as USDA Rural Development and others to address community problems stemming from land and resource issues.	Yaddof	09/30/04
Determine how CF efforts support the agency through linkages to major issues such as the National Fire Plan and highlight these efforts.	Yaddof R1/R4 S&PF	11/30/04
Ensure that project accomplishments by partners are communicated back to program managers to further reinforce successful collaborations	R1/R4 S&PF	11/30/04
Produce a series of Wildfire Coordination/Collaboration Guides for three primary audiences, based on lessons learned during past four fire seasons. Audiences include: 1) internal Line Officers; 2) sister agencies & organizations and community leaders; and 3) private landowners	R1/R4 S&PF	09/30/04

PROGRAM DELIVERY AND CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLIANCE

OBSERVATIONS & COMMENDATIONS

The R1/R4 Grants and Agreements Staff administer all the Urban and Cooperative Forestry grants and budget for both Regions. This places important civil rights functions pertaining to Federal assistance programs with that staff.

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

- The agency's responsibility to comply with Title VI of the CR Act of 1964, as amended, and other CR laws prohibiting discrimination in programs that receive Federal Financial Assistance, require active pre-award advisement and post award monitoring. The G&A Staff includes the mandatory clauses in grant packages, but doesn't have the resources or training to ensure that recipients fully understand their CR compliance duties. The Staff admits they need training. There are presumptions that since most recipients are state entities they already comply with the same laws.
- Program Managers shared their awareness of the "equity in delivery" element for their programs but don't have a clear understanding of their role. Managers were very receptive and willing to seek sources of training beyond the annual mandatory CR training modules.
- Post award monitoring of the programs are the responsibility of the program managers. This appears to be accomplished through cooperative management reviews and state forester reviews that cover all programs at one time. During these reviews it appeared the only aspect of Title VI compliance covered, is the posting of the "And Justice for All" poster and checking on brochures for the nondiscrimination statement. Additional steps which could be taken include compliance assessments covering such elements as: public notification; program access; program discrimination complaint process; outreach plans; etc. Program managers have resources for their use. National tools are available. State and Private Forestry distributed Title VI guidance in July and December, 1999. Region 1 and Region 4 CR Staffs are also resources that can advise reviews.
- Recipients acknowledged the extensiveness of state direction. Physical access to facilities is required to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. However, conversations with one recipient highlighted concerns with physical access to buildings.
- The States do provide CR training and because of assistance from multiple federal agencies, the requirement to include the FS in affiliation statements is understood. The brochures and flyers shared during the review did not consistently contain a nondiscrimination statement. (Lewis and Clark Trail; *The Idaho State Fire Plan Working Group 2003 Annual Report*.)
- Keep in mind that annual CR reports require Regional Foresters to report accomplishments in training efforts with recipients and Title VI monitoring activity.
- Recipients use various resources for outreach. Partners are resourceful using distribution lists including county commissioners and city planners, International Association of Arborists, etc. When asked if Outreach Plans existed, they had many titles. Grant and program announcements are integral and outreach using appropriate resources and networks is extremely important. Updated distribution lists, with diverse contacts will aid in identifying underserved communities. The Stewardship program often functions on a "first come, first served" basis. This process is open for scrutiny on how fairly funds are distributed. One manager described a complaint from a landowner who did not receive funds and questioned the fairness of the process. Recipients use Boards and Councils for advice, determining grant criteria and selection, etc. Progress has been made by State Forester Offices and their partnerships with Tribal communities but more work needs to be done.
- R1/R4 shared accomplishments in translating FS educational material in Spanish to meet the needs of the community. Executive Order 13166 requires both federally conducted and assisted

programs to improve their access and provide program material in the appropriate languages for customers with Limited English Proficiency.

CIVIL RIGHTS ACTION ITEMS	WHO	WHEN
Partner with R1/R4 CR Staffs for advice on Title VI responsibilities.	R1/R4 S&PF	12/31/04
Provide increased CR Title VI training to FS and State partners; include familiarity with resource packages such as the NA brochure, S&PF guidance and the review process pursuant to Departmental Regulation 4330-2.	R1/R4 S&PF	12/31/05
Conduct more comprehensive Title VI CR compliance assessments during cooperative management reviews.	R1/R4 S&PF	Ongoing
Include Title VI compliance element during the Regional reviews of programs. Remind recipients of the requirement to post the non-discrimination statement in all literature, educational material, and reports the public can access.	R1/R4 S&PF	Ongoing
Advise recipients that dynamic outreach plans or strategies are necessary. During program reviews, managers should request these plans.	R1/R4 S&PF	Ongoing
Revisit “first come, first served” process in Stewardship. Ensure awareness of USDA program discrimination compliant process and advise public of recourse available.	Dalla Rosa	12/31/04
Encourage State Foresters’ offices to work with FS Tribal Liaisons to facilitate contacts with local Tribes and aid in building relationships.	R1/R4 S&PF	Ongoing
Have recipients report diversity of board/council members and their Membership outreach efforts.	R1/R4 S&PF	Ongoing
Increase translation efforts. Advise recipients on their role.	R1/R4 S&PF	06/01/05
Assure incorporation of FS National Public Outreach Plan Guidance to actively outreach to underserved communities. Use participation data and community demographics assessments to make informed decisions for strategic outreach.	R1/R4 S&PF	12/31/05

TRIBAL RELATIONS

OBSERVATIONS & COMMENDATIONS

- Wildfire mitigation efforts have stimulated great interest and financial commitments by Native American Governments.
- The National Fire Plan provided an avenue for states to address significant needs on Tribal Lands; an example is the emphasis on establishing vegetative firebreaks for Native American scatter-sites.

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

- Tribal politics can create challenges and opportunities.
- There needs to be continued coordination between USDA-FS programs and Tribal efforts.
- Tribal representatives need training in grant writing.
- Matching funds are a restriction; Native American funds are stretched very thin.

TRIBAL RELATIONS ACTION ITEMS	WHO	WHEN
Create a guide for working with Tribal Governments re: Hierarchy for contacts; Significance of sovereign nation/chairperson; State Forester to Chairman direct contact; Advancing programs through tribal liaisons; Assessing tribal needs; Treaty vs. Executive Order rights; Affiliated vs. non-recognized Tribes.	R1/R4 S&PF	12/31/05
Provide cultural training to States to broaden knowledge of successfully supporting working relationships with Tribes.	R1/R4 S&PF	12/31/05
Provide grant writing training to tribal representatives.	R1/R4 S&PF	04/31/05

GRANTS AND AGREEMENTS

OBSERVATIONS & COMMENDATIONS

- Coordination between budget, fiscal, grants & agreements, and program delivery staff sometimes gets complicated when working in the two Regions as one mode.
- The Regions experience frequent nationally imposed changes to procedures that often require immediate implementation.
- Related issues: inability of INFRA to interact with other databases; accrual reporting requirements are challenging; and frequency of quarterly reporting requirements causes overloads.

GRANTS & AGREEMENTS ACTIONS ITEMS	WHO	WHEN
Document the organizational relationship between fiscal, budget, G&A, and program staff, and describe how different interpretations of new policies can be resolved.	R1/R4 S&PF	05/31/05
WO CF to convey to WO Grants & Agreements the degree of frustration and impacts of ongoing changes.	WO CF	09/30/04