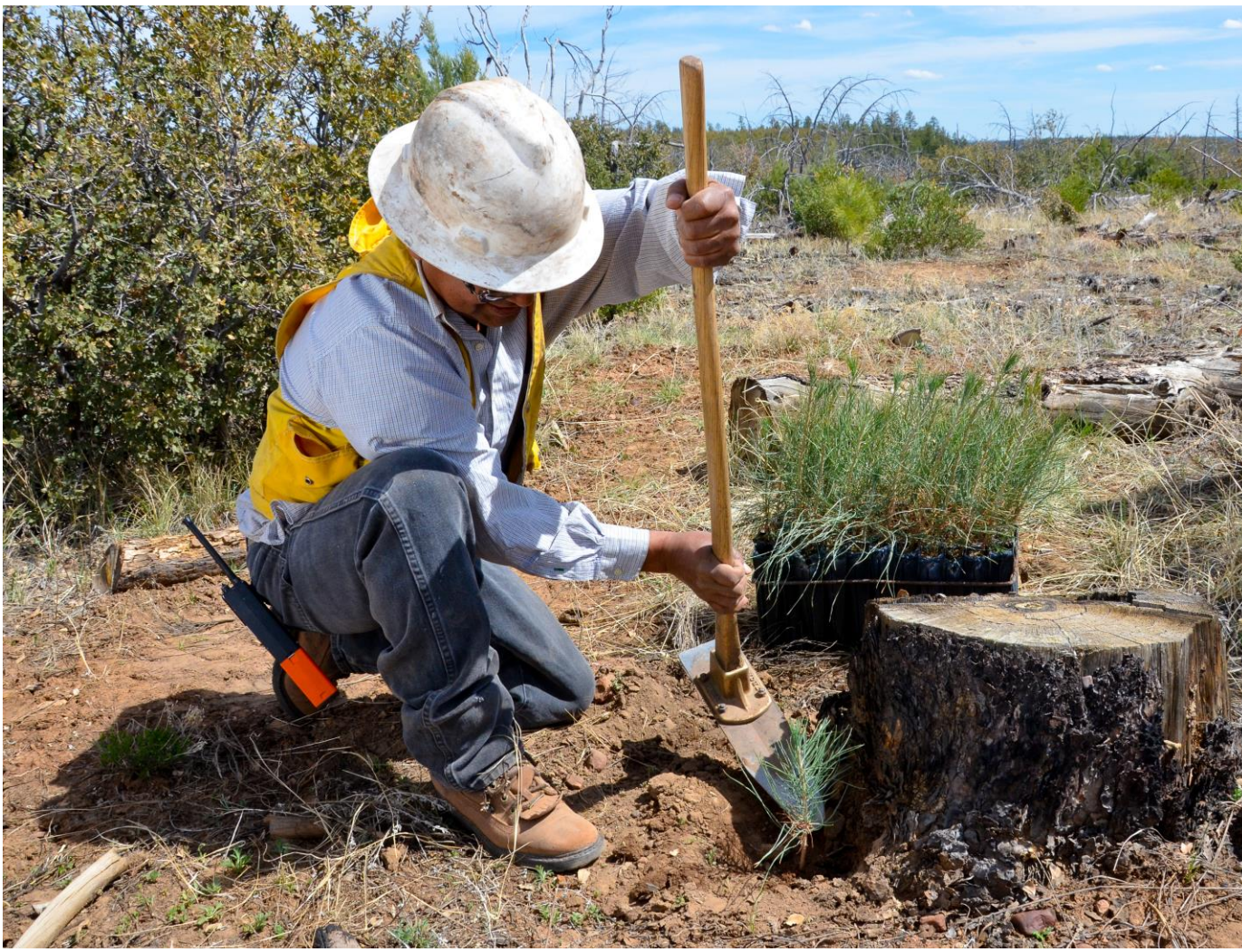
EVALUATION REPORT



The Role of Communities in Stewardship Contracting

FY 2015 Programmatic Monitoring Report to the USDA Forest Service

June 2016

PINCHOT INSTITUTE FOR CONSERVATION

FOREST SERVICE
US
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Executive Summary

Why this report was completed.

With the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113–79) Congress permanently authorized the USDA Forest Service to use stewardship contracting authorities. A component of this legislation requires that the Forest Service annually monitor the role of communities in the development and implementation of stewardship agreements and contracts. This report fulfils this Congressional mandate, examining how the Forest Service engages the public in the various phases of stewardship contracting projects.

Early on, local communities were the driving force behind many of the stewardship contracting pilot projects in the Western US. Since the early 2000s, as the use of stewardship contracting authorities has expanded, the range of non-agency (non-Forest Service) stakeholders has also grown. Local communities still participate in many projects, yet surveys conducted on 25% of stewardship contracting projects active between 2007 and 2014 revealed that local communities tend not to be the primary non-agency stakeholder in most projects today. Most local community involvement now occurs through collaborative work involving numerous non-agency stakeholders or by commenting individually during the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process associated with individual projects.

A case study approach was used to examine a cross section of recent stewardship contracts and agreements from across the National Forest System to better understand not only who is engaging in stewardship contracting, but how they engage and why. This report examines 16 cases, elucidating Forest Service and non-agency stakeholder interactions, while highlighting successes and challenges to greater public engagement in the various aspects of stewardship contracting—from planning to implementation and monitoring.

Projects for case study were selected from a list of recent contracts and agreements active between 2011 and 2014 that were identified as being representative in both project types and interactions among stakeholders. These case studies are a collection of contracts and agreements of various scales (large and small acreages) across a broad geographic distribution.

About half of the case studies feature collaborative working relationships. Stakeholders are engaged in formal collaborative groups (6 of the 16 cases), in projects with strong working relationships but without formal collaborative groups (2 of 16 case studies), and through less collaborative interactions (8 of 16 case studies).

What we found: Answers to five key questions

This report addresses five questions about agency-to-non-agency interactions. The answers are specific to the 16 case study projects highlighted by this review.

<u>Question 1</u>: How are non-agency stakeholders, including local communities and tribes, engaging in the development and implementation of stewardship contracting projects from project genesis through contracting? Does this engagement result in the perception of improved decision making and/or project implementation?

Participation by non-agency stakeholders occurs at all stages of the project lifecycle—early conceptualization through implementation and monitoring. The most common point of engagement by non-agency stakeholders is through scoping National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) environmental assessments. Participation in project planning and design prior to NEPA scoping also occurs and is endemic to many projects with collaborative processes.

Stewardship projects may be planned either before or after NEPA is completed, and the decision to implement a stewardship project is not part of the NEPA process. As a result, agency efforts to collaborate with stakeholders for stewardship projects sometimes begins after NEPA is completed. In these case studies, it was clearly evident that beginning collaboration prior to or during the NEPA process resulted in higher stakeholder satisfaction with the decision making process.

For their part, non-agency stakeholders are involved in stewardship projects because they wish to influence management activities on the National Forest System, most often wanting to improve wildlife habitat, reduce fuel loads, and restore and protect watersheds. In six of the 16 projects, they engaged through formal collaborative groups, focusing on defining the size and scope of project activities. In two additional cases strong working relationships existed among participants without there being a formal collaborative group.

Working relationships in the other eight projects were less collaborative in nature. In these cases involvement was often focused on public input during the NEPA planning process or project implementation as a contractor or agreement-holder, with some participants not viewing their participation as collaboration.

Across the spectrum of working relationships, non-agency stakeholders brought various capacities into these projects—*technical expertise* (e.g. the operational knowledge of contractors important for cost-effective project design), *local knowledge* (e.g. historical data on watershed hydrology collected by citizen monitoring), *human capital* (e.g. a workforce trained and certified for prescribed fire), and *financial resources* that augment the capabilities of the Forest Service.

Achieving desired outcomes happens in both collaborative and non-collaborative projects. Outcomes defined through a collaborative process, especially when stakeholders are involved early on through planning and design, are typically broader in scope and scale. Projects of this type ask more of agency line officers but can lead to additional resources for increased impact.

Key themes concerning the quality of working relationships and their effect on projects:

- **Non-agency stakeholder participation is occurring at all stages of stewardship projects.**

- **NEPA scoping is the most common point of engagement but highly collaborative projects tend to involve stakeholders earlier than this.**
- **Project outcomes defined through a collaborative process are typically broader in scope and scale. Projects of this type ask more of line officers but also often make additional resources available for increased impact.**
- **Non-agency participants report that engaging in project planning *prior* to NEPA scoping is the single best way to influence stewardship projects.**
- **Non-agency stakeholders bring various capacities—technical expertise, local knowledge, a workforce, and financial resources to augment the capabilities of the Forest Service.**
- **In half of the case studies agency and non-agency stakeholders did not work closely together to design or implement the projects, while collaborative interactions were present in the other half of the cases.**

<u>Question 2</u>: Have relationships between the Forest Service and non-agency stakeholders changed as a result of their engagement in stewardship contracting projects? If so, how? What factors contribute to the quality of these relationships?

How relationships evolved in these stewardship projects.
In the majority of instances where collaboration exists prior to a project beginning, relationships did not change significantly as the result of the particular case study project taking place. In projects where relationships improved as the result of a project, trust and cooperation increased through working together to achieve collaboratively defined outcomes. Factors include: early involvement, strong leadership, open lines of communication, transparent decision making, effective leveraging of non-agency financial and technical resources, and seeing results happen on the ground.

In a few case studies relationships were negatively affected over the course of the project—causes are poor communication, lack of transparency, delays, unclear or misleading expectations, and poor or transitional leadership. When a willingness to listen and compromise is absent, projects lose momentum and relationships tend to degrade. When leadership is lacking at the line officer level, frustrations among non-agency partners can result in counterproductive actions. This includes closing doors to future collaborative opportunities and additional resources.

Other factors contributing to the quality of relationships.
Collaborative work involves significant investments of time. This type of work can also involve compromises, with not everyone getting what they want, and this can include the Forest Service. Where agency and non-agency participants are willing to listen and compromise, projects move and relationships improve. Stability among key participants and staff was often a crucial factor in the formation of trusting relationships during both planning and implementation of many projects. While having the right human resources committed to the project matters, so does the design process used. For instance, field-based planning whereby alternative project designs are debated on the ground is a collaborative work process that improved relationships and understanding in many of the case studies.

Participant connectedness to the project area and other stakeholders also contributes to the quality of relationships. Those involved at the local level often bring practical knowledge about the project area that informs project design and how well they work with other participants. In these case studies, participants further from other stakeholders, both geographically and ideologically, are perceived as having less knowledge, buy-in, interest in success, and are thought of as being more likely to object to decisions.

The flexibility of the stewardship authorities enables for the design of complex projects with integrated outputs. While this can mean more complexity, it can also be a tool for addressing the multiple interests at stake in these projects. Highly integrated projects tend to involve multiple and potentially conflicting expectations, which is one reason partners commit resources to these projects—to push their visions forward. Among these case studies, successful projects that manage to integrate a diverse array of activities tend to also coincide with the existence of good working relationships.

Forest Service processes and the policy framework define the flow of information and working relationships among stakeholders. Understanding of stewardship contracting authorities and associated rules and the willingness to use these tools vary within the agency. This can frustrate or encourage non-agency stakeholders. Some agency personnel express that explaining federal rules and regulations to non-agency participants is burdensome and some question the benefit. Non-agency stakeholders become frustrated when their efforts do not improve or expedite the process. As a result the length of projects from planning to implementation is sometimes perceived as purposeful delaying.

Agency turnover is identified as a major negative influence in half of these cases resulting in timeline delays, broken promises, and trust issues, largely because incoming personnel did not know the place and local capacities, which went unutilized. On the contrary turnover of participants can occasionally provide needed change, as was the case in one project. Transfers can interrupt workflow, relationships, and trust, disrupting collaborative projects. In three case studies, conservation organizations with strong leadership positions within collaborative groups changed representatives. In these instances other collaborative group members say that the staff replacements in these organizations did not engage on the same level as their predecessor, setting back group dynamics and progress.

Transparency in communications and operations were identified in cases where participants were satisfied with outcomes. In a few cases, actions by the agency or non-agency participants appearing to lack transparency resulted in criticism from other participants. Examples of this occurred when: NEPA was completed without a collaborative approach, when individuals perceived their participation as unable to modify projects they did not agree with, and when less collaborative projects moved forward on expedited trajectories.

Key themes concerning the quality of working relationships and their effect on projects:

- **When collaborative working relationships already exist, relationships are usually not affected greatly by implementing or designing a single project.**
- **Factors contributing to improved relationships include: increased trust and cooperation from working together, early involvement of stakeholders, strong leadership, open**

communication, transparent decision making, effective leveraging of non-agency resources, and seeing planned activities happen.

- **Factors contributing to degraded relationships include: poor communication, lack of transparency, delays, unclear or misleading expectations, poor or transitional leadership, and unwillingness to compromise.**
- **Being connected to projects locally promotes relevant knowledge, buy-in, and interest in seeing a success. Participants located further from other stakeholders, both geographically and ideologically, are perceived as being less interested in success and more likely to object.**
- **The roles of agency processes and leadership are uneven. In some instances rules are perceived as presenting barriers to progress, whereas elsewhere the agency moves projects relatively quickly. The role of line officers in interpreting and communicating rules to stakeholders is critical.**
- **Knowledge gaps still exist within the agency concerning stewardship authorities, inhibiting progress and relationships.**
- **The timeline from planning to implementation varies. Slow progress is sometimes perceived as purposeful delaying or being due to lack of capacity within the agency.**
- **Relationships can be negatively affected if efforts to expedite projects promote lack of transparency, heavy involvement by political figures, or perceptions of dishonest behavior.**
- **The transfer of project participants (agency and non-agency) is common and can be both positive and negative. The effects of transfers in these case studies are mostly negative, as was the circumstance in half of the case studies.**

<u>Question 3</u>: What parts/steps of the selected case study projects do the agency and non-agency stakeholders feel are most important for non-agency stakeholders to be involved in? For the selected case study projects, are agency and non-agency stakeholders satisfied with the level of engagement in these stages?

Engaging as early as possible in planning is almost universally viewed as the most important time for non-agency stakeholders to participate. Non-agency stakeholders want to be involved and they want to be involved early on. In these case studies, there are instances where non-agency participants report dissatisfaction with their interactions with field-level Forest Service staff, expressing that they were not involved early enough in the process.

In cases where collaboration begins after the NEPA decision, non-agency stakeholder influence on project design is limited. Dissatisfied stakeholders expressed that project objectives were "predetermined" by the agency through NEPA, indicating that satisfactory engagement had not occurred during NEPA. The process of stakeholder engagement during the public involvement phase of NEPA matters greatly and needs careful consideration. Stakeholders expressing dissatisfaction often feel that NEPA did not provide an opportunity for them to actively contribute to shaping the project. It is important to find creative ways to involve those who have much to contribute but for whom doing so is challenging. Contractors are busy in the field and may be unable to participate in the front-end planning of projects, as was the case in some of these projects.

Other answers to the question of what the most important aspects of non-agency engagement include: scoping, providing outside funding, pushing the Forest Service to act, implementation, and monitoring. Forest Service respondents often mentioned the desirability of outside funding to support projects, as well as the importance of the private sector as an implementer.

Key themes on the non-agency stakeholder engagement:

- **Engaging as early as possible in planning is almost universally viewed as the most important time for non-agency stakeholders to participate. Non-agency stakeholders feel this way because it is their best opportunity to influence projects.**
- **Other areas respondents feel non-agency engagement is valuable include: scoping, providing cost-share funding, pushing the Forest Service to act, implementation, and monitoring.**
- **In cases where collaboration begins after the NEPA decision, non-agency stakeholder influence on project design is limited and the level of satisfaction among non-agency stakeholders is often low.**
- **The process of stakeholder engagement during the public involvement phase of NEPA matters greatly. Stakeholders expressing dissatisfaction often feel that NEPA did not provide an opportunity to actively shape the project.**
- **It is important to find ways to involve those who have much to contribute but for whom doing so is challenging. Contractors are busy in the field and often unable to participate in front-end planning.**

<u>Question 4</u>: How is the diversity of participation related to perceptions of project success by Forest Service and non-agency stakeholders? Are there differences in how Forest Service and non-agency stakeholders interact based on the form of non-agency stakeholder participation?

Success is a subjective concept dependent on each participant's view of project objectives and outcomes. Among participants in these case studies, metrics of success include: getting a planned contract or agreement awarded/completed, building positive relationships, enabling public participation to influence project design and implementation, building or maintaining trust.

To many, success is increasing the scale and scope of restoration activities. As such, the few instances where projects were viewed as unsuccessful correspond to participants believing projects did not implement at a large enough scale, and/or that NEPA alternatives were scaled back versions of actions delineated in a collaborative process. It is commonly expressed that involving multiple non-agency stakeholders can provide a greater diversity of ideas. However, in these case studies there is no clear tie between the diversity of non-agency participants and whether projects are viewed as successful by those participating.

There is a spectrum of participation ranging from simple partnerships, to bi-lateral relationships between contractors and the agency, to collaborative groups with varying working relationships and processes used

for decision making. Effective engagement of non-agency interests can occur anywhere along this spectrum.

While the meaning of collaboration is simple—working with someone to produce something—the act of collaboration is not always so. In one case with widely divergent opinions of the stewardship activity, some non-agency participants felt the concept of collaboration was used to gain support for an existing plan, rather than creating something together. There are places where collaborative processes would likely not work but are forced.

Money is a major driving force in all of the case study projects. It is a relationship shaper too. For the agency, bringing outside funding is a considerable benefit of non-agency engagement in stewardship contracting. In some projects outside funding is a major determinant of project outcomes and who benefits. Not only does it dictate how and why projects are structured, money is also a determinant of who influences project design and implementation, including who can participate as a contractor or agreement holder. The influence of money on the selection of contractors or agreement holders was evident in a number of different ways. Bid price is a major factor in determining "best value" and the direction of projects. In these projects, the influence of bid price has consequences for whether projects achieve desired outcomes in a timely fashion.

In recent years, some National Forest units have retained significant funding through timber receipts generated by stewardship contracting. Recognizing that the Forest Service is the ultimate decision maker, some units work with collaborative groups to allocate receipts toward management and restoration priorities identified by the group. There is a spectrum along which this trend occurs. In these case studies, non-agency participants want to be involved in both designing the activities producing the receipts (timber harvests) and the activities to which those receipts are applied (service work). Projects with trusting relationships more successfully involved non-agency participants in the expenditure of receipts.

In addition to money non-agency capacity, as measured by the ability to assist the agency with technical aspects of projects and provide input into planning and implementation, matters greatly. Non-agency stakeholders bring varying levels of capacity and in-kind support. Often times the most readily available and useful form of capacity is practical local knowledge about natural resource conditions and the project area.

In some case studies where the agency is stretched thin, outside organizations significantly augment the capacity of the Forest Service. Community-based organizations and regional conservation groups bolstered capacity via individuals with strong leadership qualities and existing collaborative relationships spanning a spectrum of interests. This enabled community-based organizations to raise funds to complete NEPA-related planning activities in an effort to accelerate project timelines. Individuals with deep knowledge and experience in leading successful stewardship projects are in high demand and are being subcontracted by various organizations (usually conservation groups) to help develop stewardship agreements and contracts.

Key themes on how non-agency stakeholders engage and their effect on project success:

- **For participants in these projects metrics of success include: getting a planned contract or agreement awarded/completed, increasing the scale and scope of restoration, building positive relationships, enabling public participation to influence projects, and building trust.**
- **In these case studies there is no clear tie between the diversity of non-agency participants and whether projects are viewed as successful.**
- **Differences in expectations and perceptions about what constitutes stewardship can result in divergent views of success.**
- **In these case studies, non-agency participants want to be involved in both designing the activities producing the stewardship receipts (timber harvests) and the activities to which those receipts are applied (service work). Trusting relationships led to successful engagement in the expenditure of receipts.**
- **Money is a major driving force in all of the case studies. It dictates how and why projects are structured, and who influences project design and implementation, including who can participate as a contractor or agreement holder.**
- **Bringing outside funding is a considerable benefit of non-agency engagement in stewardship agreements. In some case studies this additional funding was a major factor enabling the agency to accomplish its goals for the project.**
- **In addition to money, capacity also matters greatly. Non-agency stakeholders bring varying levels of capacity to projects including—practical local knowledge about natural resource conditions and the project area, strong leadership, and existing relationships spanning the interest spectrum.**
- **There are not enough individuals, both within and outside the agency, with knowledge and experience with stewardship contracting to meet the demand. There is a small network of knowledgeable people being subcontracted by various organizations to help develop stewardship projects.**

<u>Question 5</u>: Is involvement of non-agency stakeholders, including local communities and tribes, influencing the scale (size) and scope (complexity of activities) of stewardship projects?

In 10 of the 16 case studies, the diversity and integration of objectives and activities increased. Project scale increased (more acres) in 6 of the 16 case studies. In both instances, changes in scope and scale, non-agency participation was a factor. Eight of the 10 projects that experienced an increase in scope or scale had collaborative interactions.

Five of 16 projects did not experience a change in the project scope or scale as a result of non-agency stakeholder involvement. These are all instances where project objectives and design were defined mostly by the agency. One project reportedly had a decrease in the scale during the planning phase based on suggestions offered by a contractor. Such input can result in projects that are appropriately scaled to operational constraints and capabilities of contractors, potentially increasing or decreasing the scale and/or scope from that which was planned, but accomplishing work nonetheless. Collaboration before and during NEPA planning was essential to increase scale or scope in the case studies.

Key themes on the influence of stakeholders on project scope and scale:

- **In 63% of the case studies the scope, scale, or both increased due to the actions and influence of non-agency participation. Most of these projects exhibited strong collaborative relationships.**
- **In instances where projects were planned by the agency alone, project scope and/or scale did not change from beginning to end.**
- **Collaboration before and during NEPA planning was essential to increase scale or scope in the case studies. Increased public participation with willing Forest Service leadership results in more ideas and more complexity.**
- **Participation in planning can be difficult for contractors but may result in projects that are appropriately scaled to operational constraints and contractor capacity.**

Stewardship Contracting Case Studies:
FY 2015 Programmatic Monitoring Report to the USDA Forest Service

April 15, 2016

Cover photo credit: Representative of the White Mountain Apache Tribe Forestry Department planting a ponderosa pine seedling in the shade of a burned tree stump on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest.

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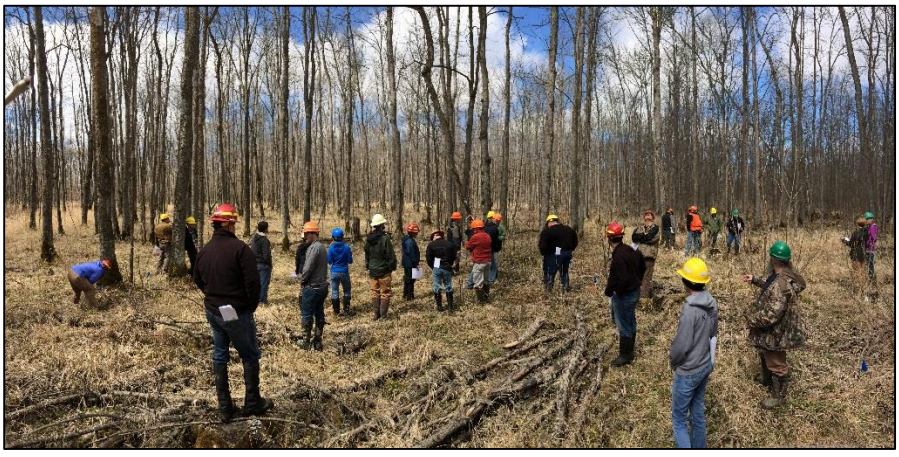
1. Background and Overview

INTRODUCTION

The USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) manages 193 million acres of federal forests and grasslands. Over the last decade Stewardship End-Result Contracting (stewardship contracting) has become an important tool for natural resource management and ecosystem restoration on the National Forest System (NFS). As one measure of increased use, over the past half-decade, stewardship contracting acreage has nearly tripled, and now represents more than 25% of total vegetative management projects on the NFS by timber volume.[1] The 2014 Farm Bill permanently authorized the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to use stewardship contracting authorities for:

- road and trail maintenance or obliteration
- maintenance of soil productivity
- habitat and fisheries management
- prescribed fires
- vegetation removal
- watershed restoration
- control of invasive plants

Stewardship contracting is believed to offer efficiencies and flexibility in meeting multiple management objectives. These efficiencies and flexibility stem from eight authorities (see Table 1).



Chippewa National Forest. Credit: University of Minnesota.

[1] http://www.fs.fed.us/sites/default/files/media/2015/07/fy2016-budgetjustification-update-four.pdf

Table 1. Stewardship contracting authorities.

Best-value contracting	Requires consideration of other criteria in addition to cost (e.g. prior performance, experience, skills, local business) when selecting awards.
Multi-year contracting	Allows for contracts and agreements to be up to 10 years in length.
Designation by prescription	A method of designating trees to be removed or retained without marking them as specified in a prescription. This method is more complex than Designation by Description.
Designation by description	A method of designating trees to be removed or retained without marking them according to a specific description.
Less than full and open competition	Allows for contracts to be awarded on a sole-source basis in appropriate circumstances.
Trading goods for services	The ability to apply the value of timber or other forest products removed as an offset against the cost of services received.
Retention of receipts	The ability to keep revenues (timber receipts) generated by a project when product value exceeds the service work performed and then applies the funds to service work that does not necessarily need to occur within the original project area.
Widening the range of eligible contractors	Allows non-traditional bidders (non-profits, local governmental bodies, etc.) to compete for and be awarded stewardship contracts. Also allows for the agency to enter into stewardship agreements.

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

Permanent authorization requires the Forest Service to annually report to Congress on accomplishments in the use of stewardship contracting and the role of communities in stewardship contracts and agreements. Beginning with monitoring the pilot phase of stewardship contracting from 1999 – 2003 the Pinchot Institute for Conservation has monitored the use of stewardship contracting authorities in hundreds of projects nationwide.[2]

Accompanying an agency-wide push to accelerate the pace and scale of forest restoration, the Forest Service is now exploring ways to improve and expand the use of stewardship contracting. As such, the agency asked the Pinchot Institute to investigate key questions (see Figure 1) related to how the agency works with non-agency stakeholders (tribes, local communities, local governments, non-

[2] Previous monitoring reports are available at: www.pinchot.org/gp/stewardship_contracting

governmental organizations, contractors, and others) in the development and implementation of stewardship projects.

Figure 1. Case study questions.

This report contains sixteen case studies of stewardship contracts and agreements framed in a manner that address these five key questions. Descriptive summary information about each case study is listed in Table 2 and is presented in brief project summaries in Appendix A. In addressing the five questions the report highlights common themes in a sample of representative projects.

While the findings should not be generalized beyond the 16 case studies, themes identified through these projects are useful in grounding inferences made about the roles of non-agency stakeholders, agency personnel, and collaborative processes, in stewardship contracting. To maintain the confidentiality of informants and the integrity of the information they provided, the projects are given a generic name.

2. Methodology

PROJECT SELECTION

The selection of case study projects was based on a simple principle, representing as many project types and combinations of agency-to-non-agency stakeholder interactions as possible within a limited number of projects. In consultation with the Forest Management staff in the Forest Service Washington Office, the project team[3] developed case study project selection criteria to ensure a mix of projects were selected. Selection criteria include:

- **a)** Projects represent a broad geographic distribution
- **b)** Projects are of small scale (fewer than 1,000 acres) or of a larger scale (more than 1,000 acres)
- **c)** Projects are either a stewardship agreement or a stewardship contract
- **d)** Projects operate with a standing collaborative group(s) or without a standing collaborative group(s)

With these selection criteria the Pinchot Institute worked with Forest Service Regional Stewardship Contracting Coordinators to categorize each of the projects in their regions that were considered active from 2011 – 2014. Projects initiated before 2011 were also considered as needed to draw from an appropriate mix of project types reflected by the selection criteria. After consulting with the Regional Stewardship Coordinators, the Pinchot Institute and its partners selected 16 projects providing a mix of attributes (see Table 2).

[3] The project team includes representatives from the Pinchot Institute for Conservation, Michigan State University, and the Watershed Research and Training Center.

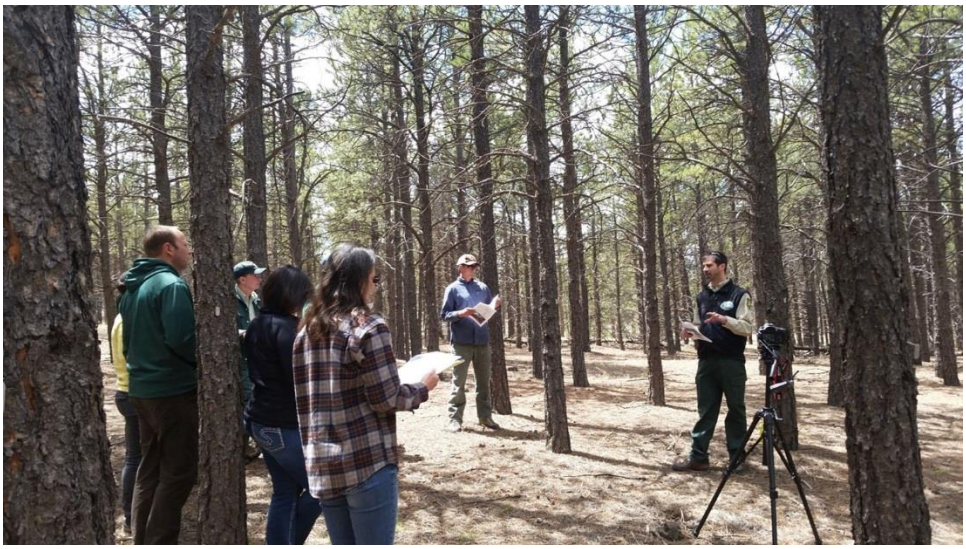


Photo credit: USDA Forest Service, Colorado.

Table 2. Selected case study projects.

Project name	Region	Agreement or contract	Project size (large is > 1,000 acres)	Collaborative group present
Lolo NF	Northern Rockies	IRTC	Small	No
Idaho Panhandle NF	Northern Rockies	IRTC	Small	Yes
Medicine Bow-Routt NF	Northern Rockies	IRSC	Large	No
Apache-Sitgreaves NF	Southwest	IRSC	Large	Yes
Coconino NF	Southwest	IRSC	Small	Yes
San Juan NF	Southwest	IRTC	Small	No
Tongass NF	Pacific Coast	IRTC	Large	No
Gifford Pinchot NF 1	Pacific Coast	IRTC	Large	Yes
Gifford Pinchot NF 2	Pacific Coast	IRTC	Large	Yes
Klamath NF	Pacific Coast	IRTC	Large	No
Sumter NF	Southeast	IRTC	Small	No
Florida NF	Southeast	Agreement	Large	Yes
George Washington-Jefferson NF	Southeast	Agreement	Small	No
Finger Lakes NF	Northeast	IRSC	Small	No
Mark Twain NF	Northeast	IRTC	Small	No
Chequamegon-Nicolet NF	Northeast	Agreement	Large	No

INTERVIEWS

Semi-structured interviews were conducted by researchers at Michigan State University, covering projects from the Northeast, Southeast, and Southwest, and also by researchers at the Watershed Research and Training Center, covering the Pacific Coast and Northern Rockies. Geographic regions of the country were defined with the goal of identifying a diversity of projects within each region, these regions are:

- **Northern Rockies:** ID, MT, ND, SD, WY.
- **Central Rockies/Southwest:** AZ, CO, KS, NE, NM, NV, OK, TX, UT.
- **Pacific Coast:** AK, CA, HI, OR, WA.
- **Southeast:** AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA.
- **Northeast/Lake States:** IL, IN, ME, MI, MN, MO, NH, NY, OH, PA, VT, WI, WV.

Using a basic interview guide developed by the Pinchot Institute and Michigan State University (see Appendix B) interviews focused on project scope and history, collaborative interactions and community engagement, and overall project outcomes and lessons learned. Interviewees were identified using a snowball sampling methodology to build out the pool of informants according to the social networks involved in each project. This was done in a manner that is consistent with IRB human subjects review protocols.

A Forest Service representative was interviewed first followed by the non-agency stakeholders that were identified by the first agency respondent. Project participants were verified in each successive interview to thoroughly map participants. A minimum of three interviews were conducted for each project. Multiple interviews were used to ground truth and triangulate interview data. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Transcribed interviews were then analyzed by the Pinchot Institute and Michigan State University.

Kaibab National Forest. Credit: Northern Arizona University Ecological Restoration Institute.

3. Results

DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEWS

Across the 16 case studies, 63 semi-structured interviews were conducted. Of these, 20 were conducted with Forest Service personnel and 43 with non-agency stakeholders. In addition to seeking answers to the five main questions, basic information about interviewee background with stewardship contracting was asked (see Tables 3, 4, and 5). Appendix A provides detailed case study project descriptions and Appendix B is the interview questionnaire.

Table 3. Prior experience of respondents with stewardship contracting projects.

Number of previous projects. (n=35 non-agency responses; 5 non-agency respondents not asked; 3 non-agency respondents declined to answer; 19 agency respondents; 5 agency respondents not asked; 4 agency respondents declined to answer)	Non-agency	Agency
This is my first stewardship contracting project	20	1
I have been involved in 2 - 5 stewardship projects	11	7
I have been involved in 6 - 10 stewardship projects	3	6
I have been involved in 11 - 25 stewardship projects	0	4
I have been involved in more than 26 stewardship projects	1	1

Table 4. Do stakeholders consider themselves local?

(n=37 non-agency responses; 1 non-agency respondents does not know; 5 non-agency respondents not asked; 18 agency respondents; 2 agency respondents not asked)	Non-agency	Agency
Yes	33	14
No	4	4

Table 5. Are stakeholders as involved as they would like to be?

(n= 31 non-agency responses; 6 non-agency respondents not asked; 6 non-agency respondents declined to answer; 14 agency respondents; 5 agency respondents not asked; 1 agency respondents declined to answer)	Non-agency	Agency
Yes	23	13
No	8	1

ANSWERS TO KEY QUESTIONS

Key themes emerging from the interviews across case studies and presented in the answers to the five questions of interest by the Forest Service. Project descriptions in Appendix A provide further context.

<u>Question 1:</u> How are non-agency stakeholders, including local communities and tribes, engaging in the development and implementation of stewardship contracting projects from project genesis through contracting?

Participation by stakeholders outside the agency (non-agency) occurs at all stages of the project lifecycle: participating in collaborative processes that exist prior to the projects, conceptualizing project ideas, early planning, providing comments through NEPA scoping, completing and/or paying for components of NEPA analyses, contributing funds and technical expertise to a variety of pre- and post-implementation activities, and project implementation. Most non-agency engagement occurred during NEPA scoping and project planning. Non-agency participants believe that engaging in project planning *prior* to NEPA scoping is the single best way to influence stewardship projects.

While NEPA legally requires federal agencies to involve the public, a particular format is not mandated. Historically engagement involves a district office sending out a project scoping document and/or hosting public meetings. Agency and non-agency respondents report that early engagement usually leads to improved outcomes and additional resources for implementation. The Washington Office recognizes this, using recent revisions to the Renewable Resources Handbook to instruct the field on principles for how to

"*engage key stakeholders in collaboration throughout the life of the project, from project design through implementation and monitoring*" (USFS 2014).

Collaborative forms of engagement are uneven across the National Forest System. Half of the case studies exhibited active collaboration either through formal groups (6 cases) or less formalized working relationships (two cases) (see Table 2). Non-agency stakeholders bring various capacities: technical expertise (e.g. the operational knowledge of contractors important for project design), local knowledge (e.g. historical data on watershed hydrology collected by citizen monitoring), human capital (e.g. a workforce trained and certified for prescribed fire), and financial resources that augment the capabilities of the Forest Service. In a few projects, non-agency participants bring significant resources and even complete elements of project design and project development that are typically reserved for the agency (see the expanded discussion on funding and capacity under question 4).

When compared to case studies that are less collaborative in nature, the cases with active collaboration tend to exhibit a broader diversity of knowledge, capacity, technical expertise, and funding, which results in greater integration of objectives (timber, habitat, wildfire risk reduction, forest resilience, jobs). Successful collaborative work is propelled by strong leaders and open communication which advance trusting relationships. Projects of this type ask more of line officers but often make additional resources available.

In projects with fewer external participants, plans usually originate within the agency. These projects tend to be driven by narrower objectives. Some still include non-agency engagement which generally occurs through one-on-one communication during planning and NEPA scoping. In some instances, this is as, or more, effective in advancing the implementation of projects as more collaborative models. Respondents expressed that creating the environment for, and sustaining, willingness to work together is the most challenging aspect of their relationships with each other.

<u>Question 2:</u> Have relationships between the Forest Service and non-agency stakeholders changed as a result of their engagement in stewardship contracting projects? If so, how? What factors contribute to the quality of these relationships?

PROJECTS WHERE RELATIONSHIPS DID NOT CHANGE

Projects with ambitious scopes tend to involve parties with good working relationships that promote integration of ideas. In the majority of instances where strong collaborative relationships existed prior to projects, these relationships did not change significantly as a result of the particular project occurring. For example, relationships in the Idaho Panhandle NF project did not change due to the fact that it was but one in a considerable list of activities a pre-existing collaborative group had successfully implemented together.

PROJECTS WHERE RELATIONSHIPS IMPROVED

In cases where relationships improved specifically due to factors involved in the particular case study project, trust and cooperation increased as a result of working together to achieve collaboratively defined project outcomes. Factors include: early involvement, strong leadership, open lines of communication, transparent decision making, effective leveraging of non-agency financial and technical resources, and seeing results happen on the ground.

For instance, in the Lolo NF project relationships between a tribe and the Forest Service improved in large part due to the diligence of the district staff who explained all the details of stewardship contracts and agency rules. In the Coconino NF project relationships improved due to a willingness to work together and integrate a diverse set of activities that benefited both agency and non-agency stakeholders. The support of a regional collaborative group also helped.

The Gifford Pinchot NF 2 project is an example where relationships and understanding improved. In this case an existing collaborative group was given responsibility to complete all stages of the NEPA process after criticizing the Forest Service for what they believed to be agency reticence to act. This experience created a greater mutual understanding and appreciation, deepening trust within the collaborative.

In the Mark Twain NF project, agency respondents report it being the first time they had worked with outside groups to plan a project. Agency personnel report significantly more communication than usual, resulting in improved working relationships and a feasible project design based on stakeholder feedback that scaled the project to a level local industry could support.

PROJECTS WHERE RELATIONSHIPS DEGRADED

In a few cases relationships were negatively affected—causes are poor communication, lack of transparency, delays to implementation, unclear or misleading expectations, and poor or transitional leadership. When a willingness to listen and compromise is absent projects lose momentum and relationships tend to degrade.

When leadership is lacking at the line officer level frustrations among non-agency partners can result in counterproductive actions and doors closing to future collaborative opportunities, including cost sharing of project activities. For instance, in the Tongass NF project, relationships degraded as a result of using collaboration in a place where distrust was high and some stakeholders felt ignored during the NEPA process. In this instance, referring to the process as collaboration frustrated and upset non-agency participants.

ADDITIONAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIPS

Collaborative work involves significant investments of time and compromises. Strong leaders are needed. Where agency and non-agency participants are willing to listen and compromise, projects move and relationships improve. Critical to this working is the good-faith belief among stakeholders that their contributions matter and will influence actions. Stability among key participants and staff was a crucial factor in the formation of trusting relationships during both planning and implementation of many projects (see discussion of staff transfers below).

Despite examples where leadership is lacking, these case studies also include instances where non-agency participants praise their federal colleagues. Having the right human resources committed to the project matters as much as having the right design process. Indeed people are integral to the design process itself. In multiple case studies, field-based planning improved relationships and understanding and contributes to satisfaction with project outcomes. For example, in the Florida NF project, a representative of the agreement holder expressed that:

> I think one of the most important reasons we are so satisfied is that we just got really good Forest Service staff to work with in the field…You have people that are good to work with and they're really solid on that Forest…they are so personable, so well liked, so well respected, it makes all the difference in the world.

Local connections to partners and the project area matters.

Participant connectedness to the project area and stakeholders contributes to the quality of relationships. Most interviewees consider themselves to be a "local stakeholder" (see Table 4). Respondents believe that being connected locally promotes relevant knowledge, buy-in, and interest in seeing projects succeed.

Participants located further from other stakeholders, both geographically and ideologically, are often perceived as having less interest in success and being more likely to object to decisions. For example, in two case studies occurring in places still recovering from decades of the "timber wars" (Gifford Pinchot NF 2 and Idaho Panhandle NF), participants report that "outsiders" negatively affect projects. It can take a long time to build trust in places where social integrity has eroded.

Those involved at the local level often bring practical and locally relevant knowledge about the area to inform project design. This local knowledge can directly improve relationships with the Forest Service by augmenting agency capacity. In the Idaho Panhandle NF project local knowledge improved the work of the NEPA interdisciplinary (ID) team, as explained by the leader of the collaborative group:

> The members had intimate knowledge of all the history and the life cycle of the creek and when it flooded and when it didn't and which storms did what….and we could design it into the project accordingly, 'cause they've been monitoring for 30 years....it was local, local knowledge, local people, and what's more important than clean water for folks in the community (sic).

Another collaborative participant stated, "*While the Forest Service specialists are looking at it from the point of view of just the resource and the land management perspectives. The community looks at it from a cultural perspective, a sense of being here, and living here, and living on the land.*"

In a few cases respondents also express that Regional Offices and National Headquarters, while disconnected from individual project and the players involved, make decisions or recommendations about projects that affect their trajectory without fully understanding impacts to local relationships and collaborative capacity.

The ability and willingness to interpret and communicate agency policies and procedures impacts working relationships and project success.

The agency's policy framework defines the flow of information and the working relationships of participants. Understanding of stewardship contracting authorities and related policies, and the willingness to use these tools, varies within the agency. This can frustrate or encourage non-agency stakeholders.

Unevenness in program application and interpretation of policies is somewhat endemic to any large and dispersed agency. In the case of the Forest Service, an agency respondent suggested, "*there's no cut and dry stewardship process in the Forest System. Some go over it with a very fine-toothed comb, and some say, 'Let's get this done. You have the contract we need. Get the people involved you need, and we'll do it*.'" In regards to how this affects stewardship contracting and agency-to-non-agency relationships, an agency representative who has worked on three different stewardship projects on three different Forests said:

> The Forest personnel, that is the stewardship contract point person, can really have the ability to manipulate things around the process to make it work, based on what NGOs are involved. And they can make that process….as easy or as cumbersome as they want…Some Forests it is extremely easy and other Forests there seems to be a lot of hurdles. So there's not the same protocol or understanding of the protocol in stewardship contracting across the National Forest System.

For their part, many Forest Service personnel suggest that one of the most challenging aspects of engaging non-agency stakeholders is explaining the rules. A line officer in one project described the challenge of explaining agency rules:

> I think what it is often, maybe for people who are outside the Forest Service, the load of regulations and all the things that have to be checked here and there….It's just frustrating if people don't understand why these things are in place and why they're important….what it is these regulations are trying to achieve.

Similarly frustrating to both agency and non-agency participants can be unclear or unmanaged expectations. Sometimes it starts before a project is even conceived. A line officer on one project said, "*Personally I believe when partners come to the Forest Service, and we fumble around not knowing how to direct their energies, then we lose those partners over time*." When collaboration begins, the agency has other expectations to manage. One line officer described it like this:

> When we have multiple non-agency partners, sometimes it seems to be hard to get them all agreeing and stuff, that we come out with a project that everybody's happy with, and sometimes we, with our rules, we can't do, or are not gonna do, some of the things that...some of the groups, are specifically after.

In addition to expectations surrounding project activities, participants often have expectations regarding the process itself. A district ranger reflected on the pace of government work:

> It's tough and there's a line of people that you have to kind of run these things through and it's unfortunate, but it's the reality of a lot of government jobs, they just sit idle at

> places, and they don't move along as quick as the public obviously would like and a lot of us would like.

Knowledge gaps still exist within the agency and are inhibiting progress and relationships.
A willingness to communicate and use stewardship authorities is one thing, possessing the know-how is another altogether. For instance, in the Chequamegon-Nicolet NF project a respondent from the agency identified lack of knowledge as contributing to poor relationships with a willing partner:

> The timing of the implementation and their initial desire to participate in the implementation and our, as an agency, we were unable to say, I don't know, corral that enthusiasm and direct it….We did not have the expertise nor the knowledge of how to fully begin these stewardship agreement relationships. And, in the long term or in the near term, we may have soured a willing partner….we managed to degrade our overall relationship.

Regarding gaps of knowledge about stewardship authorities within the agency, a non-agency respondent in one project said:

> It's really bad and I know this from interacting with a lot of my colleagues around the country. Knowledge on stewardship....They make stewardship contracting a top priority nationwide. They do not have enough people that understand it….It is a huge problem, I can't stress enough how huge that problem is.

That some feel lack of knowledge within the agency is widespread is concerning. If this is indeed the case, it may present a significant barrier to further progress in the use of stewardship authorities. In recent years the Washington Office increased training opportunities and more contracts and agreements are coming online, but inertia remains and appears to be at least partially due to lack of working knowledge in using stewardship contracting authorities.

Personnel transitions impact the success of stewardship contracts and agreements.
In half of the case studies (eight) agency turnover was identified as a major challenge to advancing collaborative work and projects. Turnover, mostly within the agency, is identified as a negative influence in half of the case studies, leading to project timeline delays, broken promises, and trust issues. In at least three cases, conservation organizations with strong leadership roles in collaborative groups changed staffing over the course of projects and in these instances other collaborative group members say that the staff replacements representing these organizations do not engage on the same level as their predecessor, setting back group dynamics and progress. In one Pacific Coast project, turnover at the district ranger position actually improved relationships. In this instance, a non-agency collaborator said, "*The district ranger was not the most helpful person. Since that person left the new district ranger has been welcome from many of our perspectives*."

The timeline from planning to implementation varies. The time it takes to get projects implemented is sometimes perceived as purposeful delaying or being due to lack of capacity.

The length of projects, from planning to implementation, is sometimes perceived as purposeful delaying and/or the agency being under capacity. A non-agency stakeholder expressed their frustration with the timeline of projects, saying:

> It's hard, hard to figure out why it takes so long to do something or to move forward from the agency's standpoint. And most of what we're talking about isn't that difficult to get done....It's very frustrating from this standpoint....I actually worked for the Forest Service for 18 years myself….A 10-year delay in this case before action was done, it's too long.

As explained by a non-agency participant, "*there's been a lot of confusion on this stuff with the Forest…Like, I'm not sure if it's to intentionally slow things down, or they just don't have enough time and people to dedicate to working with us.*" In a project in the Southeast, non-agency participants felt they needed to push the Forest Service to act, saying, "*The project takes pushing. It pushes the Forest Service out of their box a little we tried to push them on and at times held their feet to the fire in terms of deadlines and getting some things done.*" Likewise, in a project in the Northern Rockies, a non-agency participant said, "*the Forest Service will dawdle to no end if they're given time to dawdle, and you need people to say, 'We want answers for these questions by three weeks from now.'"*

In the Chequamegon-Nicolet NF project a long-term partner of the Forest Service repeatedly pushed for the project over several years to improve wildlife habitat. Despite this encouragement by a willing partner, the agency did not move the project forward until receiving pressure from economic development interests and political constituencies focused on timber production.

A respondent from the wildlife habitat group explained the situation as:

> There was some confusion along the way, and I felt it was mostly from the Forest Service….the thing has just dragged on for a long time….I think they were in the process of learning the ropes….This Forest was not one of the leaders on stewardship; they were more of a follower….there was a lot of miscommunication from the Forest Service's end....And I'm not sure if it was intentional or if it was just bad communications on the Forest Service's side….we've been a long time, good partner. We've spent hundreds of thousands of dollars backing projects on this Forest for a long time and for a while there, it sure didn't seem like we were a cooperator anymore.

Agency respondents realize that their inaction soured relationships with a willing partner:

> Our internal….federal laws and regulations that govern land management activities, typically the stuff that we are doing now, are things that we began considering three to five years ago, sometimes even longer….So when a partner comes to the door and says, "Hey why don't you do x?" and we tell them, "Well, we don't have NEPA done on it and we don't have the time to initiate NEPA associated with that, or the timeframe is three to five years. Come see us then." I think that's not the best way to establish, create, and sustain good partnerships.

Another Forest Service representative involved in this project put it in the context of dealing with differences:

> The biggest challenges that I see are with our….own agency requirements. And just to give you an example, we've got all kinds of requirements internally for timber sale administration, contract inspection, both timber sale contract inspection and service contract inspection….And yet, our partners don't have that requirement….I guess it's kind of a dance of figuring out who is responsible for what, and who's gonna be accountable….a lot of times, people that we get from the private sector, they wanna do things yesterday….that's not the way we work.

The adeptness of agency staff to operate within the regulatory environment of the NFS while still communicating and working well with non-agency partners is a complicated balance and some agency personnel manage this better than others. A Forest Service respondent involved in the George Washington-Jefferson NF project reflected on the most challenging aspect of non-agency stakeholder participation in stewardship contracting, saying, "*I guess it might be dealing with the timber sale side of things. We are so, I'm going to say 'rigid'....Well, this isn't a sale but we manage it like a timber sale, and I think most of the non-agency folks just don't understand that. They just don't. We've grown up with it. We do it all the time*."

Whereas a non-agency respondent perceived the lack of progress as due to turnover and a lack of leadership, saying:

> The negative aspect was that it took 10 coon's ages for the project to go from start to implementation. It took almost eight years before the first spade full of dirt was turned, the first chainsaw fired up…. it was painfully long. Now, part of that was the fact that stewardship contracting was new, part of it was a certain degree of timidity at first, and maybe along the way because some of the supervisory people in the Forest Service changed positions over time.

<u>Collaboration can provide a platform for important communication around agency rules.</u>

In the Idaho Panhandle NF project a member of the collaborative group felt that a commitment to the process was important because it provided a platform for the agency to explain its rules. Clear and consistent communications with the district ranger helped explain the many laws and procedures guiding the agency and why certain actions could not be taken. In another project, agency leaders felt the collaborative process provided, "*a lot of educating of non-agency stakeholders, and then that's a time thing as well, but there's a lot of education as to federal land management and applicable law and regulation associated with that, that they are not accustomed to or aware of. And I think that tends to be a bit of a stumbling block."*

<u>Relationships can be negatively affected if efforts to expedite projects promote a lack of transparency, the heavy involvement of political figures, or perceptions of dishonest behavior and favoritism.</u>

The design and implementation of any project involving public land requires high ethical standards in planning and execution. In a small subset of projects (three of 16 in three separate regions) respondents expressed that activities occurring during the planning phase of these projects did not meet their ethical standards. These lapses appear to be related to efforts by the agency and non-agency counterparts to expedite projects. Lack of transparency or heavy involvement by political figures were factors shaping these impressions.

In two projects in the East, the Forest Service surprised early proponents of those projects by partnering with other non-profits. The partners passed over for the agreements believe this was the result of political pressure to produce more federal timber. While the agency may indeed have had reasons for doing this, the interviewees were unsatisfied with the level of agency communication and lost trust in the Forest Service.

In a project in the Interior West lacking forest product infrastructure, some respondents suggested that a 10-year contract was the result of the contractor's political connections and that the agency awarded the contract despite a bid price that was too low, contributing to questionable financial viability. Some respondents cite the low bid prices as a factor in the project getting off to a slow start because the contractor could not pay competitive wages. Very few non-agency stakeholders are directly involved in the project and one respondent suggested that political pressure to address a significant forest health problem across a very large area had only partial support from the non-agency stakeholders in the area.

In the Tongass NF project, a variety of stakeholders report feeling that the output of the NEPA process was "pre-ordained," and the final decision, to harvest low-elevation old growth, was not one they agreed with. The project was planned as a timber sale. When it became a stewardship project, the district invited local stakeholders to participate in a collaborative process intended to identify stewardship service activities to be funded with stewardship receipts. Because some of the service activities were previously planned during NEPA, some participants expressed that the effort to initiate a collaborative process around the expenditure of timber receipts was initiated by the agency merely to show support for a controversial project. Non-agency stakeholders expressed significant feelings of mistrust and anger with the Forest Service and objected to terming their involvement as collaboration.

In this and a few other projects, pressure within the agency to meet timber targets and from some non-agency stakeholders focused on economic values contributed to other non-agency respondents not feeling listened to or worse regarding their interest in multiple resource values and that their trust was betrayed.

<u>Question 3:</u> What parts/steps of the selected case study projects do the agency and non-agency stakeholders feel are most important for non-agency stakeholders to be involved in? For the selected case study projects, are agency and non-agency stakeholders satisfied with the level of engagement in these stages?

WHEN IS THE MOST IMPORTANT STAGE TO ENGAGE IN STEWARDSHIP PROJECTS?

Engaging as early as possible in planning is viewed as the most important time for non-agency stakeholders to participate. Agency and non-agency respondents alike report this early engagement often leads to improved outcomes and additional resources for implementation. Moreover, projects that include collaborative groups tend to include collaboration from NEPA (or earlier) on through implementation. Non-agency stakeholders want to be involved and they want to be involved early on. In these case studies, there are instances where non-agency participants report dissatisfaction with their interactions with field-level Forest Service staff, expressing that they were not involved early enough in the process. In cases where stakeholder engagement begins after the NEPA decision, non-agency stakeholder influence on project design is limited and the level of satisfaction among non-agency stakeholders is low.

Other answers to the question about the most important steps in which to engage include: scoping, providing outside cost-share funding, pushing the Forest Service to act, implementation, providing local knowledge, and monitoring. Forest Service respondents often mentioned the desirability of outside funding to support projects, as well as the importance of the private sector as an implementer. Based on these factors, most agency respondents in these case studies were supportive of collaboration because it ultimately helps the agency complete its mission.

The importance of early engagement is summarized by a collaborative group participant who was asked about what stage is the most important to engage in:

> The absolute beginning. At the germination of the idea....That's when it's most important for collaboratives to be involved. The most important thing is to be involved with the absolute beginning of the process, before scoping. Because as soon as you start going down the process, the sideboards narrow. And the farther down the process, the ability to influence and change the project diminishes, and towards the end of this, there's very little ability to change what it is. So for collaboratives to be very effective, they should be there talking to the foresters for a scope.

In one project a non-agency respondent recognized that they should have been involved earlier but they remain optimistic the situation has improved going forward, saying, "*ideally it would be good to have our involvement building some of the prescriptions or earlier on, I guess, to have a little bit more transparency. And we are working on that with our next project, actually*."

Some agency respondents show evidence of learning from prior experience and are beginning to engage people earlier. In the Coconino NF project, the project became a focal point for regional learning which helped spawn the Four Forest Restoration Initiative (4FRI). As communicated by one non-agency respondent:

> Stewardship contracting was one of the processes that the Forest Service implemented and integrated into their project design early on [in a regional restoration effort] and that process was very integral to doing things other than just timber harvesting. And so, the project design that the Forest Service used with stewardship contracting was integral to making [the Coconino NF project] a very good project….It was a strategically key part of having this project be acceptable to the environmental community, the logging community, the wildlife community, the grassland community, all those groups that have a strategic interest in this project.

Some agency respondents, however, are resistant to collaborative work and question the benefits. An agency respondent involved in another project explained, "*it's very challenging when you have to expend hundreds of hours of time in these collaborative groups, which is just taking hundreds of hours of time away from achieving the current set of targets*." They continued, "*It's not additive knowledge, it's an additional cost or burden upon the agency to undertake this work. We still have core targets that we have to report, that we're funded for, that we need to accomplish."*

SATISFACTION WITH INVOLVEMENT

As for their level of satisfaction, the majority of respondents report being satisfied with their level of involvement, yet 12 respondents across eight projects express dissatisfaction with their involvement (see Table 6, p.28). In several projects, participants said they were satisfied with their involvement when asked directly about this, but expressed different feelings elsewhere in their interviews. This dissatisfaction was usually due to the project not meeting their expectations.

Some dissatisfied non-agency stakeholders expressed feeling that project objectives were "predetermined" by the agency through NEPA. The process of stakeholder engagement during the public involvement phase of NEPA matters greatly. Stakeholders expressing dissatisfaction often feel that NEPA did not provide an opportunity for them to actively contribute to shaping the project or that line officers were not committed to involving non-agency perspectives through collaboration. Also it is important to find creative ways to involve those who have much to contribute but for whom doing so is challenging. Contractors are busy in the field and often unable to participate in the front-end planning of projects.

Examples of non-agency stakeholders expressing that they would have liked to have been involved earlier include:

> "*In retrospect, it would have been better... More communication early on would be better*."
>
> "*Ideally it would be good to have our involvement building some of the prescriptions earlier on, I guess, to have a little bit more transparency*."
>
> "*Our awareness has changed in knowing that we need to be involved earlier on*."
>
> "*Understanding that we need to be involved earlier on, and even at the pre-planning stage when they're determining what areas are being considered for sales*."
>
> "*Get people involved early. It's much less productive to get them involved later when all of a sudden a lot of the options you have are maybe foreclosed because of time and the like*."
>
> "*Getting involved early…, it's just the way NEPA works*."

Table 6. Reasons respondents express dissatisfaction with their level of involvement in projects.

Project	# satisfied with level of involvement	# dissatisfied with their level of involvement and why.	Type of involvement (as reported by respondents)
Idaho Panhandle NF	3	1 (Meeting overload)	(4) planning
Lolo NF	2	1 (Less involved in planning than wanted)	Scoping (1), planning (1), implementation (3), monitoring (4)
Medicine Bow-Routt NF	2	1 (FS too involved given low success initially)	Implementation (1), planning (2)

San Juan NF	2	1 (Did not get industry ideas during scoping)	Scoping (3)
Tongass NF	1	4 (Do not feel listened to and do not want the project implemented)	Scoping (3), planning (1)
Gifford Pinchot NF 1	2	2 (FS could have involved group earlier)	Scoping (6), planning (3), implementation (1)
Klamath NF	2	1 (loggers too busy to participate in scoping and planning)	Planning (3), scoping (2) implementation (1)
Finger Lakes NF	1	1 (Limited by FS in how they can implement)	Implementation (2)

Note: Numbers correspond to the number of responses.

<u>Question 4.</u> How is the diversity of participation related to perceptions of project success by Forest Service and non-agency stakeholders? Are there differences in how Forest Service and non-agency stakeholders interact based on the form of non-agency stakeholder participation?

VIEWS OF SUCCESS

Success is a subjective concept dependent on each participant's view of project objectives and outcomes. Among participants in these case studies, metrics of success include: getting a planned contract or agreement awarded/completed, building positive relationships, enabling public participation to influence project design and implementation, building or maintaining trust.

To many, success is increasing the scale and scope of restoration activities. As such, the few instances where projects were viewed as unsuccessful correspond to participants believing projects did not implement at a large enough scale, and/or that NEPA alternatives were scaled back versions of the actions originally delineated in a collaborative process. For instance, in the Coconino NF, Klamath NF, and Gifford Pinchot NF 1 projects some non-agency participants believed the projects did not implement at a large enough scale. In these projects stakeholders wishing to treat more acres and/or remove more timber for economic reasons viewed the project as marginally successful if not unsuccessful.

It is commonly expressed that involving many non-agency stakeholders provides a greater diversity of ideas. In these case studies there is no clear tie between the diversity of non-agency participants and whether projects are viewed as successful. Agency respondents overwhelmingly say that projects are

successful, with only one agency respondent suggesting that their project was not likely to be successful because they were not confident the project, a 10-year contract experiencing difficulties getting started, would make it through the entire contract length.

DIVERSITY OF INTERACTIONS BASED ON THE FORM OF NON-AGENCY PARTICIPATION

In these case studies there is a spectrum of participation ranging from simple partnerships, to bi-lateral relationships between contractors and the agency, to collaborative groups with varying functionality in terms of working relationships for collaborative decision making (see Table 7, p.36). Engagement of non-agency interests can occur anywhere along this spectrum.

Not all collaborative processes are the same and neither are agency to non-agency interactions within "collaborative" group projects.

Half of these case studies involve collaborative processes where the agency works with non-agency stakeholders on some aspect of project planning, design, implementation, and/or monitoring. These projects were all different in terms of the length of time the groups had existed and how the agency interacted with their non-agency counterparts through these groups.

In the Gifford Pinchot NF 2 project, the Forest Service recognized that an experienced collaborative group wanted to influence the process and find efficiencies. To support this, the agency allowed the collaborators to manage the NEPA process. Agency and non-agency respondents suggest that this improved understanding of Forest Service processes and promoted a collaborative working environment, albeit with a few hiccups. It also helped the non-agency participants understand the complexity of environmental analysis and why NEPA is so time- and resource-intensive for their agency counterparts.

In the Gifford Pinchot NF 1 project members of a group in the early stages of collaboration relayed they were not involved early enough in the design of the project, which led to them feeling as though they had no influence on the timeline and limited influence on project scope. While a diverse group was involved in field tours and other aspects of planning, participants felt they did not have control over the process. In contrast the collaborative in the Gifford Pinchot NF 2 project perhaps was given too much control, as self-reported by participants.

Successfully addressing diverse views and values is difficult and some agency personnel do it better than others. In a project on the Idaho Panhandle NF an agency respondent displayed understanding of the local functions of the collaborative group:

> It's natural resource management, so not everybody gets everything they want at the table, but that's collaboration. So, it's a good mix of folks, and [regional environmental organization] used to be more obstructive 10 years ago, but now they're more working with and helping design the project….things are a lot better than they used to be…. it's hard to work together, but if we front-load and visit the projects, so there's no surprises, and every step there's questions asked, "what about this? What about that?" Everybody gets educated, we move forward together, and in the end it's a better project.

This agency representative has a depth of understanding about the value of field visits, how the engagement process works, and the importance of an open process in which all issues and questions are brought forward. They recognize a project is improved by the integration of diverse perspectives. A non-agency stakeholder involved in the same project said of the process and the role of the agency:

> I've been doing this a long time and back in the, let's call it the timber wars of late 1980s, early 1990s….Well, about 10 years ago, 12 years ago, collaboratives started forming. And I'll tell you, being on a collaborative sometimes resembles a root canal….It's a very long arduous process, but so long as everyone comes to the table with their hearts on their sleeves willing to look at things openly, it's a process that works. And without... I'll get off my soapbox in a second, but the Forest Service at times can figure out 10 ways to say no, and one way to say yes. And a bunch of people coming to a table, and the agency saying, "Here's an area where we wanna do something at, we want your input." For God's sakes don't say nothing, give them you're input 'cause they're asking for it.

In the Coconino NF project, extensive field tours anchored a collaborative field-based review of scientific findings and their application to the project area. Such a process created a space for environmental groups and forestry interests to interact and respectfully debate the most contentious issue in this region: diameter limits on timber harvests. As communicated by a non-agency leader within the collaborative:

> We actually took several of the active environmental groups out there….to look at the need to harvest big spans of young, but large diameter trees....The environmental groups have tried to institute a 16-inch cap….where at [the project site] lots of the prairie parts have been overgrown by new trees, and so they, said, "Yes, this is a perfect example of a place where we should cut trees bigger than 16-inches."….I think an overall change in philosophy from the Forest Service. From the very traditional silviculturally oriented people that ran it early on, in early 2000s to the new people, which also do that traditional silviculture, but also look at ecosystem restoration as an overall objective….And I think one of the best reasons for that was the Forest Service's change in its perspective on fire and fire behavior, and use of fire in a landscape that they traditionally didn't like to burn. Northern Arizona has really stepped up and the Forest Service is burning 60,000 – 70,000 acres a year, which is unheard of in the past….In the past, the Forest Service burned in the winter and the fall when the fire behavior was very different than when you try and burn areas in the spring, which is when the historic fire regime was….The Forest Service has stepped up and said, "No, we can't do these things," and people agreed, "but we will do those things," and everybody agrees.

In projects with collaborative interactions but lacking a standing collaborative group, participation of non-agency stakeholders is typically less intensive. For instance, a Forest Service representative involved in the Mark Twain NF project felt that "*having them [industry representatives] involved, we probably did more, more work than we would have without their involvement*." Proactively discussing the details of the work being sought with local industry was important given the labor-intensive nature of the treatments proposed. Agency representatives had limited knowledge on operational costs but were able to turn to local industry to gain necessary insights.

This interaction resulted in more work being accomplished than would have otherwise. Another individual from the agency suggested that, "*since this was our first one [stewardship contracting project] we really weren't sure how to put it together….and we talked to them [industry*

representatives] on, 'What's a feasible amount that you can cut in this amount of time...as cedar removal it's….pretty labor intensive, but it benefited us from talking to them. I think it made our project proposal that much better."

In another project in the Southeast with collaborative working relationships but lacking a standing group a Forest Service respondent said, "*We probably wouldn't have been doing anything in this area to begin with if it wasn't for the partners coming forward with project proposals….It got bigger and bigger and bigger…as more people who came to the table*." A non-agency stakeholder involved in the project suggested that, "*I mean that's la la land to think that everybody got everything that they wanted out of it….the folks that are against any logging, sound of a chainsaw or whatever, they didn't get everything they wanted*." Participants, including the Forest Service, got out of the project more than they would have without working together.

<u>When their investments in collaborative processes do not influence project direction, non-agency stakeholders become frustrated.</u>
As relayed by a stakeholder in the Gifford Pinchot NF 1 project, "*there was some discontent, because actually all the work we did was intended to push the project ahead at least a year or so, and that didn't really happen. The Forest Service pretty much kept on with their regular schedule, so there was disenchantment because of that*." Another participant added, "*well, with this project, I remember my main frustration was, we were supposed to look for efficiencies in the NEPA process, but there was a sense that we couldn't do anything different anyway.*"

Despite frustrations with bureaucratic processes and a perceived slowness of government, some are ready and willing to work with the Forest Service and express increased understanding of agency constraints. In the Lolo NF project a tribal representative suggested:

> It's opened our eyes a little bit about how the Forest Service works. And I think they see how we work. It's a really different culture, different philosophies, and a different way to look at things. They are pretty rigid….They're pretty, "A contract is a contract." They're... I don't know. They're the Forest Service. They're a government agency. We're really more laid back. And we know how to do the job. It's simple for us.

In this project the tribe worked with a committed agency line officer to use not only one special authority, but two; stewardship authorities and Tribal Forest Protection Act authorities. Tribal respondents hold their agency colleagues in high regard for their creativity and willingness to figure out solutions.

<u>Lack of transparency in decision making and poor responsiveness to public concerns result in continuing distrust of the agency.</u> Although they did not litigate, local stakeholders actively opposed harvesting low-elevation old-growth temperate rain forest on the Tongass NF project during the engagement phase of NEPA. These respondents expressed significant dissatisfaction with the NEPA decision. When asked if project planning is the most important thing for non-agency stakeholders to be involved in, this same respondent said, "*I think that's what we are still removed from….This is really about the requirements to satisfy a mill*."

When the timber sale was later changed to a stewardship project, these individuals were asked by the Forest Service to participate in what the agency described as a "collaborative group" to identify activities on which to spend stewardship receipts. In this process, the agency and non-agency participants had clearly different expectations. An agency respondent said, "*I think we were gonna do the project anyway but we wanted his input on how the project was gonna be implemented. We were going to go and do this project. We had a NEPA document that was done and said what we were gonna do, it's just how we were gonna do that*."

At least one Forest Service respondent felt the interactions were legitimate collaboration and did achieve something:

> Mostly, you know I mean originally, we have participation in the NEPA document. You know, that was the original participation. But then in the collaboration, they were there at the meeting and spoke on what their personal and group feelings were on the project, as a whole. So I mean you know they were able to speak at these collaboration meetings about how they felt about the project. You know and it was recorded, and written down.

Whereas a non-agency respondent expressed dissatisfaction with a process they felt was controlled by the agency:

> I attended all of the meetings except for one....But I can't say I collaborated, I attended. The board believes by mere attendance that you've collaborated so I wanna be very clear on that, and the project was not a result of collaboration amongst the group….They tried to cast that as a product of the collaborative but it was not, that was an in house proposal.

MONEY STRONGLY INFLUENCES HOW THE AGENCY INTERACTS WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Money is a major driving force in all of the case study projects. Not only does it dictate how and why projects are structured, money is also a determinant of who influences project design and implementation, including who can participate as a contractor or agreement holder. The influence of money on the selection of contractors or agreement holders was evident in a number of ways.

In prior years of the programmatic monitoring of stewardship contracting, bringing outside funding was identified as one of the major benefits of non-agency engagement. This trend continues in these case studies. Outside funding played a major factor in the ability of the agency to accomplish its own mission, but this is not always recognized or appreciated by agency respondents.

<u>Price is a major factor in determining "best value."</u>

While the best value authority enables the agency to select stewardship contractors based on elements other than price, the bottom line is still clearly the driving factor in most projects. In the Mark Twain NF project a Forest Service representative said, "*Well, we would have been paying a lot of money to get this work done; they actually ended up paying us….so it saved the government a lot of money as far as that end goes*."

In the Medicine-Bow-Routt NF project a Forest Service respondent expressed concern about the viability of the contract based largely on the "very low bid" offered by a company without prior stewardship

contracting experience. While the agency saved money on the front end with the low price, they had to spend significant staff hours working with contractors on the back end to keep the project moving.

Bringing money to the table influences project outcomes and who benefits.
Non-agency stakeholders bring money into stewardship projects in a number of different ways. Traditional contractors (mills and loggers) bring their business as financial collateral in contracts, while non-profits bring non-federal funding into agreements, and to a lesser degree contracts, to help advance various activities aligned with their missions.

In four case studies (Klamath NF, Tongass NF, Medicine Bow-Routt NF, and San Juan NF) the contractor is directly connected to a wood-utilizing facility. In some instances the contract is held directly by a wood-using facility which in turn subcontracts to loggers. With project objectives narrowed mainly to timber production, these four projects are generally less collaborative as compared to most other case studies.

In at least four case studies (two stewardship agreements and two contracts), non-profit partners engaging with the Forest Service brought funding into the projects to complete a diverse array of activities, mostly associated with facilitating various planning actions, one of which includes managing and implementing the entire NEPA process.

These non-profits bring their own money into projects because they believe that it will help achieve specific project outcomes of great interest to them. In years past, survey-based programmatic monitoring found that "specific project outcomes," that is, actions accomplished on the ground, is what project participants are most interested in with regard to using stewardship contracting. The trend toward more outside money influencing specific project outcomes continues. For instance, a non-profit collaborative group member working in the Gifford Pinchot NF 2 project explained:

> We actually were kind of a project lead or a committee lead or co-lead relative to [the project] as there were a number of different projects going on at the time. And we actually took on securing….RAC funds to do stand exams.

Likewise, in the Florida NF project, a representative from a large national conservation group successfully engaged in numerous agreements and contracts said:

> When you work with the government, you have to do the work in advance and then seek reimbursement. And there's just very few grassroots organizations or non-profits that have the ability to pay out several, several thousand dollars for work and then seek reimbursement months later.

Large well-funded non-profits can afford these investments but it presents a barrier for many non-agency entities wishing to engage in stewardship projects. A non-profit representative said, "*They need a big pool of money available to take on these contracts, which limits who can do them*." Another non-profit explained that they were, "*able to bring some non-federal dollars to the table with match…which always is critical to being able to carry out the project*."

Retained receipts as bargaining chips.

In recent years, some forests have retained significant funding through timber receipts from stewardship contracting. Recognizing that the Forest Service is the ultimate decision maker, some forests have worked with collaborative groups to allocate receipts toward priority projects identified by the collaborative. There is a spectrum along which this trend occurs. In these case studies, non-agency participants express wanting to be involved in both designing the activities generating the receipts (timber harvests) and the activities to which those receipts are applied (service work).

CAPACITY INFLUENCES HOW THE AGENCY INTERACTS WITH NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

In addition to outside funding, the capacity of stakeholders (the ability to address technical aspects of projects), matters greatly and has bearing on relationships. Non-agency stakeholders bring varying levels of capacity to projects. In a handful of projects (e.g. Idaho Panhandle NF project, George Washington-Jefferson NF project, and Coconino NF project) the most readily available and possibly most useful form of capacity is practical local knowledge about natural resource conditions and the project area.

Outside organizations contribute capacity that prioritizes or accelerates stewardship projects in a number of ways. In one case, a community-based non-profit helped accelerate the planning process by securing funds and contracting stand exams. In other cases, non-agency participants bring specialized expertise such as wildlife or prescribed fire that the agency may not have existing capacity to provide. In another project, a Job Corps program allowed urban youth to gain restoration and prescribed fire skills while assisting with project implementation. Bringing in participants or consultants with prior stewardship experience was recognized by agency and non-agency participants as valuable to developing and implementing projects, especially where agency experience was limited. One stakeholder acknowledged the benefit of bringing outside resources to their project, saying, "*This brought a lot more wildlife management knowledge into the picture....It's not that the Forest Service didn't have a decent amount of experience and expertise, but they're spread over that million acres, and we were able to bring some focus to an area that had a lot of potential, unrealized potential.*"

It is not just organizational capacity but the capacity of individuals that makes a difference. Individuals with knowledge and experience in leading successful stewardship projects are in high demand and are being subcontracted by various organizations to help develop stewardship agreements and contracts. For districts lacking experience in stewardship contracting, one strategy is to bring someone in from outside the agency with considerable prior experience and knowledge. In two projects, non-profits also took this approach, consulting with someone recognized as a national expert in the subject. About this a representative of the non-profit agreement holder said:

> The reason we hired [this experienced individual] to work with us on this project and the reason why a lot of other entities have hired him to work on stewardship is, [the person] knows more about stewardship contracting than anyone in the Forest Service, and he used to work for the Forest Service and he helped write the stewardship act, and then he retired…. people in the Forest Service will call him, to ask him advice on how to do stuff related to stewardship agreements.

In the other instance, the project lead for the Forest Service said of the knowledgeable individual:

He's been involved in different stewardship projects with the Forest Service, on other National Forests. And so, he's got quite a bit of experience working with our process. In some cases, he knew more about our process than we did….I really appreciated his patience with us….I appreciate his understanding that we were kinda new to this process and we weren't willing to just shoot first and ask questions later.

Table 7. Respondent views of success as compared to the diversity of non-agency participants.

Project Name	Types of non-agency participation	Do non-agency respondents views project as a success?	Do agency respondents view project as a success?	Collaborative Group Present
Lolo NF	Scoping, planning, implementation, monitoring.	Yes (2)	Yes (1)	No
Idaho Panhandle NF	Scoping, planning, implementation, monitoring.	Yes (3)	Yes (2)	Yes
Medicine Bow-Routt NF	Scoping, implementation.	Yes (2)	Yes (1), No, partially (1)	No
Apache-Sitgreaves NF	Scoping, planning, monitoring.	Yes (1)	Yes (1)	Yes
Coconino NF	Scoping, planning, implementation, monitoring.	Yes (2), No (1)	Yes (1)	Yes
San Juan NF	Scoping, planning.	Don't know.	Yes (1)	No
Tongass NF	Scoping, planning.	No (3)	Yes (1)	No
Gifford Pinchot NF 1	Scoping, planning, implementation, monitoring, funding.	Yes (5)	Yes (1)	Yes (early stage)

Gifford Pinchot NF 2	Scoping, planning, implementation, monitoring, funding.	Yes (4), No (1)	Yes (1)	Yes (advanced)
Klamath NF	Scoping, planning, implementation.	Yes (2), No (1)	Yes (1)	No
Sumter NF	Scoping, planning, implementation.	*	Yes (1)	No
Florida NF	Scoping, planning, implementation, monitoring, funding.	Yes (2)	Yes (1)	Yes
George Washington-Jefferson NF	Scoping, planning, implementation.	Yes (5)	Did not answer (1)	No
Finger Lakes NF	Implementation	Yes (1)	Yes (1)	No
Mark Twain NF	Scoping, planning, implementation.	Yes (1)	Yes (2)	No
Chequamegon-Nicolet NF	Scoping, planning, implementation, funding.	Yes (2)	Yes (2)	No

Note: Numbers correspond to the number of responses.
* Respondents not contacted at request of agency respondent.

<u>Question 5</u>: Is involvement of non-agency stakeholders, including local communities and tribes, influencing the scale (size) and scope (complexity of activities) of stewardship projects?

Ten of the 16 projects increased either their scope, scale, or both because of the actions and influence of non-agency participation. Collaboration before and during NEPA planning was essential to increase scale or scope in the case studies. Eight of the 10 projects that experienced an increase in project complexity (greater diversity and integration of activities) or scale (more acres) are characterized by collaborative interactions (6 with collaborative groups and 2 with strong working relationships between individuals, but without a formalized collaborative group).

Increased public participation with willing Forest Service leadership results in more ideas and often leads to a more complex set of activities. Not all projects with collaborative relationships expanded their scope or scale. In the Gifford Pinchot NF 1 case, despite collaborators bringing significant technical expertise and financial resources into the project, project timeline was not advanced in a significant way and the scale was not increased.

An example of a collaborative effort increasing scope and scale is summarized by this response from a participant in the Coconino NF case study:

> Absolutely. Absolutely. Because it was a traditional project, it hasn't been up to 50,000 and 100,000 acres, but if implemented, changes from a Forest Service perspective on how

> you should thin and manage those 20,000-acre blocks and 15,000-acre blocks and things like that. They are being managed in groups of blocks across the….landscape, which is 180,000 acres. What the Forest Service did was took complex ecosystems that are very typical throughout the landscape, and made them be managed in a similar way across the whole thing. I think that's one of the best things that this [the project] did with the Forest Service, is instead of just managing independent 20,000-acre blocks they are now managing integrated 20,000-acre blocks.

Only five of 16 projects did not experience a change in the project scope or scale as a result of non-agency stakeholder involvement. These are all instances where project objectives and design were defined mostly by the agency. Projects that were planned by the agency alone did not result in an increase in the project scope and/or scale. One project reportedly had a decrease in the scale during the planning phase based on suggestions offered by a contractor during project planning.

While their participation in planning can be difficult, project scale and scope is sometimes influenced by the participation of potential contractors. This may result in projects that are appropriately scaled to operational constraints and capabilities of contractors, potentially increasing or decreasing the scale and/or scope from that which was planned. This occurred in one case study.

Table 8. Perceived effect of non-agency stakeholders on project scale and scope.

Project Name	Increase scale	Decrease scale	Increase scope	Decrease Scope
Lolo NF				
Idaho Panhandle NF			X	
Medicine Bow-Routt NF	X		X	
Apache-Sitgreaves NF	X		X	
Coconino NF	X		X	
San Juan NF				
Tongass NF				
Gifford Pinchot NF 1			X	
Gifford Pinchot NF 2	X		X	
Klamath NF			X	
Sumter NF				
Florida NF	X		X	
George Washington-Jefferson NF	X		X	

Finger Lakes NF				
Mark Twain NF		X		
Chequamegon-Nicolet NF			X	

Photo credit: Ecological Restoration Institute Northern Arizona University.

APPENDIX A: 2015 CASE STUDY PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS.

The following project descriptions are based on the results of 63 interviews conducted with project participants and to a lesser extent on project documentation that is available on the internet which was used to verify interview data.

Pacific Coast Region

Gifford Pinchot NF project 1. Washington.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The project timeline is about five years from initial conceptualization to implementation as one of many projects resulting from a single NEPA decision. This Integrated Resource Timber Contract (IRTC) is considered large (> 1,000 acres) and is comprised of various silvicultural treatments across approximately 2,000 acres of plantations and one naturally regenerated area. The project is also completing more than $1 million worth of service work including: meadow restoration, snag and large down woody debris creation, treatment of invasive plants, stream restoration, culvert replacement, road decommissioning, road stabilization, reforestation following a fire, and rehabilitation of recreation sites.

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

Due to the value of the timber being harvested there are significant receipts that were generated and put back into various service activities. The work of a diverse collaborative group in the early stages of formation consisted of reviewing and suggesting various activities for which these funds could be expended. This group also provided outside technical capacity and funding to complete some NEPA-related activities, such as stand exams.

Most non-agency participants involved in this project through a collaborative in the early-stage of development express that planning and scoping are the most important ways for them to be involved. They participated very little in the design of treatments, in part because they acknowledge their trust in the agency silviculturalist but also because of the non-controversial nature of treatments. Instead they focused on the service side of the project. Still, some wish they had been able to engage earlier in the planning process to help define the timber side of the IRTC. A local community-based organization secured Resource Advisory Committee funding to complete stand exams for the thinnings in an attempt to accelerate the timeline. This had limited success due to agency delay. This local group expressed losing some confidence in such projects because of this.

RELATIONSHIPS OF AGENCY AND NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

Non-agency respondents felt that their relationships with the Forest Service changed over the course of the project. The number one reason for this was a change in leadership at the line-officer level that improved relationships. Some agency and non-agency respondents suggested that the creation of the collaborative group itself is an indicator of project success. Still, most involved described relations between the diversity of non-agency participants as tenuous with several divergent views and contested values that hardly softened as a result of collaborative work. On some level, this may be at least partially attributable to the fact that these interests, which had been at war for years largely over timber harvesting, came together not to define what type of timber extraction is broadly accepted but rather to define other activities, the most contentious of which was road obliteration.

In this project there is stark contrast between how some in the agency view the collaborative and how the collaborative members view their group. One Forest Service respondent not connected to the project said of the group, "*they are congealed into a collaborative that is speaking as one voice…the USFS has put more energy into that collaborative group and maintaining that communication line."* Non-agency participants did not see it this way. A leader among non-agency participants said, "*We struggled with that* [the work they undertook] *as a collaborative, there has been a lot of posturing over the years*."

Non-agency respondents expressed that they were somewhat satisfied with their level of involvement in the project and that they would have liked to have been involved earlier. They said that their field tours are the most useful thing they did together. They also suggest that the most important thing is to get involved early on. While that did not happen in this project, some respondents explained that some of them have gotten involved at earlier stages in other projects since this one.

EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIPS ON THE SCOPE AND SCALE OF THE PROJECT

Every respondent suggests that the involvement of non-agency stakeholders results in project implementation. Respondents do not think that the involvement of non-agency stakeholders affected the

scale and only moderately affected the scope by adding service activities which themselves were debated intensely by the group. Members of this early-stage collaborative came together to affect the scope, scale, and the pace of the project, but feel they did not have a significant impact, that the project was the "*low hanging fruit*" as being non-controversial pre-commercial thinning of Douglas fir plantations.

Gifford Pinchot NF project 2. Washington.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This is a large (about 1,500 acre) IRTC project focused on thinning plantations to increase structural diversity and accelerate the development of old growth characteristics. The service items in the project include road closures and decommissioning, snag and down wood creation, road maintenance and removal, stream restoration, and invasive weed treatments. Interviews revealed diverse views on what the project objectives are, including:

> "*Accelerate spotted owl habitat formation. Road closures and decommissioning.*"
>
> – Forest Service respondent

> "*Restore habitat. Remove roads that were causing aquatic problems or connectivity problems*."
>
> – non-agency respondent

> "*Help create jobs and enhance and protect the National Forest*."
>
> – non-agency respondent

> "*Build relationships in the community. Build trust. Find common ground. Variable density thinning and plant trees*."
>
> – non-agency respondent

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

The local collaborative group had significant involvement in all phases of the project except for implementation which was handled by contractors operating outside of the group. The collaborative includes representatives from the local community, forest industry, environmental groups, and a tribal nation. In this project, non-agency participants played a unique role by completing the Environmental Assessment under NEPA which is normally a Forest Service responsibility. The collaborative was vocal in saying that they could do a better job and speed up the process. In response the Forest Supervisor decided to test their hypothesis and let them carry out the NEPA process. While the work was completed by the collaborative and a technical subcontractor, separate members of the group ended up commenting through NEPA as their own independent organizations. This strained relationships within the group. Another strain came as a result of the agency being too hands off, which agency respondents readily acknowledge in retrospect, may not have been constructive.

RELATIONSHIPS OF AGENCY AND NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

In completing the NEPA work the collaborative was not able to deliver high-quality NEPA review faster than the Forest Service, and the process may have been easier for them if the agency had provided some base level of support. Some felt that perhaps there is a happy medium. Non-agency respondents report having a much better sense of what the agency has to do. Forest Service respondents suggest that due to their working relationships built during this project, overall communication has improved and relationships are less contentious. Collaborative members report satisfaction with seeing a project come to fruition when they had worked on it in multiple phases. Some members wish it had been more impactful at a larger scale.

Aspects contributing to the quality of relationships in this project include: early stage communications that are open and inclusive, as well as a commitment to field tours and working through controversial items, and a commitment on the part of agency staff to see projects through. The process of working together toward a success has built trust and constructive relationships between the Forest and the collaborative. A member of the group that is employed by a regional environmental organization described their evolving relationships, saying there are, "*definitely different kinds of conversations with the district ranger and the Forest Supervisor over the course of the project that we would never have had otherwise, which I think, at least for us on our side, it had to weigh more. It just kind of increased my trust in the agency*."

For the agency, their staff report taking the collaborative and communications with this group more seriously as a result of the positive effects of this project. Going forward, both sides of this relationship report being more focused on getting involved earlier and building consensus earlier, in part because the diversity of interests acknowledge that collaborative discussions can yield creative solutions even when not everyone in the group agrees. People are talking rather than litigating.

EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIPS ON THE SCOPE AND SCALE OF THE PROJECT

The involvement of non-agency participants through the collaborative process is believed to have improved decision making and helped develop and implement diverse objectives. Collaborative members felt that their involvement made the project more complex and larger. One non-agency respondent felt

that the collaborative process did not lead to the scale or scope of implementation that they themselves wanted to see occur.

Tongass NF project. Alaska.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This large project was originally planned as a timber sale in low-elevation old growth temperate rainforest. Local environmentalists opposed the project during NEPA scoping, notice, and comment but chose not to appeal or litigate. Later, it evolved into an IRTC stewardship contract.

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

The first opportunity for public involvement in the proposed project came during environmental analysis. Of the NEPA process, a representative of an environmental organization commented:

> Yeah, we certainly participated in scoping, and made comments in regards to the draft…. So, for a number of reasons, we chose not to litigate, but did feel that it was very important for us to be a part of the stewardship process in terms of entering our input. In terms of monitoring, of course, there was talk about monitoring, but we have yet to see that, and we spent a fair amount of time asking that the issues related to the targeting of high volume old growth habitat would...We basically asked for no more cutting of high volume old growth habitat, but that was not honored because it had to do with the economics of the timber sale.

When it became a stewardship project, the Forest Service attempted to form a "Stewardship Group" to identify activities that could be paid for by the receipts from the project. The group included supporters and opponents of the timber sale project. In describing the purpose of this group and a specific member's

involvement, an agency representative stated, "*the collaboration was more of what kind of restoration projects he felt would help the management of the Forest. You know he still, in his mind, didn't like the idea of harvesting timber, in order to do restoration projects.*"

Opponents of the project viewed the creation of a collaborative group as "*a public relations stunt*." This was exacerbated because most of the non-agency participants felt the meetings were significantly biased by having them facilitated by the district ranger and having the meetings disproportionately full of Forest Service staff. Participants expressed that they believed that the written record of the meetings did not accurately reflect what happened in the meetings.

They also referred to the service items which they were brought in to collaborate on as being "*pre-ordained,*" and expressed feeling they were misled and had no influence on project selection. A project supporter in the collaborative disagreed saying, "*I think the line officer listened to all the recommendations or the input during collaboration and we implemented some of that*." Ultimately, one of the collaborative members concluded the process was a failure. He praised the district ranger for trying to steer the group into productive ground but said group dynamics focused most of the time away from coming up with productive solutions to use the stewardship receipts and he was very discouraged.

RELATIONSHIPS OF AGENCY AND NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

One of the respondents explained, "*Our relationship with the Forest Service goes back decades, we've been commenting on timber sales....Either for timber sale or against and for habitat protection or not for decades. So, we've established with this relationship we have with the Forest Service, it's a long established relationship*." The same person also expressed frustration that the process of commenting through NEPA did not yield any measurable influence on this project and others.

From the agency perspective, when asked what they thought is the most challenging aspect of non-agency stakeholder participation in stewardship contracting projects, a Forest Service respondent suggested, "*I think the most difficult is constructively listening to people that are adamantly opposed about what we're doing….we have some pretty outspoken groups and individuals that would rather not see us implement our Forest Plan.*"

There are many challenges to collaborative relationships in a place like this. An economy made up of seasonal employment means people are not often able to attend regularly scheduled meetings. Different participants tend to come to each meeting so the conversation about priorities has difficulty advancing. Also the history of logging old growth in Alaska is a significant flash point that people just cannot get beyond to identify any common ground elsewhere. All of this impacts how the agency relates to non-agency participants. Describing this, a non-agency participant said, "*the most challenging thing is to force the agency to take non-agency stakeholders, and I should say the stakeholders that are not with the timber industry….seriously*."

In other projects the agency reports that one of the most challenging things is explaining the mechanics and rationale of stewardship contracting to non-agency participants. In this project, this appears to not be

the case. Here locals outside of the agency clearly understand stewardship contracting, they just have a fundamentally different vision about how it should be used. One non-agency participant articulated:

> My understanding of the stewardship and restoration initiatives by the Forest Service is that the funding stream to the agency itself has been highly variable, and the trend of our funding is such that there are uncertainties built into the agency budget, and I see the stewardship contracting as a means to achieve conservation objectives using receipts from timber sales to help to mitigate the consequences of timber sales. And also, of course, to instill a sense of participation from directly impacted individuals, whether they are impacted by the environmental consequences of it, or are impacted by the economic potential that the timber sale extensively represents.

EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIPS ON THE SCOPE AND SCALE OF THE PROJECT

Instead of providing their input on the scope of the project, the majority of non-agency participants did not want to work with the Forest Service to plan these activities. The main effect of relationships on the scope of the project was to not expand the project scope, but for non-agency participants to vehemently oppose the project, and for whatever trust existed to be further degraded.

Klamath NF project. California.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This is a large project over 1,800 acres that is focused on treating hazardous fuels in a late successional reserve under the Northwest Forest Plan. As defined by respondents the objectives of the project are to: "*create a fire-resilient forest especially near communities;*" "*forest health, fuels reduction, wildlife enhancement;*" "*reduction of fuel loading, enhanced fire resistance, forest health improvement;*" and "*density reduction to minimize wildfire. Promote forest health*." Private industrial timberland is interspersed in a checkerboard pattern with the project area, as is the case across much of Northern California.

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

There was no collaborative group associated with the project; rather there were two separate groups of non-agency participants. First, the Restoration Area Planning Group, which includes the local Firesafe Councils, the Fire Learning Network, and a regional non-profit. Second, a forest products company and two contractors with whom they work. "Environmentalists" are mentioned but they were not listed by respondents as being directly involved in the project.

Those listed as involved worked with the Forest Service on scoping, project design, and multi-party monitoring field trips. Participants from the forest products sector participated by helping ensure that the Forest Service put together the types of projects that would be economically viable. Concerned environmental groups were taken into the field by the Restoration Area Planning Group to discuss the project. One non-agency respondent explained the local dynamics:

> There's several extreme environmental groups who challenge almost everything…so they would request a special field trip to go out with the Forest Service. We would go with them and so, all of a sudden, these groups realized that they weren't dealing with just the Forest Service, they were dealing with the community, stakeholders, land owners, Fire Safe Councils. And so, we would push back professionally why we thought this project is a good project. So we were supportive of the Forest Service and those endeavors….when we would attend meetings or field trips with these groups that were already anti-project. They would come with a very indefinite agenda, not coming to the table willing to listen and maybe adjust and we had to come to the table trying to convince them and that's always a challenge. Because sometimes they came to the table with agendas that were bigger than just this project.

Non-agency stakeholders who were engaged in the project mainly participated in scoping (verbal comments), planning (attending meetings, commenting), and implementation (participating in project design). An adjacent industrial timberland owner was not involved in any of the planning phase but the project activities did spill over onto their land. In terms of the benefits of involving non-agency participants, respondents emphasized that groups like this can help get projects done by providing some cover to the agency regarding the need for the project, and also ensuring that the project, as designed, is "*economically viable and will lead to the best result in both cases in terms of doing something substantial for the landscape that's actually noticeable versus just putting together small projects that make work that really don't accomplish much*."

Overall the involvement of non-agency participants is believed to have resulted in improved decision making and a project design that could occur in an integrated way across boundaries, which made a difference for the scale of the project. For example, working with three adjacent landowners helped define the system of fuel breaks across the landscape.

For the most part non-agency participants were satisfied with their level of involvement, but one respondent noted that because loggers are all busy working in the woods they are essentially excluded from collaborative processes, which presents challenges since these are the main implementers with whom the Forest Service seeks to work and they provide critical on-the-ground knowledge about harvest operations. As a logger put it:

> On the other stuff, the planning part and the scoping and that, we do our best to stay involved and engaged but it's pretty difficult for people in our position and for our contractors to really be involved because we've got a lotta other responsibilities that need to be met. We just don't have the time to attend numerous meetings over one small project. And so, I think the participation at the planning level tends to be skewed towards those whose sole focus is to intervene in that planning and scoping aspects….It can result in a project where we're really not getting the full breadth of perspectives….We just can't justify engaging on every millionth foot little timber project. And I would like to see the Forest Service get away from the way they're planning these projects and soliciting input and do that at the front end.

Likewise, another respondent from the forest products sector suggested that the involvement of all non-agency stakeholders early on in scoping is important, saying:

> So that we can help them put together a project that is gonna be most effective on the ground and it's gonna be the most economically viable and will lead to the best result in both cases in terms of doing something substantial for the landscape that's actually noticeable versus just putting together small projects that make work that really don't accomplish much.

Relationships of Agency and Non-agency Stakeholders

In terms of the project's effect on the relationships, the act of planning and implementation led to a firming up of already solid relationships and a confirmation of how to work together across ownerships. Both agency and non-agency participants attribute the quality of relationships to open communication and being forthright with each other. Another noted that being able to speak freely to the agency and a willingness of both sides to listen to and accept new ideas is critical. A non-agency stakeholder also emphasized the value of stewardship authorities in meeting local needs:

> I think the stewardship authority is very beneficial because it provides the vehicle for engaging communities and engaging local workforce, and local economic development versus just like a single contract that's put out that somebody from local or exterior comes in and does it and leaves. It's more of a local based opportunity for both input and actual job creation.

In this project, participants suggest the most difficult thing about involving non-agency stakeholders is finding ways for them to participate and continual maintenance of a non-adversarial atmosphere where people will be willing to work together.

Effects of Relationships on the Scope and Scale of the Project

For the most part respondents felt that this project was a positive step toward creating a more resilient landscape. Some still feel that it was not a true success because the project did not treat as many acres as they would have liked. The scope and scale changed (expanding across ownerships). One respondent from the forest products sector suggested a problem is that many projects in this area begin with a broader scope and get pared down. This respondent suggested that this was a result of collaboration. Others who are more involved in this project suggested that it was various groups working together that led to this project expanding across ownerships.

Northern Rockies Region

Idaho Panhandle NF project. Idaho.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This is a smaller project (less than 700 acres) focused on forest restoration and fuels reduction in a municipal watershed. The project has been ongoing for more than five years and is embedded within a Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration (CFLR) program project. The main non-agency stakeholders are from the local community and are engaged through a collaborative group with 15 core members consisting of environmentalists, landowners, farmers, water district managers, and local community members. A fire in the area became the catalyst for action. The collaborative approached the Forest Service about the project because there were concerns about the possible negative impacts forest conditions could have on downstream water users.

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

Non-agency stakeholders are principally involved through the collaborative group which has been established for more than a decade. Through the course of this project collaborative meetings occurred four times annually. Activities have included scoping, planning, monitoring, and accessing outside funding. The industry members of the collaborative are also involved in implementation. Participants emphasized that the most important aspect of their involvement in the project is to keep open and transparent communications and for each member to be candid and forthcoming with introducing issues for broader consideration by the group. Respondents believe that the diversity of interests involved in the collaborative group contributed to better project design and outcomes. The group also has a depth of understanding with timber harvest operations, which is an important aspect of meeting project objectives.

RELATIONSHIPS OF AGENCY AND NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

The agency trusts the collaborative group and relies on the group for a lot of leadership and direction; for example, the idea for this project was originally put forward by the group. While the collaborative group is the main non-agency stakeholder, this project was mostly instigated by the county commissioner and the local water district, which included the project in a CFLR proposal prior to the collaborative group leading it. On the effect on the quality of relationships, non-agency participants in the group expressed:

> It's about the local community and the fact that we are getting more and more projects through that contributes to the quality of relationships. More and more economic opportunities; "A process that involves as wide a group as we can. That is what does the best job. Strong people and good leadership keep things moving;" "I think cultures are changing within Federal agencies and they look forward to sharing what they are doing as opposed to. Prior to [the collaborative group existing] the USFS would come into my community and this is how contentious it was, the USFS would need to bring security.

EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIPS ON THE SCOPE AND SCALE OF THE PROJECT

The scale of the project was not affected by non-agency participation but the internal debates of the collaborative group did shape the scope of activities and treatment design.

Lolo NF project. Montana.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This Integrated Resource Service Contract (IRSC) is just less than 1,000 acres. The project area is a second growth forest originally logged in the 1960s. The project objectives were to improve forest health and reduce wildfire risk across the project area and adjacent tribal lands. Activities included thinning and controlled burns to reduce tree density, road maintenance, road construction, and road decommissioning.

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

The project was "*off the shelf*" as in it had been developed and had gone through NEPA.
This project originated with the Forest Service and the tribe talking about the need to address fuel loading along the border between the National Forest and reservation. Another topic of conversation was the use of both stewardship contracting authorities and the authorities offered under the Tribal Forest Protection Act. The tribe worked closely with the agency at the planning, monitoring, and implementation stages. Planning during project design was viewed as the most important role. Both parties involved in this project report being satisfied with their level of involvement and the tribe wants to do similar work going forward.

RELATIONSHIPS OF AGENCY AND NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

The project provided employment to tribal loggers during a period when timber markets were unfavorable due to a recent pulp mill closure and the recession of the last decade. The Forest Service personnel that liaised with the tribe was recognized for their diplomacy and diligence in finding solutions to challenges, going over the details of the contract extensively. Tribal respondents expressed their gratitude for the agency representative leading this aspect of the project. The agency representative explained:

> The federal government has sovereign rights, the tribe has sovereign rights, and both entities are protective of their rights, particularly the tribes. And so, when you negotiate a

> contract with a tribal entity and the federal government, both parties are essentially, through that contract mechanism, agreeing to waive a very small portion of their sovereign rights in order to conduct a business transaction. Because, in a contract, you can get into a dispute and basically either party can file a claim against the other and when an entity has sovereign rights, they have to agree to let another entity sue them, so to speak….So, in this, it's very important that that contract, the terms of that contract, are fully understood. That there's complete honesty, nothing's hidden and that if there are any questions that it's admitted that, "We don't know this and we will find out." Because, to me, when dealing with the tribes, it's absolutely critical that there's trust and honesty there…. You are trying to come to a mutual understanding and agreement that both parties are very satisfied with. So, you have to just confront. If you don't know something, you have to confront it and get an answer that both parties can understand.

This individual also explained the importance of knowing tribal laws and expectations when entering into a contract, something which the tribe had been concerned about, in part because they acknowledge being considerably less bureaucratic than the federal government:

> I think it's really important that Forest Service personnel involved in that transaction, whether it be before contracts awarded or during the contract award process, I think it's really important that the Forest Service personnel be educated about tribal law, tribal rights, tribal sovereignty, as well as the information about the specific project, because that's very much in the minds of tribal representatives when they approach the federal government to negotiate a contract. They are very protective as they should be of their own rights. And if they know that you understand those and acknowledge those, then you're on the same page when you're starting to talk about negotiating the contract. You certainly need to understand where they're coming from and not. You don't want to approach them like you would a private contractor. That would be the wrong approach.

While timber output is important to project objectives, tribal participants express that the project could have been structured as an agreement and not a contract, and that they would have likely preferred this. Both interests shared similar objectives and both wanted the work done. Both the agency and the tribe expressed some awkwardness around signing a contract between a tribal entity and a federal agency. Yet, since the tribe was not bringing cash to the project, it seems as though its role defaulted to that of a contractor and not an agreement holder even though technically an agreement could have been used.

Effects of Relationships on the Scope and Scale of the Project

The project did not increase in terms of complexity or scale because the agency essentially brought the project to the tribe as a complete package. The tribe plans to work on another contract with the Forest Service.

Medicine Bow-Routt NF project. Colorado and Wyoming.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This is a very large 10-year contract between the Forest Service and a forest products company. One Forest Service staffer working to develop this project identified the following objectives: (1) to utilize low value trees killed by the recent pine beetle epidemic; (2) to lower per acre treatment cost by guaranteeing a supply over a 10-year period; (3) to promote establishment of an industry that could utilize biomass; (4) to mitigate unacceptable fuel loading associated with all of these dead trees, especially in the wildland urban interface; (5) to treat the safety hazards that are associated with falling dead trees along public travel corridors, and; (6) to begin rehabilitating subalpine and montane forest types to a condition more resilient to insects, disease, and other disturbance mechanisms. With an over 1 million acre disturbance from the Mountain Pine Beetle, the Forest is devising strategies to maintain a diversity of age classes over the next century.

Other respondents suggest that the project objectives are:

> To remove dead and dying Lodgepole pine hazard trees. Most everything that we do, probably 90%, 95% of it, is hazard tree removal along road sides, so we can keep Forest Service roads open and clear for the public, so people aren't getting trapped behind falling trees, or hit by falling trees, while as they're traveling down the road.
>
> - Forest Service respondent

> It's basically to supply our plants with a good quality, long-term supply of affordable wood and as well accomplish for the US Forest Service some of that, their ability to utilize this low-value wood, no-value wood that they need to get rid of that there's virtually no market for.
>
> - Contractor

> To utilize multiple merchantable forest products, specifically biomass and non-saw timber products to get work done that we normally can't get done under regular timber sale contract, and also to try to get a better cost for that work, and then of course, to support industry development and maintain industry, forest products industries.
>
> - Forest Service respondent

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

Agency respondents suggest that the most important role for non-agency participants is to be engaged in the planning process and through one-on-one communications. The latter was the way non-agency stakeholders participated in this project. There was little open planning and scoping, in part because the early task orders of the project came to be through the use of a categorical exclusion (CE) from needing to complete an Environmental Assessment under NEPA. This is because the project falls under recent legislation addressing the massive beetle kill in the Rockies. "*We're not talking about an EIS, where we had environmental groups involved and stuff. It wasn't that kind of collaboration,"* remarked an agency interviewee.

Aside from the contractor, nearby private landowners are the only other non-agency stakeholders identified as being directly involved. The project was promoted by the contractor and a regional organization promoting biomass utilization and economic development. The Forest Service supported the idea because it was a means to treat some of the beetle-killed forest stands where limited opportunities exist. The award of this long term contract resulted in establishment of additional wood processing infrastructure in the area.

Because there was little infrastructure already in place, there was also little existing capacity to complete the contract activities. The project struggled to accomplish work on time for at least the first two years. This was aggravated, according to one respondent, by the contractor's inability to pay competitive wages to subcontractors due to bidding low on the contract.

RELATIONSHIPS OF AGENCY AND NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

Since this was a new relationship for the contractor and the Forest Service there has been a considerable learning curve. The Forest Service recognizes, "*we took a risk but they gave us a very good price*." Still, for the Forest Service, getting a low price up front meant needing to increase support of the project on the back-end with additional staff time. The newness of the contractor to the world of Forest Service contracts also had an impact. As the project got moving respondents suggest that communication techniques improved to address challenges as they came up. An agency representative now engaged in the project said that they are in very regular communication with the contractor and together work out changes in the location and timing of harvesting. That same representative expressed the Forest Service stands to benefit from the 10 year contract by building a solid long-term working relationship with a contractor and the contractor has assurance for a long term supply of forest products and revenue necessary to invest in processing infrastructure.

Early on the contractor failed to meet some of the resource management objectives and needed extensive agency oversight. Reflecting on these challenges, a Forest Service respondent said, "*we should have put a*

lot more emphasis on the relationship and partnership building upfront, to make this thing work in the long-run. We basically had to develop a relationship."

Effects of Relationships on the Scope and Scale of the Project

The project objective of treating areas outside of hazard trees has not progressed. The timeframe and size of the project were both heavily influenced by the contractor's business model. The project guarantees that the Forest Service will put up at least 1,000 acres each year. While one Forest Service representative reported being skeptical of long-term contracting based on experience with this project, most agency respondents suggest that the large scale and 10-year timeframe of the project should yield positive economic and ecological benefits.

Southwest Region

Coconino NF project. Arizona.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This is a smaller stewardship contract focused on restoring an alpine meadow habitat by removing encroaching coniferous trees, reducing wildfire risk, and restoring watershed function. The project itself does not have a collaborative group but occurs within a landscape that has a long history of collaboration. This project is viewed as a key stepping stone in a larger regional forest restoration strategy, the Four Forest Restoration Initiative (4FRI).

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

The private landowner adjacent to the project site is a conservation organization that initiated the project to promote habitat restoration and reduce wildfire risk to their property. This landowner was involved in scoping, planning, implementation, and monitoring. The relationship with the agency occurred through one-on-one communications with the agency project lead.

Larger collaborative efforts that exist within the region have established diameter limits for tree harvesting which remain controversial. This project is an instance where the restoration objective involves removing trees larger than the typical diameter limit and the project was used as a learning opportunity for all involved to identify instances where diameter limits can be relaxed. The project also served as a demonstration site for the application of designation by description, a stewardship authority that is sometimes more controversial. Both of these issues have been flash points for collaborative groups operating in Northern Arizona and elsewhere.

Field trips, demonstrations, and multi-party monitoring have all been used in this project and contribute to trust building. Given to the fact it is "*so well designed*," this case study project has been used by the broader group of regional stakeholders to test and evaluate restoration principles and science in a smaller project before transitioning to implementation at much larger scales. Environmental groups participated in the project design and this is believed to have contributed to there not being any appeals. Moreover the project is generally viewed as being very well designed in large part because it integrates science and diverse perspectives, and directly involved widely regarded restoration scientists in the design process. As one non-agency participant put it:

> The project design that the Forest Service used with stewardship contracting was integral to making a very good project…. It was a strategically key part of having this project be acceptable to the environmental community, the logging community, the wildlife community, the grassland community, all those groups that have a strategic interest in this project therein.

RELATIONSHIPS OF AGENCY AND NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

Respondents believe that the project improved relationships between the Forest Service and adjacent landowners by helping them learn to plan and implement together. Specifically, an agency respondent said:

> The [conservation group that owns land adjacent to the project site] is very involved with a lot of stuff we're doing. In fact, next week, we're working with them on a different project on trying to help prescriptions in 4FRI get implemented by doing, working with some tablets that they think are, would be beneficial for operators to have in their machinery to better meet the designation by prescription, that we have the authority to use now in 4FRI. And without the previous collaboration, I think present collaboration would've not been available.

Indeed other respondents suggest smaller projects like this one enabled a culture of collaborative work that spawned larger efforts like the Four Forest Restoration Initiative. The key factor that interviewees suggest contribute to the nature of the relationships around this project is transparent communication:

> I think they have changed a little bit, because like I said, [the Coconino NF project] was a great example of how the Forest Service interacted with others, and I would say that they've improved based on [the Coconino NF project]. They didn't need a lot of improvement on [the Coconino NF project] because it was such a well-designed project, but they took that improvement and moved it to other project areas, like 4FRI.

Some respondents suggested that the project is a success because it is a departure from the way the Forest Service used to work toward something more restoration-driven, science-informed, and collaborative in nature. One respondent noted for this type of change to occur that trust is the key factor.

Effects of Relationships on the Scope and Scale of the Project

The capacity of the contractor constrained the scale of the project since it was their first project. At the same time the scale increased by working closely with an adjacent landowner. While the scale was somewhat influenced by non-agency stakeholders, the complexity of the project "*dramatically increased*" due to non-agency involvement, fire was returned as a restoration tool, restoration of aspen was included, as was the creating of downed woody debris, and other diverse activities.

Apache-Sitgreaves NF project. Arizona.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This is a large stewardship contract included as one of the last task-orders implemented under the White Mountain Stewardship Contract, the first 10-year large-scale stewardship contracting project ever implemented. The landscape has had a collaborative group in place since the mid-1990s as an outgrowth of a process that started in 1993. This project is mostly focused on wildfire risk reduction and restoration of resilient ponderosa pine forests. The project is a fairly straightforward reduction of tree density across a large area from a density of about 300 – 500 trees per acre down to 15 – 50 trees per acre.

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

Respondents suggest that the most important consideration when working with non-agency stakeholders is to involve them early on in project development. The planning phase is again recognized as the most important phase of this project. A Forest Service respondent described how this early engagement works:

> We're already talking to them about, we have an idea. We haven't even done anything….and that general area map may change half a dozen times before we actually get down to even measuring items within the... Now I'm talking about measuring, I'm talking about burn surveys, archeological, anything. So they're brought in early on, they pretty much know what we know. And I guess maybe that's evolving, is that there's nothing we're doing that's worthy of keeping from the public's eye. There's no secret here, it's the usual. So we meet once a month and as we're working through.

Non-agency participants contributed to the work of the ID team for the NEPA analysis and also in monitoring. Agency respondents suggest that non-agency participants did impact their decision making but clarified, "*It's not like we make great changes because of public influence*," and "*It's more buy-in on what we are doing*."

RELATIONSHIPS OF AGENCY AND NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

The collaborative process began in 1993 and led to a memorandum of understanding between all of the partners involved in the restoration of this forest type in this region. This group is referred to as the Natural Resources Working Group which one respondent describes as bringing together people of divergent perspectives and expectations. Due to the long-standing nature of these relationships, respondents explained that their relationships with each other were well-established prior to the project and this did not change as a result of the project. Communication and follow through are identified as the foundations for trust. Challenges for effective agency-to-non-agency relationships were identifed as the practical difficulty of involving all the ideas that come up and how to temper those which are not feasible without damaging relationships. The largest challenge identified is the slow pace at which work on the National Forests progresses.

Forest Service representatives suggest that the most challenging aspect of engaging non-agency stakeholders is that the members of the collaborative are aging and it is not clear who is going to replace

them. This is a very established group that has moved projects forward. There are not many new voices coming to the table.

Effects of Relationships on the Scope and Scale of the Project

A Forest Service respondent described how the scale of projects and NEPA analyses have changed in this region within the last decade:

> The [Apache-Sitgreves NF project] was, as far as I can remember, the largest project or area we had done….and it's not just this one, but it's this other same kinda groups meeting with the Forest Service. At the 4FRI, they just completed a nearly 600,000-acre NEPA, and it's the same thing. Now, if that's not this group here, it's a different group on the other side of the state, but to go to a NEPA that size was unthinkable, even five years ago. And so here goes that, we're working on two local ones. The one is, on our side of the state it's 66,000 acres, but it's tied directly to the Gila National Forest in New Mexico, and with their acres added in, we're up to 200,000 acres of the NEPA here. Now, we ourselves, by ourselves, are planning another NEPA area that's 130,000 acres. I would suggest most forests in the nation are probably dealing with 30,000-acre NEPAs and I'm proud of that.

Respondents attribute a lot of this increase in scale to collaborative work that has occurred since the mid- to late-1990s. Some of the dramatic increase in the scale of project planning and environmental analysis is due to the fact that prescriptions for lower elevation ponderosa pine forests are somewhat generic and non-controversial, which has enabled a sizable scale up. Project participants believe prescriptions have gotten more complex.

San Juan NF project. Colorado.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This is a small IRTC project focused on regeneration of an older aspen stand via harvest. A secondary objective of the agency is to support two local industries that use aspen. The initial planning for the project began 6 – 7 years ago.

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

The agency completed basic outreach to local environmentalists, a national fish habitat conservation group, and local tribes but there was no collaborative involvement through regular meetings. A workshop was held to look at multiple ways to treat aspen. When asked about the most challenging aspects of involving non-agency participants in this project, an agency respondent suggested:

> I guess just, trying to figure out how to get people involved or what level of involvement is...That we're supposed to be doing. Or, I guess, to me like the whole concept of collaboration is great. But that, basically...Again, to me, means you're working together with somebody to achieve a common goal. And if you can't really ever figure out what that common goal is, how do you collaborate?....And some organizations are just kinda fundamentally opposed to parts of our agency mission and we can hear concerns and all that, but if you just knock on the same page, fundamentally how do you work together?

Some disagreement has occurred between interests around the type of regeneration practice to use; prescribed burns versus timber harvests. One agency respondent described why they felt it is important to involve multiple stakeholders:

> If you're trying to move a project forward as quickly as possible without litigation, et cetera, then you really need to have as….diverse a stakeholder process right from the get-go. So that's really important. I mean where you're seeing litigation on these things, and this is frankly where a lot of these Congressmen are missing the point here, is when....You go fast lane, push forward, and without people, without the community taking a look at it together, that's when you run into litigation....

This respondent suggests that non-agency stakeholder engagement is important for multiple reasons, mentioning reducing the chance of litigation and increasing the ability to secure funding for projects. This same respondent suggests that engagement of non-agency participants should extend beyond the federal lands to include those interests that pertain to non-federal lands as well.

RELATIONSHIPS OF AGENCY AND NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

Transparency and integration of science are viewed as important factors for involving multiple interests in decision making. As one agency respondent put it:

> If you don't have, it's not science-based, you're not working with contemporary information being enforced or changing so much, then you're out of date with it, you can't make good decisions. But if you have that good information like that's science-based and you're working in a transparent situation exchanging the information, even if you

> disagree about it, you can at least, there could be the give and the take and the compromising to find something that is agreeable for as many partners as possible.

Effects of Relationships on the Scope and Scale of the Project

This is a small project of limited scope and scale. Non-agency stakeholders got involved by helping to evaluate a few different ways of regenerating aspen, but little to no deviation from the original idea emerged. A one-day science workshop likely improved decision making and augmented what the Forest Service plans to do beyond this project but did not really change this project. Moreover, the project was not affected by the involvement of non-agency stakeholders. The agency stated that the project was going to be completed regardless of any non-agency input:

> Has it increased the size or scale of it? No, I think, we tried to do what we felt like was the right thing to do, and I don't know that this process, or using stewardship made us really do anything different. It was just a different way of getting done what we thought we should be trying to get done.

Southeast Region

Sumter NF project. South Carolina.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This is a small IRTC focused on harvesting a Loblolly pine plantation and using the receipts retained to restore hardwood forests by reducing competition with non-native species. The project has been ongoing for four years. An additional objective has been to try to reintroduce American chestnut into some of the project areas, which is being evaluated by the Forest Service Southern Research Station in partnership with a non-profit interested in restoring chestnuts.

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

The two primary non-agency stakeholders included timber purchasers and service contractors (tree planting and herbicide work). Secondary stakeholders included two non-profit conservation groups. The agency respondent mentioned a state agency as providing cost-sharing, labor, and equipment.

A Forest Service respondent suggests the most important stage of involvement for individuals outside the agency is helping craft proposed activities, to complete implementation, and "*on the back end is helping with monitoring, the Forest Service struggles in its budget, you know having enough of a budget to do adequate monitoring. Having these folks help this out with any cost-sharing or labor is a real help."*

RELATIONSHIPS OF AGENCY AND NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

Most of the relationships are one-on-one communications or communications through the NEPA process. The Forest Service respondent suggests that the involvement of a national conservation group helped with decision making by augmenting technical understanding to make the project more "*ecologically sound*." The agency also suggested of the timber purchasers, that:

> Where they come into play is kind of a reality check for us on how practical are the activities that we're proposing, can someone come in and do this in an economical way, or is it something that will be just so cost prohibitive that no one's going to touch it? They've been real helpful with helping us package the project in such a way that still meets our land management objective but it is also economical.

The non-profit group working to restore chestnut has worked with the Southern Research Station and the field to consider reintroducing American chestnut in the project's restoration activities. Their involvement has been helpful in directing the agency to not plant the species at this time. Regarding non-agency involvement, a Forest Service respondent said, "*it can be greater, and it's no fault of theirs. We haven't reached out enough yet I don't think and that's because, as short-handed as we are we are kind of just putting out whatever fire* [metaphorical] *is the biggest.*"

When asked whether relationships changed as a result of non-agency participation in stewardship contracting projects, the Forest Service respondent offered:

> Yes I do…when I first got here in 2011, I transferred from out West, we had done on this district what I will call mainly conventional or traditional types of timber sales to implement project objectives where it wasn't stewardship and at that time the purchasers were like, 'OK here is my contract, I go in, I cut, and I pay you,' that kind of a thing. Now they are a lot more, also on the service contracts as well, they are paying a lot more attention on what we're trying to do from a silviculture standpoint, and ecological standpoint, we're getting more buy in from them on you know wanting to see the project succeed, because you know they will come to us and say, well, you know 'we aren't sure this is going to work, but how about like this, in terms of what you are trying to do,' and they are paying attention more to the big picture of what we are trying to do.

This speaks to the "end-results" focus of stewardship contracting. In terms of the relationship with the national non-profit conservation organization, the agency respondent suggests, "*just having a relationship there and some regular communication because in the past, at least here on this district, it was really just doing the Forest Service thing and we weren't really connected with* [the conservation group]."

Overall, the quality of relationships is dependent on having all participants (agency and non-agency) more engaged in projects. On the economic side, the agency respondent thinks it helps smaller contractors to offer timber through stewardship contracts as opposed to timber sale contracts, presumably because of competition issues.

EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIPS ON THE SCOPE AND SCALE OF THE PROJECT

For this project the size and complexity was not impacted by non-agency stakeholder involvement.

Florida NF project. Florida.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

According to the Forest Service the objective of this large stewardship agreement is to "*increase the health of the longleaf pine ecosystem and to accelerate restoration*," within a multi-ownership landscape. The agreement holder described their objectives as:

> We were interested in the project because, actually we are supporting the Forest Service in accelerating restoration at all of our National Forests and that's what this project does. It accelerates the rate of removal of slash pine plantations and then in turn restoration to longleaf pine woodland that has historically occurred on site. So, we're very supportive of assisting the Forest Service in any way possible to accelerate the progression towards those ecosystem restoration goals.

Activities include removal of slash pine plantations and restoration of longleaf stands.

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

The agreement holder is a national wildlife conservation group which has established a master agreement with Region 8. The project involves numerous regional and national non-profit wildlife conservation and environmental advocacy groups, in addition to local, state, and other federal agencies.

Most non-agency involvement came through an ongoing collaborative process of agencies and groups focused on restoring habitats within the southeast Georgia and northeast Florida landscape. This group focused on prioritization of projects, implementation, and leveraging financial and technical resources. The agreement holder brought their technical expertise and financial resources to bear, and enlisted the services of a well-known and experienced subcontractor to work with the Region and the Forest on the agreement.

The agreement holder's experience and expertise is recognized by the Forest Service as critical to making the project happen, as is the backing of the larger regional landscape-level collaborative. The agreement holder also recognizes that, "*we have some flexibility that the Forest Service just doesn't have.*"

An innovative part of this project involves using a local Job Corp program to train a restoration workforce in prescribed fire techniques. A respondent from a Job Corp program involved emphasized the social objectives of the project:

> I think the objectives of the project was to give opportunity to young men and women who may not have had much knowledge or maybe did not know of the opportunity with the Forestry Department, [a national conservation group]. And it was utilized to recruit, I would say, minorities and women to give them an opportunity of employment in the Forestry Department. I think the objective for the Forestry Department was two-fold. I believe that was their initial objective. I think, personally, was to actually assess if these young men and women could do the job, and perform to their standards. And I was just gotten feedback from the employees of Forestry Department, these young men and women exceeded their expectation.

Relationships of Agency and Non-agency Stakeholders

The Forest Service is a consistent participant in the regional collaborative focused on longleaf pine restoration. Through this the agency has developed consistent and extensive personal relationships with non-agency stakeholders. Communications thus take place as part of formal networks and meetings and, informally, as person-to-person communications. Several non-agency respondents spoke very highly of the Forest Service in these interviews.

Effects of Relationships on the Scope and Scale of the Project

This is a highly integrated project with at least 12 different service items and more than $2 million in receipts and goods for services activities that are largely defined through collaborative work. As one Forest Service respondent expressed, the availability of stewardship receipts and the assistance from the partner make project success highly likely.

The agreement holder believes that the involvement of non-agency stakeholders increased the pace and scale of restoration in this region. Specifically, they suggest:

> We are seeing a raise of longleaf and prescribed restoration and the return of prescribed fire to the landscape that is much more rapid than we have seen before, and that's in line with our longleaf pine goals for the region. So, the increase rate of restoration is one of our primary goals. And the other thing that we're very happy to see is... It's an important value for the agreement holder. It's an important value and goal for the Forest Service to do a better job of engaging in a meaningful way underserved communities that live in and around National Forests. So, the shared goal [the agreement holder] and the Forest Service have is that we both struggle to do an adequate job of... And I think what we found in this project through our partnership with Job Corp is, yeah we found a really neat way to do that, but do it in a way that's not outside of our general scope of work. We found a way to create a meaningful engagement that also gets the restoration down on the ground. And that's a really unique sort of win-win for both of us.

Moreover, the agreement holder reports that they are in the process of replicating the approach taken in this project area into other parts of the southeastern US.

George Washington-Jefferson NF project. Virginia.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This is a small agreement that was proposed and signed in 2009 - 2010. A national wildlife conservation organization is the agreement holder but other non-profit wildlife management organizations with less funding capacity had pushed for the project as much as a decade prior. Project objectives include timber harvesting to create early successional habitats for ground nesting birds, management of pine savannah habitats, controlled burns, tree plantings and riparian plantings, wetlands and hydrologic restoration, and invasive vegetation management. A non-agency respondent described the habitat work:

> The wildlife habitat work was a pretty broad spectrum. One aspect of it was the restoration of a savanna; another aspect was the addition of wetland-tolerant shrubs to the wetland hydrology restoration, and I don't think I mentioned it, but the inclusion of some desirable shrubs and small trees in the cutover areas for ruffed grouse, to benefit ruffed grouse particularly. Although deer and other species will certainly get their fair share of benefit out of it too, plus lord knows how many fruit-eating birds.

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

In this project it was the non-agency participants who brought the project idea forward to the agency as they saw great restoration potential in the site. The central entity was a regional wildlife conservation group that was responsible for bringing the parties together. Other partners included state agencies and two national wildlife conservation groups, one of which was involved early on and one that came in later but brought more resources to the project.

According to a non-agency respondent, non-agency participants were involved to "*provide a separate set of eyes*" and "*a different way of thinking*." These non-agency participants came up with the project ideas and participated in scoping, planning, implementation, and monitoring. Most of the entities involved provided their technical expertise or funding to complete the diversity of habitat improvements.

RELATIONSHIPS OF AGENCY AND NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

Non-agency participants advanced the project. A state agency pushed the Forest Service to be accountable to the timelines and activities envisioned. "*The project takes pushing. It pushes the Forest Service out of their box a little we tried to push them on and at times held their feet to the fire in terms of deadlines and getting some things done….We are getting some things done that would have taken them longer or been non-existent*." (State agency representative)

"*On this particular project, I would say yes in that in this particular instance, relations might be a little more strained. As I said, there's a little bit of frustration on our part that more isn't getting done quicker*," said one of the non-agency stakeholders because of the pace at which the Forest Service worked. Overall, respondents feel that the project resulted in improved communications between the Forest Service and the various non-agency stakeholders and this led to strengthened relationships. The only negative thing reported is that the project took a very long time to develop.

Effects of Relationships on the Scope and Scale of the Project

The involvement of non-agency stakeholders is believed to have increased the scale and complexity of this project. According to the Forest Service representative, it was one of the non-agency groups that "*developed the heart of the project*," with others broadening the scope. The agency expressed that they "*wouldn't be doing anything*" if it wasn't for the proposal being brought to them and that as more groups came to the table the project got bigger. Non-agency participants agreed with this sentiment suggesting they made the project larger and with an integrated set of activities.

Northeast Region

Chequamegon-Nicolet NF project. Wisconsin.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The project is designed to be a straightforward demonstration of how a stewardship project could work in a given local context. Objectives cited include helping get National Forest timber on the market, increasing age class diversity, improving wildlife habitat, recreation access, and water quality, and strengthening partnerships with local towns. When describing the project an agency representative said:

> Locally, we've got a political movement to get more timber harvested out of the National Forest, and to get more work done locally out on the Forest. So, part of it is to produce volume for the local economy. Part of it is to trade the value of that to get work done across the Forest....Couple of the service items on this are to mark about....a 1,000 acres of timber…. And this would be getting additional timber volume treated and prepped, not using appropriated monies. So, in other words, that's allowing us to get a little bit more timber volume-prepared than we ordinarily would have….And there's quite a few service items, both inside of the timber sale area, and then in other places around the district that are getting done that probably ordinarily wouldn't get done.

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

There has been a push by the forest industry in Wisconsin to make more National Forest timber available. A Forest Service respondent described this movement saying, "*There's a group….called Federal Forest Sustainability Committee and they're a group of local and regional people that are concerned about the level of harvest in National Forests. We were kinda in communication with them before and during the process, just responding to....some of the things that they've been coming to us with*."

One of the strategies industry has been advancing is the use of stewardship contracting. In doing so, a state economic development agency provided a grant as match for a stewardship agreement. The goal of the state economic development agency is to "*create the capacity to do stewardship projects on the National Forest*." The agreement holder is advised by an advisory group that "*is an industry-like group*" composed of individuals from the early-involved wildlife conservation group, the state economic development agency, a county government forestry group, and the Federal Forest Sustainability Committee. The Forest Supervisor also participated in this group. A master stewardship agreement with the Regional Office was negotiated by the agreement holder, a regional economic development non-profit, and set about getting a project developed under this agreement.

In creating this project the Forest Service packaged a timber sale with some of the habitat work that a national conservation group involved early on had been advancing for quite some time. This group has a cooperative management area on the Forest and had worked on several projects across the Forest investing significant non-federal resources. This group had pushed for aspects of this project for a long time with little support from the Forest Service and was dismayed when the Forest announced that there would be an agreement but not with them.

RELATIONSHIPS OF AGENCY AND NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

The state economic development agency reports improved decision making about the project due to the fact that the project would not have happened without funding they provided and consider themselves involved in implementation because of this. The corporation suggests that the type of involvement that is the most important is promoting awareness of what stewardship contracting is and what it can do. This project was not so much about consensus building as it was interested stakeholders developing a strategy to advance objectives they cared about.

The state economic development agency reports that relationships between the agency and non-agency stakeholders grew from a point of non-existence to trust and mutual respect because the agency was not really engaged with this group prior to this project. Clear paths of communication (e.g. one-on-one relationships between individuals or a group) promote the building of such trusted relationships and commonality in objectives. Non-agency stakeholders suggested that the project timeline would shorten if the Forest Service could move more quickly in getting revenue from timber.

In this project the agency temporarily soured a relationship with a long-standing partner by choosing to pursue an agreement with a new partner. An agency respondent expressed that while the agency had a willing partner in the conservation group, the Forest's initial lack of knowledge about stewardship agreements or willingness to move forward prevented this partnership from culminating in an agreement.

Also, this existing partner was more interested in wildlife habitat than timber extraction. A newly created partner brought money to the table and a focus on economic development through timber harvesting. This aligned with agency goals to produce timber and with those of the Federal Forest Sustainability Committee which was linked to a push by Congress to produce more timber off the Chequamegon-Nicolet NF.

> So now we have developed a working relationship with the [the new entity]. We're implementing this first agreement, and we are moving forward with another stewardship agreement with them on another project, they're continuing to express a desire to be a willing partner in the implementation of stewardship projects. So that's changed significantly. (Forest Service representative)

EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIPS ON THE SCOPE AND SCALE OF THE PROJECT

According to all respondents the project would not have happened without non-agency stakeholders pushing for it in order to address economic and ecological objectives.

Mark Twain NF Project. Missouri.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This small IRTC is focused on restoring a glade habitat by removing cedar trees encroaching on the area. The project was six years in development. The agency initially considered a larger project and then broke it into smaller projects to meet the needs of industry.

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

Primary non-agency stakeholders include sawmills in the area that use cedar trees. They helped mostly with planning and implementation, identifying ways to make the project economically viable. Secondary stakeholders include two national conservation groups, and the Central Hardwoods Joint Venture which were active in the planning phase by providing input and recommendations.

An agency respondent remarked that this was the first time that they had worked with non-agency participants to actively plan project design, specifically the mix of timber and service work items to package the project in a way that would be attractive to mills. The agency engaged local forest workers for input on developing a feasible project.

RELATIONSHIPS OF AGENCY AND NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

This was the first time that the agency had actively engaged non-agency stakeholders in project design. Agency respondents expressed that communicating effectively up front about the details of the project and stewardship contracting authorities was a challenge, especially explaining all of the processes and rules of the Forest Service. The agency also expressed that the project resulted in a net gain for the Forest Service, that is "getting paid instead of paying" to get this type of work done.

EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIPS ON THE SCOPE AND SCALE OF THE PROJECT

The involvement of the mills helped the agency right size the project, breaking up what was initially one larger project area into several smaller projects. The end result was success for the contractors and a successful project overall for the agency.

Finger Lakes NF project. New York.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This is a small agreement between a farmer and the Forest Service focused on maintaining grassland bird habitat. The project is a unique use of the goods for services authority that involves a farmer receiving access to mow a series of fields on the National Forest to control woody and herbaceous plants. In exchange, the farmer keeps the hay for forage. The agreement and relationship is very simple. The project has existed for around 5 years.

INVOLVEMENT OF NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

In this project, the agreement holder is the only non-agency participant. The farmer visits the district office regularly to check in. The farmer feels that he is able to tell the agency exactly what he thinks "*without them getting annoyed.*"

RELATIONSHIPS OF AGENCY AND NON-AGENCY STAKEHOLDERS

Agency respondents and the agreement holder report having common values about promoting grassland nesting bird habitat through active management via mowing. The Forest Service respondent suggested:

> He comes to the office, he checks on things, asks questions about things, and we obviously chat in the springtime prior to where we do... We have grassland burn surveys that we require ourselves to do in these locations and all these grasslands prior to any kind of mechanical or chemical or any kind of treatment for that matter in the spring and summer months. So, just more general conversation between myself and the district ranger and [the farmer]….I think it's just the type of rapport that we have with him that builds the relationship, for sure. Just that rapport started on knowing the culture in the area and just being good members of the community before Forest Service season.

EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIPS ON THE SCOPE AND SCALE OF THE PROJECT

There has been no effect on the scope and scale of the project.

APPENDIX B: 2015 CASE STUDIES. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE.

Interview Questions

First we would like to ask you a few background questions about your experience with stewardship contracting:

1. How many SC projects have you been a part of?
2. What is your role in THIS project?
3. How long have you been involved with this project?
4. Would you consider yourself "local" to the project area?

1. From your perspective, what are the project objectives and anticipated outcomes of this project?

2. In the next group of questions I want to ask are about who participated in (name specific project) and how they participated.

2.a. Who are the primary (e.g. people who have participated the most) nonagency stakeholders in the project (ask agency people and get contact information; then read that list to non-agency folks and ask if there is anyone they would add; be sure to get additional contact information.) Are there other stakeholders who have participated at some point? If yes, ask who and how they participated.

2b. For each interviewee, list primary nonagency folks in the table below to keep track of who the primary nonagency stakeholders are and to organize their responses.

Then for each primary nonagency stakeholder ask about their involvement in project stages.

If the interviewee says that a person or group participated in a phase, ask them to explain how or what they actually did

Example: You listed Tribal Nation X as a nonagency participant in the project. What project stages/parts of the project were they involved in…

How did Tribal nation X participate in scoping? What exactly did they do?

The following list of example nonagency roles is here to help you probe rather than walk through every stage for every nonagency stakeholder:

- Conceiving of the project idea/approaching the agency with the idea
- Project planning
- NEPA scoping (Example probes: Did the agency do a schedule of proposed activities notification? Were there public meetings?, field tours?)
- Project implementation
- Project monitoring

2.c. For each primary nonagency stakeholder, do you think their participation:

- Resulted in improved decision making about the project? Please explain why ….
- Resulted in getting the project implemented on the ground? Please explain why….

2.d. You listed several parts of (name SC project), that nonagency stakeholders were involved in. like (list a few from 1b above)……

- Which of these kinds on involvement that you listed, do you believe are most important for engagement of nonagency stakeholders?
- You said that you believe that (example : monitoring) is most important? Are you satisfied with the level of involvement of nonagency stakeholders in this project in (monitoring)? Please explain why or why not.

3. The next set of questions are about relationships and communication between the Forest Service and nonagency stakeholders.

3.a. Do you think relationships between (list primary nonagency stakeholders) and the Forest Service have changed as a result of their participation (nonagency stakeholder) in this SC project?

If yes, please explain what factors led to this change and give examples.

Probe: If they DON'T mention communication, ask: Specifically, has this project changed the way the Forest Service communicates with stakeholder X? Explain.

3bb. Overall, based on your experiences with stewardship contracting what things do you think contribute to the quality of the relationships between (stakeholder X, Y, Z) and the Forest Service either positively or negatively?

4. **a.** Has the involvement of nonagency stakeholders influenced the size/ scale of this project? Please explain.

b. Has the involvement of nonagency stakeholders influenced the complexity/scope of this project? Please explain.

5. What do you think is most challenging about non-agency stakeholder participation in the stewardship contracting projects? Please6explain…examples?

6. In your view, is/was (name specific SC project) a success? Explain why or why not.

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