



Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Forest Service Equity Action Plan

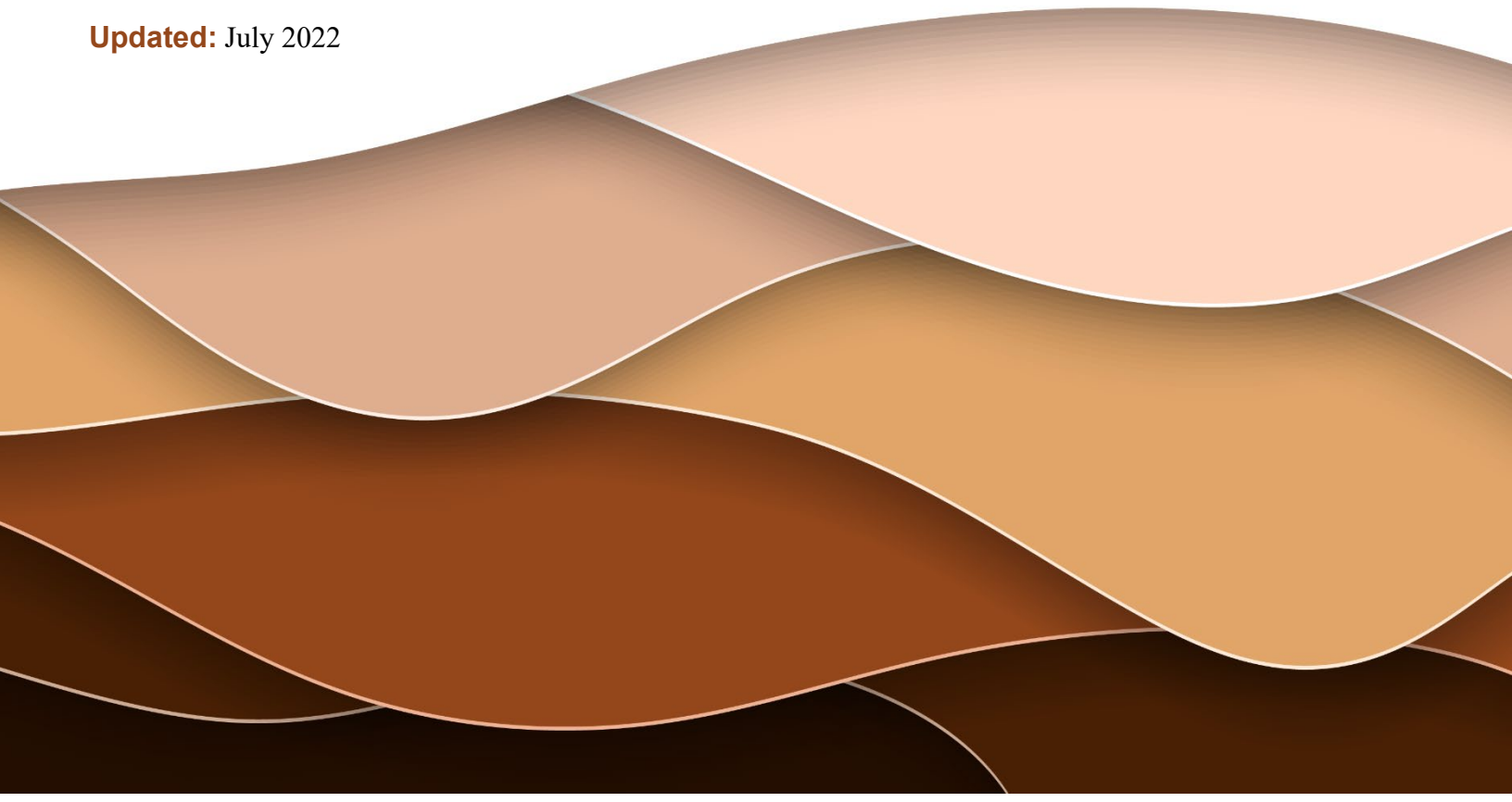
Mission Area: Natural Resources and Environment

Equity Action Plan Leads:

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Executive Summary

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment (NRE), Forest Service Equity Action Plan (hereinafter referred to as “Forest Service Equity Action Plan”) represents a broad set of high-leverage actions with potential for creating high impact and enduring systemic change that benefit employees, Tribes, partners, and the public. Delivering the Forest Service’s mission in a purposefully equitable manner requires changing traditional perspectives, processes, actions, and performance measures to ensure the full suite of benefits, outcomes, and opportunities to participate are made available to all, especially in rural and urban places that have been marginalized or overlooked.

Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, requires the head of each agency to prepare a plan for addressing any barriers to full and equal participation in programs, services, procurement, contracting, and other funding opportunities. In this plan, the Forest Service commits to assessing barriers and identifying equity outcomes for underserved communities by focusing on the following 10 actions: increasing Tribal trust responsibilities and participation in Forest Service activities that honor Tribal rights and interests; increasing Tribal and stakeholder engagement and relationship building and equity-centered communications; achieving a representative and inclusive workforce; embedding equity in employee onboarding processes; providing economic opportunities through contracting and procurement; providing economic opportunities through grants and agreements; reducing wildfire risk to Tribes and underserved communities; expanding cooperative and state forestry assistance programs to underserved communities; expanding urban forestry benefits to underserved communities; and increasing access to recreation and outdoor experiences for underserved communities.

Information management, data needs assessment, performance management, monitoring, and mapping actions are also in development, along with action items for institutionalizing internal learning opportunities. The Forest Service performs some of its best work with and through others. The foundation for the agency’s success depends on having a high-performing, representative, and service-focused workforce. The agency’s success in equitable mission delivery depends on employees who mirror the people they serve, build community, and share stewardship with all citizens.

Forest Service Equity Actions

Community Service to All

1. **Position Agency and Tribes for Success by Expanding Tribal Costewardship**—Engage Tribes and line officers, identify barriers and opportunities, and conduct other activities focused on achieving success in a learning environment, with an initial focus on costewardship and Forest Service Tribal authorities such as the Tribal Forest Protection Act and others.
2. **Enhance Engagement and Partnerships with Tribes and Underserved Communities through Culturally Relevant Strategies**—Center the voices, diverse needs, and unique perspectives of Tribes and underserved community stakeholders and create shared leadership in achieving enduring change for equitable mission delivery.
3. **Achieve a Representative, Inclusive, and Thriving Forest Service Workforce**—Integrate and prioritize hiring authorities under the Resource Assistant, Job Corps, Public Land Corps, and Tribal Youth Conservation Programs, which will significantly increase successful placements of underrepresented employees to meet near- and long-term hiring needs.
4. **Institutionalize the Onboarding Experience for New Employees**—Implement an onboarding program that celebrates diversity, meets inclusion objectives for a growing workforce and the changing work environment, and orients new employees to Forest Service values around equitable mission delivery and Tribal trust responsibilities.

Economic Prosperity

5. **Increase Equity in Opportunities for Small and Disadvantaged Businesses**—Initiate a pilot program to provide further support to small and disadvantaged businesses by increasing capacity in procurement zones, building deeper relationships with Tribes and local small and disadvantaged businesses, and demonstrating a strong commitment to recurring national and local outreach event efforts.
6. **Increase Equity in Agreements**—Expand the pool of partners to include more Tribes and diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) organizations; develop new outreach strategies; launch a working group to address issues that affect implementation and obstacles to establishing partnerships; promote Tribal relations and reduce barriers to Tribal participation; and establish an access storefront to reduce barriers to access by DEIA organizations.

Health and Resiliency

7. **Reduce Wildfire Risk to Tribal, Underserved, and Socially Vulnerable Communities**—Address impacts to Tribal, underserved, and socially vulnerable communities in relative proximity to National Forest System lands by integrating data, information, and maps into planning and decision-making processes and tools. This action will ensure demographic variables are understood, considered, and addressed during tradeoff analysis and decision-making. Integrate processes into the Wildfire Crisis Strategy effort to reduce the severity and frequency of wildland fires; protect lives,

homes, and communities; achieve equity outcomes; and improve the health and resilience of our Nation's forests.

8. **Expand Cooperative Forestry Benefits to Underserved Communities**—Use the Landscape Scale Restoration Program to integrate equity into proposal evaluation and guidance for competitive processes by prioritizing discretionary points for underserved communities and enhancing outreach to newly eligible Tribal and other applicants to attract proposals from rural communities.
9. **Expand Urban Forestry Benefits to Underserved Communities**—Issue requests for proposals while highlighting equity considerations; develop explicit criteria for requests for proposals and evaluation guidance to prioritize underserved communities; enhance outreach to prospective applicants to attract proposals from Tribes and high-need urban communities; and work toward funding 40 percent of projects in underserved communities and with Tribes.
10. **Promote Access to Recreation and Outdoor Experiences within Communities of Color and Socially Vulnerable Populations**—Promote research to understand who visitors are; how they recreate; who is not visiting; barriers to accessing recreation opportunities; economic, community, and personal benefits of recreation opportunities; and preferences regarding and satisfaction with recreation opportunities. Develop research-based strategies to increase visitation by communities of color. Promote use of the Native American Tourism and Improving Visitor Experience Act in support of Tribal culture and tourism enterprise.