



Accelerating Restoration Implementation Workshop

November 29–30, 2017

Phoenix, Arizona

Content

The United States Forest Service (USFS) is under tremendous pressure to increase the pace and scale of forest restoration. Declining budgets and the urgent need for action requires that processes and operations are time and cost efficient. Across the USFS, discussions are underway to improve National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) efficiency. Equally important is decreasing the time and effort it takes to implement treatments from a signed record of decision to the processing gate. Discussions are also underway to improve implementation efficiency, including the 2013 Task Force Report on Sale Prep and Cruising Costs in 2013, the 2015 update on that report, and the ongoing Washington Office Modernization Team.

The Four Forest Restoration Initiative (4FRI) has more than 500,000 acres approved by NEPA and ready for implementation. It provides a tremendous opportunity to identify, apply, and evaluate innovative approaches to accelerating restoration.

Workshop

On November 29 and 30, 2017, USFS staff representing the 4FRI team, the 4FRI forests, Region 3, and the Washington Office Modernization Team assembled in Phoenix, Arizona to consider opportunities for innovation that can be tested to improve efficiency and effectiveness during 4FRI implementation. Staff were intentionally chosen to be diverse and included individuals from contracting, grants, and agreements, forest supervisors, and other disciplines associated with implementation. In addition, staff from The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Campbell Global, and NewLife Forest Products were present to provide industry perspectives on implementation issues. The meeting was coordinated and facilitated by the Ecological Restoration Institute (ERI) at Northern Arizona University (NAU).

The **goals** for the workshop were to:

1. Understand current efforts to improve efficiency for projects designed to remove low value wood and biomass (Washington Office Modernization Team and the 2013 and 2015 Task Force Reports);
2. Identify specific business and implementation practices that should be changed to accelerate implementation efficiency and effectiveness;
3. Identify solutions that are implementable and testable as a part of the 4FRI project; and,
4. Identify USFS staff who will move identified solutions forward.

Summary of Issues

Prior to the meeting, workshop participants received a summary table of possible innovative actions. These items were developed using multiple sources including: 1) Preliminary information emerging from the Washington Office Modernization Team; 2) The 2013 and 2015 Task Force Report on the Costs of Sale Preparation and Cruising; 3) Opportunities for innovation identified by the 4FRI USFS Team and the 4FRI Stakeholder Industry Work Group; 4) Lessons learned by TNC during the development of their Stewardship Agreement with the USFS; and, 5) A time and efficiency analysis done by an Experience Matters Fellow currently advising TNC.

In addition to identifying innovative actions, the group discussed why each action is important, what needs to change in order for the action to occur, and what efficiencies could be gained by implementing the new approaches. Participants acknowledged that it would be impossible to accelerate the pace and scale of restoration using current approaches to implementation. Individuals were then assigned to create and/or lead Action Item Teams. Innovations were developed under the categories of Sale Preparation, Industry Operations, Alignment of Timber Contracts/AQM Contracts and Agreements, Appraisal Process Clarity/Definition of Products, Technology, and Surveys. Examples of some of the innovative actions include using more design by prescription (DxP), cruising with LiDAR, and engaging representatives from grants, agreements and contracting at the beginning of treatment planning. Many of the innovations can be implemented without changes in the Forest Service Manual or Handbook but are not commonly used. The role of USFS culture and risk-taking was highlighted as important to acknowledge and address if innovation is to occur.

Next Steps

The group committed to the following next steps:

1. A national webinar on December 5 and 13 on the Washington Office Modernization Effort presented the outcomes from the workshop.
2. The ERI will send out a draft report from the workshop for feedback on December 15.
3. An executive summary of the meeting will be completed and shared with the 4FRI Stakeholder Group, USFS employees, and others on December 15.
4. The Action Item Teams will define metrics for each action item, determine how to document change, and define measures of success, all of which will be action specific.
 - a. The Action Item Teams will meet and determine how to operate, take action, and determine what constitutes success (mid-January 2018).
5. The workshop participants will provide feedback on the workshop draft report by January 15 and the ERI will complete the final report (end of January 2018).
6. The ERI will reconvene the group to assess progress (March–April 2018).
7. The USFS will share the workshop report/outcomes with 4FRI Industry Roundtable (Spring 2018).

Future Involvement

USFS staff at the local, regional, and Washington Office levels and partners have expressed interest in this project and would like to be informed of progress and provide feedback. Once the workshop report is complete, additional outreach will occur to broaden the conversation.

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