

Stewardship & the U.S. Forest Service

WHAT IS THE STEWARDSHIP AUTHORITY?

Congress created the stewardship program to give the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) the authority “to perform services to achieve land management goals for the national forests and the public lands that meet local and rural community needs.” The seven land management goals include:

- road and trail maintenance or obliteration to restore or maintain water quality;
- soil productivity, habitat for wildlife and fisheries, or other resource values;
- setting of prescribed fires to improve the composition, structure, condition, and health of stands or to improve wildlife habitat;
- removing vegetation or other activities to promote healthy forest stands, reduce fire hazards, or achieve other land management objectives;
- watershed restoration and maintenance;
- restoration and maintenance of wildlife and fish habitat; and
- control of noxious and exotic weeds and reestablishing native plant species.

WHEN WAS THE STEWARDSHIP AUTHORITY DEVELOPED?



HOW IS THE STEWARDSHIP AUTHORITY IMPLEMENTED?

The USFS or BLM can award both stewardship contracts and stewardship agreements. *This overview describes the process and details within the U.S. Forest Service.*

HOW ARE STEWARDSHIP CONTRACTS DIFFERENT FROM TIMBER SALE CONTRACTS?

First, all stewardship contracts and agreements include both forest product removal and service work items. Stewardship work is also awarded on a “best value” basis, and excess funds remain on the forest as “retained receipts,” whereas timber contracts go to the highest bidder and excess funds are returned to the U.S. Treasury or collected in trust funds.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “BEST VALUE?”

Best value is the basis for evaluating all proposals for stewardship contracts based on price criteria *and* non-price criteria. Non-price criteria may include, but are not limited to, past

performance, work quality, experience, and benefits to the local community. Some criteria are unique to the Forest Service. For example, Forest Service stewardship agreements also take into account mutual benefit/mutual interest.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “RETAINED RECEIPTS?”

Stewardship contracts and agreements involve trading goods (usually timber) for services (stewardship work). When goods and services are traded, receipts or credits are generated. If a contractor is awarded a stewardship contract and builds two miles of new roads, he will receive credit for the work. The contractor can then be reimbursed for the work by removing timber equal in value to the credit he received and then selling the timber to a mill. Alternatively, if a contractor removes timber from a forest as part of a stewardship contract, he will then be responsible for performing stewardship work equal to the value of the