



## FEDERAL FOREST RESOURCE COALITION

# Policy Position Stewardship Contracting Reauthorization

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### **Background**

Stewardship contracting was first authorized as a pilot program in 1999. In 2003, the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) were granted 10-years authority to enter into Stewardship Contracts or Agreements. The Agriculture Act of 2014 reauthorized the authority permanently, and provided fire liability limitations for all Stewardship Contracts.

Stewardship Contracting allows the Forest Service and BLM to enter into a variety of different contracts, which allow them to trade goods (usually timber or biomass) for services (which can cover a variety of land management practices, including habitat improvement, fish passage, and other activities which would otherwise have to be obtained through service contracts). Stewardship Contracting has proven an effective, and increasingly important, mechanism to help federal land management agencies achieve land management goals. Further, in many regions, timber volumes produced through Stewardship Contracts make up a significant percentage of the Forest Service's annual sale program.

Authority for Stewardship Contracting expires on September 30, 2013.

### **FFRC Policy Recommendations**

FFRC supports the use of Stewardship Contracting as one means to accomplish forest management objectives. Although the 2014 Farm Bill provided permanent authority for these contracts, FFRC supports additional reforms to help improve its flexibility and effectiveness. It is important to recognize that Stewardship Contracting is one tool for achieving land management goals; in many cases, the same land management results can be – and are currently being – achieved with traditional timber sale contracts.

The reforms suggested below will help the Forest Service and BLM achieve greater program efficiency in the use of Stewardship Contracts, while ensuring local support for the projects performed using this important tool. They will also help attract a broader variety of potential partners who want to support and participate in Stewardship Contracting projects.

- Provide the Forest Service and BLM with the discretion to chose whether to use “best value” selection criteria.

- Provide the Forest Service and BLM with greater discretion to select personnel responsible for awarding and administering Stewardship contracts and agreements.
- Make retention of existing wood products infrastructure a co-equal objective with other goals of Stewardship contracts and agreements.
- 25% of the timber bid value in Stewardship contracts or agreements should be paid to the County where the project is being performed.
- Provide clarification that the Forest Service is not required to set aside funding to cover the potential costs of canceling Stewardship contracts or agreements.