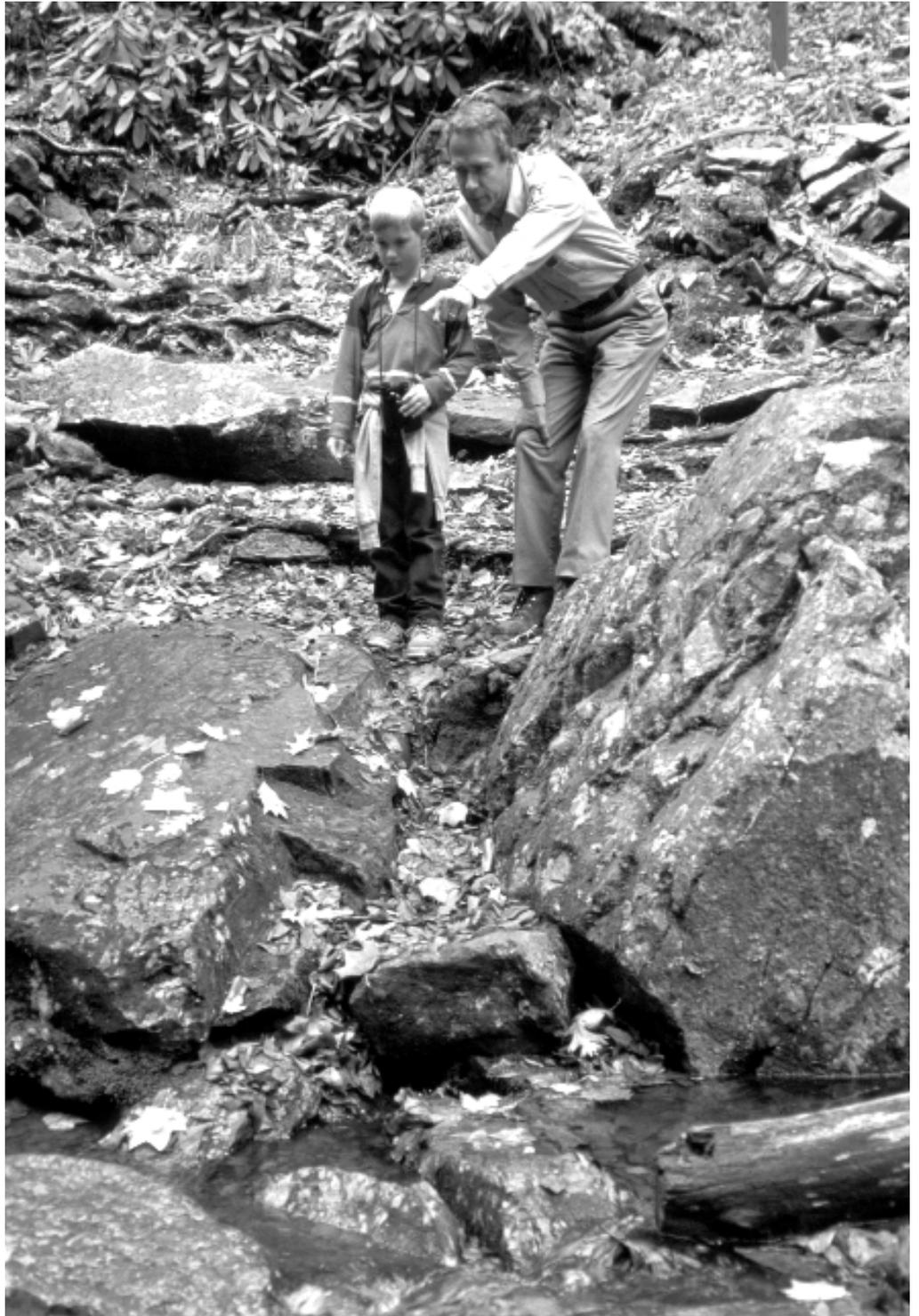


Appendix E—Performance Information



Performance Information

Introduction

Based on the goals and objectives of the *USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan (2000 Revision)*, the Annual Performance Plan for fiscal year (FY) 2002 committed the USDA Forest Service to delivering a range of natural resource-based benefits to the American people. The USDA Forest Service's strategic goals outlined in the 2000 Revision are:

Goal 1. Ecosystem Health

Goal 2. Multiple Benefits to People

Goal 3. Science and Technical Assistance

Goal 4. Effective Public Service

The *USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan*, Annual Performance Plan, and budget each play an important role in performance management. The USDA Forest Service budget provides a framework for meeting the goals by describing the actual "on-the-ground" work that needs to be done. In FY 2001, the USDA Forest Service defined a set of corporate-wide activities that will better define on-the-ground work. These activities were linked to individual appropriations, but also to specific strategic objectives. For each strategic objective, agency leadership and program staffs developed annual performance goals to attain the long-term goal in the strategic plan. The performance data in this report is measured against the goals established in the Annual Performance Plan for FY 2002.

The USDA Forest Service put a new system in place for field-based reporting starting with the FY 2001 end-of-year accomplishment reports. Individual forests enter data into spreadsheets and provide reasons if performance data is outside of a +/- 5 percent range of the targets. Individual forest data is consolidated into a national database for regional and national review, validation, and analysis. This system is intended to incorporate a USDA Office of Inspector General (OIG) recommendation (from report 08-001-0001-HQ June 2000) for implementing reasonableness checks into the reporting process.

To eliminate the need for duplicate documents, and further enhance the relationship between budget and accomplishments, the FY 2003 USDA Forest Service Budget Justification will also serve as the FY 2003 Annual Performance Plan. The USDA Forest Service continues to work on improving the quality of the data that measures its work activities.

The following pages provide narratives of each annual performance goal for FY 2002.

**Strategic Goal 1.
Ecosystem Health**

Strategic Objective 1a: Improve and protect watershed conditions to provide the water quality and quantity and soil productivity necessary to support ecological functions and intended beneficial water uses.

Annual Performance Goals and Associated Measures:

(1) Priority watersheds are maintained or improved to fully functioning hydrologic condition (water quality, flow, timing) and soil productivity to protect beneficial uses and meet water quality requirements.

Measure: Percent of 5th Level Hydrologic Unit Codes (HUCs)* in satisfactory condition.

(2) Communities of interest and place are actively engaged in multijurisdictional watershed management.

Measure: Percent of watersheds with community-based stewardship plans in place and implemented.

* 5th Level HUCs are defined as watersheds in a river basin, usually between 40,000-250,000 acres in size.

<i>Activities and Outputs</i>	<i>Data Source</i>	<i>FY 1999 Actual</i>	<i>FY 2000 Actual</i>	<i>FY 2001 Actual</i>	<i>FY 2002 Revised Target</i>	<i>FY 2002 Actual</i>
Maintain and improve watershed conditions Acres improved	MAR ^a	35,562	29,899	23,946	21,256	Not Verified ^b
Manage environmental compliance and protection/abandoned mine lands—Activities completed	Program Staffs	N/A ^c	52	110	23 ^d	43 ^d
Manage grazing allotments Thousands of allotment acres administered to 100% of standard	Program Staffs	NR ^e	45,226	44,010	21,017	21,017
Decommission classified and unclassified roads Miles decommissioned	RAR ^f	2,907	2,545	2,164	1,307	734
Administer mineral operations Number of operations administered to standard	MAR	9,189	NR	8,254	13,329	8,300

^a MAR – Management Attainment Reporting database.

^b Not Verified = Data not verified at time of audit.

^c N/A – Not applicable or not available.

^d Includes only cleanups and environmental compliance audits completed. Prior year accomplishments also included studies and design work.

^e NR – Not reported or not required.

^f RAR – Roads Accomplishment Report.

Overview

At least 3,400 cities and towns in 43 States, with a total population of over 60 million people, obtain at least a portion of their drinking water from watersheds located on National Forest System (NFS) lands. Agency hydrologists and sanitary engineers provide technical assistance to many of these communities in delineating areas that are the source of this water, as well as assessing pollution risks from various types of land use, atmospheric deposition, and since September 11, 2001, terrorism. The Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments of 1996 require these assessments be completed by the States by May 2003. While this requirement has received little public attention, it is an example of how various levels of government work together for the public good, thus ensuring taxpayers are getting good value.

The Environmental Compliance and Protection (ECAP) program provides for the cleanup of hazardous substances on national forest lands to improve and protect watershed conditions and human and ecological health. In addition to cleanup projects, the ECAP program is helping to establish an environmental management system, including environmental compliance audits, to systematically improve environmental performance of the agency. The Abandoned Mine Land (AML) program, closely linked to ECAP, focuses specifically on cleaning up abandoned mines in high-priority watersheds.

Many activities contribute to the improvement of watershed conditions and fisheries habitat. For example, protection and rehabilitation of the soil resource contributes to sustainable fish populations by reducing the amount of soil transported to lakes and streams. Returning unnecessary roads to a forested condition through decommissioning also lessens adverse impacts to forest resources such as water quality and fish habitat.

Administering proposed mineral operations ensures proper design and layout and identifies appropriate mitigating and final reclamation measures. Proper administration minimizes erosion, sedimentation, pollution, and other adverse effects. It also helps maintain ecological functions and the quality, quantity, and beneficial uses of surface and ground waters during and after the conduct of operations. Analyses are conducted collaboratively with State and Federal agencies and the public. After operations begin, emphasis is placed on inspection and monitoring to ensure that operators comply with mitigating measures to protect watershed conditions and ensure the measures are providing adequate protection.

FY 2002 Performance

Planned work in the watershed, soils, air, and weather programs was greatly affected by the reassignment of many field personnel to emergency fire suppression and emergency watershed rehabilitation activities during the summer and fall of 2002. This resulted in the postponement of many planned watershed improvement projects, soil mapping contracts, and water quality monitoring work to FY 2003. It also resulted in reduced technical assistance to States and local communities by agency hydrologists in assessing the vulnerability of drinking water sources to pollution and terrorism. In addition, fewer watershed assessments were completed in FY 2002.

Fifteen multiyear community-based watershed restoration partnership projects continued in FY 2002. These partnerships crafted innovative ways to improve watershed, forest, range, water, and habitat conditions at a river-basin scale. An example is the devastating Hayman fire, which burned over 142,000 acres in and around one of these partnerships—the Upper South Platte Watershed. Four issues are being addressed in relation to catastrophic fires:

(1) vegetation landscape patterns, (2) soil development and movement, (3) water quality and quantity, and (4) aquatic habitats. More information is available on these partnerships via the Internet site: www.fs.fed.us/largewatershedprojects.

Two emphasis areas made considerable progress in FY 2002. The first focused on community-based efforts to improve water quality and restore large watersheds across ownerships. The second was continued cooperative efforts between the agency and the States of Colorado and Idaho to explore new options for providing instream flows for fisheries on national forest lands without adversely affecting existing water rights for agricultural diversions. If ultimately successful, new options for handling disputes over water uses could emerge.

Conflict over the total maximum daily load (TMDL) of specific pollutants in water resulted in marginal progress in water quality management in 2002. One of the key questions is whether TMDL allocations of nonpoint pollutants, such as sediment in the water column, can or should be made to all landowners in a watershed that does not meet State water quality criteria because it contains an impaired body of water. While various courts have issued rulings on this question, there is no consistency among them. The USDA Forest Service continues to maintain its position that the Clean Water Act (CWA) itself provides TMDLs that do not apply to nonpoint sources.

The USDA Forest Service completed a significant number of hazardous material cleanup projects under the ECAP/AML program, including 18 mine cleanups and 14 non-mine cleanups. The accomplishment greatly exceeded the target, due in part to reallocation of funds, initial plan studies, and removal and remedial actions during the course of the year. Under the ECAP program, the USDA Forest Service met its target of completing 11 environmental compliance audits, helping units identify operational improvements needed to comply with environmental regulations.

Road decommissioning targets were reduced substantially from FY 2001 to FY 2002 to address a concern that road maintenance funds were not necessarily being spent on the highest critical priorities. Results indicate that the concern was at least partially valid. While the mileage of roads decommissioned decreased from 2,164 miles in FY 2001 to 734 miles in FY 2002, the accomplishment of road deferred maintenance projects increased from 2,325 miles to 5,837 miles.

Because of a misunderstanding of reporting standards and definitions for mineral operations administered to standard, comparison with prior years is not meaningful. Targets in FY 2002 for mineral operations administered to standard were based on revised definitions of what was to be counted. The new definitions, however, were still not clear to the field. As a result, the actual accomplishment fell short of the target. The potential consequences of the shortfall are lessened because the operations not being reported are smaller operations that have much less potential for adverse impacts to the environment.

Program Evaluations

No national level reviews of the water, air, soils, or weather programs were made in FY 2002.

The Engineering Staff conducted a monitoring review of Region 1 in FY 2002. The review reinforced the findings in prior year monitoring that unmet critical resource deferred maintenance needs are a major concern.

One program evaluation for the Minerals and Geology Management Program was conducted in FY 2002 in Region 9. There were no significant findings or recommendations.

Conclusions and Challenges

There are several challenges to watershed management in the agency: (1) delineation of 5th Level HUCs for the entire country will take several more years; as a result, it is unknown how many HUCs will include NFS lands, thus requiring associated condition tracking of soil and water resources in the future; (2) local assessment of watershed conditions is being used instead of nationally consistent criteria and protocols; and (3) reassignment of soil, water, and air specialists to emergency firefighting duties for weeks or months results in the inability to complete previously planned soil, water, and air work; lost or delayed information includes sites not monitored and data not gathered that is needed later to interpret watershed and soil conditions.

Sorting through the myriad of Federal, State, and local laws and regulations governing water is an ever-challenging task and one that creates very different roles, responsibilities, and expectations that vary with each Administration. There are approximately 25 Federal laws that govern agency management of water resources, hundreds of State laws, and thousands of State regulations with which agency officials are expected to comply. It is extremely difficult to ensure that all laws and regulations are being recognized and followed.

The USDA Forest Service is also facing a shortage of hydrologic skills as the ranks are thinned through retirements and other vacated positions that are not filled. The agency faces great challenges to meet State TMDL requirements, including extensive restoration and monitoring to complete these mandatory projects. Planning will require greater than normal levels of hydrologic expertise to identify and quantify instream flow needs, especially in western national forests.

The results of field evaluations show that the decommissioning of roads, although necessary and important, is a difficult endeavor due to extensive administrative processes that are required prior to actually executing the work.

Abandoned mine lands comprise the majority of sites impacting NFS lands via the release of hazardous substances. The USDA Forest Service estimates that there are over 40,000 abandoned mine sites, of which an estimated 1,800 to 2,000 will require hazardous material cleanup. The estimated cost to complete needed work on these mining sites exceeds \$3 billion. At historic funding levels, it is estimated that it will take 150 years to clean up these sites.

In late FY 2000, the USDA Forest Service adopted a policy of requiring all existing mineral and energy operations to be properly inspected, monitored, and bonded before new operations are approved. This requirement, however, is not being reached. Priority is given to operations in sensitive settings and to those that may be logistically easier to reach. Although an adequate job is being done, the agency would do a better job with more inspections.

Verification, Validation,
and Limitations of Data
Sources

The problem with the 5th level HUCs has been described above, and until the Federal interagency team completes the delineation in all 50 States, the agency will not know how many HUCs include NFS lands.

Regional program managers report ECAP/AML accomplishment and financial data on a project-by-project basis. This itemization of work plans, progress, and accomplishments lends credence to the project's report. A portion of this program is funded using transfer appropriations from USDA; that portion has been audited in prior years by the General Accounting Office and the Office of Inspector General.

The roads accomplishment data comes from reporting actual work accomplished at the national forest level, which is aggregated at the regional level and finally into a national accomplishment. At the forest level, the data is collected by road program managers and verified by budget personnel. The forest data is reviewed at the regional and Washington Office levels for reasonableness. In addition, road monitoring activities are conducted on approximately 25 percent of the approximately 383,000 miles of road on NFS lands each year. Limited budgets prevent additional monitoring.

Outputs shown with a data source indicator of MAR are collected in the Management Attainment Reporting database. The data is compiled by the districts and forests and then reviewed by regional and national offices for reasonableness. Further validation is not considered cost effective; accuracy of the data is dependent on entries made at the forest level.

Strategic Objective 1b: Provide ecological conditions to sustain viable populations of native and desired non-native species and to achieve objectives for management indicator species (MIS)/focal species.

Annual Performance Goals and Associated Measures:

(1) Accelerate the protection and recovery of threatened and endangered species on national forest lands.

Measure: Populations, status, and trends for selected threatened and endangered species on national forest lands.

(2) Ecological conditions are maintained or improved to provide habitat for native and desirable non-native species.

Measure: Number of National Forest System land and resource management plans that have established measurable objectives and monitoring programs for populations, habitats, and/or ecological conditions for threatened and endangered species, species for which there are viability concerns, and other MIS/focal species.

(3) Population trends for native and desirable non-native species are maintained or improved.

Measure: Populations for selected species.

(4) Manage habitat and facilities to support wildlife viewing, as well as harvest of fish and game.

Measure: Harvestable surpluses of fish and game species are available.

<i>Activity and Outputs</i>	<i>Data Source</i>	<i>FY 1999 Actual</i>	<i>FY 2000 Actual</i>	<i>FY 2001 Actual</i>	<i>FY 2002 Revised Target</i>	<i>FY 2002 Actual</i>
Manage stream habitat—Miles of stream enhanced	MAR ^a	2,194	1,687	2,193	1,919	2,001
Manage lake habitat—Acres of lake enhanced	MAR	16,346	18,147	18,428	15,694	18,217
Manage terrestrial habitat—Acres of terrestrial habitat enhanced	MAR	266,774	192,373	241,123	247,013	209,472
Land impacted for the management and conservation of migratory species—Acres of migratory habitat impacted ^c	Program Staff	NR ^b	NR	NR	NR	NR

^a MAR – Management Attainment Reporting database.

^b NR – Not reported or not required.

^c Outputs for this activity have never been collected, and it was not a field reporting requirement in FY 2002.

Overview

National forests and grasslands provide habitat for more than 3,000 vertebrate and invertebrate species and more than 10,000 plant species. Essential work on each national forest and grassland includes managing habitats for these species to maintain the diversity, viability, and productivity of plant and animal communities. This includes actions to restore, recover, and maintain habitat and ecosystem conditions necessary for healthy populations of fish, wildlife, and native plants.

Stream and lake improvements (acres and miles) are designed to restore and improve habitats for inland, anadromous, and threatened and endangered aquatic species. Terrestrial wildlife habitat restoration and enhancement focus on a variety of species, including threatened, endangered, and sensitive species, as well as management indicator and focal species. Enhanced acres improve and maintain diversity and productivity of wildlife and rare plant species, and thus provide for their use and enjoyment by current and future generations.

Efforts to support migratory species are spearheaded by International Programs (IP). Through habitat improvement work, migratory species conservation partnerships, and strengthening conservation capacity in countries where migratory bird species live, IP strives to ensure the viability of more than 80 migratory species. Through these partnerships, USDA Forest Service funds have been leveraged. With a relatively small investment of USDA Forest Service expertise from IP, the agency has worked with foreign and domestic partners to enhance habitats and populations of migratory species. In the case of some bird species, such as the endangered Kirtland's warbler, IP's work outside the United States is invaluable in preserving the species.

FY 2002 Performance

A new set of measures has been established, which are believed to be more reflective of annual performance goals. During this transition year we continue to report in acres and miles accomplished, but future years will depict outcomes of our management efforts.

In FY 2002, the national forests accomplished 104 percent of their target in improving stream habitats and 116 percent in lake habitats. Examples of habitat improvements include reducing sediment input and stream bank erosion through structural and nonstructural instream, riparian, and upland treatments; restoring riparian habitat functions for natural recruitment of large wood; creating pools within streams, thereby providing hiding cover for fish and increasing spawning gravel; removing or modifying human-made barriers to allow free movement of aquatic life throughout the stream; and increasing lake fertility.

Approximately 85 percent of the target for improving terrestrial habitat was accomplished in FY 2002. Examples include using prescribed fire; maintaining early successional habitats; regenerating aspen and oaks; planting and seeding to improve forage conditions; and developing water sources in arid lands. Work within the wildlife, fisheries, and rare plants program, however, was significantly affected by the emergency fire suppression needs and activities during FY 2002. Approximately 8 percent of the wildlife and fisheries funds was redirected to emergency suppression efforts, as well as a large percentage of wildlife, fisheries, and rare plants employees, which resulted in less time devoted to program implementation.



Partnerships are key to the successful implementation of the wildlife, fisheries, and rare plant program. In particular, the Challenge Cost-Share Grant Program encourages direct public involvement in managing these resources on national forests and grasslands. Established in 1986, the program has grown from 57 partners and 120 projects to more than 2,500 partners and 2,000 projects in FY 2002. A variety of State agencies and private organizations worked with the USDA Forest Service in FY 2002 to leverage \$19.4 million of appropriated funds into over \$46 million of habitat projects benefiting wildlife, fish, rare plants...and people! Partnership capacity continues to increase through the efforts of several positions shared and housed with partner organizations.

An example of a successful partnership is on the White Mountain National Forest in New Hampshire, culminating in the delisting of the endangered Robbins' cinquefoil (*Potentilla robbinsiana*), a rare plant. In a long-term cooperative effort with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Appalachian Mountain Club, New England Wild Flower Society, New Hampshire Natural Heritage Program, and others, the recovery plan was implemented to the extent that this species is no longer in danger of extinction.

National forests and grasslands provide exceptionally important habitat for birds; to improve our ability to conserve and manage birds, the agency has become a partner in the North American Bird Conservation Initiative. The USDA Forest Service's participation in this partnership initiative with other Federal, State, university, and nonprofit conservation organizations is enhancing our agency's ability to coordinate and integrate efforts in bird conservation. This has resulted in more effective conservation and restoration activities on national forests and grasslands and provided for bird-related recreational opportunities.

Similarly, the agency has become a member of Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, a coalition of Federal and State agencies, tribes, universities, nonprofit conservation organizations, and industry groups. The group coordinates efforts to conserve amphibians, reptiles, and their habitats through partnerships across the country. Benefits for the agency will include better understanding of conservation management needs on national forests and grasslands, as well as standardized survey protocols.

IP led and supported 13 field projects in FY 2002 that increased habitat capability outside the United States for migratory bird species. Projects were selected based on species or habitats that are of greatest concern to American conservationists or are of importance to indigenous cultures in North America. Support for these projects included technical conservation training for key people in host nations.

Through an interactive Web broadcast sponsored by IP, an estimated 700,000 students in the United States, Canada, and Mexico learned how they can help migratory birds.

Program Evaluations

A national level trust fund review was conducted, with onsite field inspections in the Southern Region. Overall, wildlife and fisheries projects funded through the Knutson-Vandenberg fund were well planned, documented, and implemented; however, some opportunities to use additional available funding to accomplish meaningful habitat improvements were missed. This review occurred early in the year; due to fire suppression activities, other planned reviews were cancelled.

Conclusions and Challenges

The USDA Forest Service is challenged with providing more funding resources and qualified personnel to manage habitat to maintain viable populations and provide for diverse and sustainable wildlife, fish, and rare plant species. For example, national forests and grasslands provide habitat for 422 listed species (up from 415 in 2001) and more than 2,900 sensitive species. The agency must increase knowledge of management needs; develop or adopt conservation and recovery strategies and implement strategies to achieve recovery objectives; and meet appropriate statutory, regulatory, and policy requirements that apply. The agency continues to work effectively with State, Federal, and nongovernmental partners, who are cornerstones of these programs.

In FY 2002, the USDA Forest Service provided testimony on fish passage at road crossings on national forest lands in the Pacific Northwest at a U.S. House of Representatives Appropriations Committee hearing. While primarily a fish passage issue, other aquatic species may be impacted by passage problems at road crossings. On public lands in Oregon and Washington alone, there are over 10,000 road culverts on fish-inhabited streams. Many do not effectively allow all life stages of fish to pass freely, denying them important habitat. Recent assessments have identified 250 culverts, which if modified or replaced, would increase access to over 1,000 miles of anadromous fish habitat. The agency is assessing passage problems and prioritizing culvert restoration to ensure efficient and effective use of funds to maximize benefits to aquatic resources. Although public attention is currently focused on salmon passage in the Northwest, similar needs occur throughout the National Forest System.

Up to 40 percent of migrating waterfowl depend on the boreal forests of North America, but habitat is steadily disappearing due to oil and gas development, agriculture, some forest management practices, and other activities. The agency must develop partnerships with other Federal agencies, State and local governments, and private corporations and organizations to mitigate the impacts of development on migratory species. International partnerships are important as well. One example is the Copper River International Migratory Bird Initiative, which is working to conserve the millions of migratory birds that depend on the Copper River Delta and other feeding and breeding sites along the Pacific Coast from Alaska to as far south as South America. Some examples of Copper River Delta species are the Western Sandpiper, Dusty Canada Goose, and Trumpeter Swan.

Verification, Validation, and Limitations of Data Sources

Outputs shown with a data source indicator of MAR are collected through the Management Attainment Reporting process. The data is compiled by the districts and forests and then reviewed by regional and national offices for reasonableness. Further validation has not been considered cost effective; accuracy of the data is dependent on entries made at the forest level.

Historically, no data has been collected on migratory species work; therefore, the measure “land impacted for the management and conservation of migratory species – acres of migratory habitat impacted” was removed from the annual performance plan.

Strategic Objective 1c: Increase the amount of forests and grasslands restored to or maintained in a healthy condition with reduced risk and damage from fires, insects and diseases, and invasive species.

Annual Performance Goals and Associated Measures:

(1) Hazardous fuel conditions are treated to reduce the threat of high-intensity wildland fires to communities, watersheds, or species at risk, particularly in wildland-urban interface areas, and areas with extreme risk to high-intensity wildfire.

Measure: Percent of wildland-urban interface areas with completed fuel treatments. Percent of all acres with fuel levels meeting condition class 1.a

(2) Targeted nonnative invasive species are managed to reduce populations, infested areas, and risk.

Measure: Percent of acreage treated to reduce the rate of spread of invasive species. Percent decrease of infested acreage. Percent of acreage at high risk of insect and disease infestation treated to reduce the rate of spread.b

(3) Reduce the risk of loss to communities and residences from wildland fire.

Measure: Percent of affected communities with prevention and education programs in place, and where firewise treatments are being applied on the ground.a

(4) Agency fire management organizations are operating at maximum efficiency in the prevention, detection, and suppression of wildland fire to protect life and property.

Measure: Fire Fighter Production Capability (FFPC) rating for initial attack of wildfires is maximized. Percent of needed support resources available for deployment in support of large wildfire incidents.b

(5) Affected communities have increased State, local, and private firefighting resources capability and readiness to respond to wildfires.

Measure: Percent of affected communities with increased firefighting capability and readiness.b

^a Data is not collected with these criteria, so accomplishments cannot be reported directly to this measure.

^b Percentage figure not available.

<i>Activity and Outputs</i>	<i>Data Source</i>	<i>FY 1999 Actual</i>	<i>FY 2000 Actual</i>	<i>FY 2001 Actual</i>	<i>FY 2002 Revised Target</i>	<i>FY 2002 Actual</i>
Plan timber sales—Approved NEPA ^a documents through appeals and litigation ^b	MAR ^c	NR ^d	NR	NR	NR	NR
Prepare regular timber sales—Hundred cubic feet (CCF) of regular timber volume offered ^b	STARS ^e	2,984,558	2,223,952	2,035,161	3,073,824	2,185,546
Administer total timber sales—Timber volume harvested (CCF) ^b	TSA ^f	5,877,142	5,084,854	4,540,158	4,774,952	4,403,989
Plan salvage timber sales—Approved NEPA documents through appeals and litigation ^b	MAR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
Prepare salvage timber sales—Salvage timber volume offered (CCF) ^b	STARS	1,381,345	997,119	1,217,181	1,092,757	1,169,885
Administer salvage timber sales—Salvage timber volume harvested (CCF) ^b	TSA	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
Manage noxious weeds—Acres treated	MAR	87,000	121,946	143,938	105,554	159,923
Mitigate hazardous fuels—Nonwildland-urban interface (acres mitigated)	Program Staffs	1,471,781 ^g	777,375 ^g	750,146	551,346	493,536
Mitigate hazardous fuels—Wildland-urban interface (acres mitigated)	Program Staffs	---	---	611,551	800,622	764,367
Develop control strategies for foreign-based invasive species—Number of projects	Program Staffs	NR	4	8	8	8
National Fire Plan forest land rehabilitation and restoration—Number of rehabilitation and restoration projects	Program Staffs	N/A	0	329	436	506

^a NEPA = National Environmental Policy Act.

^b These budget activities/outputs have been addressed under Strategic Objective 2c.

^c MAR = Management Attainment Reporting database.

^d NR = Not reported or not required.

^e STARS = Sales Tracking and Reporting System.

^f TSA = Timber Sale Accounting System.

^g Fiscal years 1999 and 2000 data for fuels treatment was not separable by wildland-urban and non-wildland-urban acres. Values shown are combined totals.

Overview

The health of our forests and grasslands is important to the Nation for a variety of reasons, including the production of clean water, forage for livestock and game, timber and other forest products, a wide variety of recreation opportunities, and many other uses. Forest and grassland health, however, is threatened by noxious weeds, invasive plant and animal species, and forest fires. The USDA Forest Service is combating these issues very aggressively through initiatives such as the National Fire Plan; the Healthy Forests Initiative; partnerships with various Federal, State, tribal, and local governments; partnerships with natural resource organizations; and other efforts.

Nonnative invasive species are a significant threat to the forests of the United States from both an economic and ecological perspective. Management efforts seek to prevent the spread of noxious weeds and pests, treat new noxious weed and pest infestations without delay after discovery, and provide information and education on control techniques. Noxious weed treatment returns the vegetative community to a more natural state and restores land productivity by eliminating or controlling invasive weeds that threaten native plant communities. Similarly, pest control efforts attempt to control forest and grassland pests to minimize the economic and environmental damage they cause. One pest, the Asian longhorned beetle, has the potential to have a \$670 billion impact on the Nation's forests. Another, the hemlock woolly adelgid, is killing hemlock trees along the East Coast to the point of altering stream flows and temperatures, and decimating the important ecological niche that hemlock serves as a large tree. Partnerships and other coordinated efforts with private landowners and local, county, and State governments are key to preventing the spread of invasives and in the development of treatment regimes.

Prescribed fire and other fuel-reduction treatments of the hazardous fuels programs enhance forest and range health by reducing the intensity of wildfires, protecting wildland-urban interface areas, promoting forage production, and maintaining fire-dependent ecosystems. The Wildland Fire Preparedness and Wildland Fire Operations programs and associated firefighting capability are necessary to ensure that fires are controlled for firefighter and public safety, for property and resource protection, and to minimize large wildland fire suppression costs. Cooperative fire assistance programs help State and local governments maintain a base level of wildland fire protection readiness, and provide public service advertising and education promoting partnerships designed to help reduce wildland fire occurrence.

The Forest Health Management Program provides for the detection, monitoring, evaluation, prevention, and suppression of forest insects, diseases, and invasive plants on forest and rangelands managed by the National Forest System (NFS), other Federal agencies, and governments of States, territories, and tribes. Forest health management specialists evaluate risk for resource damage and determine prevention, suppression, and maintenance treatments based on the results of the risk evaluations. Aerial and ground surveys are conducted for insects and diseases in areas of risk. The program includes development of technologies to improve efficiency and effectiveness of management of forest pests. The activities of the program enhance forest and rangeland health by protecting wildland-urban interface areas, water resources, critical wildlife habitats, and recreational opportunities. See also a discussion of Forest Health Management under strategic objective 3c.

FY 2002 Performance

Approximately 1.6 million acres of forests and grasslands were treated for insects, diseases, and invasive plant species, which is 4 percent of the estimated infested acreage of public lands in the United States. More than 575,000 acres were treated to reduce the rate of spread of gypsy moth through the National Gypsy Moth Slow the Spread (STS) Project. Approximately 100,000 acres were treated to prevent insect and disease outbreaks. Although much work was done to reduce the spread of other pests such as sudden oak death and hemlock woolly adelgid, data is not available.

Noxious weed treatment activities accomplished 152 percent of the target in FY 2002. Almost 160,000 acres were treated, including 130,868 acres accomplished with vegetation and watershed management funds; 7,287 acres accomplished with contributed funds; 13,728 acres using Knutson-Vandenberg (K-V) funds; and 8,041 acres using other funds. This reflects the priority that the national forests are putting on this very important program. The fires of fiscal year (FY) 2000 and FY 2001 created situations that allowed for an increase in noxious weeds on NFS lands; therefore, additional emphasis was placed on this program to alleviate problems that stemmed from the previous fire seasons. With the disastrous fire season in FY 2002, hundreds of thousands of additional acres will undoubtedly be at risk to invasive species in the near future.

A huge workforce of Federal, State, tribal, local, and contract resources was needed to battle the extremely severe fire season that occurred in fiscal year (FY) 2002. Suppression efforts from initial attack to large escaped fire support were provided by 10,480 firefighters, including 65 interagency hotshot crews and 277 smokejumpers. In addition, 995 engines, 94 helicopters, 44 airtankers, and 218 pieces of heavy equipment were deployed throughout the country to assist firefighters. For the first time, a significant number of contracts, for 52 crews and 95 engines, was awarded to assist with initial attack. These resources equate to a FFPC of 15,608 chains per hour.

Fuel reduction treatments totaled 1,257,903 acres, nearly a 93 percent accomplishment rate. This rate is significant since over \$24 million in the fuel treatment program was redirected to cover wildland fire suppression costs during FY 2002. Fuel mitigation work in the non-wildland-urban interface was nearly 58,000 acres short of the projected accomplishment, and in the wildland-urban interface about 36,000 fewer acres were treated than was projected. Additionally, the agency signed a joint memorandum with the Department of the Interior defining the collaborative process for fuels project development.

The Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior, along with 17 western governors, signed a document titled, *The 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan—A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment*. This plan sets uniform performance requirements for delivery of the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy for both Federal and State partners.

The activities and outputs for planning and administering both regular and salvage timber sales play a beneficial role in meeting this strategic objective, but they are more closely aligned with strategic objective 2c, which provides sustainable levels of desired uses, values, products, and services from the Nation's forest and grasslands. Therefore, accomplishments for these activities and outputs are reported under that objective.

International Programs (IP) has supported a number of activities that address the eradication or control of invasive species. Many of the activities are in collaboration with the Forest Health Protection (FHP) and Research and Development (R&D) staffs, as well as with USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and USDA Agricultural Research Service.

Some of the activities include a workshop on the current knowledge about the Asian longhorned beetle in the United States and China; support for two German scientists to work in the United States, along with ongoing information exchange between international scientists on Sudden Oak Death data; research into chemical and biological control agents for the Asian longhorned beetle, hemlock woolly adelgid, kudzu, mile-a-minute weed, beech bark scale, and Japanese knotweed; and development of a database of invasive plants from Asia.

Accomplishments of the Forest Health Management Program can be found under strategic objective 3c.

Program Evaluations

The Washington Office NFS staff conducted a review of the noxious weed program within the Pacific Southwest Region of the USDA Forest Service in FY 2002. While the review found that partners at the Federal, State, and local levels are working collaboratively on cooperative weed management projects, it identified significant challenges to overcome.

Progress and accomplishment reports have been submitted by implementing units for each of the International Programs projects mentioned above. No field reviews were performed in FY 2002.

The FY 2002 fire season was very severe. In response, the agency took many steps to reduce the risk of catastrophic damage. The USDA Forest Service and Department of the Interior worked together closely to start implementation of the National Fire Plan. Oversight reviews were made to help managers and administrators make adjustments in programs to ensure proper direction and provide on-the-ground accountability. The following list provides a sample of the processes the USDA Forest Service used in FY 2002 to ensure firefighter and public safety, mitigation of private and public property losses, and cost reduction:

- Completed a hazard abatement plan and started implementation of specific actions designed to increase firefighter safety and enhance training.
- Completed three national-level large fire cost reviews to assess the effectiveness of fire suppression actions with respect to decisionmaking and cost containment.
- Contracted with the National Academy of Public Administration for a study on wildland fire suppression costs. The academy published the results in a document titled, *Wildfire Suppression: Strategies for Containing Costs*.
- Started, with the Department of the Interior, a computer system design process for a new fire planning system. The Fire Program Analysis (FPA) system will replace the present system over the next few years. FPA will be designed as a more comprehensive land management decision-support system than what presently exists.
- Created the Wildland Fire Leadership Council to coordinate and implement the National Fire Plan and the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy among Federal agencies, States, counties, and tribes. The council approved a standard fire management plan template for use by the USDA Forest Service and the Department of the Interior. Fire

management plans tier from land and resource management plans and provide direction for the full range of fire management activities on public lands.

Forest Health Management reviews included the Chief's Overviews of the National Fire Plan for Regions 8 and 10, which addressed insect outbreaks as they relate to fire risk. These reviews emphasized the need for prevention and restoration activities on forest lands. An invasive plant activity review for Region 5 (California and Hawaii) recommended that the region's invasive plants program better integrate with other agencies.

Conclusions and Challenges

Finding solutions for controlling and eradicating invasive species is a long-term process. There have been some promising management techniques, and chemical and biological control agents, but most are in the development stage. Additionally, the need for information and communication between the USDA Forest Service and its partners has become evident to prevent invasive species from establishing themselves in the forests and grasslands of the United States.

Findings and conclusions from the Washington Office NFS review of the invasive plant program identified that Section 7 consultation under the Endangered Species Act with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service, primarily in northern California, needs to be improved and streamlined. The review also found that there is a need to better integrate the USDA Forest Service noxious weed program with other agencies, especially with respect to fire suppression. The review concluded that communication between the regional office and the field needs improvement, especially in assigning clear priorities in developing the program budget for invasive plants. The review found that national forests are having difficulty in completing site-specific National Environmental Policy Act analyses requirements while trying to address issues related to new invaders, newly infested sites, and expanding populations of existing infestations. This was particularly true for infestations associated with wildfire suppression and rehabilitation.

The increasing number of acres burned in wildfires in recent years on national forests and adjacent lands is resulting in new potential habitat for noxious weeds. As a result, the number of infected acres is increasing on burned lands and adjacent unburned areas. Treatment efforts will need to be amplified to deal with this growing problem.

The USDA Forest Service will continue its emphasis on firefighter and public safety and large fire cost containment. At the same time, an expansion of the fuel treatment program will be sought, especially in the wildland-urban interface. The agency will be working cooperatively with other Federal agencies and State and local governments to minimize the impacts of wildland fire on public and private lands. Implementation of the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy will assist Federal, State, and local land managers with coordination, collaboration, and actions to reduce the risk of wildland fire to communities and the environment.

In August 2002, the President introduced the Healthy Forests Initiative. This program implements core components of the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy. It provides additional Administrative endorsement of the strategy and will improve regulatory processes to ensure more timely decisions. This will lead to greater efficiencies, a restoration of forest health, and a reduction of the risk of catastrophic wildland fire.

Verification, Validation,
and Limitations of Data
Sources

Noxious weed treatments are reported directly to the Washington Office upon request at the end of the fiscal year. Currently, no electronic database system is available to track this work. A database system to monitor infected acres, acres treated, methods used, and dates of treatments is being developed and tested at this time.

Common interagency performance measures for Fire and Aviation Management were developed for baseline data collection in FY 2002 and FY 2003 and for program measurement in FY 2004. These new performance measures will supplement existing measures. The new measures are outcome-oriented and are integrated with the agency Government Performance and Results Act strategic and annual performance plans. Data collection and display problems may arise as the new measures are implemented.

In previous years, Forest Health Management technical assistance, which includes biological assessments and technology transfer to forest managers, was converted to acres treated or protected, which resulted in different estimates of actual work performed. There is no direct link, however, of technical assistance to number of treated acres. The transformation of technical assistance to treated acres is no longer used. Thus, the actual number of forest health acres protected decreased by nearly 1 million acres when compared to estimates for the FY 2002. This decrease in acres protected reflects changes in how these acres were calculated in the past. For FY 2002 accomplishments, "Acres protected" equals "Acres treated" to better reflect actual work performed.

**Strategic Goal 2.
Multiple Benefits to
People**

Strategic Objective 2a: Improve the capability of the Nation's forests and grasslands to provide diverse, high-quality outdoor recreation opportunities.

Annual Performance Goal and Associated Measure:

(I) Recreation uses and activities are managed to prescribed standards within the capability of the ecosystem.

Measure: Percent of recreational uses and activities meeting meaningful measure standards. Percent increase in user satisfaction by use and geographic region.

<i>Activity and Outputs</i>	<i>Data Source</i>	<i>FY 1999 Actual</i>	<i>FY 2000 Actual</i>	<i>FY 2001 Actual</i>	<i>FY 2002 Revised Target</i>	<i>FY 2002 Actual</i>
Operate developed sites—Number of PAOT ^a days operated to standard	MAR ^b	NR ^c	75,000,000	80,000,000	96,015,369	91,018,707
Manage general forest areas—Number of days managed to standard	MAR	NR	719,000	755,000	7,147,058	2,200,978
Provide interpretation and education (recreation)—Number of products provided to standard	MAR	NR	34,000	34,000	17,584	13,974
Administer recreation special use authorizations—Number administered to standard	MAR	NR	1,227	1,225	12,195	14,213
Provide interpretation and education (wildlife)—Number of products provided	MAR	NR	2,885	2,885	2,651	3,886

^a PAOT – persons of one time.
^b MAR – Management Attainment Reporting database.
^c NR – Not reported or not available.

Overview

Recreation is the fastest growing use on the national forests and grasslands, and it is where most Americans meet the USDA Forest Service. The Recreation, Heritage, and Wilderness Resources (RHWR) program provides a wide spectrum of recreational settings and opportunities that are consistent with good land stewardship. The RHWR program is managed to improve the capability of the Nation's forests and grasslands to provide diverse, high-quality outdoor recreation opportunities. The recreation program oversees a multibillion dollar recreation infrastructure that includes facilities and trails and supports activities such as camping, picnicking, winter sports, hunting, fishing, and visiting cultural sites. Activities such as these contribute to economic diversification in and around national forests and grasslands.

To provide diverse, high-quality outdoor recreation opportunities, the USDA Forest Service has implemented several strategic activities, including user surveys, to gather information for use in priority setting and decisionmaking. The survey data released in September 2002 indicates that 214 million national forest visits occurred in fiscal year (FY) 2001. During the 11,420 survey days, 64,045 visitors were interviewed. The survey results are compiled at the forest level and expanded to provide estimates at the regional and national levels. National Visitor Use Monitoring Process data addresses monitoring elements in the USDA Strategic Plan and the 2003 National Report on Sustainable Forests, an international monitoring plan.

In addition to providing benefits to people, the RHWR program advances ecosystem health through the administration and management of partnerships and tourism, interpretive services, recreation special uses, congressionally designated areas, national forest scenic byways, scenery management, wilderness stewardship, and heritage resources. The focus is on minimizing impacts and educating users in low-impact and responsible use through programs such as Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly!, as well as the preservation of special areas.

The USDA Forest Service delivers annual outputs, as identified above, that lead to the accomplishment of the long-term outcomes in the agency's strategic goals and objectives. With public input, the USDA Forest Service has developed a strategic framework that includes five core principles to focus RHWR priorities and actions; each is linked to and complements the strategic goal of providing multiple benefits to people. The five core principles are settings, service, conservation education and interpretation, community connections and relationships, and partnerships.

NatureWatch is a cooperative program among private industry, conservation groups, the USDA Forest Service, and other Federal and State agencies to foster conservation of wildlife, fish, plants, and their habitats. The program provides nature-viewing opportunities for the public and encourages safe and sound viewing ethics through signage and educational programs. Nature viewing is a popular outdoor activity, with more than 50 million annual user days on national forests and grasslands.

FY 2002 Performance

In some areas of the Nation, the impacts of the fire season were reflected in reduced outputs due to the presence or threat of fire in and around recreation areas and through diversion of financial and human resources to aid in firefighting efforts. Wherever possible, the effects of the diversion of funds were absorbed internally to minimize the impact on service to the public.

Nationally, seasonal recreation capacity was slightly under target. The Rocky Mountain and Southwestern Regions were down to 71 percent and 80 percent of their target respectively, due to fire closures and diversion of funds and personnel to meet the fire emergency. Agencywide capacity using appropriated funds totals 280 million PAOT-days to standard; during FY 2002, the capacity provided was less than half of that amount.

The number of days administered to standard in general forest areas slightly exceeded expectations. Limited understanding of the new output measure caused an underestimation of capability of the target in some regions. In addition, increased dispersed area patrols, primarily due to the increased fire danger and use closures, had the serendipitous effect of meeting higher standards in some dispersed areas.

Delivery of interpretation and education was down overall due to significant fires in the Rocky Mountain and Southwestern Regions. Fire suppression costs and forest closures impacted the ability of these regions to provide products and deliver programs to the public. Other regions, however, succeeded in providing substantial interpretive products and programs, such as those associated with the 2002 Winter Olympics, Lewis and Clark Bicentennial, and American Frontiers as part of National Public Lands Day. In addition, the Interpretive Service's program held a national symposium for visitor center directors. The symposium increased the skill

level of the directors, thereby ensuring the long-term vitality of USDA Forest Service programs and materials provided at our visitor centers.

Many of the 214 million visits were made possible by recreation service providers through the Special Use Program. Of the more than 25,000 permits, 14,243 were administered to standard, 114 percent of the goal for FY 2002. Other accomplishment highlights include hosting of approximately 30 million skiers; working to support legislation that would benefit organizational camps and outfitter services; establishing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the National Ski Areas Association to support their Environmental Charter program; establishing a MOU with the Association of Small Business Development Centers to assist agency permittees in business planning and agency personnel in acquiring business acumen; and a revision of agency policy for campground concessionaires to allow for accounting of indirect costs.

The Recreational Fee Demonstration Program, started in 1996, was implemented at 87 projects on 80 national forests in 32 States and Puerto Rico in FY 2002. The public benefit is reflected in additional expenditures of close to \$121 million for the period 1996-2002 toward critically needed services and facilities, including repairs and maintenance, health and safety, interpretation and signage, annual operations, law enforcement related to public use, facility and habitat enhancement, and resource preservation. In FY 2002, the agency developed a draft framework for a consistent national fee program and worked closely with Department of the Interior agencies to coordinate more consistent cross-agency program delivery to benefit the recreating public.

Accomplishments for NatureWatch were significant, reflecting the ability of national forests to leverage dollars with partners.

Program Evaluations

Due to the need to divert resources to fire, a program review in Region 10 was postponed until funds are again available.

Two reports on the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program were issued to Congress in April 2002. The annual interagency report provided detailed financial results and highlights of program accomplishments for FY 2001. An interagency interim report provided results from the first 4 years of the program, including evaluation of investments, expenditures, experimentation, and research, as well as lessons learned and future direction for the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program.

A recent court case determined that a certain type of special use authorization is a contract as opposed to a license. This decision has resulted in the agency reviewing its entire Special Use Program to determine which authorizations could be classified as contracts. A major adjustment to agency policy will be needed to address these findings, along with training of personnel in contract administration procedures.

The southern province of the Pacific Southwest Region (Southern California) conducted a review of its Special Use Program. The review highlighted several concerns related to monitoring of expiration dates and followup on billing and collection procedures. A special team within the region is developing an action plan to address these findings.

Conclusions and Challenges

Public use at developed recreation sites is increasing. The agency estimates the annual direct costs to operate specific developed recreation sites at full-service standards to be \$108 million. This amount far exceeds available appropriations. Therefore, the agency addressed the issues through managing concessions; using volunteer and human resource programs; developing partnerships with nongovernmental organizations, other agencies, and private sector businesses; reducing the quality of the service; shortening the time facilities are open; and continuing to defer needed maintenance.

A greater emphasis on reconstruction of existing sites along with higher levels of maintenance, rather than new construction, will allow the agency to improve the quality of the recreation experience. In addition, the agency elevated the need for facility master planning as a critical first step to realign the agency recreation offerings with available resources and customer demand. Inventory, facility condition, Meaningful Measures (MM), and National Visitor Use Monitoring Process data will all be used in determining the environmentally and financially sustainable mix of facilities that best meets customer demand.

The Recreation Fee Demonstration Program evaluation report concluded that, while the program successfully raised new revenue to invest in critical recreation needs, greater consistency is needed both within the USDA Forest Service and among the other agencies that participate in the program. The Interagency Recreation Fee Leadership Council was formed to address this and other program issues. The council membership includes the Department of Agriculture Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment and the Department of the Interior Assistant Secretary for Policy Management and Budget, along with agency heads and legislative affairs directors.

Special use permit administrators continue to feel the pressure of declining resources. The agency recognizes the need to develop additional human and financial resources for special use administration. The agency is considering methods to improve financial resources, including retaining special use rental fees and working with the Administration to draft legislation to allow for private sector investment in Government-owned facilities. In addition, the difference between target and actual accomplishment is primarily due to confusion in interpreting the definition of the standards, as well as inconsistent application of standards across all field units. The definition of the standard for this activity for the future has been revised to present a more meaningful description of work, incorporating simplified attributes.

Verification, Validation, and Limitations of Data Sources

Progress continues with the application of consistent costing as MM data is being used in budget formulation. In addition, the inventory, standards, and costing components of MM are now being used for developed site analysis and management. Agency guidance being prepared to conduct recreation facility master planning incorporates MM concepts and data. The agency has secured private consulting services to review our financial analysis process as it relates to the recreation program to help us refine our resource allocation framework.

The Special Uses Database System (SUDS) continues to improve in the second year of its implementation. While a great improvement over the previous system, the agency continues to find gaps in the information migration process.

Outputs shown with a data source indicator of MAR are collected through the Management Attainment Reporting process. The data is compiled by the districts and forests and then

reviewed by regional and national offices for reasonableness. Further validation has not been considered cost effective; accuracy of the data is dependent on entries made at the national forest level.



Strategic Objective 2b. Improve the capability of wilderness and protected areas to sustain a desired range of benefits and values.

Annual Performance Goals and Associated Measures:

(1) Manage uses and activities to prescribed standards to protect wilderness resources.

Measure: Percent of wilderness areas with uses and activities meeting prescribed standards.

(2) Forest management practices contribute to the mitigation of haze and other air-quality concerns.

Measure: Forest management practices contribute to the mitigation of haze and other air-quality concerns.

<i>Activity and Outputs</i>	<i>Data Source</i>	<i>FY 1999 Actual</i>	<i>FY 2000 Actual</i>	<i>FY 2001 Actual</i>	<i>FY 2002 Revised Target</i>	<i>FY 2002 Actual</i>
Manage wilderness Number of wilderness areas managed to standard	Program Staffs	NR ^a	39	39	101	105
Manage heritage resources Number of heritage resources managed to standard	Program Staffs	NR	4,000	4,000	7,037	6,906
Manage air quality—Acres monitored ^b	MAR ^c	NR	7,964,000	7,964,000	1,3815,025	NR
Manage air quality sites inventoried ^b	MAR	0	23	29	30	30
Manage Air Quality Sites monitored ^b	MAR	35	35	35	35	35
Manage air quality PSD ^d permit applications reviewed ^b	MAR	60	65	107	100	Not Verified ^e
Manage air quality—Number of monitoring sites reporting improved or stable air quality ^b	IMPROVE ^f	N/A ^g	34	34	34	34

^a NR Not reported or not available.

^b Outputs were changed from acres to number of sites in FY 2000. Sites are more representative of the workload and are more reliable for counting and data verification purposes.

^c MAR = Management Attainment Reporting database.

^d PSD = Prevention of Serious Deterioration.

^e Not Verified = Data not verified at time of audit.

^f IMPROVE = Interagency Monitoring of Protected Visual Environments.

^g N/A = Not applicable or not available

Overview

The USDA Forest Service manages 33 percent of the National Wilderness Preservation System, 97 of the 160 designated national wild and scenic rivers, and the majority of back-country opportunities available on public lands. Providing good-quality, undeveloped outdoor recreation opportunities and appropriate resource stewardship depends on a number of factors. The performance measure for wilderness stewardship is characterized by a number of components that collectively determine whether the resource is being managed to standard. These components include the development and implementation of a variety of plans that reflect the stewardship activities for wilderness. Such activities include fire, noxious and invasive plant management, wilderness education, air quality monitoring, identification and monitoring of adequate wilderness area standards, and completion of recreation site inventories.

Heritage resources, which are also protected, provide numerous benefits to the American people, including key connections to the Nation's historic and prehistoric past. Heritage resources cover a broad spectrum, including the physical remains of prehistoric and historic cultures, locations of cultural or religious significance, written records, and oral histories. Interest in heritage tourism is increasing and is being accommodated through increased protection, interpretation, and "hands on" opportunities to experience cultural resources on National Forest System (NFS) lands. The performance measure is based on several components used to determine whether the resource is being managed to standard. These components include resources identified and evaluated, protected, monitored, and preserved; heritage values promoted; and heritage data integrated into natural resource analyses, plans, and articles.

Air quality strongly affects the condition of both natural and cultural resources. The Clean Air Act holds the agency responsible for protecting forest air quality and air quality-related values from the adverse effects of air pollution. Forest air-quality conditions result from the cumulative impacts of regional emission sources; the agency has limited ability to effect changes in air quality. The USDA Forest Service participates in Federal and State regulatory programs and policies that protect its resources. The air quality performance measures address visibility, ozone, and acid precipitation in all forest areas that monitor air quality, not only those designated as Class I air quality wildernesses. The agency encourages and supports the development of monitoring programs that are based on national or State protocols and are fully integrated with a national strategy.

FY 2002 Performance

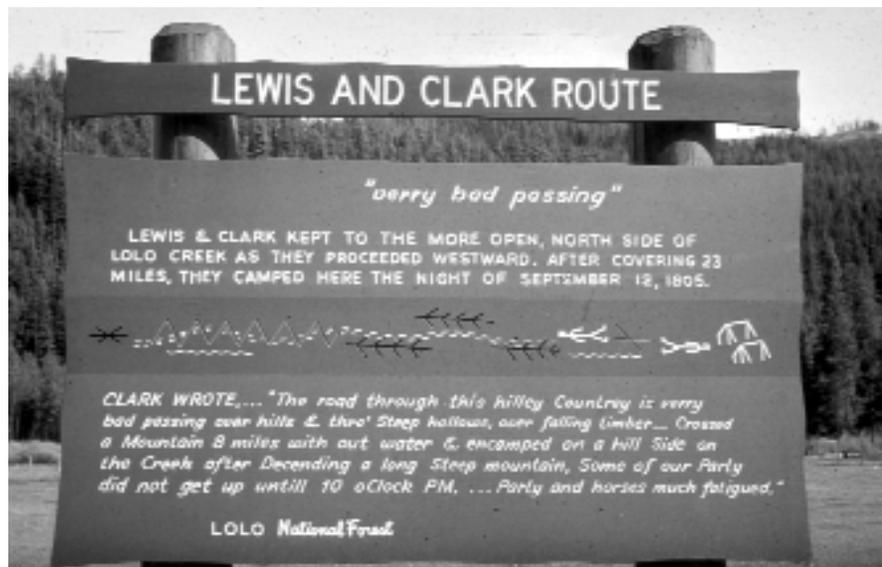
The Forest Service Wilderness Monitoring Committee, along with other Federal wilderness management agencies, drafted "A Protocol to Monitor and Evaluate Trends in Wilderness Character." When completed, this protocol will provide the specific methodology needed to evaluate whether or not our stewardship efforts are protecting and restoring wilderness character as required by law.

Through continued support to the interagency Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center, wilderness accomplishments include:

- Nine unit wilderness workshops, attended by 260 managers and staff, resulting in increased awareness of wilderness and proficiency in its stewardship by agency personnel. In addition, planning and wilderness suitability processes were established on two units.
- The first multiagency-unit wilderness workshop, which resulted in increased collaboration

and consistency in wilderness stewardship across agency boundaries.

- Development and support of the Internet Web site wilderness.net, highlighted by National Geographic Society's online magazine *Best of America*, realizing a 25 percent daily increase in the number of visitors to the site.
- Review of the K-12 Wilderness and Land Ethic curriculum to determine the degree to which lessons meet national education standards. The curriculum will be shared with thousands of teachers and students over 3 years through a partnership with the National Park Service and Student Conservation Association *Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery II Project* beginning in 2003.
- Began production of "*American Values: American Wilderness*," a video slated for national broadcast to increase public awareness, understanding, appreciation, and support of the National Wilderness Preservation System. The video is expected to be viewed by thousands of people over 3 years through partnership with the National Park Service and Student Conservation Association *Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery II Project* beginning in 2003.



The USDA Forest Service facilitated improved interagency coordination in implementing the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act through its participation in the Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council. The council, initiated in 1995, continues to develop technical products, provide training of field personnel, and expand its Web site, significantly increasing consistency in the management of designated wild and scenic rivers and evaluation of study rivers.

To help achieve the objectives of the USDA Forest Service strategic plan, a subordinate document, "The Wild and Scenic Rivers Agenda," has been developed. The agenda defines priorities for developing plans and administering 97 designated rivers, as well as protecting nearly 700 study rivers identified to date through the agency's planning processes.

Despite the extreme wildland fire season of FY 2002, heritage sites managed to standard reached 98 percent of the national target. Two regions fell moderately short of their goals, but

these regions were most affected by the demands of the fire season, specifically by shifting attention from program activities to wildfire suppression and rehabilitation. Other regions that were not as affected by wildfire managed to compensate by exceeding targets. Most regions are within 5 percent of target goals.

The USDA Forest Service addressed the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) national visibility goal during FY 2002 in several ways. The USDA Forest Service participated in all five regional visibility planning organizations, established or updated memoranda of understanding with States to implement effective smoke management programs, continued to review Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) permits to minimize impacts of large new off-forest facilities, ensured that its activities in nonattainment areas conformed to State or tribal air quality implementation plans, and continued to support and improve air quality monitoring programs.

Program Evaluations

Evaluation of the heritage program supports the continued practice to set targets at a modest level because flat or reduced heritage funding necessitates accomplishment of program goals while providing support to other USDA Forest Service programs. While this work helps protect heritage resources from the effects of other USDA Forest Service undertakings, it does little to accomplish heritage program goals as mandated in the National Historic Preservation Act.

The number of air quality monitoring sites has not changed, but the activities and outputs table above shows the addition of many new sites that are considered inventory until they have at least 3 years of data. The deployment of visibility monitors was completed in FY 2002. The PSD permit reviews continue to remain high due to increased emphasis on building energy facilities. Currently, the air quality result measures are based on 10-year rolling average trends. The USDA Forest Service is working with the National Park Service (NPS) and the EPA on the trends protocol, which may result in change to the measurement standards.

In FY 2002, the EPA and several States began auditing the visibility monitoring sites. In addition, the Interagency Monitoring of Protected Visual Environments (IMPROVE) program—which does extensive, long-term monitoring of national parks and wilderness areas and establishes current visibility conditions, tracks changes in visibility, and determines the cause of visual impairments—recognizes site operation excellence. Two USDA Forest Service sites were recognized this year for data collection efficiency, having entered 100 percent of their data in the IMPROVE database.

The USDA Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and EPA accomplished real-time smoke monitoring this year on several major fires. Smoke data was available on the Internet to the fire teams and county health officials, updated every 15 minutes. A review of the effort has been completed and improvements are in progress. This was the first year for EPA's smoke emergency response team that resulted from a review and recommendations made 2 years ago. Improvements to the Web site are being tested.

Conclusions and Challenges

People are visiting national forests and grasslands in record numbers. Our challenge is to meet the soaring demand for nature's amenities while safeguarding the health of the lands and protecting the resources. Education efforts must involve more partnerships to reach the growing number of users seeking opportunities for solitude, and rediscovering the Nation's heritage. The USDA Forest Service will continue to refine the measures and performance goals to accurately monitor the efforts to educate visitors and gauge their satisfaction and preferences.

A continued trend in declining funds in the heritage program inhibits our ability to adequately protect and interpret cultural resources. Although the agency continues to find ways to use outside partnerships and assistance to even greater degrees, there are a limited number of heritage personnel to initiate these actions. The USDA Forest Service also faces growing public demand for heritage tourism while our ability to provide those opportunities declines. Partnerships and public programs help keep the program viable. The Passport in Time (PIT) volunteer program is instrumental in protecting sites, and continues to accomplish as much as 25 percent of the preservation work on national forests.

Visitors to national forests and grasslands expect clean, clear air and cherish the natural resources and majestic vistas associated with the special places. Monitoring conducted in national forests documents that, in most areas, air quality is better than the standards set by EPA. In addition, air quality is improving or remaining stable in about 40 percent of the units where monitoring occurs. Some of the areas occasionally experience essentially pristine air quality conditions unaffected by air pollution.

Unfortunately, air quality in national forests is not always pristine. Some natural resources, such as trees and lakes, readily show the impacts from air pollution. In many cases, significant damage has been done before the impacts become visible. The USDA Forest Service will continue to communicate information about air pollution conditions in the national forests to the public. The agency will provide advice and technical assistance to State, Federal, and tribal regulatory agencies; work cooperatively through partnerships with a variety of stakeholders in the development of air pollution control strategies; and promote pollution prevention practices through education and outreach, use of clean vehicles, solar power generation, emissions inventories, and mitigation of pollution from activities in the national forests.

Verification, Validation, and Limitations of Data Sources

The USDA Forest Service's Wilderness Program conducted the first national upward reporting exercise using Infra-WILD in FY 2002. The data is being used for program management and public information dissemination purposes. This information will form the basis for the State of the Wilderness Report, which is currently under development.

The USDA Forest Service completed a database of eligible or suitable wild and scenic rivers for use in the forest plan revision process and ongoing national forest management. Through its reporting functions, the database provides for ready assessment of the status of the wild and scenic river study program nationally, regionally, and at the forest level. Additionally, it provides river managers with a repository of key information on wild and scenic study rivers.

Updated data quality protocols for the IMPROVE monitoring network have been in place for 3 years. Network audits are being conducted by EPA and State regulatory agencies to assess and maintain quality. Problems with the backlog of data from the contractor have been fixed.

Strategic Objective 2c. Improve the capability of the Nation’s forests and grasslands to provide desired sustainable levels of uses, values, products, and services.

Annual Performance Goals and Associated Measures:

(1) Products and services are provided for subsistence, commercial, and noncommercial uses within sustainable limits.

Measure: Percent of products and services that are provided within sustainable limits.

(2) New bio-based products, including energy, are developed from small-diameter and low-value trees.

Measure: Extent of use of new bio-based products developed from small-diameter and low-value trees.

(3) Heritage and significant geologic resources are protected, stabilized, and monitored.

Measure: Percent of priority heritage and significant geologic resources protected, stabilized, and monitored.

(4) Accelerate carbon sequestration through active forest management.

Measure: Number of acres restored through management to a sustainable forest condition.

(5) Critical lands or interest in lands are secured for administrative, resource management, and public needs.

Measure: Number of acres of identified critical lands acquired in full fee or interest in lands through conservation easements to protect the private forest land base to meet administrative, resource management, and other public needs. *

* Measure 5 has been rewritten to replace the original measure of “Percent of identified critical lands or interest in lands that are secured for administrative, resource management, and public needs.” It is not feasible to collect the data as stated in the original measure.

<i>Activity and Outputs</i>	<i>Data Source</i>	<i>FY 1999 Actual</i>	<i>FY 2000 Actual</i>	<i>FY 2001 Actual</i>	<i>FY 2002 Revised Target</i>	<i>FY 2002 Actual</i>
Monitor forest plans—Reports completed	MAR ^o	101	87	104	119	92
Plan regular timber sales Approved NEPA ^o documents through appeals and litigation	MAR	NR ^r	NR	NR	41	NR
Prepare regular timber sales—Hundred cubic feet of timber volume offered ^r	STARS ^r	2,984,558	2,223,952	2,035,164 ^r	3,073,824	2,185,546
Administer total timber sales—Hundred cubic feet of timber volume harvested ^r	TSA ^o	5,877,142	5,084,853	3,530,158	3,774,952	3,402,989
Administer special forest products (nonconvertible) Number of permits administered	TSA	NR	NR	NR	721,453	NR
Plan salvage timber sales Approved NEPA through appeals and litigation	MAR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
Prepare salvage timber sales Hundred cubic feet of salvage timber volume offered ^r	STARS	1,381,345	997,110	1,347,181 ^r	1,093,757	1,169,885
Administer salvage timber sales Hundred cubic feet of salvage timber volume harvested	TSA	- ^r	- ^r	- ^r	NR	- ^r
Establish vegetation Acres established	TRACS ^r	268,570	217,215	195,595	NR	100,811
Improve forest and rangeland vegetation Acres improved	MAR	NR	NR	4,539,798	1,926,499	170,644 ^r
Preparation of allotment NEPA Number of grazing allotments with signed decision documents ^r	INFRA ^o	464	354	184	367	Not Verified ^o
Process mineral operation proposals Number of mineral operations processed to standard	MAR	12,247	11,171	7,931	8,670	8,328
Provide geologic services Number of reports completed	MAR	NR	NR	NR	1,020	1,091

<i>Activity and Outputs</i>	<i>Data Source</i>	<i>FY 1999 Actual</i>	<i>FY 2000 Actual</i>	<i>FY 2001 Actual</i>	<i>FY 2002 Revised Target</i>	<i>FY 2002 Actual</i>
Adjust land ownership Acres adjusted	MAR	337,396	75,295	35,132	20,174	15,553
Administer land use authorizations—Number of authorizations administered to standard	Program Staffs	18,726	12,108	12,907	10,011	11,498
Process land use proposals—Number of land use proposals processed	Program Staffs	5,984	3,907	3,870	2,303	2,791
Protect land ownership title Total number of encroachments and title claims with formal activities	Program Staffs	332	263	292	498	441
Survey boundary lines—Miles of boundary line marked/maintained	MAR	3,102	2,880	3,187	2,637	2,552
Purchase land Acres acquired	MAR	151,439	139,445	128,913	62,796	42,817
Conserve environmentally important forests threatened by conversion to non-forest uses Forest Legacy Project acquisition (acres)	PMAS ^o	19,281	31,263	84,709	200,000	57,009
Assist through States in the preparation of NIPF ^p lands stewardship management plans Thousands of acres of NIPF lands under forest stewardship plans.	PMAS	1,866	1,137	1,617	1,408	1,640

^a MAR – Management Attainment Reporting database.

^b NEPA – National Environmental Policy Act.

^c NR – Not reported or not required.

^d These timber sale-related activity titles have been changed from the FY 2002 Annual Performance Plan to clarify that the outputs from the regular timber sale program are separate from the salvage sale program. Both outputs must be combined to obtain the total timber sale-related outputs.

^e STARS – Sales Tracking and Reporting System database.

^f Includes FY 2000 carryover volume.

^g Data for FY 1999 and FY 2000 were derived from the actual board foot volumes reported using a national average 5 board foot per cubic foot ratio.

^h TSA – Timber Sale Accounting System database.

ⁱ Data included in Administer Total Timber Sales outputs.

^j TRACS – Timber Activity Control System database.

^k Includes timber stand improvement accomplishments only; range accomplishments were not reported.

^l The output for the activity has been changed to reflect the correct Budget Formulation and Execution System title rather than the “number of grazing allotments with signed agreements” as shown in the FY 2002 Annual Performance Plan.

^m INFRA – Infrastructure database.

ⁿ Data not verified at time of audit.

^o PMAS – Performance Measurement Accountability System database.

^p NIPF – Non Industrial Private Forest.

Overview

The agency provides a sustainable supply of values, products, and services from National Forest System (NFS) lands, and encourages and supports other landowners to do the same. Through State and Private Forestry (S&PF) programs, assistance is provided to a variety of partners in land management, land conservation, and natural resource-related economic development efforts.

National Forest System

National forests are an important source of timber from Federal lands. Timber from the national forests supplements timber provided from private lands to meet our growing demand for products derived from trees. Today, the majority of national forest timber sales are designed to incorporate multiple objectives, including insect and disease prevention and control, wildlife habitat improvement, and fuels reduction. In addition, national forests are also an important source of forage for livestock under grazing permits that allow the permit holder to use and occupy NFS lands. Mineral operations on NFS lands provide energy resources, base and precious metals, and industrial minerals for industry partners to develop and produce, thereby contributing to local economies. The Minerals and Geology Management Program provides for the management, protection, and use of geologic resources on national forests including caves, fossils, interpretive sites, and rock-collecting areas.

National forests are monitored and evaluated through land and resource management plans (LRMPs). Plan reports describe plan implementation evaluations, how effective management actions are in achieving desired results, and the validity of underlying assumptions made in the plans. Results are used in adaptive management to keep plans current and adjust decisions to correct or improve management of the NFS lands.

Land consolidation through acquisition or exchange enables the agency to better manage Federal lands within or adjacent to NFS boundaries. Emphasis is placed on acquisitions that will improve outdoor recreation, protect critical wildlife habitat, preserve cultural resources, and respond to urban and community needs. Administrative benefits are provided by reducing property boundaries, protecting property rights, acquiring rights-of-way, authorizing special uses, and simplifying road management and fire protection. Many of these activities are essential to local economies and the sustainable supply of goods and services and provide for the public's enjoyment, future use, and access to NFS lands.

State and Private Forestry

Within the S&PF deputy area are several programs that address the goals, measures, activities, and outputs of this objective. The goal of Economic Action Programs (EAPs) is to build the capacity of natural resource-dependent communities to manage change. In addition to building crucial working relationships and partnerships with communities, direct financial and technical support is provided to rural communities for addressing current and relevant issues and opportunities, such as developing new bio-based products, including energy, by using small-diameter and low-valued material. These programs are primarily delivered through the Economic Recovery, Rural Community Assistance, Rural Development, Wood In Transportation, and Forest Products Conservation and Recycling program components.

Essential to accomplishing economic goals are partnerships with other Federal agencies, State foresters and economic development organizations, university extension services, county and local governments, resource conservation and development (RC&D) councils, nonprofit organizations, private landowners, and many others. Partnerships that involve all the following

major components are a prerequisite for success: raw material acquisition, technical and financial feasibility, capital, workforce, marketing, and business skills. Failure in one component can result in failure of the entire venture. See also a discussion of EAPs under strategic objective 3a.

The goal of the Forest Legacy Program (FLP) is to protect environmentally important forests threatened by conversion to nonforest uses. The program operates on a “willing buyer and willing seller” basis and is completely nonregulatory in its approach. No eminent domain authority or adverse condemnation is authorized for this program. The FLP acquires land through full fee or conservation easement real estate transactions that typically take 12 to 24 months to complete. Therefore, budget allocations in a fiscal year may not result in acres acquired in the same fiscal year. Due to the voluntary nature of the program, acreage goals can only be estimates.

The Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) helps landowners become better informed of the value of their forest resources and how they can manage these resources to produce the goods and services they desire on a sustainable basis. Preparation of forest stewardship plans allows landowners the opportunity to identify their primary management objectives and learn how these objectives can be achieved. See also the Forest Stewardship discussion under strategic objectives 2d and 3a.

FY 2002 Performance

Overall, the agency fell below its expected targets for many activities and outputs due to personnel and funding shifts to meet the fiscal year (FY) 2002 firefighting efforts. The impacts affected both NFS and S&PF program areas.

National Forest System

Accomplishments from the NFS include:

- Approximately 76.5 percent of LRMP monitoring and evaluation reports was accomplished. Program effectiveness relies on consistent data collection over time, using standard protocols and long-term sampling procedures designed to assess specific changes in resource condition.
- The total timber sale program achieved almost 81 percent of its target for timber volume offered for sale. Of the total, salvage timber offered was 107 percent of its target.
- The number of completed NEPA process decision documents signed this fiscal year was lower than planned as national forests fell behind in achieving the objectives of the grazing allotment NEPA schedule due to diverting employees to fire assignments or to work on appeals and litigations. Priorities shifted between allotments, and as a result, some work was completed early while other NEPA analysis work has been delayed.
- Approximately 70 percent of land acquisitions and exchanges was accomplished.
- Nearly 97 percent of the national forest boundary line marking and maintenance goal was achieved.
- Resolved 441 trespass and encroachment cases to remove unauthorized use and occupation of public lands.
- The agency met 100 percent of its goal of managing all targeted acres of NFS lands to standard on grazing allotments across the country.

For “mineral operations processed to standard,” the USDA Forest Service cannot predict the number of proposals that might be submitted in a given fiscal year. Targets shown for FY 2002 represent field office capability; however, the number of new proposals in any given year is dependent on market conditions and other factors. Although processing can be delayed by environmental requirements or temporary unavailability of personnel, there are no long-term backlogs in this program.

In FY 2002, 115 percent of the special use permit target was administered to standard and 121 percent of land use proposals was processed above the national target. The agency is currently revising the process to track accomplishments reported by the national forests in processing land use proposals and administering land use authorizations. Concurrently, a more concise and measurable definition of “administered to standard” is being developed for consistency in reporting accomplishments in the future.

State and Private Forestry

Through the EAPs, the agency has provided both technical and financial support to new small, rural businesses that produce products made from small-diameter and low-value trees. The USDA Forest Service made significant progress in facilitating the development of new bio-based products; additional accomplishments were forestalled by continued emphasis on implementing the National Fire Plan (NFP) and the transfer of program funds to help cover firefighting costs in FY 2002. Numerous examples exist, however, of projects that have made progress in FY 2002, including bio-diesel made from poplar trees; red maple trusses; schools and other institutions being heated by wood chips; small-scale, bio-power systems producing electricity and heat from forest residues; small-diameter roundwood trusses; wood flooring, cabinets, paneling, and furniture being made from low-value species; juniper/plastic composites; and others.

FLP acquisitions of 57,009 acres fell short of the target of 200,000 acres for FY 2002, partly as a result of the transfer of program funds to help cover firefighting costs during the year. This resulted in delays to projects that were due to be completed during the fiscal year. In addition, appraisal review services that the agency normally provides to States for FLP projects were diverted, also resulting in delays to some projects expected to close in FY 2002. These projects will carry into FY 2003; completion is expected if the funds are restored. Through FY 2002, the Forest Legacy Program has protected over 300,000 acres since inception. Other significant accomplishments include new and enhanced partnerships with State agencies and nongovernmental organizations. Furthermore, many State-led agencies that participate in the program have improved their capacity to conserve important and sensitive forests.

Forest stewardship plans were written for 18,102 ownerships covering nearly 1.64 million acres of NIFP lands in FY 2002. In total, nearly 25 million acres of NIPF lands are covered under approximately 217,000 forest stewardship plans.

Program Evaluations There were no program evaluations conducted by the Ecosystem Management Coordination Staff during FY 2002.

National Forest System Timber sale program evaluations in FY 2002 included reviews of the timber sale appraisal, preparation, harvest administration, and theft prevention programs in Region 9 (Eastern Region). It was found that the Region 9 timber sale appraisal handbook needs updating, which will be done in FY 2003. It was also found that the currency, completeness, and application of timber sale-related environmental analyses and documentation varied widely in the region. It was recommended that a review of regional procedures and standards for environmental analysis and documentation be made to ensure they agree with national procedures and standards.

In the spring of 2002, the INFRA Rangeland Module, which is the corporate database of national forest grazing allotments and permits, was reviewed to evaluate progress on the completion of allotment NEPA procedures. It showed that national forests met approximately 50 percent of their scheduled work. The delay in meeting the schedule was due to difficulty in moving through the NEPA process itself, appeals of project decisions, lack of trained field personnel, and inadequate project funding. Livestock grazing program evaluations were planned at the regional and national forest levels, but the reviews were cancelled late in the fiscal year.

One program evaluation for Minerals and Geology Management was conducted in FY 2002 in Region 9. There were no significant findings or recommendations.

Land Ownership Adjustment Program oversight evaluations were conducted for all regions in FY 2002. Evaluations were completed to ensure that land exchanges are being processed consistently with applicable laws, regulations, and policies. Evaluations were also conducted to ensure that regions properly manage delegations and third party activities and provide oversight for their Land Ownership Adjustment Program.

State and Private Forestry Due to the need for redirecting resources to cover fire suppression costs, no regional or national evaluations were conducted this year for EAPs.

A FLP review of Region 6, which provides service to the States of Washington and Oregon, was conducted in FY 2002. The region was found to be providing excellent service to the States. The region recognized that the growth of the program requires a dedicated staff position. This new position will provide assistance to Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington.

The FLP underwent an extensive inquiry by the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations Surveys and Investigations staff. That investigation looked at all of the regions across the country and included participating States and other partners. A report of findings was published in June 2002. The USDA Forest Service prepared a response to the report outlining actions taken and to be undertaken to address issues raised in the report.

The Washington Office Cooperative Forestry Staff undertook an evaluation of the implementation of all the FSPs in Region 6. The evaluation indicated that implementation of the FSPs was very successful. No significant issues were identified.

Conclusions and
Challenges

National Forest System

The agency needs to strengthen its reporting of monitoring and evaluation results. Those reports not published in FY 2002 will be included in the unit's FY 2003 monitoring and evaluation report. A national meeting with regional monitoring and evaluation coordinators and monthly conference calls will stress compliance with these targets. Additionally, the agency will strengthen the relationship between these reports and strategic and annual performance plans.

Environmental and species protection provisions are evolving faster than the agency can react to them. The currently poor timber market conditions have significantly affected our ability to accomplish our vegetative management objectives through the timber sale program. Timber sales being planned and prepared are affected by appeals and lawsuits on other sales, leaving no prepared sales in the pipeline to replace those that are delayed or withdrawn. Sale preparation costs are also increasing faster than outyear budget plans anticipate, so field units have less ability to meet assigned targets. In addition, the Timber Sale Pipeline Restoration Fund has not yet been able to increase the pipeline.

Program Evaluations

The agency expects that animal unit months of grazing under permit will decline slightly as more allotment management plans are reviewed and evaluated using the NEPA process. New livestock grazing permits will be issued following these allotment analyses; an expected decline in permitted numbers is expected to be reflected in these permits. As new decisions are made, the acres under grazing are expected to decline slightly. Because of this, the acres of grazing allotments administered to standard will decline commensurately.

The USDA Forest Service continues to keep pace with the number of proposed energy and mineral operations while meeting various environmental requirements, despite the need for employees to work on many different priorities. In part, this is the result of the decline in new proposals due to delays, additional costs, and uncertainty of energy and mineral development approvals on NFS lands.

Over the next several years, key opportunities are expected for exchange or purchase of lands from industry and other private landholders for the national forests. Many areas within or immediately adjacent to existing national forests contain important resources. If acquired, these purchases will help the USDA Forest Service meet critical objectives related to public outdoor recreation opportunities, critical wildlife habitat, and wilderness or other congressionally designated areas. These purchases will also improve management efficiency and decrease property management administration costs.

The agency is facing serious challenges in being able to adequately manage its 45,000 nonrecreation special use authorizations and in conducting monitoring and inspections to ensure compliance with existing authorizations. At current funding levels, the agency is able to administer only about 25 percent of its authorizations annually, and a growing number of authorizations have expired. The agency lacks the resources needed to aggressively evaluate the impacts of existing uses and occupancies, to determine whether or not to continue to authorize use or occupancy, and to identify provisions needed in new authorizations to adequately protect NFS lands and resources.

The increasing relocation of the public into the rural landscape, as well as the exploding wildland-urban interface, is significantly increasing the volume and frequency of encroachments and unauthorized trespasses on USDA Forest Service lands. Fire rehabilitation, fire suppression, and fuels reduction activities occurring along the boundaries of the national forests impact public lands. The greatest challenge will be to ensure that boundary lines are marked and maintained in those areas where increased populations and public use have increased the impacts on public lands.

State and Private Forestry

There are many creative ideas emerging through the EAPs for developing new, bio-based products from small-diameter and low-value trees. This past fiscal year has seen numerous products working their way into the market. For every two successes, however, there are four failures—converting a concept into a reality is a difficult task. The EAPs are getting better at identifying and prioritizing potentially successful efforts. The financial and technical resources have been increased with the advent of the NFP, thus providing more seed funds and helping launch new, bio-based products. Challenges include sustaining funding to continue activities during the startup, learning, and development stages; helping these enterprises become self-sufficient; and meeting the demand for services.

The FLP is a growing program that has expanding appeal to States, nongovernmental partners, and Congress. An increase in program funding to \$65 million for FY 2002 and the introduction of seven additional participating States bode well for future accomplishments. Unfortunately, the same caveats stated above apply to future years. The typical uncertainty associated with real estate transactions and voluntary participation by private landowners inherently makes target setting more art than science.

Annual FLP accomplishments vary greatly, but expanding field unit capacity and additional, consistent funding will improve program performance predictability. Funding for the FLP increased for FY 2002 to \$65 million, and the FY 2003 President's Budget proposes approximately \$70 million. This increased funding will result in accelerating accomplishments, but will also put a strain on the current capacity of services. Options such as outsourcing and expanded partnerships may help the agency's ability to provide services.

As a result of the House Committee on Appropriations investigation into the FLP, new program policies and process approaches have been developed and will be implemented over the next several years. These will improve program management efficiency and effectiveness and fiscal accountability.

An analysis of FSP plans conducted in 2000 indicated that plan writers were not always adequately addressing nontimber values to the extent required by statute. As a result, a desk guide and a Web site were developed to assist landowners and plan writers in writing forest stewardship plans, including information on forest management for timber and nontimber values. Additional evaluations will be needed to determine the effectiveness of these tools.

Verification, Validation,
and Limitations of Data
Sources

National Forest System

Outputs shown with a data source indicator of MAR are collected through the Management Attainment Reporting process. The data is compiled by the districts and forests and then reviewed by regional and national offices for reasonableness. Further validation has not been considered cost effective, so accuracy of the data is dependent on entries made at the forest level.

The USDA Forest Service took several actions in FY 2001 and FY 2002 to improve the quality of the MAR data for completion of forest plan reports. A new database, Natural Resource Information System (NRIS), is starting to be used to accumulate monitoring data and facilitate its evaluation using consistent methods. NRIS was designed and implemented to reduce the amount of time for data entry and tabulation, and to minimize the risks of errors from manually consolidating data entry sheets; to facilitate field review of accomplishments reports; and to improve data analysis, control, and validation efforts. This system addresses Office of Inspector General recommendations in a June 2000 report on implementing “reasonableness” checks in the reporting process.

The forest products activities and outputs are presumed to be provided within sustainable limits because the levels of most outputs provided today are significantly less than the levels provided in the past. To move toward achievement of the established annual performance goal of “products and services are provided for subsistence, commercial and non-commercial uses within sustainable limits,” it is necessary to establish how sustainability will be defined and measured. Processes designed to assess sustainability are under development. In the meantime, periodic assessments of inventory and monitoring data must serve as indicators of sustainability.

“Timber sale volumes offered for sale” is entered by field personnel into the Sales Tracking and Reporting System (STARS), from which accomplishment reports are run. In addition, timber sale “sold and harvest” information for each sale is recorded on form 2400-17, and regularly inputted into the Timber Sales Accounting (TSA) System. These processes are managed in conformance with the direction provided in the Timber Management Information System Handbook (FSH 2409.14), Chapter 30, Timber Sale Information and Chapter 40, Timber Harvest Information, as well as the Automated Timber Sale Accounting Handbook (FSH 6509.17).

Keeping track of recent range project decisions once a NEPA analysis is completed is accomplished using the Range Module within the INFRA database. This database is used on all forests with a livestock grazing program. There are numerous steps to completing an analysis and making a project decision, and the INFRA database tracks this information. In spring 2002, the database contained up-to-date information for nearly all grazing allotments on NFS lands. Data input has fallen off since this effort was completed. The number of decisions made after new NEPA analyses reflects this data input problem. Similarly, information on allotment acres administered to standard may actually be higher than reported. To correct these problems, the database and entry forms are being modified to allow tracking starting in FY 2004. This is expected to improve reporting and accuracy.

Land ownership case information is entered on a Proposed Exchange form (FS-5400-10) or proposed Purchase Sheets (FS-5400-9) at the field level in conformance with direction

provided in the Land Acquisition Handbook (FSH 5409.13). The acquired acreage reported on the digest sheets is then entered into the MAR system by each unit for national reporting.

Lands Special Use Authorization (SUA) information is entered into the INFRA Special Uses Database System (SUDS) at the field level to track scheduled and completed SUA inspections. In FY 2002, SUDS was modified to collect data of completed inspections into its biannual data collection snapshot. The accuracy of data is dependent, in part, on whether inspections are documented in SUDS.

Individual forests and grasslands record boundary management accomplishments in their respective Corner Status Atlas in conformance with direction provided in the Surveying Manual (FSM 7150). These accomplishments are physically marked on hard copy maps and then reported in the MAR system by each region for national reporting. Boundary management accomplishments will soon be electronically tracked in the Automated Lands Program (ALP) database.

Title management information is reported in several formats. Small Tract Act case information is reported through Form 5500-3, Small Tract Act Parcels Report; land status information is reported through the Land Areas Report and also in the ALP system; and title claims are reported through the litigation process or through administrative procedures. These reporting requirements have been in place for several years and provide an accurate and reliable measurement of the annual accomplishments and the agency's progress in resolving access issues.

State and Private Forestry

The data source for FY 2002 accomplishments of the EAPs is a new database used to assess and account for the program's activities. The database was significantly revised during FY 2002, and program managers in the Washington Office are continuing to evaluate and expand the capabilities of the tool. The intent is to maintain an accurate and reliable database that will help manage, track, monitor, and report all EAP assistance and activities, including new bio-based products from small-diameter and low-valued trees.

The FLP has developed a national database (Forest Legacy Information System) through the National Information Center in St. Paul, MN, associated with the Northeastern Area. This Web-based system allows program managers to update information and increases their ability to estimate project completion dates and form accurate target estimates in future years.

FSP data entered by each State has been closely scrutinized. In cases where there was a marked difference in FY 2002 data entry compared with FY 2001 data, the State has been contacted to ensure that the numbers are accurate.

Strategic Objective 2d. Increase accessibility for a diversity of people and members of underserved and low-income populations to the full range of uses, values, products, and services.

Annual Performance Goals and Associated Measures:

(1) Agency plans, programs, and activities demonstrate involvement of interested and affected people from all segments of society, including underserved and low-income populations.

Measure: Percent of persons participating in agency processes, programs, and activities that represent underserved and low-income populations.

(2) All segments of society, including underserved and low-income populations, have the capacity to effectively participate in the planning, delivery, and consumption of USDA Forest Service products and services.

Measure: Percent of USDA Forest Service administrative units whose products and services meet target population accessibility standards.*

* Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) services are administered by State forestry agencies. The USDA Forest Service does not keep national records of the percent of State forestry agency units that meet target population accessibility standards. This measure will be rewritten to better reflect FSP goals.

Overview

The USDA Forest Service provides services and opportunities to Americans of all racial and ethnic backgrounds. Through a variety of employment and economic outreach programs, the agency strives to encourage and increase participation of many diverse individuals and groups. Many of these efforts are directed at minority, poor, and other underserved groups throughout the Nation.

The agency's strategic plan and the strategic public outreach plan, goals, and objectives provide the corporate umbrella for many national efforts and local activities already under way. They also provide new opportunities to work and learn together, ensuring that all Americans, including the underserved, participate in natural resources management and benefit from agency programs and service. Our Nation is rapidly changing and becoming more diverse. This increases the agency's need to find common ground and build relevance with all segments of society, including underserved populations and communities, in order to carry out the agency's mission, plans, programs, and activities. These improvements result in a more productive work environment and better customer service.

In the development of forest management plans, including Forest Stewardship Plans, the USDA Forest Service helps a diversity of landowners. The distribution of nonindustrial private forest (NIPF) landowners participating in the development of forest management plans is tracked by race and ethnicity. (See also Forest Stewardship Program discussions under strategic objectives 2c and 3a.)

FY 2002 Performance

The USDA Forest Service continues to accomplish and expand upon the USDA Civil Rights initiatives integral to customer service delivery. Through the strategic public outreach plan, the agency continues to establish and build positive working relationships with underserved, minority, low-income, and limited-resource communities in collaborative land stewardship, as well as to improve customer service and increase program delivery and outreach. Communities affected include Hispanic, Asian-Pacific Islander, African American, and other multiracial/cultural community-based organizations.

The USDA Forest Service national headquarters provided seed money to field units that demonstrated excellent public outreach partnerships with diverse, underserved communities. These excellent models of public outreach with underserved communities are the focus of agencywide dialogue to improving customer service, public outreach, and collaborative stewardship initiatives.

The USDA Forest Service implemented a partnership agreement with the National Network of Forest Practitioners (NNFP) to help implement the National Fire Plan (NFP), a key national initiative. This agreement ensured underserved communities are integral to the implementation of aspects of the NFP and Large-scale Watershed Restoration Projects initiatives. NNFP implemented a series of local and regional meetings delivered through external community-based organizations and underserved communities.

The USDA Forest Service developed the National Hispanic Radio outreach pilot project, which included a contract with the Hispanic Radio Network (HRN), La Red Hispana, Inc. The contractor aired more than 30 USDA Forest Service program stories nationally and internationally across the HRN radio affiliates. Spanish language stories included wildfire prevention and suppression activities, careers in natural resources and requirements of such careers, and other USDA Forest Service programs offered at the field units.

The Pacific Southwest Region and the University of California, Berkeley, created a partnership to support numerous community-based organizations. The partnership worked to establish a forum for dialogue between the USDA Forest Service and underserved communities, called "People for Forest, Forest for People—Just Forest Symposium." The forum has been planned for FY 2003.

Civil Rights Impact Analyses (CRIA) and Social Impact Assessments are integral to national forest land and resource management plans and other administrative decision processes. During FY 2002, the USDA Forest Service implemented these analyses and assessments for numerous programs and policies. Noteworthy actions include establishment of the Forest Service Limited Tree Removal Policy/Program and several USDA Forest Service organization management decisions. The CRIA tool ensures that diverse perspectives, values, uses, products, and services important to affected American populations are considered and engaged.

The USDA Forest Service national outreach coordinator and the USDA Office of Outreach coordinated several FY 2002 events to provide technical assistance and resources to underserved communities, including the Third Annual Small Farmers Conference in Albuquerque, NM, as well as assistance in the development and implementation of the 2002 Farm Bill.

The agency is striving to improve minority participation in the FSP, which assists, through States, NIPF landowners in development of forest management plans and encourages sound natural resource practices. Minority landowner participation in the FSP was 2.9 percent of the total in FY 2002. Minority participants identified themselves as Black (2.1 percent), Native American/Alaska Native (0.2 percent), Asian American (0.5 percent), or Hispanic (0.1 percent). The percent of non-Caucasian participants has decreased since the most recent prior data on the racial/ethnic makeup of landowners was collected in 1978. At that time, participation by race/ethnic origin was Black (4.6 percent), Native American/Alaska Native (1.1 percent), Asian (0.8 percent), and Hispanic (0.2 percent). It is unclear if the lower participation percentage is due to a decrease in minority ownership of NIPF since 1978, or because there is a need to greatly enhance program outreach. The USDA Forest Service has, in any case, taken measures to improve outreach, including the publication of an outreach handbook and its distribution to our State partners. Some States have also initiated outreach efforts such as hosting landowner field days and workshops, as well as creating outreach positions.

Program Evaluations

The USDA Forest Service conducted field unit civil rights compliance reviews and implemented Senior Executive Service Performance evaluations. The reviewers found many positive examples of customer service and positive work environments, as well as the need for improvement in coordination and training. The USDA Forest Service published the Fiscal Year 2002 Information and Reporting Requirements report to USDA and the U.S. Department of Justice, delineating servicewide compliance reviews of federally assisted programs and program complaint resolutions that were accomplished.

The Washington Office Cooperative Forestry Staff evaluated program implementation in Region 6. The evaluation indicated that implementation of the FSP was very successful. No significant issues were uncovered.

Conclusions and Challenges

Overall, the USDA Forest Service continues to improve employee morale, decrease employment complaints, maintain a low number of program complaints, increase organizational capacity to perform at a higher level, and experience fewer retention problems. Decreasing national budgets continue to place pressure on field units and the headquarters to restructure the workforce and organization infrastructure.

To make the FSP more successful with minority landowners, the USDA Forest Service needs to have more reliable data on the racial and ethnic makeup of potential program participants. At this time, the agency is working to gather this information on current NIPF landowners. The data collection efforts now under way will not be complete for several years. In the meantime, the USDA Forest Service will continue to encourage State partners to reach out to underserved landowners and ensure they have fair and equal access.

Verification, Validation,
and Limitations of Data
Sources

The agency maintains and manages the USDA Forest Service Employee Complaint System, the Program Discrimination Complaints Database, and the Human Resources Management FOCUS Database, which allow assessments, actions, and improvement of situations as they arise. No significant data limitations were identified in these systems.

Data related to the FSP that was submitted by State counterparts has been reviewed and analyzed. While the data can serve as an indicator, it may not be entirely accurate. Although the agency prefers that States collect the data using a written form filled out voluntarily by the landowner, some States are determining race/ethnicity by the appearance of the participant, which can be inaccurate at times.

Strategic Objective 2e. Improve delivery of services to urban communities

Annual Performance Goals and Associated Measures:

(1) Improve the livability within urban areas by helping to ensure that urban trees, forests, and other green spaces are diverse, healthy, and lasting.

Measures:* Increased total number of communities participating in urban forestry programs at all levels of management (project, formative, developmental, and sustained). Increased percentage of communities participating at the developmental and sustained levels of management (with open space assessments, ordinances, and management plans).

* The original measure read “Percentage increase in green space in selected cities. Increased number of communities engaging in urban forestry practices that address air quality conditions. Increased percentage of communities with urban forestry and open space assessments, ordinances, and management plans.” The agency never established a strategy to measure annual increases in green space in cities. The measures above are more appropriate to the goals of the Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) Program.

Activity and Outputs	Data Source	FY 1999 Actual	FY 2000 Actual	FY 2001 Actual	FY 2002 Revised Target	FY 2002 Actual
Address community and metropolitan area natural and environmental needs—Number of participating communities	PMAS ^a	10,514 ^b	10,547	11,021	10,500	11,686

^a PMAS – Performance Measures Accountability System.

^b FY 1999 actual accomplishment revised from figure published in FY 2000 performance report.



Overview

While research studies increasingly demonstrate that well-managed urban trees and forests contribute to improved air quality, since 1997 States have only reported the number of communities participating at any level of urban and community forestry programs. The higher the level of participation, the more likely that urban trees and forest resources contribute positive benefits for air quality, stormwater retention, urban cooling, and a myriad of other positive environmental, economic, and social benefits. Responsibility for these benefits is shared among many Federal, State, and local programs.

State and Private Forestry's (S&PF's) Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) Program provides leadership in improving and expanding urban forest ecosystems. The U&CF Program assists local communities in recognizing the value of their urban trees and forests, building capacity to manage community forest resources, and supporting community vitality through public involvement, commitment, and action. Communities are encouraged in the strategic use of tree planting; urban forest management to help mitigate the effects of flood hazards and air, water, soil, and noise pollution; and the reduction of energy use and community beautification. These efforts also contribute social and economic benefits by creating community gathering places and recreation opportunities, increasing real estate values, and helping communities attract and retain businesses.

The U&CF Program leads communities to provide better stewardship of urban natural resources. The program offers expert advice, innovative technology, and financial assistance to ensure that there are healthy trees and forests where people live, work, and play. Metropolitan areas collectively support nearly one-quarter of the Nation's total tree canopy cover. Program funding contributes to community economic stability, natural beauty, public health, and quality of life. The U&CF staff works cooperatively with State foresters and other partners to effectively deliver the Federal program and develop urban and community forestry programs at the State and local levels. The program currently places emphasis on four areas: strengthening State and local capacity, helping to make cities more livable to help reduce urban sprawl, assessing the condition of urban natural resources, and strengthening applied research and technology transfer.

FY 2002 Performance

USDA Forest Service Research and Development (R&D), in cooperation with U&CF, has initiated a long-term strategy to assess tree cover in urban areas nationwide every 10 years. The first assessment, published in August 2000, established a 1992 baseline of 27 percent tree cover in urban areas nationwide. The second assessment, which will update these numbers for 2002 and provide the first indication of regional and nationwide trends, will not be completed for another 2 to 3 years.

Based on preliminary reports by the States, 11,686 communities participated in U&CF programs nationwide during FY 2002. This number is larger than the 10,500 anticipated, in part because additional Federal and State funding for financial and technical assistance in FY 2001 contributed to increased community involvement that carried over into 2002. This situation occurs when States receive Federal funds near the end of the Federal fiscal year and may not issue subgrants to communities until the following year. As a result, some States may not report accomplishments for a fiscal year until the following year. Between 1997 and 2002, the program experienced modest but steady increases in Federal funding that were reflected in accomplishments. Over these 5 years, the States reported that the number of participating

communities increased steadily from 27 percent to 43 percent of all eligible communities. USDA Forest Service and State-supported projects attracted 2.3 million hours of volunteer assistance in 2002, an increase of about 700,000 volunteer hours from the previous year, which greatly exceeded projections.

In 2002, Congress appropriated \$1.5 million for the USDA Forest Service to “participate in developing living memorials using trees that will recognize the tragic losses that occurred on September 11, 2001, in New York City, the Pentagon area, and southwest Pennsylvania.” By the first anniversary in September 2002, the U&CF “Living Memorials Project” had already awarded \$933,300 in Federal grants ranging from \$13,000 to \$236,000 to establish publicly accessible memorial sites. In addition, grant recipients received technical support in the form of training, on-the-ground assistance, Web-accessible technical materials, and online mapping. In Virginia, the USDA Forest Service is working with the Virginia State forester and officials from the Pentagon, Arlington County, and American Forests to develop additional memorial sites.

The USDA Forest Service continued its partnership with more than 130 public and private organizations that have joined forces in Chicago Wilderness, an unprecedented alliance dedicated to protecting and restoring the region’s natural heritage and to inspiring the region’s residents to become active stewards. Since 1995, the U&CF program has helped Chicago Wilderness fund more than 170 urban forestry projects across the region, extending from northeastern Illinois into Wisconsin and Indiana. Projects under way in 2002 with USDA Forest Service support include two efforts: the Illinois Biodiversity Basics, a program aimed at increasing awareness and support among educators for the recovery of biodiversity in the region and the Metropolitan Natural Landscaping Initiative, which promotes the use of trees and other natural vegetation around corporate, institutional, and local government buildings.

Urban watershed stewardship activities around the country continued to receive U&CF support in FY 2002. Regions and State partners provided technical assistance and grants to communities and Native American Tribes to undertake collaborative efforts to manage, protect, restore, and maintain natural resources and watersheds in their communities. Some projects engaged underrepresented groups and youth organizations in community-based watershed restoration efforts. The program works with States to define and implement natural resources protection and restoration efforts within large urban areas, as well as to address issues of environmental justice and urban sprawl in project design and implementation.

One example is Revitalizing Baltimore, a regional partnership working to improve urban natural resources in and around Baltimore, MD. This national model for community forestry and watershed restoration equips city residents to care for natural resources, while employing these resources to revitalize their neighborhoods. Over the last 7 years, Revitalizing Baltimore has helped to green 45 urban neighborhoods by planting more than 3,560 street trees and 9,800 riparian trees and shrubs in over 500 projects involving more than 3,000 volunteers annually. The partnership also provided stewardship education to over 6,600 students and 500 adults. It actively reaches out to culturally diverse communities to help residents in a variety of urban forestry projects. Examples include planting trees along streets and streams, transforming vacant lots into community green space, improving neighborhood parks and schoolyards, monitoring streams and habitats, and fostering stewardship of natural resources through youth education and adult training.

In 2002, the USDA Forest Service conducted new Geographic Information System (GIS)-based urban ecosystem analyses for metropolitan areas in San Antonio, TX; Fayetteville, AR; San Juan, PR; New Orleans, LA; and Philadelphia, PA. More detailed GIS-based analyses were also completed for Atlanta, GA, and Roanoke, VA. The U&CF program continued to support development and delivery of GIS planning tools for integrated forest ecosystem analysis, such as the American Forests' CITYgreen™ analysis package and TreePeople's T.R.E.E.S. Project. These cost-benefit programs assist State and local governments in documenting the effectiveness of using green infrastructure approaches in improving planning and management in rapidly growing communities.

The U&CF Program completed a National Technology Transfer Strategy and Action Plan in FY 2002. As part of this process, the national team also completed the first phase of a market analysis to "identify barriers and/or obstacles from inadequate staffing and funding that prevent effective delivery of technology transfer research and information." This social/market research is designed to help those involved in urban and community forestry become more effective in disseminating technical knowledge and education information. The products from this project will include a market analysis summary that outlines the findings, presents "key messages" to overcome barriers, and provides a simple and direct strategy to motivate the target audience; a PowerPoint presentation for local government officials and leaders to highlight the importance of investing in green infrastructure and community forests; and a handbook that provides a step-by-step process for implementing the strategy and promoting investment in community trees.

Program Evaluations

The U&CF Program participated in a review of all Cooperative Forestry programs in Region 6. The purpose of the review was twofold: (1) to monitor and improve program management, delivery, coordination, and communication between the Washington Office and the Pacific Northwest Region; and (2) to ensure that the USDA Forest Service is providing high-quality service through all cooperative programs to State forestry and economic development organizations, the agency's National Forest System (NFS) and R&D deputy areas, nongovernment organizations, urban centers, communities, and private landowners.

The review found that all Cooperative Forestry programs provide the tools, approaches, and authorities needed to shift to seamless government within Region 6; the region is working across boundaries and the U&CF Program is a key element in making this shift successful; and Cooperative Forestry programs in the Pacific Northwest are being well managed and delivered.

Conclusions and Challenges

Over the past decade, since inception, the U&CF Program has shown exciting accomplishments and increasing public awareness and participation in State and local U&CF programs. Financial support to State and local programs has built a structural capacity leading to greater numbers of self-sustaining efforts. Every dollar of Federal funding leverages another 4 dollars invested by State and local public organizations in planting trees and maintaining the urban forest.

Even with these successes, the need is growing for greater scientific understanding and applied research into urban forest health, structure, and function within the landscape to better monitor and sustain the long-term benefits provided by these forests. As urban areas expand

ever more rapidly into less-developed rural areas, a growing percentage of the Nation's natural resources—including key national forests—will merge with urban forest ecosystems. For this reason, it is critical that we begin to look at and influence vital connections on the landscape. From declining inner-city neighborhoods to increasingly fragmented rural forests, a new emphasis on linking and managing the Nation's "green" infrastructure will enable the agency and the U&CF Program to work effectively across the landscape with other Federal, State, and local partners to contribute to and build more sustainable communities.

The USDA Forest Service will continue to track trends in participating communities, volunteer participation in U&CF programs, and sustainability of local programs. Various cities are using new tools, developed by USDA Forest Service R&D and other partners, to help assess urban forest benefits and functions (e.g., air pollution removal and carbon sequestration). With these tools, communities are improving management of urban forests to improve human health and environmental quality. The agency has also begun to assess urban tree canopy cover every 10 years. By 2006, the agency will complete the second assessment and report on trends in tree cover for urban areas nationwide.

One challenge to continuing the steady increase in numbers of participating communities and in the level of participation may come in FY 2003 with a reduction in capacity in State programs. Several factors converged during FY 2002, causing States to begin reducing U&CF technical and financial assistance to communities. These factors include the downturn in the national economy that seriously impacted State budgets, the mid-year borrowing of funds from U&CF and other agency accounts to help cover unexpectedly high wildfire suppression costs, and deferral of final FY 2003 appropriations until calendar year 2003, which further delayed U&CF grants to States.

Verification, Validation, and Limitations of Data Sources

During November 2002, U&CF coordinators in the States provided FY 2002 annual accomplishments on line using the Performance Management and Accountability System (PMAS), a Web-accessed database. Regional coordinators and Washington Office staff personnel reviewed the submitted data prior to acceptance. To the greatest extent possible, the information in this report was validated via e-mail, phone calls or Web-based reports.

**Strategic Goal 3.
Science and Technical
Assistance**

Strategic Objective 3a: Better assist in building the capacity of tribal governments, rural communities, and private landowners to adapt to economic, environmental, and social change related to natural resources.

Annual Performance Goals and Associated Measures:

(1) Professional management on non-Federal land through the Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) is increased to help balance policy changes on public lands.

Measure: Percentage of eligible lands with a current forest stewardship plan in place.

(2) Natural resource-based businesses, rural communities, tribal governments, and private landowners are able to integrate the sustainable use of natural resources into their local and regional development processes.

Measure: Number of rural communities with a broad-based strategic plan*

(3) Rural community strategic planning and USDA Forest Service land management planning are coordinated to identify, integrate, and achieve common goals.

Measure: Number of forest plans (scheduled for revision) with specific direction for integration planning and management activities with local/rural communities.

(4) Focused financial-assistance-to-States more effectively implements the Federal role in management, protection, and improved use of forests.

Measure: To be developed.

* Measure modified from "Percentage of rural communities..." to "Number of rural communities..." to be consistent with past measurements and agency actions.

Activity and Outputs	Data Source	FY 1999 Actual	FY 2000 Actual	FY 2001 Actual	FY 2002 Revised Target	FY 2002 Actual
Provide State fire assistance to communities—Number assisted	NFPORS ^a	2,450 ^b	2,450 ^b	121	660	768
Provide assistance to volunteer fire departments—Number assisted	NFPORS	↓	↓	871	2,522	1,134

Activity and Outputs	Data Source ^c	FY 1999 Actual	FY 2000 Actual	FY 2001 Actual	FY 2002 Revised Target	FY 2002 Actual
Assist natural resource-dependent rural communities and businesses—Number of communities working under broad-based local strategic plans	PMT ^c	740	928	959	960	970
Assist Pacific Northwest (PNW) natural resource-dependent rural communities and businesses—Number of PNW communities working under broad-based local strategic plans	PMT	248	219	231	329	240
National Fire Plan—Cooperative fire protection, State fire assistance to communities	NFPORS	N/A	N/A	1,070	1,928	1,795
National Fire Plan—Cooperative fire protection, cooperative fire assistance to volunteer fire departments	NFPORS	N/A	N/A	1,001	4,170	2,647
National Fire Plan—Cooperative Forestry, Economic Action Program—Assist natural resource-dependent rural communities and businesses	NFPORS	NR ^d	NR	^e	NR	222

^a NFPORS – National Fire Plan Operations and Reporting System.

^b The combined accomplishment for both communities assisted and volunteer fire departments assisted is 2,450. In fiscal years (FY) 1999 and FY 2000, the two programs had combined accomplishments not separable by program. An error in tracking in FY 2000 led to underreporting for the number of communities/volunteer fire departments assisted. These numbers have been revised upward from the 2000 Annual Performance Report.

^c PMT – Performance Management Tool.

^d NR – Not reported or not required.

^e Funding is for technical and financial assistance to communities to help them recover from the effects of wildland fires. Projected outputs for these funds were not estimated in advance. Accomplishments were not reported in 2001.

Overview

The USDA Forest Service provides financial, scientific, and technical support to States, tribal governments, rural communities and businesses, and private landowners in support of local economies and to provide protection from wildland fires.

Through the State Fire Assistance (SFA) and Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) programs, the USDA Forest Service provides financial and technical assistance to help States, territories, and communities implement fire preparedness and wildland fire mitigation activities. These activities increase their ability to protect the natural resources and property that small communities rely on for their economic livelihood. See also a discussion of fire assistance programs under strategic objective 1c.

The USDA Forest Service uses the Economic Action Programs (EAPs), such as Pacific Northwest Assistance and others, to build working relationships with rural communities and provide them with technical and financial assistance. USDA Forest Service employees across the country work with local elected officials, grassroots community organizations, community forestry practitioners, and a multitude of other partners in a wide variety of community-based activities. Partnerships are formed to strengthen, diversify, and expand local economies; build local capacity to develop, implement, and monitor community strategic plans; integrate natural resource stewardship with opportunities to expand and create jobs and locally owned businesses; develop new products and markets for ecosystem restoration byproducts; improve transportation networks; and increase access to technology.

In FY 2002, EAP authorities, networks, and partnerships of the EAPs were also used by the National Fire Plan (NFP) to help rural communities and organizations seek market-based opportunities for natural resource businesses and services. Through the additional financial resources of the NFP, the agency uses EAPs to build local capacity in areas at risk from wildfires due to concentrations of high-hazard fuels. Additional discussion of EAPs can be found under strategic objective 2c.

The 9.9 million non-industrial private forest (NIPF) landowners in the United States control 48 percent of the Nation's forests, but only about 7 percent of these lands are covered by written forest management plans. Stewardship management plans and multiresource practices on these non-Federal forest lands help enhance forest and rangeland health across the entire landscape. See also a discussion of the Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) under strategic objectives 2c and 2d.

FY 2002 Performance

States and territories receive State Fire Assistance grants to address wildfire hazards in the wildland-urban interface through fuels reduction, community projects, prevention, creation of defensible space around property, and FIREWISE education campaigns. In 2002, the Cooperative Fire Assistance Program provided SFA grants to 46 States and 4 territories. Four States, two territories, and the District of Columbia did not receive cooperative fire assistance because they were not able to submit their grant applications before the transfer of funds to cover extraordinary fire suppression costs in 2002. Some States that did receive grants did not receive the full funding anticipated when targets were established. Shortfalls in meeting targets are attributable primarily to the lack of program contributions from these States. Grants issued allowed the States, territories, and rural communities to increase their capacity to fight wildland fire. The program supplied additional firefighting equipment, safety gear, communi-

cations equipment, and training for both volunteer and governmental firefighters. FY 2002 was the second year for specific funding to address significant hazard mitigation needs across the Nation.

VFA grants were awarded to 43 States in FY 2002. Seven States did not receive VFA assistance because they were not able to submit grant applications before funding was stopped when funds were transferred to cover the enormous fire suppression costs during FY 2002. Some States that did receive grants did not receive full funding anticipated when targets were established. As with the SFA program, a shortfall in meeting the target is attributable in part to the lack of program contributions from these States. In addition, due to priorities in some States, the average grant size to communities went up, with the result that fewer departments may be assisted than anticipated. Grants enabled rural fire services to increase their capacity to fight wildland fire and associated community protection in the wildland urban interface. Special emphasis has been on training and personal protective equipment for volunteer wildland firefighters. The new National Fire Plan Operations and Reporting System (NFPORS) database has improved our ability to track VFA target accomplishments and NFP goal progress. The data produced is considered reasonably sound and supportable. Expectations are that future data collection and reporting will improve as the NFPORS database is adjusted in FY 2003 to collect more complete data.

Forest stewardship plans were written for 18,102 ownerships covering over 1.64 million acres of NIPF forest lands in FY 2002. This brings the total number of acres under forest stewardship plans to just under 25 million and the total number of plans to about 217,000. The FY 2002 target of 1,407,800 acres was exceeded by more than 131,000 acres.

The USDA Forest Service exceeded its goal for number of rural communities working under broad-based local strategic plans. In addition to those communities with completed plans, more than 200 other communities are working on new plans. With the continued emphasis on implementing the NFP and the transfer of program funds to help cover firefighting costs of FY 2002, regional and local coordinators of EAPs spent only limited time and other resources to help rural communities develop new or revise old local strategic plans. NFP-EAP funding was used, however, to assist over 222 rural communities in integrating wildfire protection and prevention and hazardous fuels management into new or existing local strategic action plans, an increase of 41 over FY 2001. Rural communities use these plans to develop the capacity for collaborative resource management and sustainable development projects.

In FY 2002, with not all regions reporting final totals, over 1,300 rural communities and organizations received direct technical or financial assistance via the EAPs (including both regular core program and NFP-funded assistance). The total number receiving assistance is greater than in FY 2001 due to the heightened focus on communities at risk from wildfires. Even though funding was transferred to cover firefighting costs, communities receiving assistance included 325 underserved rural communities, 91 tribal communities, and 102 communities of other minority groups.

Through base EAP and NFP-EAP funds, rural communities and organizations implemented over 820 projects, including activities aimed at maintaining or expanding local businesses. A substantial number of projects were not initiated due to the redirection of funds for firefighting.

During FY 2002, the new PMT database was used, evaluated, and revised for management of the EAPs. This tool is critical to the full implementation of the USDA Forest Service's National Strategic Plan for Economic Action Programs: *Working Together for Rural America: 2000 and Beyond – Integrating Natural Resource Management and Rural Community Assistance*. Although this new tool is helping with certain aspects of monitoring and evaluation, only small advances were made in FY 2002 to build the capacity in rural communities to measure and evaluate their own progress toward their strategic goals. This remains a key emphasis area for future efforts.

The Forest Products Laboratory (FPL) is conducting research on various applications that may open up new markets for material that can help offset the costs of hazardous fuel reduction. Such applications could be used by rural communities in economic development efforts. For example, FPL is developing new uses for small-diameter and low-valued trees. Water filters made from material removed from forests during thinning operations are used to clean up mine waste. New drying techniques for ponderosa pine are eliminating crook and twist prevalent in small diameter trees. Forest residues are combined with plastic to produce a multitude of niche products, such as roofing, highway signs, and specialty products. Small roundwood logs, 4 to 6 inches in diameter, are being used as trusses and I-beams. Electricity and heat are being produced from forest residues and material from thinning operations, using small-scale modular wood gasification systems.

Program Evaluations

Joint fire and aviation reviews scheduled in Region 2 and Region 6 in FY 2002 included the SFA and VFA programs. These reviews were postponed due to the severe fire seasons both regions experienced. These reviews have been rescheduled for the spring of FY 2003. Regions conducted reviews of State programs.

The Washington Office Cooperative Forestry Staff undertook an evaluation of the implementation of all FSP components in Region 6. The evaluation indicated that implementation of the FSP was very successful. No significant issues were uncovered.

Due to the need to emphasize the EAP component of the NFP under tight budget and time constraints, EAP managers did not conduct any national or regional program reviews devoted solely to EAPs in FY 2002. EAP managers, however, participated in a Cooperative Forestry Program review in the Pacific Northwest Region.

Conclusions and Challenges

A common finding is that States are having difficulty implementing their programs. State budgets are strained and they have very limited ability to increase staffing commensurate with the level of activity being generated by the NFP incentives. Nevertheless, partnering and collaboration are helping all agencies to work more effectively to deliver these programs. FY 2002 was the second year of increased emphasis on assistance to communities in the wildland-urban interface. There is a visible increase in the public interest in the wildland fuel and interface issues. Communities and landowners seem to be more engaged in the issue than ever before. The challenge for the State foresters and the Federal agencies is to work closely together to avoid complicated and confusing delivery of assistance programs. Also, regions and States learned from the difficulties posed by the FY 2002 borrowing strategy to cover fire suppression costs that it will be important for States to have grant request packages submitted early in FY 2003 to ensure grant funding.

The FSP continues to be successful. Landowner enrollment has remained constant since program inception. A study of FSP participants conducted in FY 2000 indicated that landowners were highly satisfied with their plans and that a high percentage would recommend the program to others. An analysis of plans conducted that same year indicated that plan writers were not always adequately addressing nontimber values to the extent required by statute. This issue has been addressed by the production and distribution of a desk guide to writing forest stewardship plans and by the creation of a Web site designed to provide landowners and plan writers with information on forest management for timber and nontimber values.

Implementation of the early stages of the NFP-EAPs has once again shown that where partnerships have developed, where community capacity is in place, and where problems (such as wildfire risks) and opportunities (such as small-diameter roundwood products) are more clearly defined, rural communities and their supporting organizations are able to successfully compete for resources to revise, update, or implement their strategic plans. Those communities without local strategic plans were much less ready to engage in NFP implementation and were more likely to need community-organizing, training, and other basic assistance before they could seek market-based opportunities associated with hazardous fuels reduction on public lands.

Regional reviews of State programs revealed no significant shortfalls or failures. State actions under grants were being delivered in accordance with grant objectives. State priorities are focused appropriately on wildland-urban interface issues and protection of threatened communities. There are many documented successes that demonstrate the effectiveness of Federal grants to States for community protection and interagency collaboration. In nearly all cases, State foresters expressed a concern that their ability to deliver program increases is severely limited by staffing shortages.

Time is needed to create a common community vision and a set of goals that include natural resource and other concerns, such as time to build trust and learn how to become involved in programs and processes. Long-term USDA Forest Service commitment of adequate staffing and financial resources is essential to helping rural communities move from dependency to resiliency. Community leaders look to the EAPs to leverage much more than dollars even though financial resources are essential to managing the changes they face. The availability of agency resources is problematic as budgets fluctuate and staffing is redirected to other priorities.

Verification, Validation, and Limitations of Data Sources

The implementation of the NFPORS database was not completed until late in the year so there was some difficulty in meeting reporting timeframes. The database provides a good foundation of information; however, several shortcomings have been identified. Followup with several regions was necessary to verify and validate data. Measurement of “communities assisted” remains difficult as there are so many ways to define a “community.” Also, there are many types of assistance that may be provided to a community. Identifying actual numbers of communities assisted as opposed to “assists to communities” remains a challenge. Adjustments to the database and development of better definitions, direction, and training will strengthen reporting and verification in the future.

FSP data entered by each State has been closely scrutinized. In cases where there was a marked difference in data entry compared with FY 2001 data, the State has been contacted to ensure that the numbers are accurate.

For FY 2002, the data source for EAP is a new PMT database, which is being used by program managers and field coordinators to assist rural communities and organizations. At the time of this report, all regions had not completed their data entry, with particular data entry shortfalls associated with incomplete grant award processes for the regular EAPs and NFP-EAPs. During FY 2002, the database was significantly revised; program managers in the national headquarters continue to upgrade the database structure and evaluate the quality and consistency of data entry and the reporting system. Regional program managers monitor available data for completeness and accuracy. Although data quantity is adequate for assessing the progress made in FY 2002, additional modifications and enhancements will be made to further improve the consistency and reliability for FY 2003 data entry and reporting. More design work is needed to take advantage of the full potential of the database to assist communities and the agency in describing and measuring progress toward long-term goals.

Strategic Objective 3b. Increase the effectiveness of scientific and technical assistance delivered to domestic and international interests.

Annual Performance Goals and Associated Measures:

(1) USDA Forest Service conservation education materials support agency mission/programs and enhance the public's understanding.

Measure: Percent of customer (educators) satisfaction with materials.

(2) Current and accurate information is delivered using a variety of media including Web-based technology, and is available to other agencies, partners, and the public to support analysis and decisionmaking.

Measure: Percent of user satisfaction with usefulness of information and technology provided.

(3) Management of overseas habitats for U.S.-based migratory species is effectively supported.

Measure: Percent increase in overseas habitats of selected U.S.-based migratory species.

(4) Advanced technology is developed for construction of durable and affordable housing.

Measure: To be determined.

(5) Provide technical assistance to support the management of selected protected areas in other countries.

Measure: To be determined.

(6) Environmental performance in pulp and paper processing is improved through research.

Measure: To be determined.

Overview

The USDA Forest Service provides a wide range of scientific and technical assistance to numerous entities such as local, tribal, State, Federal, and foreign governments; nongovernmental organizations and partnerships; forest landowners; and the general public. Although virtually all functions and levels of the agency provide some form of assistance to one or more external entities, scientific and technical assistance is delivered to domestic and international interests mainly through Research and Development (R&D), Conservation Education, and International Programs (IP). The assistance and products provided by these staffs contribute considerably to maintaining and improving the health and productivity of forest, rangeland, and aquatic ecosystems from the local to the global level. Through these efforts, land managers in all 50 States, U.S. territories, and throughout the world benefit from improved management alternatives.

Conservation Education strives to educate people to take informed actions to sustain natural and cultural resources. This requires an integrated and coordinated program that addresses current issues and concerns that face the public, as well as long-term environmental and resource management concepts.

Efforts to support migratory species are spearheaded by IP. Through habitat improvement work, migratory species conservation partnerships, and strengthening conservation capacity in countries where migratory bird species live, IP strives to ensure the viability of more than 80 migratory species. Through these partnerships, USDA Forest Service funds have been leveraged. With a relatively small investment of expertise from IP, the agency has worked with foreign and domestic partners to enhance habitats and populations of migratory species. In the case of some bird species, such as the endangered Kirtland's warbler, International Programs work outside the United States is invaluable in preserving the species.

FY 2002 Performance

The level of customer satisfaction with materials produced by Conservation Education was measured by a national USDA Forest Service Customer Service Survey conducted from March through June 2002. Customer service surveys were conducted at the national level and in five geographic regions from March to June of 2002 to assess customer satisfaction with the delivery of the Conservation Education program. Individual surveys were combined for a national report of customer satisfaction with Conservation Education. In that survey, customers reported a high level of satisfaction with the content of USDA Forest Service-produced conservation education materials. Customers expressed a high level of satisfaction that these materials are based on scientific findings and support current agency direction.

USDA Forest Service R&D produced 8,831 research products, tools, and technologies that were transferred to users. A simple tabulation of the numbers of research products, however, clearly was not sufficient to convey the breadth and depth of the R&D program. Several accomplishments are highlighted in the following paragraphs, while others are featured throughout this annual report to demonstrate how scientific knowledge and research products contribute to resource sustainability.

Forest Products Laboratory (FPL) scientists have constructed a research/demonstration house on the grounds of FPL that serves as a research laboratory and a forum for information transfer to builders and the public. Some of the research focuses on moisture-related durability issues, including mold growth and biodeterioration. Other research is addressing the increased

use of recycled materials, structural composites and engineered wood products from underutilized species, improved natural disaster performance, and increased energy efficiency.

FPL has been a national leader in evaluating properties of deconstructed lumber, developing a grade stamp for lumber reuse in engineered applications, and wood recycling. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that 245,000 buildings are demolished in the United States each year, involving more than a billion board feet of lumber. Reusing lumber and fiber from building demolition is an increasingly popular means of extending the forest resource and reducing material in landfills.

FPL scientists have also developed a new filter for removing pollutants from water. The current focus of this research is to develop filtration systems for sources of water pollution such as agricultural or urban storm water runoff and acid mine drainage. The benefits of this research to the American public are twofold. First, this research directly contributes to the development of low-cost technologies for protecting the quality of water resources. Second, ecosystem health is enhanced through the development of new technologies for converting low-value forest residues into higher-value products such as water filters and related products.

Scientists from FPL have developed the ability to produce ethanol using biomass materials. Biomass includes woody materials and agricultural wastes such as corn hulls and corn cobs. This is an important advancement for the biomass conversion industry, and it is especially significant for the production of renewable fuels from agricultural and woody residues. When this technology is fully implemented, farmers and woodlot owners will be able to sell agricultural and small-diameter, low-grade hardwood residues; the timber industry could recover additional value from processing wastes; and the grain processing industry could increase ethanol production from grain hulls.

Similarly, FPL scientists are providing important advances in paper science and technology. Improved, lightweight, high-opacity printing papers are the result of technologies such as biopulping, microwave pretreatment for thermomechanical pulping, oxalic acid pulping, and fiber loading with simultaneous alkaline peroxide bleaching.

In 1999, the Southern Research Station developed a database system to organize and distribute delivery of USDA Forest Service research publications via the Internet. Since that time, several modifications and enhancements have improved online delivery of publications. Last spring the database was expanded to include records from other stations and laboratories. The public has benefited from this fast, effective mechanism for delivery of research products; the database currently receives 2,000-3,000 requests per day and is fully indexed by major search engines.

The Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) Program developed software that allows users to create customized maps on forest and rangelands based on their own criteria. The Web page for accessing this FIA Mapmaker software was one of the most popular on the North Central Research Station Web site. The support provided by this program included the first release of annualized inventory data, a feature long requested by State foresters.

International Programs led and supported 13 field projects in fiscal year (FY) 2002 that increased habitat capability outside the United States for migratory bird species. Projects were selected based on species or habitats that are of greatest concern to American conservationists or are of importance to indigenous cultures in North America. Support to these projects included technical conservation training for key people in host nations.

Program Evaluations

Conservation Education customer service surveys were conducted at the national level and in five geographic regions from March to June of 2002 to assess customer satisfaction with program delivery. The regions surveyed were Alaska, the Intermountain West, the Northeast, the Pacific West, and the South. The national survey was on the National Symbols (Smokey and Woodsy) Program. These individual surveys were also combined for a national report of customer satisfaction with Conservation Education. The highest overall customer satisfaction levels were reported in the South, Alaska, and Intermountain West areas. The national survey report identified high customer satisfaction with the content of agency-produced education materials. Customers expressed a high level of satisfaction that these materials are based on scientific findings, are presented in a user-friendly format, meet educational standards required by their organization, and support current agency direction.

Within R&D, the six regional research stations, the FPL, and the International Institute of Tropical Forestry annually evaluate needs at the various levels, assign priorities, and request funding. Their requests are carefully reviewed and coordinated with needs identified as critical at the national level and then merged into a National Research Program. The base R&D program, however, is assembled from individual field submissions.

Customer, research user, and peer comments are considered and critically reviewed when identifying research needs at regional levels. Valuable guidance in shaping the R&D program is provided in this process. For example, as R&D began reaching out to underserved communities, a need to expand our social science research effort was identified. Many minorities do not know about national forests; others, because of perceived barriers, do not use them. R&D believes this is a subject worthy of special emphasis.

No evaluations were conducted in FY 2002 on International Programs.

Conclusions and Challenges

By surveying customers nationwide, the Conservation Education Staff has determined that there is a high level of satisfaction with the content of its materials, but there is also room to improve the delivery of those materials and related educational services to educators, youth leaders, and other members of the public. Notification of the availability of materials and services and the actual distribution of those materials need to be improved and expanded to satisfy the current demands. The USDA Forest Service will continue to emphasize cooperation with other education partners, such as other agencies, nonprofit educational institutions, and State and private organizations to effectively and efficiently address this public need.

The most direct means for obtaining the percent of customer satisfaction is through a survey of customers as was done in FY 2002. It is not practical, however, to survey our customers annually. Future measurement of this annual performance goal, for those years when a survey is not conducted, should be the percent of materials developed and used during the year that support public understanding of priority natural resource program issues or objectives as identified by USDA Forest Service leadership.

In a science agenda for the next fiscal year, the Administration presented research and development opportunities that are intended to continue global leadership in science and technology. The science agenda includes existing and emerging research and development priorities that require significant levels of coordination and planning. The priority-setting and coordination process reflects the Administration's objectives of maintaining excellence and maximizing the efficient and effective use of the Nation's resources.

The multitude of opportunities requires wise selection of which programs to launch, encourage, and enhance, and which to reevaluate, modify, or redirect in keeping with national needs and capabilities. For example, the area of science for sustainability seeks to increase our understanding of complex systems and addresses challenges to global sustainability in areas such as energy, environmental protection, food and water, and health.

As directed by the President's Management Agenda, R&D program management and effectiveness will be improved through the application of explicit investment criteria. The criteria will help improve program management and funding decisions, which will ultimately increase public understanding of the possible benefits and effectiveness of Federal investments in research and development. Satisfying the research and development performance criteria for a given program should serve to set and evaluate performance goals for purposes of the Government Performance and Results Act.

International partnerships continue to be valuable in protection efforts for migratory species and their habitats. Up to 40 percent of migrating waterfowl depend on the boreal forests of North America, but habitat is steadily disappearing due to oil and gas development, agriculture, some forest management practices, and other activities. The agency must develop additional partnerships with other Federal agencies, State and local governments, and private corporations and organizations to mitigate the impacts of development on migratory species. International partnerships are important as well. One example is the Copper River International Migratory Bird Initiative, which is working to conserve millions of migratory birds that depend on the Copper River Delta and other feeding and breeding sites along the Pacific Coast from Alaska to as far south as South America. Some examples of Copper River Delta species are the Western Sandpiper, Dusky Canada Goose, and Trumpeter Swan.

Verification, Validation, and Limitations of Data Sources

The Conservation Education customer service survey was conducted through a nationally recognized survey firm. The maximum sampling error for this survey is plus or minus 3.1 percent at the 90 percent confidence level.

The complex and unstructured processes found in the research and development arena are less easily quantified. In the physical sciences, measurement such as length, temperature, and mass may be measured using single standard units—the adequacy of each measurement depends on the qualities of the instrument, but the standards are well defined and widely accepted. In contrast, the creative aspects of research and development make direct measurement impossible. The dilemma is balancing objectivity with the subjective selection and interpretation of measurement indicators, recognizing the cognitive and social structure of science. Three dimensions of research and development—concept generation, product development, and leadership—are distinct phenomena with unique characteristics within the innovative process of research. These dimensions are not amenable to forced correlations and patterns, which can result in comparing apples and oranges, so to speak.

Alternatively, indicators may be used for certain aspects. The degree to which such indicators “measure” research and development performance depends on their accuracy, their quantity, and whether any one indicator may be aggregated with others for indexing. Empirically, this means one measure will be inherently insufficient to capture all the information required.

The current single measure of R&D performance—number of products, technologies, and tools produced—has a reasonably high bias for accuracy, precision, and repeatability, but has variable tolerance and sensitivity. A more plausible approach would be to use a set of performance measures that can be linked to outputs. A systematic design and understanding of the process by which R&D impacts agency performance, and to which the agency remains committed to working with users and the scientific community, will allow us to identify and define meaningful performance measures for the future.

Historically, no data has been collected on migratory species work; therefore, no validation is done by International Programs.

Strategic Objective 3c. Improve the knowledge base provided through research, inventory, and monitoring to enhance scientific understanding of ecosystems, including humans, to support decisionmaking and sustainable management of the Nation's forests and grasslands.

Annual Performance Goals and Associated Measures:

(1) The internationally agreed-to Montreal criteria indicators are used as the principal reference for measuring large-scale sustainability.

Measure: Percent of forest plans annual monitoring reports and large-scale assessments incorporating framework based on the Montreal criteria and indicators.

(2) Research is responsive to the needs of public and private land managers and other customers.

Measure: Customer satisfaction ratings with research projects and studies.

(3) Research and Development (R&D) produced knowledge enhances understanding and management of forest and grassland ecosystems.

Measure: The scientists, the scientific processes, and the results and products of R&D are found to be of high quality through peer review processes.

(4) Inventory programs provide current and accurate data on the status of social, economic, and natural resource conditions and trends needed to support decisionmaking.

Measure: Percent of National Forest System (NFS) units with inventory data and information addressing goal statement that is less than 10 years old.

(5) Monitoring programs provide current data and information on the ability of current management direction and policy to maintain social, economic, and ecological sustainability.

Measure: Percent of monitoring and evaluation reports prepared and incorporated into land and resource management plans (LRMPs). Percent of activities with monitoring and administration in place.

(6) Research work unit descriptions (RWUDs) and problem and program charters are responsive to the needs of public and private land managers and other customers and stakeholders.

Measure: Customer satisfaction with RWUD and problems and program charters.

Activity and Outputs	Data Source	FY 1999 Actual	FY 2000 Actual	FY 2001 Actual	FY 2002 Revised Target	FY 2002 Actual
Create/revise forest plans—Number of plans created/revised ^b	MAR ^b	11	5	8	7	6
Maintain forest plans—Number of plans corrected/amended	MAR	NR ^c	15	82	91	198
Conduct assessments—Number of assessments completed	MAR	169 ^d	130 ^d	154	142	134
Conduct above-project level inventories—Millions of acres of above-project level inventory completed**	MAR	63.8 ^d	58.7 ^d	124	NR	30.4
Conduct research—Number of research products, tools, and technologies	RBAIS ^e	NR	NR	NR	NR	8,429
Conduct research on vegetation management and protection—Number of research products, tools, and technologies ^f	RBAIS	NR	3,359	2,966	NR	NR
Conduct research on wildlife, fish, water, and air—Number of research products, tools, and technologies ^f	RBAIS	NR	1,680	1,426	NR	NR
Conduct research on resource valuation and use—Number of research products, tools, and technologies ^f	RBAIS	NR	1,478	1,084	NR	NR
Collect, analyze, and publish forest resource inventory and monitoring data—Number of research products, tools, and technologies ^f	RBAIS	NR	202	228	NR	NR

Activity and Outputs	Data Source	FY 1999 Actual	FY 2000 Actual	FY 2001 Actual	FY 2002 Revised Target	FY 2002 Actual
Forest Inventory and Analysis Percent of forest lands covered by the annual FIA program ^a	Program Staff	NR	42	65	73	73
Forest Inventory and Analysis Number of research products, tools, and technologies	Program Staff	NR	NR	NR	NR	402
Protect Federal lands from insects, diseases, and exotic plants—Forest health protected on Federal lands (thousand acres)	Program Staff	NR	NR	NR	1,000	302
Protect cooperative lands from insects, diseases, and exotic plants—Forest health protected on cooperative lands (thousand acres)	Program Staff	NR	562	417	700	950
Collect, analyze, and publish forest resources inventory and monitoring (SPIA budget item) ^b	Program Staff	NA	NA	7%	7%	NR
National Fire Plan—Forest health management on Federal and cooperative lands Forest health protected on Federal and cooperative lands (thousand acres)	Program Staff	---	---	- ^c	NR	423
National Fire Plan Vegetation management and protection research Number of research products, tools, and technologies developed	Program Staff	---	---	63	500	783

^a In prior years, forest plans output measures traced the number of plans currently under review. This output has been modified to count only the number of plans completed in the current fiscal year.

^b MAR = Management Attainment Reporting database.

^c NR = Not reported or not required.

^d A change in how these measures are calculated occurred during FY 2001. The change corrects data provided in the FY 2000 Annual Performance Plan to reflect the new definition.

^e RHAIS = Research Budget Attainment Information System.

^f These activities have been combined into one activity "Conduct Research number of research products, tools, and technologies for FY 2002". The output for all activities is displayed in that activity in FY 2002.

^g Data will no longer be collected on a percentage basis. New output will track number of products, tools, and technologies produced. See output listed immediately below this output.

^h SPIA funds are combined with R&D funds and NFS funds to support the implementation of the FIA program. There is no measure that pertains solely to SPIA; these accomplishments are reflected in the FIA performance measure.

ⁱ Funding is for technical assistance to manage and control invasive insects and diseases and to evaluate forest/tree health after wildland fire. Outputs for these funds is not directly related to established outputs.

Overview

Research, inventory, and monitoring are valuable tools used by the USDA Forest Service to enhance the scientific understanding of ecosystems to support decisionmaking and sustainable management of the Nation's forests and grasslands. Responsibility for gathering and analyzing the information gathered lies within the programs of Research and Development (R&D), National Forest System (NFS), and State and Private Forestry (S&PF).

The mission of R&D is to develop, demonstrate, and disseminate scientific information and technologies to protect, manage, and use in a sustainable manner those renewable resources in rural, suburban, and urban areas. The knowledge and research products provided by R&D scientists contribute considerably to maintaining and improving the health and productivity of forest, rangeland, and aquatic ecosystems, as well as to providing important information for USDA Forest Service policies and programs.

On NFS lands, integrated inventories meet multiple information needs for national forests and grasslands achieved by collecting data on the status or conditions of resources, including vegetative and physical characteristics as well as human dimensions. Inventories occur at multiple scales and are, or will be, conducted to national standards.

Assessments also occur at multiple scales and provide information relevant to a broad range of resource management issues. Broad-scale assessments are used to evaluate ecosystem composition, structure, and processes and evaluate indexes of ecological, social, and economic sustainability. Watershed assessments provide the contextual information necessary to focus and prioritize restoration and management. Findings associated with assessments are used to identify topics of general interest or concern to be addressed in land and resource management plans (LRMPs).

LRMPs guide management decisions for all national forests, grasslands, prairies, and the Land Between The Lakes. Plans develop long-term strategies while recognizing the need to make short-term decisions and provide a framework for making future site-specific project decisions. Plans are dependent on data and information collected by inventories and assessments of specific resource issues, conditions, and trends. The development or revision of LRMPs is a multiyear process.

The Forest Health Management Program provides for the detection, monitoring, evaluation, prevention, and suppression of forest insects, diseases, and invasive plants on forests and rangelands managed by the NFS, other Federal agencies, States, territories, and tribal governments. With the exception of invasive plants, Forest Health Management also provides the same activities on NFS lands. Forest health management specialists evaluate risk for resource damage and determine prevention, suppression, and maintenance treatments based on results of the risk evaluation. Aerial and ground surveys are conducted for insects and diseases in areas of risk. The program includes development of technologies to improve efficiency and effectiveness of management of forest pests. The activities of the program enhance forest and rangeland health by protecting wildland-urban interface areas, water resources, critical wildlife habitats, and recreational opportunities. See also the discussion of Forest Health Management under strategic objective 1c.

With a wide-ranging and inclusive knowledge base derived from these research, inventory, and monitoring tools, land managers throughout the United States and its territories are afforded improved management alternatives that cover both public and private lands.

FY 2002 Performance

Much was accomplished by R&D, NFS, and S&PF in fiscal year (FY) 2002. The accomplishments of each are delineated below.

Research & Development

During FY 2002, R&D produced 8,831 research products, tools, and technologies that were transferred to users. A simple tabulation of the numbers of research products, however, clearly was not sufficient to convey the breadth and depth of the R&D program. Several accomplishments are highlighted in the following paragraphs, while others are featured throughout this annual report to demonstrate how scientific knowledge and research products contribute to resource sustainability.

R&D sponsored the Forest Science Summit, which brought representatives from Federal agencies, State foresters, nongovernmental organizations, universities, and environmental groups to respond to the National Research Council's *Report on National Capacity in Forest Research*. One component of this report is improvement of research services to underserved customers and communities. Strategies and actions have been developed and are being implemented to address concerns raised in the report.

The *Southern Forest Resource Assessment*, a 3-year study that examined the history, status, and likely future of southern forests, was released this year and will be featured in a special issue of the *Journal of Forestry*. The citizen-centered process used in the development of the assessment was a model for engaging the public in the research arena, and assured that the results addressed the concerns of the citizens. The results have clearly affected the public dialog about southern forests, and are being used to develop and direct future programs and activities.

R&D conducted the first national survey to determine the value of the urban tree resource in the United States and calculated it to be about \$2.5 trillion. City managers, planners, and private corporations use this information to determine the potential risk of loss to the resource due to various events such as fire, insect outbreaks, and others that damage or destroy urban trees.

An urban tree resource study of the urban forest of South Lake Tahoe by the Center for Urban Forest Research in Davis, CA, revealed the need for more active participation of homeowners to mitigate existing fire hazards. A press release was issued locally to advise homeowners of the findings and to stress that community involvement is absolutely necessary for effective fire hazard mitigation, especially in neighborhoods with predominantly small lots.

North Central Research Station scientists developed a new instrument to detect trees infested with Asian longhorned beetles. They also initiated a bilateral research program with China to understand this exotic pest. This invention will help find outbreaks of this pest more rapidly than current inspection techniques allow. The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) used the new device in New York's Central Park, saving most trees in this historic location from destruction.

Responding to demands for riparian forest buffer information, the Rocky Mountain Research Station published an article that provided the first summary and synthesis of the peer-reviewed scientific literature on buffer performance in mitigating water quality problems. Policymakers and land managers are increasingly calling for a clear estimate of how much reduction in nonpoint source pollution can be achieved by buffer installation programs on private lands. A major conclusion from this summary was that expectations for program success are currently not well founded in the research literature.

Scientists are improving models of natural stand development in the Douglas-fir-western hemlock forests where they occur on public and private lands of the Pacific Northwest. The improved models incorporate new knowledge about disturbance regimes and their biological legacies, such as live trees, snags, and logs; the complexity of stand structures and forest development; and the development of later stages in long-lived forests.

Technology transfer and conservation education receive greater emphasis each year from R&D. During FY 2002, almost 25,000 copies of the *Natural Inquirer*, a science education journal for middle school and early high school students, were distributed worldwide. Of these, over 600 copies were in Spanish. The supporting Web site provides widespread access to R&D information.

Also, through electronic means, R&D has provided vastly improved ways for internal and external customers to be better served, including ease of access to scientific publications, program opportunities, employment, and financial assistance. This has also helped meet the Paperwork Reduction Act and Government Paperwork Elimination Act requirements.

R&D also continued to demonstrate this strong customer-driven approach through the Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) Program. FIA is the Nation's forest census, reporting annually on status and trends in the Nation's forested resources. FIA is a collaborative effort funded by R&D, S&PF/Forest Resource Inventory and Analysis, S&PF/Forest Health Protection (FHP), and NFS/Inventory and Monitoring, plus many State forestry agencies. In FY 2002, the FIA program expanded coverage from 65 percent to 73 percent of the Nation's forested lands by adding Colorado, New Hampshire, New York, and Washington to the program, bringing us closer to our goal of 100 percent implementation by FY 2003. More details are available in the FY 2002 FIA Annual Business Report, available on the Internet at fia.fs.fed.us.

In an effort to increase service provided to underserved populations, R&D has implemented new forest inventory methods tailored to urban areas and tropical forests. The new methods for urban forests were pilot-tested in FY 2002. The International Institute of Tropical Forestry (IITF) collaborated with the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to inventory all of the island's forests. This will be the first-ever inventory to include urban forests of the island.

National Forest System

The USDA Forest Service completed five LRMP revisions and one new plan in FY 2002. In FY 2003, the agency will continue to revise its planning rule to improve the revision process and the quality of resulting plans. These regulations are designed to take advantage of lessons learned over the past 20 years of forest planning. Setting forth a process that makes sustainability the foundation of planning and decisionmaking, the new rule will engage the public in defining the future of NFS lands and create plans with a sound scientific basis.

A total of 134 LRMP assessments was completed in FY 2002, 6 percent below the national target. Broad-scale assessments are generally conducted for specific purposes on a forest or a multifest area. Because the purposes and scopes of assessments vary considerably, flexibility is necessary for planning, developing, implementing, and reporting on the results of these assessments. Each successive broad-scale assessment benefits from lessons learned from previous efforts. The Southern Appalachian Assessment was recently completed in 2 years at relatively low cost, and the results have been shared by a number of Federal and State agencies and have proved invaluable in support of land and resource management planning for the region.

The USDA Forest Service also completed 30,347,000 acres of above-project inventories. This accomplishment is made up of a number of component parts with associated targets, some of which were met and others not. Adjustments by program managers shifted component measures of the total target to support LRMP revisions, amendments, and watershed assessments. For example, targets for “Terrestrial Ecological Unit Inventories—acres inventoried” were shifted among eco-subregion, landscape, and land unit scales, which enabled forests to focus basic inventories and complete core Geographic Information System (GIS) coverage in support of identified priorities and needs.

State & Private Forestry

The Forest Health Management Program had many accomplishments in FY 2002. Of special note are the following:

- Implemented a Slow the Spread (STS) strategy on more than 575,000 acres to control gypsy moth infestations in areas that extended from North Carolina to Wisconsin.
- Surveyed over 744 million acres of forest lands for damage caused by forest insects and diseases.
- Treated over a million acres of Federal, State, tribal, and private forest lands for insects, diseases, and invasive plants. These acres were treated to provide suppression and prevention of major pests, including hemlock woolly adelgid, gypsy moth, southern pine beetle, and other bark beetles. These acres are in addition to those treated for the gypsy moth in the STS program.
- Cooperated with USDA APHIS in survey, eradication, and community education efforts to combat Asian longhorned beetle infestations in Chicago and New York.
- Maintained programs to prevent further spread of established invasive pathogens such as Port-Orford-cedar root disease in Oregon and California and white pine blister rust in the East.
- Supported the risk assessment and eradication projects for Sudden Oak Death in California and Oregon.
- Provided technical assistance to Federal, State, and tribal land managers in preventing pest outbreaks and maintaining healthy forest ecosystems, conducting surveys to detect and evaluate forest pest outbreaks, coordinating action where pest outbreaks or other forest health problems overlapped ownership boundaries, and monitoring and reporting trends in forest ecosystem health indicators for all forests of the United States.
- Responded to nationwide threats to forest ecosystems from nonnative invasive species, such as Sudden Oak Death and emerald ash borer outbreaks.
- Conducted evaluation monitoring projects to investigate forest health issues related to fire risk, invasive species, and fire effects in the burned and unburned areas.
- Conducted a successful pilot on the Early Detection Survey System with APHIS to rapidly detect new, unwanted introductions of exotic insects and diseases around nine U.S. port facilities.

- Maintained development, pilot tests, and demonstrations of new technologies, materials, methods, and strategies to improve the efficiency of the management of forest pests.

Program Evaluations

No program evaluations were conducted by the Ecosystem Management Coordination (EMC) Staff of NFS during FY 2002.

Within R&D, the six regional research stations, the Forest Products Laboratory, and the International Institute of Tropical Forestry annually evaluate needs at the various levels, assign priorities, and request funding. Their requests are carefully reviewed and coordinated with needs identified as critical at the national level and then merged into a National Research Program. The base R&D program, however, is assembled from the individual field submissions.

Customer, research user, and peer comments are considered and critically reviewed when identifying research needs at regional levels. Valuable guidance in shaping the R&D program is provided in this process. For example, as R&D began reaching out to underserved communities, a need to expand our social science research effort was identified. Many minorities do not know about national forests while others, because of perceived barriers, do not use them. R&D believes this is a subject worthy of special emphasis.

In FY 2002, 13 percent of research work unit descriptions were revised to reflect changes in the proposed research mission, problem, or approach.

R&D program reviews were conducted at several stations. Employees and station customers were interviewed in each case. As a result, a number of changes have been made to enhance program delivery internally and to external customers.

Forest Health Management reviews included the Chief's Overviews of the National Fire Plan for Regions 8 and 10, which addressed insect outbreaks as they relate to fire risk. These reviews emphasized the need for prevention and restoration activities on forest lands. An invasive plant activity review for Region 5 (California and Hawaii) recommended that the region's invasive plants program better integrate with other agencies.

Conclusions and Challenges

In a science agenda for the next fiscal year, the Administration presented research and development opportunities that are intended to continue global leadership in science and technology. The science agenda includes existing and emerging research and development priorities that require significant levels of coordination and planning. The priority-setting and coordination process reflects the Administration's objectives of maintaining excellence and maximizing the efficient and effective use of the Nation's resources.

The multitude of opportunities requires wise selection of which programs to launch, encourage, and enhance, and which to reevaluate, modify, or redirect in keeping with national needs and capabilities. For example, the area of science for sustainability seeks to increase our understanding of complex systems and addresses challenges to global sustainability in areas such as energy, environmental protection, food and water, and health.

As directed by the President’s Management Agenda, R&D program management and effectiveness will be improved through the application of explicit investment criteria. The criteria will help improve program management and funding decisions, which will ultimately increase public understanding of the possible benefits and effectiveness of Federal investments in research and development. Satisfying the research and development performance criteria for a given program should serve to set and evaluate performance goals for purposes of the Government Performance and Results Act.

NFS will continue to improve the definition of its inventory indicators to improve the quality and usefulness of the information gathered. To ensure further improvements to the inventory and monitoring program, the EMC staff will continue to prepare inventory and monitoring program plans and schedule, develop, and test protocols and accomplishment tracking tools.

Verification, Validation,
and Limitations of Data
Sources

Research & Development

The complex and unstructured processes found in the research and development arena are not easily quantified. In the physical sciences, measurement such as length, temperature, and mass may be measured using single standard units—the adequacy of each measurement depends on the qualities of the instrument, but the standards are well defined and widely accepted. In contrast, the creative aspects of research and development make direct measurement impossible. The dilemma is balancing objectivity with the subjective selection and interpretation of measurement indicators, recognizing the cognitive and social structure of science. Three dimensions of research and development—concept generation, product development, and leadership—are distinct phenomena with unique characteristics within the innovative process of research. These dimensions are not amenable to forced correlations and patterns, which can result in comparing apples and oranges, so to speak.

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The current single measure of R&D performance—number of products, technologies, and tools produced—has a reasonably high bias for accuracy, precision, and repeatability, but has variable tolerance and sensitivity. A more plausible approach would be to use a set of performance measures that can be linked to outputs. A systematic design and understanding of the process by which R&D impacts agency performance, and to which the agency remains committed to working with users and the scientific community, will allow us to identify and define meaningful performance measures for the future.

National Forest System

Outputs for NFS in the chart above shown with a data source indicator of MAR are collected through the Management Attainment Reporting (MAR) process. The data is compiled by the ranger districts and national forests and then reviewed by regional and national offices for reasonableness. Further validation has not been considered costeffective, so accuracy of the data is dependent on entries made at the national forest level.

The method for calculating the performance measure “million acres of above-project inventory completed” was changed to better reflect the MAR data collected at the field level. The measure “assessments completed” now represents only landscape/watershed scale assessments.

State & Private Forestry

In previous years, Forest Health Management technical assistance, which includes biological assessments and technology transfer to forest managers, was converted to acres treated or protected, which resulted in different estimates of actual work performed. There is no direct link, however, of technical assistance to number to treated acres. The transformation of technical assistance to treated acres is no longer used. Thus, the actual number of forest health acres protected decreased by nearly 1 million acres when compared to estimates for the FY 2002. This decrease in acres protected reflected changes in how these acres were calculated in the past. For FY 2002 accomplishments, “Acres protected” equals “Acres treated” to better reflect actual work performed.



Strategic Objective 3d: Broaden the participation of less-traditional research groups in research and technical assistance programs.

Annual Performance Goal and Associated Measure:

(1) Develop active, ongoing participation of less-traditional groups in research and technical assistance programs.

Measure: Percent increase in the number of less-traditional technical and research groups participating in research and technical assistance programs.

Overview

The USDA Forest Service provides services and opportunities to Americans of all racial and ethnic backgrounds. Through a variety of employment and economic outreach programs, the agency strives to encourage and increase participation of diverse individuals and groups in research program management and community capacity building. Many agency programs and services are directed at minority, poor, and other underserved groups throughout the Nation.

USDA Forest Service management is concerned with the potential for disproportionately high adverse human health or environmental effects from its programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations. It is important to find common ground and build relevance with all segments of society, including underserved populations and communities, to effectively carry out the agency's mission, plans, programs, and activities.

The mission of the USDA Forest Service Research and Development (R&D) deputy area is to develop, demonstrate, and disseminate scientific information and technologies to protect, manage, and sustainably use those renewable resources in rural, suburban, and urban areas. The knowledge and research products provided by R&D scientists contribute considerably to maintaining and improving the health and productivity of forest, rangeland, and aquatic ecosystems, as well as providing important information for USDA Forest Service policies and programs. Many efforts have been undertaken to increase the knowledge of, and participation in, the research programs of the USDA Forest Service and its partners and cooperators among minorities and other underrepresented groups.

Conservation Education emphasizes delivery of program materials and services to audiences identified in the Forest Service Interim Strategic Public Outreach Plan of April 2000 as underserved customers, populations, or communities. According to the plan, these audiences include minority groups (including American Indians or Alaska Natives), persons below the poverty level, and persons with disabilities. Conservation Education also emphasizes delivery to urban communities in consideration of the growth of urban populations in comparison to rural populations. This requires national emphasis because the majority of Forest Service field units are located in rural communities.

FY 2002 Performance

The USDA Forest Service continues to accomplish and expand upon the USDA Civil Rights initiatives integral to customer service delivery. Through the strategic public outreach plan, the agency continues to establish and build positive working relationships with underserved, minority, low-income, and limited-resource communities in collaborative land stewardship, as well as to improve customer service and increase program delivery and outreach. Efforts are under way to increase the diversity of the research community through participation with universities and other partners in supporting enrollment of minorities and other underrepresented groups in natural resource research fields. Communities affected include Hispanic, Asian-Pacific Islander, African American, and other multiracial/cultural community-based organizations.

The national headquarters provided seed money to field units that demonstrated excellent public outreach partnerships with diverse, underserved communities. The field units and project managers obligated 80 percent of these funds to accomplish additional local results. These excellent models of public outreach with underserved communities are the focus of agencywide dialogue for improving customer service, public outreach, and collaborative stewardship initiatives.

The USDA Forest Service implemented an agreement between the Pacific Southwest Region and the University of California-Berkeley. This partnership supports numerous community-based organizations and works to establish a forum available to the USDA Forest Service for dialog with these underserved communities, called "People for Forest, Forest for People—Just Forest Symposium." Implementation of the forum has been planned for fiscal year (FY) 2003.

The USDA Forest Service headquarters implemented initiatives on civil rights partnerships, outreach, and capacity building with several land grant colleges, universities, and centers of excellence. Federal financial assistance was administered by USDA Forest Service regions and research stations. Capacity building includes (1) increasing school capacity for accreditation, more classes, USDA Forest Service research, and natural resource applicability; (2) providing meaningful student work experiences; (3) providing undergraduate and graduate academic development integral to growing agency research programs that are addressing problems, thereby achieving place-based solutions; (4) building community capacity through technology transfer; (5) making USDA Forest Service research and technical assistance accessible to less-traditional research groups and underserved communities; (6) improving service to underserved communities through public outreach efforts; and (7) enhancing the internal retention capacity of a skilled, representative workforce.

An example of USDA Forest Service partnership and outreach efforts is the Clark Atlanta Initiative, an education and research partnership among the agency's Forest Products Laboratory (FPL), Clark Atlanta University (CAU), the Institute of Paper Science and Technology in Atlanta, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The objectives of the initiative are to attract CAU students into undergraduate and graduate programs focused on forest products utilization research and to diversify the scientific workforce in natural resources utilization. The FPL has four specific goals for the program. The first is outreach and education among underrepresented groups through (1) highlighting career opportunities in research; (2) encouraging and assisting underrepresented group members to pursue degrees in engineering, chemistry, biological sciences, materials science, forest products technology,

and economics; and (3) increasing the diversity of participants in the programs of all initiative partners. The second objective is recruiting and preparing underrepresented group members for careers with the agency. Third is identifying and recruiting successful candidates for the USDA Forest Service Scientist Recruitment Initiative. The final objective is identifying and implementing research projects of common interest and benefit among the participating institutions.

Results of research programs are reaching an ever-widening range of diverse audiences—with ever-broadening benefits to the agency and its customers. For example, the newly established wildland-urban interface research work unit in the South serves a distinctly urban/suburban population—a new, diverse, and increasingly important constituent base for the USDA Forest Service.

Another example is ongoing research on cultural diversity in land use in northern New Mexico that is helping the agency deliver fair and effective programs to the historically underserved people of the area, including many small and limited-resource farmers and ranchers and land owners.

A team, including representation from R&D, has been assigned to evaluate the existing Washington Office (WO) Tribal Relations Program/Organization and to make recommendations on how the organization can be more responsive to Native American programs and responsibilities. In conjunction with this effort, the R&D organization created a team to review on-going activities and provide a framework identifying additional opportunities to support the agency's Tribal Relations Program.

A benefit to tribal relations was realized through R&D's close involvement in addressing Sudden Oak Death, particularly in California and Oregon. Many Native American tribes in these areas were not aware of the fungus that causes this disease, and the impact to the oaks, and more specifically, the acorns that are used in a number of tribal religious ceremonies. R&D has played a major role in addressing the issue and in communicating with tribal leaders about the disease and ongoing research activities to address it.

A 10-year partnership between the USDA Forest Service and Alabama A&M University resulted in a program receiving full accreditation from the Society of American Foresters, the professional society of foresters in the United States and beyond. The USDA Forest Service's largest student recruitment initiative program is at Alabama A&M, with up to 40 undergraduate students in training at any one time. Because of this partnership with Alabama A&M, the agency has increased employment of African American foresters, and Alabama A&M has faculty, facilities, and a research program worthy of recognition.

R&D sponsored and participated in the Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences Symposium, host to over 800 minority college students throughout the United States. R&D shared information on USDA Forest Service career opportunities and provided career advice to individual students.

The National Urban Tree House program provided educational opportunities to almost 5,000 urban or minority youth. There are currently four operational sites nationwide.

In a national customer service survey conducted in 2002, almost 63 percent of Conservation Education customers reported that they were involved with traditionally underserved populations. In addition, approximately 32 percent identified the community that they served as an urban community. No specific targets have been assigned to this aspect of the goal; however, measurements obtained through the customer service survey and subsequent annual accomplishment reports are used to help managers decide on program emphasis.

Program Evaluations

The USDA Forest Service conducted field unit Civil Rights Program reviews. The reviewers found many positive examples of program attributes and effective use of resources, but noted some areas for administration improvement, better coordination, and training.

The six regional research stations, the FPL, and the International Institute of Tropical Forestry annually evaluate needs at the various levels, assign priorities, and request funding. Their requests are carefully reviewed and coordinated with needs identified as critical at the national level and then merged into a national research program. The base R&D program, however, is assembled from the individual field submissions.

In FY 2002, 13 percent of research work unit descriptions were revised to reflect changes in the proposed research mission, problem, or approach.

Program reviews were conducted at several stations. Employees and station customers were interviewed in each case. As a result, changes have been made to enhance program delivery internally and to external customers.

A series of customer service surveys were conducted in 2002. Refer to the program evaluation for strategic objective 3b for a full description.

Conclusions and Challenges

Overall, the USDA Forest Service continues to improve administration of the civil rights partnership and outreach program. Decreasing national budgets continue to place pressure on field units and the headquarters to improve service delivery.

Customer, research user, and peer comments are considered and critically reviewed when identifying research needs at regional levels. Valuable guidance in shaping the R&D program is provided in this process. For example, as R&D began reaching out to underserved communities, a need to expand our social science research effort was identified. Many minorities do not know about national forests while others, because of perceived barriers, do not use them. R&D believes this is a subject worthy of special emphasis.

Information obtained through the 2002 customer service survey for Conservation Education indicates a strong emphasis on delivering conservation education materials and services to underserved populations and, to a lesser degree, to urban populations. However, no baseline has been previously established for the measurement of accomplishment in this arena. Measurements from 2002 and subsequent years will provide a baseline for future management decisions on program emphasis and direction.

Verification, Validation,
and Limitation of Data
Sources

The complex and unstructured processes found in the research and development arena are not easily quantified. The current single measure of R&D performance—number of products, tools, and technologies produced—has a reasonably high bias for accuracy, precision, and repeatability, but has variable tolerance and sensitivity. A more plausible approach would be to use a set of performance measures that can be linked to outputs. A systematic design and understanding of the process by which R&D impacts agency performance, and to which the agency remains committed to working with users and the science community, will allow us to identify and define meaningful performance measures for the future.

No limitations of data sources have been identified by the Civil Rights Staff for the information that they have gathered and use.

The Conservation Education customer service survey was conducted through a nationally recognized survey firm. The maximum sampling error for this survey is plus or minus 3.1 percent at the 90 percent confidence level.

**Strategic Goal 4.
Effective Public Service**

Strategic Objective 4a: Improve financial management to achieve fiscal accountability.

Annual Performance Goals and Associated Measures:*

(1) Maintain an effective and efficient service-wide financial management organization.

Measure: Review the activities and structure of the headquarters' Budget and Finance deputy area and implement identified changes within the fiscal year.

(2) Manage an integrated performance accountability process that provides for program and financial management accountability.

Measure: Develop a conceptual design of an agencywide performance accountability system that integrates program and financial management information.

Measure: Develop and implement a comprehensive range of financial management performance measures and establish financial management performance benchmarks.

(3) Maintain continuous improvement in USDA Forest Service activities to support more efficient and effective financial management.

Measure: Support the valuation of the agency's property with less than a 5 percent error factor.

Measure: Reconcile 100 percent of the agency's fund balance with the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

Measure: Reconcile subledgers monthly with the agency's general ledger.

Measure: Prepare quarterly financial statements.

* The annual performance goals and objectives have been rewritten from the FY 2002 Annual Performance Report to better reflect the agency's financial goals and issues.

Overview

The USDA Forest Service continues to emphasize fiscal accountability as the agency manages public funds and property entrusted to it throughout the Nation, as well as internationally. Toward this end, the agency made significant strides during fiscal year (FY) 2002 in the development and maintenance of an efficient and effective financial management organization.

USDA Forest Service financial management has been strengthened this past year through the accomplishment of key activities. Included have been efforts impacting the agency's financial management organization and the processes used to monitor performance and related accountability. Other critical projects included management of the agency's annual budget and records supporting the valuation of USDA Forest Service property. Conducted in a coordinated, planned environment, these activities all support the agency's stewardship of public assets.

Effective public service requires that the USDA Forest Service improve financial management to achieve fiscal accountability. To accomplish this objective, three key goals have been identified in the table above for FY 2002. These goals are a modification of the three goals originally published as part of the USDA Forest Service FY 2002 Annual Performance Plan, dated March 2001. Appropriate modifications of the original published annual goals became evident as the agency continued implementing financial management improvements throughout FY 2002.

FY 2002 Performance

In FY 2002, USDA Forest Service achieved an unqualified audit opinion from the Office of Inspector General (OIG) for the first time. Many factors contributed to achieving this milestone, but tantamount was the hard work and dedication of employees throughout the agency in working toward this goal.

Another important element was an evaluation of core responsibilities and a subsequent reorganization of the Budget and Finance (B&F) staff in the Washington Office, which allowed the agency to better manage those responsibilities. The reorganization of the headquarters' financial management staff resulted in a flattened organization through the elimination of 11 branch chiefs and a 16 percent decrease in total staffing.

Defining performance expectations and measuring actual performance are other key aspects in achieving fiscal accountability. Efficient and effective management of financial resources includes not only maintaining accurate and timely records of the expenditure and collection of Government funds, but also measures of what has been accomplished through the use of such funds. During FY 2002, the agency designed a pilot system for integrating program and financial management accountability. Linking accountability in this fashion provides the agency with a valuable managerial tool.

The agency also successfully developed and implemented key financial management performance measures. As a result, measures depicting actual individual performance by units agencywide are reviewed every month by USDA Forest Service management. These measures provide management with a valuable tool for tracking accomplishments and identifying areas needing additional support.

Continuous improvement requires continuous efforts, targeted to accomplish specific objectives. In attaining the unqualified audit opinion, the USDA Forest Service successfully

supported the valuation of property agencywide with an error factor of less than 5 percent and successfully reconciled 100 percent of the agency fund balances with the U.S. Department of the Treasury. The USDA Forest Service also successfully completed monthly reconciliations between subledgers and the agency's general ledger, and completed quarterly financial statements on time.

Program Evaluations

A review was conducted of the core responsibilities and associated organizational structure of the headquarters' B&F staff during FY 2002. Through this review, the B&F staff was streamlined, including reducing managerial positions. In addition, key organizational changes within the staff were completed in FY 2002, permitting a sustained focus on critical financial management activities such as reconciling agency accounts, including cash, real and personal property, and other assets.

Conclusions and Challenges

The USDA Forest Service achieved significant progress in improving financial management within the agency in FY 2002. The activities and organizational structure of the headquarters' B&F staff were reviewed, with significant changes made to improve the unit's efficiency and effectiveness. Similar reviews of the roles and responsibilities of units throughout the agency will need to be completed, along with reviews to identify the most efficient structure to accomplish the tasks of financial management.

A strong basis for measuring and reporting program and financial management performance was developed in FY 2002. In future years, the agency will formalize an integrated performance management process. This integration will require close coordination between program and financial management staffs. Through integrated monitoring, the agency will be able to accurately measure and report on USDA Forest Service financial management activities.

Financial management is a continuous process. Similarly, the USDA Forest Service will continuously improve the efficiency and effectiveness of agency financial management processes and systems. During FY 2002, the agency made significant progress in reconciling agency accounts and supporting the valuation of property. Through these reconciliations, sustainable business processes have been identified. It is critical for the agency to continue to develop, implement, and monitor sustainable business processes agencywide as needed.

Verification, Validation, and Limitations of Data Sources

Validation of USDA Forest Service financial management activities is achieved through a number of methods, including reviews, the use of financial management performance measures, and audits. A key audit conducted annually by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of Inspector General (OIG) is the audit of agency financial statements. The audit opinion expressed by the OIG relative to the annual financial statements compiled by the agency is an excellent means of validating the integrity of USDA Forest Service financial management and the degree to which an outside party may rely on specific amounts reported. In this audit, the USDA Forest Service received an unqualified opinion, the highest level attainable.

Strategic Objective 4b: Improve the safety and economy of USDA Forest Service roads, trails, facilities, and operations and provide greater security for the public and employees.

Annual Performance Goals and Associated Measures:

(1) Roads under USDA Forest Service jurisdiction are operated and maintained to standards.

Measure: Percent of roads under USDA Forest Service jurisdiction with no critical deferred maintenance needs. Agency facilities, trails, and infrastructure are maintained to be in safe condition for the public.

Measure: Percent increase in the number of agency facilities and infrastructure that meet health, safety, and environmental standards. Percent increase in critical fire facilities reconstructed and maintained.

(2) Restore State, local, and private facilities and infrastructure, primarily in the western United States, that sustained severe damage by the wildfires of 2000, through provided fire assistance.

Measure: Percent of wildfire-damaged State, local, and private facilities and infrastructure that have been restored through provided fire assistance.

(3) Law enforcement capability provides for employee and public safety and protection of resources and infrastructure assets.

Measure: Percent increase in the number of administrative units with adequate law enforcement services.

<i>Activity and Outputs</i>	<i>Data Source</i>	<i>FY 1999 Actual</i>	<i>FY 2000 Actual</i>	<i>FY 2001 Actual</i>	<i>FY 2002 Revised Target</i>	<i>FY 2002 Actual</i>
Enforce National Forest System Drug Control Act Number of cannabis plants eradicated	Program Staffs	NR ^a	733,427	733,427	734,000	396,880 ^b
Enforce laws and regulations Percent enforcement capability	Program Staffs	28	30	44	44	50
Investigate crime Percent investigative capability	Program Staffs	49	51	43	43	72
Maintain facilities condition index ^c	IN/RA ^d		N/A ^e	N/A	N/A	63
Improve facilities—Number of projects completed ^{f,g}	Program Staffs	62	73	72	110	61

<i>Activity and Outputs</i>	<i>Data Source</i>	<i>FY 1999 Actual</i>	<i>FY 2000 Actual</i>	<i>FY 2001 Actual</i>	<i>FY 2002 Revised Target</i>	<i>FY 2002 Actual</i>
Maintain transportation system (passenger car roads) Miles maintained to objective standard	RAR ^b	NR	51,733	30,056	73,337	77,499
Maintain transportation system (high clearance and closed roads)—Miles maintained to objective standard	RAR	NR	69,984	51,576	29,011	49,299
Improve transportation system (roads) Miles of road capital improvement to objective maintenance level	RAR	NR	612	370	1,130	1,131
Maintain transportation system (trails) Miles of trails maintained to standard	MAR ^j	NR	24,065	40,800	26,502	30,649
Improve transportation system (trails) Miles of trail improvement to standard	MAR	NR	1,510	1,245	1,169	1,159
National Fire Plan Maintain and improve forest service fire facilities—Number of projects completed	Program Staffs	—	—	107	44	10 ^k

a NR = Not reported or not required.

b Due to the marijuana eradication season extending beyond the fiscal year, data collected for number of marijuana plants on National Forest System lands is done by calendar year. These numbers are only through fiscal year (FY) 2002. Data for FY 2000 and FY 2001 are shown on a calendar year basis.

c The protocol for the measurement of the facility condition index was under development. No targets were set.

d INEHA = Infrastructure database.

e N/A = Not applicable.

f FY 2000 and FY 2001 outputs do not include number of recreation projects.

g FY 2002 facilities projects target and accomplishment include major Capital Improvement Projects only. A number of planned projects were not awarded in FY 2002 due to transferring funds to support fire suppression.

h RAR = Roads Assessment Report.

i MAR = Management Attainment Reporting database.

j A number of projects were not awarded in FY 2002 due to transferring funds to support fire suppression.

Overview

National Forest System (NFS) lands provide a wealth of opportunities for all segments of American society. Millions of visitors use our national forests and associated transportation system for work, recreation, and other uses. Safety and security of all users on NFS lands are paramount and are the primary responsibility of the Law Enforcement and Investigations (LEI) Program. In addition, LEI has the responsibility to protect natural resources and other property under the agency's jurisdiction. LEI cooperates with Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies and other USDA Forest Service programs to achieve these goals.

Major responsibilities of the LEI staff include providing a highly visible patrol presence and prompt response to public and employee safety incidents and to violations of laws and regulations. The staff conducts criminal and civil investigations; responds to acts of domestic terrorism, unlawful civil disobedience, and other critical incidents that occur on NFS lands or facilities; and provides security-planning and operational support and investigates threats against agency facilities, interests, or employees. In addition, LEI is responsible for reducing the production of domestic cannabis and other controlled substances on, and the smuggling of illegal drugs through, NFS lands.

Increased forest visitation, urban encroachment, and increasingly urbanized users are impacting NFS lands, raising health and safety risks to the public and employees, and threatening resource viability. Consequently, the demands on agency law enforcement personnel continue to increase.

Forest visitors use more than 360,000 miles of roads and more than 130,000 miles of trails that exist on national forest lands. Maintenance of facilities, roads, and trails is needed to ensure that these systems do not degrade to the point of causing resource damage or injury to employees and national forest visitors. Facility, road, and trail maintenance ensures that legal, environmental, and safety requirements are met as much as possible within funding constraints and helps provide for the safety of forest visitors and employees. Maintenance of roads directly affects national forest management, because the road system provides the access necessary to achieve forest plan objectives. Maintenance of facilities results in improved customer service and satisfaction, higher employee productivity, improved public image, improved safety and security, and lower Worker's Compensation costs. Adequate facilities also increase productivity in environmental resource development and use.

FY 2002 Performance

A variety of road, trail, and facility maintenance work was done in fiscal year (FY) 2002. During FY 2002, approximately 88 percent of all roads were operated at maintenance levels equal to or greater than the objective maintenance level. The measure for road maintenance was changed for FY 2002 from "miles of road maintained to standard" to "miles of road maintained to objective maintenance level" to better define the accomplishment required. In FY 2002, miles reported under the new measure were 8.5 percent lower than that reported under the old measure at the end of FY 2001. The reported miles of trail maintenance and improvement are 105 percent of target. The agency has emphasized reducing the backlog of trail improvement and maintenance and is completing trail inventories, assessments, and condition surveys to determine the existing situation and plan for the future.

Approximately 36 percent of passenger car roads had no critical health and safety deferred maintenance needs and only 5 percent had no critical deferred maintenance needs of any type. Deferred maintenance is maintenance that was scheduled to be performed but delayed until a future period, and can be either critical or noncritical. Critical maintenance involves situations where health and safety concerns need to be addressed, whereas noncritical maintenance involves routine and other non-emergency types of maintenance. In FY 2000 and FY 2001, a single mileage figure was reported for the road maintenance accomplishment. In FY 2002, the agency delineated both critical and non-critical maintenance activities. Reporting both activities better reflects the common situation where critical activities are performed and noncritical work is deferred. Many roads in the lowest maintenance level (1 - stored roads) require no maintenance, yet they are also reported as maintained to objective maintenance level.

The national average of bridges inspected on schedule for FY 2002 was 66 percent of the target. Many inspections were conducted by State engineers; in some cases the reports were not received in time to get the results entered into the database. In addition, there is a lack of trained and certified bridge inspectors, and in FY 2002, some inspections were delayed due to diversion of staff resources for fire duty.

The reported miles of trail maintenance and improvement were 105 percent of the target due to an emphasis on reducing the backlog of trail improvement and maintenance. In addition, the agency is in the process of completing trail inventories, assessments, and condition surveys to determine the existing situation and plan for the future. Project work was supplemented by long-term partnerships and other volunteer assistance; however, staff shortages and fire emergencies continued to challenge backlog progress.

The number of capital improvement projects accomplished was 55 percent of the target. The shortfall was due to the transfer of construction funds to support fire suppression nationwide.

Law enforcement activity in general was down in FY 2002. Approximately 157,000 incidents were reported to have occurred on NFS lands, which is below previous years. This could be attributed to the high fire activity, which closed some national forests to visitors and involved many LEI personnel with related fire activities. LEI personnel also contacted more than 1 million people, providing such services as general information, obtaining information on criminal matters, assisting with visitors' problems, and search and rescue. Criminal investigators opened 1,650 resource investigations and closed 1,184, including offenses such as timber and forest product theft, archeological resource damage and theft, and arson. In addition, they conducted 154 internal criminal misconduct investigations.

USDA Forest Service facilities have unfortunately been the target of attacks by domestic terrorists and other individuals who oppose Federal law or agency policies. In August 2002, an \$800,000 arson fire destroyed an agency research facility in Warren, PA. The Earth Liberation Front claimed responsibility for this action and made additional threats against agency facilities and employees. LEI conducted a number of security assessments on agency facilities located throughout the country and provided expertise to agency managers in planning for and responding to emergency incidents.

As part of a large cooperative security task force operation, LEI also provided more than 100 personnel to the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, UT, both on and off Olympic venue sites. A number of other emergency incidents throughout the year resulted in employees being moved throughout the Nation to meet demands.

The White House National Strategy for Homeland Security defines responsibilities for all Federal agencies. LEI's homeland security capability lies in its local enforcement and intelligence expertise on the millions of acres of NFS lands. Partnerships with Department of Justice and Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Terrorism Task Forces and numerous other entities were initiated and strengthened by LEI in FY 2002.

There are approximately 31,860 nonrecreation special use authorizations that may have varying degrees of vulnerability. These authorizations cover everything from irrigation ditches to large-scale dams, small private radio antennas to large industrial microwave sites, and worm harvesting operations to energy generation and water treatment plants. While the USDA Forest Service does not have the explicit duty to protect these sites, this does not preclude its responsibility to require that any activities are conducted and maintained in a safe and secure manner.

FY 2002 was a devastating fire season, not only in the resources lost, but also in suppression costs. LEI personnel investigated hundreds of fires, many of them arson caused. Due to LEI's investigative efforts, an agency employee was arrested and charged for starting the Hayman fire in Colorado, which burned over 150,000 acres and many structures. The Rodeo-Chediski fire in Arizona burned over 500,000 acres and hundreds of structures. LEI investigated the fire in cooperation with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the FBI, which led to the arrest of two BIA employees. LEI investigators also arrested a man in Tennessee for arson. He is suspected of setting fires to the NFS lands for the past 30 years.

Program Evaluations

The Engineering Staff conducted a road program monitoring trip in Region 1 (Northern) during FY 2002. The monitoring revealed that many national forests do not have adequate road management objectives.

Due to the diversion of funds to fire suppression activities, the Region 10 (Alaska) Recreation, Heritage, and Wilderness Program review, including a review of the trail program, was postponed to FY 2003.

A general activity review of the Southwestern Region Law Enforcement and Investigations program was conducted during FY 2002. The review found strong relationships between LEI and other USDA Forest Service programs and a strong commitment by personnel to resource management values. The Southwestern Region's implementation of the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program on the Tonto National Forest has improved public safety and emergency response, as well as reduced general crime and drug use problems. The creation of the new Valles Caldera National Preserve within the NFS in New Mexico and its management by a board of citizens and agency officials presented unprecedented agreements regarding provision of law enforcement services. During the review, this process was found to be proceeding well.

Unfortunately, the review also found ongoing problems throughout the region. This is perhaps best illustrated along the Mexican border. The Coronado National Forest shares over 55 miles of direct border with Mexico. The review confirmed the ongoing extraordinary impacts and significant safety risk presented by international border traffic in undocumented immigrants and drug smuggling and use.

Conclusions and Challenges

The USDA Forest Service estimates there is a \$10 billion backlog of deferred maintenance and capital improvement needs on the road system, a \$2.8 billion backlog in facilities, and a \$280 million backlog in trails. At current funding levels, the backlog continues to grow and has extensive adverse impacts on national forest visitors and resources.

The USDA Forest Service published a new road management policy in FY 2001. The policy required all national forests to complete a forestwide roads analysis by January 12, 2003. In doing this analysis, national forests compared their available road maintenance funding with the funding needed to maintain the road system at its objective level. Alternative transportation strategies were developed that, while greatly reducing the number and maintenance levels of open roads, resulted in a road system that can be maintained to applicable standards within the available budget. As these strategies are implemented, the percentage of roads maintained to objective maintenance levels will continue to decline, resulting in a lower percentage of roads reported open and available to intended traffic

The USDA Forest Service currently owns more than 40,000 buildings, of which 60 percent are older than 30 years. The agency is prioritizing facilities to be upgraded to meet health, sanitation, and accessibility standards. At the same time, the agency must be prepared to remove buildings and infrastructure that no longer meet its needs, are not in tune with the natural setting, present significant health and safety problems, or are too expensive to maintain. To protect and ensure the proper care of natural settings, the agency will need to strengthen some heavily used and fragile sites. New construction is expected to be limited and will focus only on resolving resource impacts, meeting identified demand, and helping to diversify local economies.

Appropriations are not sufficient to bring all existing facilities to an acceptable standard or to construct new facilities that meet changing customer demands or reduce environmental impacts. The USDA Forest Service is developing a Facilities Management Strategy to address the funding shortfall that includes a facility master planning process, facility working capital fund, and guidelines for decommissioning and disposal of unwanted facilities. In addition, the USDA Forest Service will continue to look at opportunities to partner with volunteers, nongovernmental organizations, private sector businesses, and other agencies to get the job done.

The public is becoming increasingly interested in the trails program. Additional resources will be needed to complete inventory, assessment, and condition survey needs; maintain and continue partnership outreach efforts; and provide other volunteer support. Recent fires of 2001 and 2002 have added to direct and indirect trail and trail structures damage, resulting in additional rehabilitation needs in some regions. The current annual appropriation for trail maintenance is estimated to be 50 percent of the need.

Inclusion of additional trail resources inventory data in the infrastructure database will improve overall accountability. Program budgets were supplemented in FY 2002 by a variety of partnership and collaborative volunteer efforts to accomplish trail operation and maintenance needs, and that is expected to continue. Increased emphasis should result in improved accomplishments in FY 2003.

NFS lands are heavily impacted by the production and illegal importation of controlled substances and other drug activity. The USDA Forest Service has primary responsibility for drug enforcement on NFS lands. LEI personnel eradicate domestic marijuana plants, locate clandestine methamphetamine operations on NFS lands throughout the Nation, and interdict illegal drug smuggling along both international borders. Armed growers, booby-trapped sites, and toxic chemicals pose a tremendous risk to the public and employees. Additionally, watersheds, vegetation, soils, and wildlife are at a great risk from toxic chemicals, fertilizers, and wildlife poisoning and poaching. LEI is striving to achieve a 100 percent response rate for both enforcement and investigative capabilities and to completely eliminate marijuana, methamphetamine, and other drug production and trafficking on NFS lands, as well as drug-related activities affecting those lands.

LEI is undertaking efforts in facility security assessments, primarily at highly vulnerable research labs, and is defining a national plan for identifying and protecting USDA Forest Service assets, including those under special use permits. LEI has designated a homeland security coordinator to facilitate all LEI efforts in sharing information; collecting and disseminating intelligence; and preventing, enforcing, and investigating terrorist acts.

As part of the USDA Forest Service mission of managing more than 192 million acres of NFS lands, the agency must ensure public and employee safety and resource protection. The events of September 11, 2001, have changed how the agency views security and impacts on international borders. The USDA Forest Service Homeland Security Committee set a goal to maintain the security of USDA Forest Service operations and critical infrastructure. One of the objectives under this goal is to reduce and mitigate impacts and implications to NFS lands, facilities, and public safety due to unchecked illegal traffic coming across the international borders that may facilitate terrorist activities.

The agency recognizes its responsibility as a Federal law enforcement entity in providing assistance and augmentation to agencies assigned to border security. The agency, however, is often the only Federal agency working in these remote areas and is the best trained, equipped, and knowledgeable in these locales. Given adequate permanent staffing, the USDA Forest Service and LEI will be uniquely suited to participate with and augment any agency or task force that is designed to safeguard the U.S. borders and the interests affected by these borders.

To reach these targets, LEI must obtain additional funding for personnel. The targeted minimum level of service is one or more law enforcement officers on each USDA Forest Service unit. Until the base level of service is reached, LEI's goal is to maintain, rather than reduce, its current enforcement and investigative capabilities. LEI will prioritize enforcement and investigative actions, giving priority to responses to crimes against persons and their property over natural resource-related crimes.

Verification, Validation, and Limitations of Data Sources

The majority of the roads and trails data referenced is obtained through the USDA Forest Service INFRA database. This database provides access to data that is input at the field level. Therefore, there are limitations to the accuracy of this data. Currently, the only active process for data verification and validation is through condition surveys throughout the year. These surveys provide a look at the progress of the performance measures.

The measure "percent of roads open to intended traffic" is limited in its applications. Monitoring trips to the regions continue to indicate that the forests are over-reporting this value. The roads analyses discussed above will begin to address this issue.

Although current trail data is incomplete, in the near future we expect the INFRA trails module, complemented by cost information from Meaningful Measures, and assessment and condition survey from Trails Assessment and Condition Survey to provide complete trail information by local, regional, and national levels, as well as by State and political divisions.

LEI implemented a new electronic enforcement and investigative database in FY 2002, the Law Enforcement and Investigations Management Attainment Reporting System. This system is a compilation of two older systems and fully integrates enforcement and investigations data. The system also adds modern Geographic Information System (GIS) crime mapping capabilities to provide more responsive management feedback about agency law enforcement effectiveness.

The primary limitation to a fully functioning database is data input. LEI also lacks the resources needed to verify, enter, and maintain the tremendous amount of field data collected. Consequently, the data included here is very conservative.



Strategic Objective 4c: Improve and integrate informational systems, data structures, and information management processes to support cost-efficient program delivery.

Annual Performance Goals and Associated Measures:

(1) The public and employees are satisfied with the accessibility and usefulness of information systems, service, and data structures.

Measure: Public and employee satisfaction rating.

(2) Information system and data structures provide employees and the public ready access to current economic, social, and ecological data and information using current technology.

Measure: Percent of available and current technology that is incorporated in projects and products.^a

Measure: Percent increase of Intranet hits annually. Gigabytes of information available on the Washington Office World Wide Web.^b

^a No data was collected for this measure in FY 2002. For FY 2003 and beyond, new information technology contracts will be performancebased, and data will be measured annually.

^b Original measure tracked Internet hits, but Intranet hits have been tracked instead, so wording was changed. "Gigabytes of information..." added as part of the measure.

Overview

Public and employee surveys are undertaken to assess satisfaction with accessibility and usefulness of information systems, service, and data structures. The USDA Forest Service then makes improvements to computer and network architecture in order to support seamless access to information kept on agency Intranet and Internet servers.

Several changes in activities and system modifications have been made in the past several years to improve the delivery of services. Implementing the Enterprise System Management (Tivoli) environment improved central operations and supports the computer infrastructure as well as central backup/restoration for online storage and contributes to accessibility, service, and usefulness of systems. The Information Resources Board was established to ensure that information resource investments are directed to priority program requirements.

Data standards are key to sharing data with customers from both the public and private sectors, as well as combining data with partners to perform broad-scale natural resource analyses for areas that overlap USDA Forest Service boundaries. The agency established internal data standards, the Geographic Information System (GIS) Data Dictionary being a prime example. The agency is also involved in setting interagency data standards, participating in the National Wildfire Coordination Group, the Federal Geographic Data Committee, and others.

FY 2002 Performance

The steady stream of advancements in information technology is driving increasingly high expectations for increases in services and convenience of service. The Government is a principal service provider and its leaders are accountable for meeting these growing service demands. The President's Management Agenda challenges Federal agencies to become citizen-centric and to expand e-Government.

Based on observations and trend analyses, from fiscal year (FY) 2001 to FY 2002, the agency increased the amount of information available to employees from 630,000 gigabytes to more than 750,000 gigabytes. During the same period, information available to external customers via the Internet increased from an estimated 65 gigabytes to 133 gigabytes. Access to the information appears to have increased dramatically during the past year as well. Internally, employee access to the agency's Intranet at the Washington Office more than doubled from FY 2001 to FY 2002. In FY 2002, approximately 82 million "hits" were recorded; this increased to more than 167 million in FY 2002. The USDA Forest Service Internet Web site also experienced a surge from 280 million "hits" in FY 2001 to more than 510 millions "hits" this fiscal year. The amount of information made available to employees is increasing at a rate of about 20 percent a year, whereas the amount of information made available to the public, while currently at a much lower base, is growing at a rate of more than 50 percent a year.

A survey by Gartner Incorporated, which is discussed in the Program Evaluations section, revealed that 78 percent of employees rate the quality of the information technology equipment and the quality of deskside support as "OK," "Good," or "Excellent." The overall quality of the computing environment was rated "OK" or better by 70 percent of employees.

The agency made great progress in the implementation of the Natural Resource Information System (NRIS), an inventory and monitoring system that is on schedule to be fully operational by the beginning of FY 2004.

Program Evaluations

The USDA Forest Service contracted during the first half of FY 2002 with Gartner Incorporated (Gartner) to conduct a performance evaluation of the agency's Distributed Computing Environment (DCE). Gartner applied its standard Government Managed Services Assessment methodology that includes Gartner's Total Cost of Ownership methodology, a rigorous sourcing analysis, and an internal end-user survey. The study found that the DCE total cost of ownership per user is \$11,254 compared to a peer group average (PGA) of \$10,519. The direct cost (operations and customer support, including amortization of hardware and software) portion of that total is \$5,139, which is 29 percent higher than the peer group. Since the direct cost component of the study includes amortization of hardware and software and the agency's equipment was newer than that of the peer group (since the agency completely replaced its Data General computing infrastructure in 1999) partially explains this discrepancy. The cost of operations labor indicates that the agency has a much lower ratio of users to support staff (25) than the peer group average (100), resulting in operations costs that are 32 percent higher than the PGA. The agency's indirect costs for end user operation of the equipment and software are 7 percent below the PGA. This was affected in part by the comparatively lower salaries of USDA Forest Service end users compared to the peer group.

The Gartner end-user survey found that 78 percent of agency end users rated the quality of the official deskside support as "OK," "Good," or "Excellent," and 78 percent rated the quality of

their computing and communication devices as “OK,” “Good,” or “Excellent.” The survey also found 44 percent of users required co-worker custom application support more than 12 times in the last year (3.7 times the PGA), and 55 percent of users reported they received no training for standard applications.

The Gartner report recommended 20 actions the agency could take to lower total costs of ownership and improve customer satisfaction. Some of the most significant of these are:

- Consolidate servers and databases;
- Update hardware and software master contracts;
- Continue to move to an enterprise solution (Tivoli) for the management of the DCE;
- Move to a single point of contact help desk;
- Implement end user training on all applications;
- Move to a Virtual Private Network telecommunications architecture;
- Negotiate service levels with line management;
- Adopt standards, approve enterprise architecture, and ensure applications and systems software are adequately tested before being released into production operations;
- Request assistance from the Chief to communicate the evolving nature of information technology support, the need for standards, and the need for both information technology and program delivery personnel to change business practices to increase productivity and service delivery to the public; and
- Implement a continuous improvement program for information resources management that actively seeks out and applies best practices.

Conclusions and Challenges

The DCE performance review indicated many areas in which the agency’s Information Resource Management (IRM) community can improve and thereby reach and sustain higher levels of performance. The overall rating of employee satisfaction is slightly below the norm. Implementing a central full-time help desk (the End User Support Center) and increasing employees’ access to information systems training are two actions IRM is taking to most directly address employee satisfaction. Another action IRM will pursue, based on the review, is to better communicate about, and involve management in, decisions as to the services the IRM community will provide and the resource allocations this will require. IRM is also strengthening its standards, enterprise architecture, and software testing practices as advised by the DCE study.

The study did not address the public’s satisfaction with the information resources offered by the USDA Forest Service, but it is known throughout the industry that better organized, consistently designed Web sites supported with an effective search engine can greatly improve the public’s experience. The IRM and Office of Communications (OC) staffs are implementing improvements in this area.

Staffs from IRM, OC, R&D, and others working on applications development and geospatial information face a number of challenges both in improving current performance and on measuring performance achieved. The biggest measurement challenges are to assess the public’s satisfaction with the agency information provided and to determine the utility of the information provided, not just the quantity. The agency will be implementing an information quality Web site that will contain some mechanisms to measure the public’s perception of the quality of USDA Forest Service information.

Verification, Validation,
and Limitations of Data
Sources

The gigabytes of information available to internal and external customers, as reported in the performance section above, are based on close observation, but have not been verified. The amounts shown are based on extrapolations of incomplete data. The usage trends are a good representation of what is occurring. IRM will endeavor to collect the data more comprehensively in FY 2003. The challenge is that the USDA Forest Service still has 10-15 small World Wide Web (WWW) installations around the agency that provide fairly unique information and services to the public. This lack of central management makes it somewhat more difficult to get accurate supply measurements. This problem also exists on the USDA Forest Service Intranet or FSWEB. IRM is pursuing consolidation of the agency's WWW sites and is evaluating tools capable of gathering supply information across the agency's Intranet.

The number of hits on the Internet or Intranet is even harder to measure than the amount of disk capacity, for the same reasons; therefore, the information provided is only for the Washington Office. For the WWW, the hits measured are estimated to be at least 80 percent of the total hits across all agency WWW sites. For the FSWEB, there is no plausible way to extrapolate from the number of hits measured at the Washington Office. To track the use of the total FSWEB, the agency is searching for a tool capable of measuring Web hits across the entire USDA Forest Service Intranet.

The customer satisfaction numbers are based on a proven methodology developed by Gartner Incorporated. IRM is investigating the requirements needed to conduct an annual internal survey. Surveying external users will be more challenging; IRM will investigate options as part of establishing an information quality WWW site.

IRM is also developing additional metrics for measuring performance and will use them in defining service level agreements in contracts for IT products and services. Among these are two customer satisfaction measures. The first will assess employee satisfaction with the corporate hardware and software available to them, and the second assesses employee satisfaction with the End User Support Center in resolving problems using corporate hardware, software, national applications, and agency-run networks. The data for these measures is required by contract, will be audited, and thus will be of high quality.

Strategic Objective 4d: Improve the skills, diversity, and productivity of the workforce.

Annual Performance Goals and Associated Measures:

(1) The skills of USDA Forest Service employees are sufficient to meet agency needs and commitments for program delivery.

Measure: Percent increase in number of employees meeting skill requirements to accomplish program delivery.

(2) Affirmative Employment Program goals/objectives are met for all underrepresented groups.

Measure: Percent decrease in number of job categories with underrepresentation by affirmative action target groups.

(3) USDA Forest Service employees demonstrate improved productivity.

Measure: Cost per work unit index is stable or declining.

Overview

Our Nation is rapidly becoming more diverse. As a result, the USDA Forest Service needs to find common ground and build relevance with all segments of society—including underserved populations and communities—to effectively carry out its mission, plans, programs, and activities.

The agency’s Civil Rights (CR) and Human Resources Management (HRM) Staffs formed a partnership in the overall leadership of the agency’s Strategic Workforce and the Affirmative Employment Program Plan. The agency’s Strategic Public Outreach Plan provides a corporate umbrella for many current national and local efforts to diversify the workforce, improve customer service, and provide employment opportunities for the American public.

The agency’s Continuous Improvement Process (CIP) provides a venue for all employees to participate in surveys to identify areas within the agency where relative strengths and weaknesses exist and to effect improvements. The CIP data covers 17 areas, including rewards and recognition, training and career development, fairness and treatment of others, communication, and use of resources. The process is all-inclusive, with specific questions developed to gather information from full-time, part-time, seasonal, temporary, and student employees, as well as from Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) enrollees.

FY 2002 Performance

The USDA Forest Service continues to accomplish and expand upon the USDA CR initiatives integral to customer service delivery. During fiscal year (FY) 2002, the agency held a national meeting that featured broad Title VI and related program training for civil rights and resource program managers and supervisors.

The national headquarters provided seed monies to the field units who demonstrated excellent public outreach partnerships and conservation education efforts with diverse, underserved communities. The field units and project managers who used these funds accomplished additional local results. These excellent models of public outreach with underserved communities are the focus of agencywide dialog regarding customer service, public outreach, and collaborative stewardship initiatives.

The USDA Forest Service implemented the National Hispanic Radio outreach pilot project, which included a contract with the Hispanic Radio Network (HRN), La Red Hispana, Inc. The contractor aired more than 30 USDA Forest Service program stories nationally and internationally across HRN radio affiliates. Spanish language radio stories included wildfire prevention and suppression activities, careers in natural resources and requirements of such careers, and other agency programs offered at the field units.

The agency implemented an agreement between the Pacific Southwest Region (Region 5) and the University of California-Berkeley to provide support to numerous community-based organizations in civil rights and human resource issues. A forum for dialog between the agency and underserved communities, called "People for Forest, Forest for People – Just Forest Symposium," was developed, and will be held in FY 2003.



In collaboration with the Washington Office (WO) Ecosystem Management Coordination (EMC) Staff, the CR Staff completed development of an environmental justice and Civil Rights Impact Analysis/Social Impact Analysis Web site on the agency's Intranet. This Web site coordinates key information regarding preparation and implementation of civil rights impact analyses and environmental justice assessments for employees agencywide and provides direct links to other key related WO program staff Web sites.

The USDA Forest Service conducted numerous Civil Rights Impact Analyses (CRIA) that were regional, station, or national in scope. Some noteworthy efforts include establishment of the USDA Forest Service Limited Tree Removal Policy/Program and several organization management decisions. The HRM and CR staffs use CRIA tools and decisionmaking processes to conduct assessments of impacts on workforce diversity, local program delivery, and customer service.

During FY 2002, the agency held another organizational assessment survey called CIP 2001. Employee participation increased from 47 percent in FY 2000 to 49 percent in FY 2002. Emphasis was made on making the survey more accessible to field personnel and resulted in providing the survey in several formats, including a Web-based shortened survey and a Web-based original survey format sampling 1,000 employees. In addition, Spanish and English versions were offered in hardcopy format. Survey results indicate that there were nine areas in which the agency is doing well. Compared to other Federal agencies that administered this survey, the agency scored the highest in the area of diversity and had similar high scores in two other areas: work and family life/personal life, and fairness and treatment of others.

The USDA Forest Service has become a member of the Office of Personnel Management's Performance America Network, which enables Government organizations at all levels to benchmark themselves against other high-performing organizations to share strategies that work and establish an effective forum for discussing successes and strategies.

The Civil Rights Leadership Team (CRLT), composed of Washington Office CR leadership and CR directors from all regions and stations, continues to be an integral part of the CR Program. During the past fiscal year, the team has developed a task map that outlines all required civil rights reports, produced a brochure describing the core values and goals of the CRLT, developed a communication plan for the team, and organized several ad hoc teams to develop means for improving strategic outreach and program delivery. The CRLT has provided guidance and leadership to enhance civil rights organizational effectiveness and has contributed to continuity, consistency, and accountability in CR programs.

Program Evaluations

The USDA Forest Service conducted program reviews and implemented Senior Executive Service Performance evaluations around workforce diversity, customer service, and outreach to underserved populations. The reviewers found many positive examples of customer service and positive work environments, as well as the need for improvement in coordination and training.

The agency has been recognized as a Model Employer of Choice (the largest agency designated) by the Partnership for Federal Agencies for its effective development and use of CIP to improve the work environment of its employees.

Conclusions and Challenges

Overall, the USDA Forest Service continued to improve employee morale, decreased employment complaints, increased program complaints, increased organizational capacity to perform at a higher level, and experienced fewer retention issues in FY 2002 than in previous years. Decreasing national budgets continue to place pressure on field units and the headquarters to restructure the workforce and facility infrastructure.

The CIP continues to provide definitive data to measure organizational effectiveness over time by providing direct feedback from employees. Managers, supervisors, and employees work together to develop long-term plans to address and improve work environment issues and concerns identified in the survey to improve employee morale. The agency expects to realize improved employee performance in the upcoming year as a result of strategically addressing the areas of improvement identified by the CIP Survey.

Verification, Validation, and Limitation of Data Sources

The agency maintains and manages the USDA Forest Service Employee Complaint System, the Program Discrimination Complaints Database, and the Human Resources Management FOCUS Database, which allow assessments, actions, and improvement of situations as they arise. No significant data limitations were identified in these systems.

Strategic Objective 4e: Ensure equal employment opportunity in employment practices.

Annual Performance Goals and Associated Measures:

(1) The agency offers a work environment that values the contribution of all employees and manages employment complaints in a productive way.

Measure: Percent decrease in the number of formal internal and external equal employment opportunity (EEO) complaints.

(2) Identify and resolve the root causes of EEO complaints.

Measure: To be determined.

Overview

An integral part of USDA Forest Service leadership is the management of the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint process which provides for earlier resolution of complaints at lower cost and at lower levels of the organization. The USDA Forest Service Employment Complaints Program is going through continuous improvements, conducting several pilots and emphasizing early intervention.

FY 2002 Performance

The agency continues to emphasize a collaborative approach to evaluating and resolving EEO complaints. This model is an effective means of coordinating the various perspectives needed to fully explore resolution options and has improved the quality of work produced by all involved in the complaint resolution process. Resolutions are reviewed for adherence to Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, USDA, and agency settlement and delegation policies.

The total number of both informal and formal EEO complaint filings decreased in fiscal year (FY) 2002. The per capita complainant filing rate, using a permanent workforce of approximately 30,450, was 0.58 percent, which is less than the Government-wide average of 0.66 percent.

The resolution rate for informal EEO complaints was 54 percent, which is 13 percent higher than in FY 2001. Formal complaints closed by either settlement or decision increased significantly in FY 2002. There were 222 closures compared to 139 the previous year.

Monthly Leadership Reports on complaint statistics were developed and are distributed to top-level management and Civil Rights (CR) directors. These reports assist in the analysis of complaint numbers, resolution rates, and patterns and trends evident in complaint filings.

Development of a new complaint database was undertaken; the database is expected to become fully operational in FY 2003. The new database will improve the tracking and analysis of complaints and will be available to CR directors in the field.

Training on EEO complaints, both the process and ways to prevent and deal with complaints, was provided to USDA Forest Service managers.

In May 2002, USDA Forest Service dispute resolution practitioners met for 3 days for training and discussion of mutual concerns. Civil Rights directors, Human Resources Management staff, and Early Intervention Program staff continue to work collaboratively throughout the organization to address EEO complaints.

Program Evaluations

The USDA Forest Service Washington Office CR Staff looks at EEO complaint activity as part of its Title VII reviews of selected regions and stations. One such review was conducted during FY 2002. The 5-year trend showed a consistent decrease in activity from six complaints in FY 1998 to three complaints in FY 2002. There was a high rate of resolution averaging over 50 percent over the 5-year period. Reprisal was noted as a basis for several complaints in 4 of the 5 years of informal complaint data. The formal complaint filings were below the USDA's average filing rate of 0.6 percent per capita based on permanent full-time and part-time employees.

Conclusions and Challenges

Statistical data reflected positive indicators for the USDA Forest Service in FY 2002. Fewer EEO complaints were filed and more were resolved than in previous fiscal years. The agency continued to promote use of alternative dispute resolution procedures, while refining its database and reporting mechanisms to aid in the analysis of complaint patterns and trends. The agency will continue to build on these efforts in FY 2003, with a focus on complaint analysis, prevention, and resolution.

Verification, Validation, and Limitations of Data Sources

The agency maintains and manages the USDA Forest Service Employee Complaint System, the Program Discrimination Complaints Database, and the Human Resources Management FOCUS Database, which allow assessments, actions, and improvement of situations as they arise. No significant data limitations were identified in these systems.

Strategic Objective 4f: Provide appropriate access to National Forest System lands and ensure nondiscrimination in the delivery of all USDA Forest Service programs.

Annual Performance Goal and Associated Measure:

(1) USDA Forest Service programs are managed in accordance with all accessibility laws, regulations, policies, and guidelines.

Measure: Percent increase in number of programs in compliance with accessibility laws, regulations, policies, and guidelines.

Overview

USDA Forest Service programs are required to provide equal opportunity in the delivery of its program to all program beneficiaries. No agency, office, or employee of the USDA can exclude from participation in, deny the benefits of, or subject to discrimination, any person in the United States on the grounds of race, color, sex, age, national origin, religion, or physical ability under any program or activity administered by the agency, office, or employees. (See USDA Regulation 7 CFR Part 15 and 15d – Nondiscrimination in USDA Conducted Programs and Activities.)

Through the integration of accessibility across agency functions, the USDA Forest Service will ensure that there is access to facilities and programs at all levels of the organization. All new or reconstructed facilities, exhibits, or informational materials are required to meet the accessibility guidelines. No separate funding is provided to improve accessibility; it is integrated into all projects. Accessibility improvements are completed using a wide range of funding sources, such as capital investment and maintenance, the Fee Demonstration Program, Transportation Equity Act (TEA-21), cooperative agreements, and grants.

Accessibility awareness training and support are needed by all staff. Furthermore, the agency must provide the tools and staff needed to make consistent accessibility-related decisions. Both of these needs were addressed in fiscal year (FY) 2002. Emphasis has been placed on including policies, procedures, and actions on accessibility in agency unit reviews.

FY 2002 Performance

A Title VI managers meeting was conducted by the Civil Rights (CR) Staff to provide training on equitable program delivery and outlined complaint process resources to be used by units. In addition, the agency has continued to provide advice and counsel across deputy areas and field units on the processing of complaints and case status. The agency also continues to identify complaint trends and develop resources for use by units.

The May 2002 Conference for the Disability Program offered guidance to employees on Equal Employment Opportunity complaint and Alternate Dispute Resolution processes and program access, along with resources valuable to individuals with disabilities.

A contract was issued with Johnson and Johnson Associates (JJA) to develop an assessment tool to administer compliance reviews on regions, stations, and areas as outlined by the agency's 5-year compliance review plan. JJA consultants' reports will provide results-oriented findings with, recommendations for action plans. This process is designed to assist the USDA Forest Service in developing compliance strategies.

National forests improved more than 1,050 facilities and related programs in FY 2002. This work included a wide range of accessibility improvements, such as campgrounds, picnic tables, interpretive sites, trails and trailheads, boating and fishing access sites, cabins, shelters, informational materials, improved access for the hearing impaired, and an Access Guide for Incident Facilities. The total expenditure to complete all FY 2002 forest recreation accessibility improvements was \$53,045,220.

An accessibility awareness training module was developed and distributed in both CD and transparency formats to staff at each level of the agency by the accessibility program coordinator. The total expenditure for this agencywide training module was \$4 million.

The agency planned to develop a decision matrix on motorized mechanical uses for restricted areas. Through work with staffs on many levels of the agency, however, it was determined that a decision matrix would not be the most helpful tool. Instead, a policy was developed regarding motorized use in restricted areas. No additional funds were expended to meet this field-identified need.

Through coordination with the CR Staff, the compliance review process has been revised to include a component on accessibility. In addition, accessibility implementation is a part of all unit reviews.

Program Evaluations

Each region has reviewed its accessibility accomplishments and reported them to the national office. The results indicate a significant improvement in program and facility accessibility across the agency. Every region has increased the number of programs and facilities that are accessible. In addition, 80 percent of accessibility transition plans have been completed for existing facilities that are not now accessible.

The regional reviews have highlighted the need to standardize the information reporting formats in order to be able to access the total percent of facilities and programs that are accessible across the agency.

In August 2002, a CR delivery and employment programs compliance review was conducted on the Forest Products Laboratory by JJA consultants. Findings for the employment program were very comprehensive and recommendations will lead to improvements in the program. The assessment of program delivery found that the application of the broad standards of compliance used by NFS for most recipients of Federal funds does not meet the needs of the majority of research stations.

The USDA Forest Service provided a FY 2002 Information and Reporting Requirements report to the USDA and the Department of Justice indicating servicewide compliance reviews of federally assisted programs.

Conclusions and Challenges

Tools are needed to assist the field in the integration of accessibility. The necessary tools identified by the national forests and regions include accessibility guidelines for outdoor recreation areas, the integration of accessibility policy into the USDA Forest Service Manual, and a user-friendly guidebook that combines outdoor recreation accessibility guidelines with the agency's philosophy and policies regarding universal design. Partners have requested a tool to assist outfitters/guides under special use permit to integrate persons with disabilities into their programs, as is required by law. Each of these projects will be undertaken in FY 2003.

It is estimated that people made approximately 235 million visits to national forests in FY 2002. Only 17 program-related discrimination complaints are on record with the USDA Office of Civil Rights (OCR), of which 5 were new complaints in FY 2002. The USDA Forest Service continues to identify trends and barriers that are the root causes of complaints. OCR makes all final determinations in the cases.

The data shows an increase in discrimination complaints regarding access to recreation lands due to national origin, disabilities, or age. As a result, the USDA Forest Service has developed a National Recreation Accessibility Plan that strategically addressed access to agency programs and facilities. An off-highway vehicle use decision tool has been developed, which addresses the recurring issue of access to National Forest System lands.

Verification, Validation, and Limitations of Data Sources

In addition to the need for standardized reporting formats, information concerning the accessibility of programs and facilities should be integrated into the agency database system in order to have information readily available.

Data on discrimination complaints in the agency is tracked in USDA by the OCR, Program and Investigations Division, which periodically runs reports for the agency. The USDA Forest Service does not do any data entry or retrieval from this system; therefore, the validation of information is the responsibility of the OCR.

