

Tool: Forest Service Handover Memo

Summary

The Forest Service's hand-over memo process enables an outgoing agency leader to share information with their replacement. The memo documents important relationships and collaborative work.

Keys to Success

Written documentation of collaborative efforts and key community relationships, consistent use of the handover memo tool by the agency

*"Oftentimes both our external and internal customers complain that key Forest Service personnel move on to other jobs just as they begin to understand the local needs and resources. A good handover memo can be a vital tool in shortening the start up time and increasing a key leader's productivity in real time."
—Pete Karp, retired Uinta National Forest Supervisor*

National Forest Foundation
Bldg. 27, Ste 3
Fort Missoula Rd.
Missoula, MT 59804
406.542.2805
www.natlforests.org
www.WestCANHelp.org

Handover Memo Eases FS Staff Transitions

The challenge of rotating Forest Service line officers is a well-known barrier to community and forest-level collaboration. It takes time to develop good relationships, and when a key agency contact is transferred, a collaborative effort can stall out while community members establish rapport with the new person.

In 2006, (former) Chief Dale Bosworth issued a directive to Forest Service employees to use a leadership transition process when leaving their post. Specifically, he asked those in key leadership positions-- Forest Supervisors, District Rangers, Research Program Leaders, State and Private Forestry field representatives, and Staff Directors at national and regional levels who work extensively with partner and cooperator networks-- to prepare a handover memo for the incoming employee.

In the handover memo, the outgoing agency leader provides information critical for the new person to be successful in doing their job. The memo describes relationships with partners, collaborative efforts underway, commitments that have been made, and any work agreements or procedures that partners are using with the agency/unit.

As stated in the attached template, the purpose of the handover memo is not only to communicate between the departing and new leader, but also to inform and involve agency staff and superiors who will continue to support collaborative efforts in the interim and into the future.

The handover memo process has yet to be used routinely by Forest Service employees when leaving a position. The Forest Service is working internally to increase employee awareness and use of the memo. Community groups, too, are encouraged to ask their Forest Service contacts who are transferring to other positions to prepare a handover memo.

Benefit

The handover memo enables a new Forest Service leader to honor the commitments made to the community by their predecessor, and for the agency to maintain momentum on collaborative efforts despite changes in personnel.



File Code:

Date: January 3, 2006

Route To:

From: Pete Karp, outgoing Forest Supervisor, Uinta NF

To: Dan Dallas, Acting Forest Supervisor and the yet-to-be selected Forest Supervisor, Uinta NF

“Handover Memo”

The purpose of this memo is to help improve transition between outgoing leaders and incoming leaders specifically in the area of partnerships and collaborative efforts. I followed a template given to me by Mary Wagner, Deputy Regional Forester, R-4, at our December Regional Leadership Team (RLT) meeting. We agreed that this “first handover memo” would serve as a test basis for future memos. Also due to the time of year, we recognized that coordination with key forest Staff and Rangers would be minimal (i.e. Annual Leave, holidays, etc.). I was only able to coordinate with Loyal Clark, Public Affairs Officer, for input.

- **Describe the current partnership and collaborative efforts underway on your unit**

In no particular order, here are a list of key partners and partnership efforts.

Timpanogos Cave National Monument – recreation fee program partnership, future co-location of agencies in one facility, management of American Fork Canyon in partnership with Utah Department of Transportation and the Utah County Sheriff’s Department. Forest Supervisor and Pleasant Grove District Ranger are the lead contacts. Partnership has been in existence for 8 years.

Utah Department of Transportation/Local County Transportation Agencies – agreements to maintain parts of the Forest transportation system. Forest Engineer and District Rangers are the lead contacts. Critical to maintaining Forest Service (FS) roads to provide quality customer service within shrinking budgets. Ongoing partnership for many, many years.

Congressional Staff – at least monthly briefings with staff from Senator Bennett, Senator Hatch, Congressman Cannon and Congressman Matheson offices. These offices are located in Provo and Salt Lake City. Congressman Bishop’s staff is included when his district is affected. Forest Public Affairs Officer (PAO) is the lead contact. Important for Forest Supervisor and sometimes other Staff and/or Rangers to attend depending on significance of topics.

County Commissioners/County Council/Mayors – regular briefings as needed. There are four county governments that are directly affected by the Forest’s programs and decisions. Three are in the form of county commissions and one is a county council. There are 23 mayors that are part of the Forest communication network. The most common



communication method is the monthly Council of Governments meeting. Forest Supervisor, District Rangers, and PAO coordinate responsibility for contacts.

State Agencies - Tim Garcia, Utah Statewide Coordinator is the primary contact for the Forest Service. Forest Supervisor and Leadership Team are involved as needed. Local State agency contacts are coordinated by the Leadership Team.

Tribal Contacts – briefings as requested and needed. There are two Tribes that are affected by Forest programs and decisions; Confederated Tribes of the Goshute Reservation located in Ibapah, and the Ute Tribe located in Fort Duchesne. PAO is responsible for Forest-wide program. Forest Cultural Heritage specialist and District Rangers are the lead contacts for specific project information.

Utah County Convention and Visitor's Bureau – office and visitor center are located in Provo. Forest Service information is provided at the visitor center. Partnership Specialist is the lead contact. Coordinates events and information requests with PAO and other Forest staff.

Provo/Orem Chamber of Commerce – Partnership Specialist is the lead contact. Coordinates events and information requests with PAO and other Forest staff.

Media – 3 daily and 11 weekly newspapers, 6 television stations, and 10 radio stations are part of the Forest communication network. PAO is the lead contact.

Friends of Strawberry Valley (FOSV) – a very key group of people that help in various ways to make Strawberry Valley (Heber RD) a better place. Group was started about five years ago. Jim Carter is the Executive Director (a real jewel!) and backbone of the group. The District Ranger at Heber is the key forest contact, although long-term strategies should be set with Forest Supervisor involvement. “Strawberry Watershed Report” is the key guiding document.

Trout Unlimited – key group to work with primarily in American Fork Canyon (decommissioning of American Fork Hydroelectric Plant, and abandoned mine land reclamation and restoration, Diamond Fork Creek restoration, Strawberry Valley Project Lands). Great organization, very productive partnership over the last 5-8 years in particular. Ted Fitzgerald, retired FS person, is key contact for abandoned mine work in North Fork of American Fork Canyon.

Rock Canyon Land Exchange Proposal – fairly recent “opportunity” to acquire 80 acres near mouth of Rock Canyon, Pleasant Grove Ranger District. I was approached by Provo City Mayor, Lewis Billings, and asked to work with City and landowner Richard Davis, and other interested parties (including President of the State Legislature, State Senator John Valentine, Orem) to explore possibilities to acquire this land and have it become part of the National Forest System (land exchange, purchase, etc.). John Logan is the key forest contact.

Volunteer Program – an absolutely unique and invaluable partnership on the Uinta NF. The program always leads the nation in number of participants (generally 8,000 – 10,000 per year, as many as 17,000 one year). As importantly, this program allows the Forest Service to maintain close contact with communities and is extremely effective in communicating Forest Service programs and learning what our National Forest owners want. The positive Forest

Service working environment for the Uinta NF is a direct result of our staying connected through our volunteers. Never let this program disintegrate! PAO is the Human Resource Program (SYVP) coordinator. Each Ranger District has a full-time HR coordinator position.

- **Commitments or schedules associated with current partnership and collaborative efforts**

Timpanogos Cave National Monument (NM)– main efforts involve recreation fee program and construction of Timpanogos Interagency Center (will be new location for the Pleasant Grove Ranger District office). Pam Gardner is the key contact on the forest and is working with Kit Mullen, Superintendent, Timpanogos Cave NM. The ball is in the National Park Service (NPS) court on design and incorporation into the NPS budget for construction. The Forest Service provided the land (37 acres) through a land exchange for a construction site. Senator Bennett is interested in getting funding through NPS budget. Spring should be the next checkpoint. NPS process is slow right now. The FS will need to stay on top of this one and move for funding in FY-07 or FY-08 at the latest. The estimated cost is \$5.8 million, which has been conceptually “agreed” to by NPS Acting Director in Denver.

Friends of Strawberry Valley (FOSV) – commitments are pretty well described in the Strawberry Watershed Report (copy is in bookcase in my office). Some projects are scheduled in FY-06. The Uinta will need to coordinate and plan for projects in FY-07 and beyond. There are great opportunities here for additional partnerships with Blue Ribbon Fishery Council, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources Habitat Council, other user groups and possibly Wasatch County. Jim Carter is a key person to work with on this. Julie King, Heber District Ranger is the key forest contact.

Rock Canyon Land Exchange – informal commitment to work with Provo City Mayor, Lewis Billings, to try to find a win-win solution to get 80 acre piece of private land in Rock Canyon on National Forest System lands. No specific timeframe has been discussed. The next coordination meeting is January 25, 7:30 a.m. in Salt Lake City. John Logan is the key forest contact.

- **Current working agreements or procedures**

I encouraged Staff and District Rangers to be the key contacts for local elected officials (i.e. Mayors, County Commissioners, etc.) and local partnership groups. This helped maintain direct communication at the lowest organizational level of the Forest Service. I am kept up-to-date by Staff and Rangers on current and emerging issues, jointly develop strategies with them, and become personally involved when issues were forest-wide or larger in nature. I think this strategy helped develop leadership skills in Staff and Rangers too. Staff and Rangers can provide additional information and any formal agreements. Include this in your transition.

- **Strategy for meeting and getting to know your community**

Work with the PAO on possible media opportunities as a way for the local public to get to know you as a person. Monthly evening meetings with Council of Governments is a way to meet local Mayors (Utah County). The PAO can schedule you on the agenda. Visits with four County Commissioners/Council is encouraged. A transition meeting with Forest

Leadership Team is important early on. This will also result in a larger list of key contacts for you to make. Meet with forest employees as soon as possible. These are some of the finest employees you will ever know! Meet with the Regional Forester's Team as soon as you can and get the highest Regional/National priority items for you to address during your assignment. Finally, make sure you enjoy something from each and every day in this job. The Uinta NF is one of the best in the entire system. Help ensure it stays at the top of the pack!

/s/ Peter W. Karp
PETER W. KARP
Forest Supervisor

cc:
Jack Troyer
Cathy Beaty
Mary Wagner
Uinta Forest Leadership Team

Transition Management of Agency Personnel

Tool: “Handover Memo”

Purpose- Today, communities of place, local governments and other groups are increasingly convening and facilitating collaborative efforts that directly involve our agency. In turn, our agency is recognizing the need for improved transitions between outgoing leaders and incoming leaders who will assume the responsibility for working directly with the public and partners. Good transition management between the agency leader these groups have been working with, and the leader they will now rely on, is especially important. Our ability to solve natural resource related problems over the long run depends on the quality of long-term relationships between agencies, other organizations and the public. Often, what makes collaboration work is a combination of formal and informal working agreements and commitments between various participants.

The purpose of this “Handover Memo” is to help communicate these agreements and commitments, not only between the departing leader and the new leader, but also to inform and involve agency staff and superiors who will continue to support such cooperative efforts in the interim and into the future. The very act of writing or finalizing this memo will emphasize the importance of, and pass along a better understanding of the relationships and cooperative efforts you have helped develop, so they can continue to grow and evolve.

Template

To: Address memo to the new agency unit leader and any interim leaders.

From: Completed by you as the outgoing leader prior to your departure. At a minimum, memo should be developed with the participation of your primary staff. At your discretion, you may find it useful to also have others review it prior to finalization.

cc: At a minimum, the letter should be copied to your primary staff and supervisor. At your discretion, you may want to copy others as well to better meet the purposes of this memo.

The memorandum should cover the following three areas:

- **Describe the current partnership and collaborative efforts underway on your unit**

Briefly describe any specific projects or programs that each partnership or collaborative effort is currently engaged in. This memorandum should largely focus on describing key aspects of ongoing partnerships and collaborative relationships that may not have any formal, written agreements that are readily available for your successor to review. Partnerships and collaborative efforts that do have formal agreements (e.g. Resource Advisory Groups, Memorandum’s of Understanding, Cooperative Agreements etc.) can simply be referenced with a description of the activities, projects or goals that are currently underway. Some basic information about the length of time a partner or collaborative effort has been underway may also be useful. Some relationships will be in their infancy while others may have evolved over a period of time.

Where possible, consider having your key partners assist with crafting this section and include their signatures on the memo.

- **Commitments or schedules associated with current partnership and collaborative efforts**

For each of the above relationships, describe any formal or informal commitments you have made to key partners or groups leading or engaged in collaborative efforts with you or your unit. Be sure to include any shared understandings about specific schedules for accomplishing joint projects or implementing shared programs. Commitments may include but are not limited to time agreements, financial arrangements, accomplishments or personnel commitments. These commitments may or may not need to be renegotiated with your departure. However, the current state of any agreement is key information to pass on to your successor, supervisor and staff.

Again, where possible, consider having your key partners jointly craft this section and include their signatures.

- **Current working agreements or procedures**

Describe any local communication norms or procedural agreements that help keep relationships active and well functioning. This may include information about regular meetings, formal and informal expectations or working agreements that partners and the agency have developed during your tenure. This may include but are not limited to information about communication frequency, timing, particular subjects or issues of interest and key contacts etc.

Because this memo will function in concert with other transition activities and an on-site visit with your successor, this memorandum can be reasonably brief and focused on factual information about current partnerships and collaborative efforts that are active and underway during the transition period.

- **Strategy for meeting and getting to know your community**

Describe a potential strategy for incoming staff to foster and maintain relationships within the surrounding community. Include information on potential venues, regularly scheduled events (if there are any), community social gatherings, and contacts for each.

Where possible, engage your key partners in development of this section.

This memo is intended to focus on establishing and maintaining community relationships associated with ongoing partnerships and collaborative work. It is not intended to be a comprehensive list of activities and/or projects. Partnership and collaborative efforts that have formal agreements in place should be referenced with a brief description of the activity to date.

