

**Forest Products Modernization Western Partner Feedback Session
October 10, 2018 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.**

Transcript

Welcome, everybody.

This is Ben Irej with the National Forest Foundation.

Welcome to today's Forest Products Modernization Western Partner Feedback Session.

This session is specific to Regions 5, 6, and 10.

Could somebody indicate that they can hear me okay in the question/discussion chat box there?

Again, my name is Ben Irej with the National Forest Foundation.

We'll be joined shortly by Allen Rowley after I go through some logistics for today's session.

Thanks, Dave.

So, currently, as you join the webinar today, if you've joined us by phone at 1-800-576-6614, you are currently muted.

You can hit *# to unmute your phone to join the discussion.

That's *#.

If you hit it twice, that will remute your phone.

So, *# both mutes and unmutes your phone.

Before we get started today, I just want to make sure everybody's turned down their computer speakers if they're joining by phone.

That way, we can eliminate any feedback in the system and try and keep your phone muted unless you're wanting to speak.

If you have not already done so, please go ahead and introduce yourself in the chat box there to the right.

And for our folks joining us at on-site locations at various Forest Service locations across the region, when you get an opportunity, if you could have somebody in the room, your logistics manager or something, take the sign-in sheet and go ahead and enter the names of the folks that are joining you from your room in that chat box, as well, that would be great.

I just want to remind you all that this session is being recorded.

After this session concludes, in the next few days, we will be able to send you a link to the recording.

Actually, let me back up on that.

We will probably send it out all as one batch, a link to the recording, a thank-you for joining us today, and we'll have the notes.

So, it might take us a little bit longer than the next few days to get those notes prepared.

But look for that in your "in" boxes.

You will get a link to this recording, the PowerPoint presentation that we are going through right now, and the notes from today's session.

So, just a few logistics about Adobe Connect and how this system works, for those of you joining us from your desk at your offices or at home, or if folks that are joining us at the on-site locations throughout the regions, every one of these three or four windows you see up on the screen, there is a little, kind of like a paragraph mark over on the upper-right-hand corner.

That controls the view for you of that particular window.

If you are having a hard time seeing the PowerPoint presentation or the closed captioning going on down there at the bottom or the chat box, you can expand those windows so that you can see them in full-screen view.

You can also change the font size for the chat box and the closed-captioning window.

Down the lower right-hand corner, you'll see a little window that's got a bunch of different files in it.

Those are kind of the briefing materials for today's session.

And you can click on those and select "download file," and you can download those files here today during the session and preview those if you'd like.

Let's see.

One other thing -- when we get into the question/discussion session, you can either ask questions or give feedback for discussion in the chat box, or if you'd prefer, and I will read those items on as they come in, in the chat box.

If you prefer to join us by voice, which I would highly encourage, please use this top -- on the top toolbar of your screen, you'll see an icon of a person with his hand raised.

You just click on that.

It will raise your hand.

And I've got a 10-D pod open.

I'll see that you have your hand raised, and I'll specifically call on you.

As a reminder, if you haven't already done so, you'll need to hit *# to unmute your phone to join the discussion over voice.

Now, I just want to briefly review the agenda for today's session.

We're going to shortly get some welcome and opening remarks from Allen Rowley, and then we're going to get into some of the meat of the presentations.

We'll get Forest Products Modernization overview and national perspective from a couple different speakers, including Dave Wilson and Dave Cawrse.

And then we will get into -- that will last about an hour.

And then we'll get into some brief, ten minutes of questions and answers for any clarifying questions you all have on the presentations that you just heard.

If you have any questions that come up during the presentation, that you need to get to us, please feel free to enter those questions in the chat box, and I will get those to the speakers during the presentation.

Then, 1:30 after our start time, we will take a 10-minute break.

Everybody will have an opportunity to stretch their legs, if you're at on-site location.

Get up, use the facilities, and get a drink of water or something.

And then we will get into the meat of the feedback and discussion.

I've got several prompting questions here.

We will spend a little bit of time on each of these prompting questions and just see where the feedback and discussion takes us from there.

Then we'll finish up with leadership close-out from Dave Wilson and just some last-minute logistical items from me and reminders from me before we adjourn, three hours after our start time.

Before I kick it over to Allen, I just want to make sure, is there anybody that can't hear me or see their screen correctly?

If so, please enter that into the chat box, and I'll troubleshoot during the presentation.

Okay.

And without further ado, I will hand it over to Allen Rowley, there in the Washington office.

Allen?

Allen, we might have you on mute.

You might need to hit *#, unmute your phone.

>> All right, let's try this.

Good morning, everyone.

>> We got you.

>> This is Allen Rowley.

I am one of the acting associate deputy chiefs of the National Forest System coming to you from our Washington in the Yates Building.

Thanks to all of you joining us from the Forest Service Regions 5, 6, and 10 or California, Alaska, Oregon, and Washington.

We are holding a series of webinars, trying to make it as accessible as possible around the country.

We held one here in Washington, D.C., for folks who are close.

Holding this on the West Coast and the Rocky Mountains, and, again, on the Southeast United States to allow people to join in these smaller webinars and then hopefully have smaller breakout sessions or roundtable discussions after the webinar with some Forest Service offices right there in your hometown.

So, objectives for this session -- one, to create awareness.

When we talk about forest products modernization, what is behind it?

In hindsight I might say the name should probably be the Forest Products System Modernization.

Otherwise, you might think we are talking about modernizing 2x4s and wood products.

It's really creating awareness around our system that we use to deliver forest products to the purchasers, consumers, producers.

Another objective of this session is to collect feedback on some preliminary solution ideas and actions that are already under way or planned.

We have done some internal work identifying things we think we should -- we the Forest Service -- think we could improve on and make some changes.

Some of them are maybe really obvious, and others not so much.

And this is a chance to share those ideas with you and collect some of your feedback.

Also, to gather ideas on how to streamline our business processes and practices for delivering forest products.

Again, what about our mechanisms of identifying timber sales, laying out timber sales, appraising them, selling them, awarding and administering the contracts?

That whole bundle from "I have a good idea" all the way to logs on trucks -- what in that system could we streamline or make more efficient?

And out of this, another outcome in terms of strengthening, existing, and developing new relationships with other partners and new businesses.

Next slide.

Today, we will share why we think the changes are important.

Many of our timber-sale processes, many -- let me just say some of them started when there was a lot of competition and a lot of high-value forest products being sold.

There were some practices being implemented on part of the agency and industry that got us mutually into trouble.

And we are still carrying some of those practices forward, even though we are in a different time and era, for sure.

Part of the dialogue today is again just to have that open dialogue and hear directly from forest products' purchasers and loggers, and folks who are involved in the industry to look at some of the ideas we've had and give us some direct feedback about it.

What are some of the perceived barriers that are getting in the way, as well as some solutions to remove those barriers?

Also, a great opportunity to identify opportunities for continued engagement with all of you.

When we get to the solutions page, later and at the end, you will see the list of top 10 things we want to work on.

Some of them really beg continued engagement from industry.

So, for example, I have heard from forest-product companies, loggers and companies, that have said they stopped bidding on Forest Service contracts because they're too complicated.

Well, one of the work elements we'd like to take on is take a look at our contracts and figure out what part of that is true and what do we do about it?

And to do that, that's this piece of continue engagement and feedback.

What can you tell us about our processes?

We want to continue that.

And discuss how we can use your feedback.

So, onto the next slide.

So, what do we hope to come out of this?

A better understanding of specific actions we can take to increase the pace and scale of our restoration work through an improved forest products delivery.

That is, what about how we again identify, prepare, sell, award, administer timber-sale contracts?

What's getting in the way of that system and slowing us down?

The goal is to do as much as we can, at least within our decision space here of forest products.

What can we do to make that as efficient or at least as effective as possible?

And to continue to develop better understanding of ways to improve our communication methods will all of you and continued engagement.

So, we have a number of, at the local level, purchaser meetings with local, national forest-system units, purchaser associations with regional offices.

We have other national groups, a national loggers association, federal timber purchasers, AFRC, and a number of other groups.

So, what else do we do besides those groups to keep the dialogue going, to get specific feedback?

So, that's what we hope to come out of this session.

And with that, I'll turn it over to Dave Wilson.

I'm going to step out and go to another activity across town.

So, I'll miss the feedback session.

Let me say, based on the conversation we had here at the first webinar in Washington, D.C., I look forward to seeing the transcripts and downloading with the folks who did participate about the ideas they identified and the kind of dialogue and discussion we had.

So, with that, I'll turn it over to you, Dave.

>> Dave, this is Ben Irej.

Thanks, Allen.

Dave, this is Ben Irej.

Let me interrupt you just briefly, if you don't mind.

If we could take just a couple of minutes for the on-site locations to put their phones on mute, and we will take just a couple-minute pause and have them give some just logistics and safety information for their room.

Is that okay with you, Dave?

>> Perfect.

>> Okay, Dave.

Folks, if you're joining us from an on-site location, those on-site-location facilitators, if you could have your phone on mute and talk to your folks there joining you in the room about the logistics of the room, escape routes, all that type of stuff and then just enter in your chat box that you're done, when you're finished, and we'll resume with Dave Wilson.

Thanks, Dave.

>> Thanks, Ben, and thanks, Allen, for the introduction.

My name's Dave Wilson.

I'm the acting assistant director for forest products.

>> I'm sorry, Dave.

If you could wait just a couple minutes for folks to rejoin us from the on-site locations.

Sorry about the confusion.

>> Okay.

>> Okay, looks like folks are wrapping things up there at the on-site locations.

Thanks for taking a moment to go over your in-room logistics for us.

And now Dave Wilson, we'll kick it over to you.

And, again, sorry about the interruption.

Take it away, Dave.

>> Thanks, Ben.

Welcome, everyone.

I am glad to be here to talk to you about the forest products modernization.

My name is Dave Wilson.

I am the acting assistant director for forest products within the forest management, range management, veg ecology staff area here at the Washington office.

When we talk about the forest products modernization effort, it's part of an overall, overarching set of goals and objectives for not only the agency but for the department, as well.

When you look at the strategic goals of the Department of Agriculture, we stand out on a few of the goals.

Programs delivered efficiently, with a focus on customer service and ensuring productive, sustainable use of our national forest system land.

So, within those goals, we then looked on to the Forest Service priorities that have been set by the chief.

We have five priorities we're working from.

Three of them we can tie directly to the forest products modernization effort.

So, we are looking at uplifting and empowering employees.

We are doing that through a lot of interaction with the employees, both at the leadership level, all the way down to the field level, trying to get ideas and ways to move forward with our modernization effort.

We are looking to be good neighbors and excel at customer service.

We're here to work with you, our partners, and find ways to make it as efficient as possible, the delivery of our forest products from the national forest.

And, most importantly, we're looking at improving the condition of forest and grasslands.

As we look at the modernization effort, we're looking at how can we help with the sustainable, healthy, resilient forests and grassland in the future?

That will occur when we are able to increase the work on the grounds today.

So, as we increase the pace and scale of our activities, on improving the conditions, we have to find ways to better deliver products from the forest.

Within the Forest Service itself, we have six different change efforts under way, looking to better the agency as a whole.

Most of you have heard of the Environmental Analysis Decision-Making process And I will talk a little bit about that here in a moment.

Forest products modernization, the focus of today's presentation, and four other efforts that are going on -- oil and gas leasing.

Trying to improve that process.

Land exchange, modernizing the special uses, the permitting and such for special uses, and efficient infrastructure delivery.

So, when you look at them altogether, you can see how we were able to tier off of each one of the strategic goals and priorities, come down to our change efforts.

Starting at the top, let's talk a little bit about the forest products modernization and also the Environmental Assessment Decision Making.

The EADM goal is to increase the efficiency of environmental analysis and decision-making procedures to accomplish more work on the ground.

They are looking at six different goals -- training our employees, examining and reforming Forest Service policies, improving efficiency through technology, developing new performance standards, improving consultation with other agencies, and changing the way we do business.

When you look at the goal of the forest products modernization, our goal statement is a strategic effort designed to better align our culture and policies and procedures with current and future forest-restoration needs in order to increase the pace and scale of restoration, improve forest conditions, and improve efficiency of forest products delivery.

We want to improve the forest conditions, meet the forest-restoration needs, create sustainable landscapes, and increase the amount of forest products coming from the national forest land.

So, as we increase the pace and scale of our activities, we want to make sure that we get the policies, procedures, and even work on changing the culture to actually be better aligned to meet those goals and objectives.

And if I can get the mouse to work...

Again, building on the goals, we are aligning Forest Service practices, policies, and guidance to be more agile, flexible, and adaptable to better meet current and future forest-improvement goals.

You will find a lot of our policies now are getting dated, and they're not keeping up with the change in our ways that we are doing our management activities these days.

So, we're learning that we have to have them be more agile and flexible to meet the goals as we work on our restoration activities.

We are improving forest conditions, meeting forest-restoration needs, creating sustainable landscapes, increase the amount of forest products coming from national forest lands.

So, we're looking at it from all different angles, as to how we can better meet those objectives.

Sensitive mouse here that doesn't want to -- It's stuck.

Okay.

Why change now?

We are looking at changing forest conditions.

We are looking at about 80 million acres of forest and grasslands that are in need of restoration.

At the current rate of restoration, just over 5 million acres a year, and our current processes may be slowing us down.

Identifying this many acres that need restoration across our forest land, we need to figure out how to increase the pace and scale.

And what we are looking at is trying to find ways to increase that opportunity through making sure that our processes are not slowing us down.

What can we do to increase that scale of restoration?

Another reason is the staffing.

Our non-fire workforce is the lowest capacity in years, and our forest-products delivery workforce was nearly 40% larger in 1980 than 1960.

Our staffing has gone way down.

We're looking at lots of vacancies and lots of needs to be more efficient with the workforce that we have.

I'm not saying we need to go back to what we had in the past because we have technologies and efficiencies that we can work with, but we do know that we're working with a low capacity right now.

Okay.

Achieving our goal.

This effort is relying on ideas and support from our employees in the field and also our partners.

We've had sessions with the employees, gathering up their ideas on ways to make things more efficient.

Dave Cawrse will talk about those in a minute.

And we've had some feedback from our partners, but these sessions are to give you a chance to express other ideas that you may have.

We want to learn what is working well in the forest products delivery and to share what is learned nationally.

What we're doing as we find successes out in the field, we're communicating them across the whole agency so that other field sites can learn from those successes and build on them and make new opportunities.

We want to strengthen existing and develop new relationships with our partners, with our employees, with other agencies so that we can -- with these relationships, we should be able to come up with new ways of doing our business.

Along the way, what we're doing is identifying short-, mid-, and long-term actions.

We're not just collecting these ideas and waiting to press the "go" button.

We are implementing as many short-term and mid-term actions as we can, as we position ourselves to do more of the long-term actions.

Some of the things that we're doing -- we're updating our training for our employees.

We're examining and reforming our policies.

We're improving efficiency through better use of technology.

Changing project management and delivery-system processes.

Changing the way we do business to get more work done on the ground.

And exploring opportunities to change all aspects of the forest-products delivery system.

A lot of our effort right now is looking at how can we better train our employees and reform our policies to make sure they're in line, in tune with the way we do business today.

We're looking at the way we use technology, whether it's electronic data collection or remote sensing or whatnot.

We're looking at ways of using those technologies to better our business.

This is just a diagram of the modernization-effort teams that we have.

In the center is the core team.

This is Washington-office level staff that meets weekly to look at the progress of the effort.

We prioritize things.

We're looking at how we can implement new policies and procedures, all said, up to the executive team, which is Chris French, Greg Smith, Allen Rowley, and John Crockett.

From the core team, we have other teams that meet on a regular basis.

The guiding team, you see in the center there.

These are regional contacts that we have that we meet monthly with, who propose new ideas to get some initial ideas of what we're working on as the way they would like us to go, from initial feedback or feedback on the things that we're working on so far.

The implementation team -- what we found was that we needed to have a team of people come in.

They come in on details to work with the core team through Dave Cawrse as the implementation team lead, to work on specific tasks to try and get a better understanding of what the issue is and be able to propose recommendations from that.

Solutions team -- this is where we brought the field people into the process.

We set up six solution teams, look at six different ideas.

And what they did is they met for four weekly sessions to look at the issue at hand and come up with their recommendations of what they think we should be doing to improve the process.

We can't do this alone, so within the agency here we have a cross-deputy team, where we work with the other staff areas and deputies, deputy areas, to bring in experts as we need them to help with all sorts of stuff, whether it's human resources or marketing or other things that stay in private.

That's where they come into play.

Quite a big team, a lot of moving parts in this, and so, then, on top of this, we have all the projects that are going on out in the field.

This is just an idea of the timeline.

We've had three phases going here, where we've looked at the awareness of what we're trying to do.

We're looking at the mapping of the system.

What we're trying to do there is look at, map out every process point in the whole delivery system, from preplanning all the way through the closure of a sale and the follow-up treatments.

With that map there, then we'll be able to look at pinch points and identify things we can do at each one of those points.

So, it's a systematic way of looking at the whole process and being able to identify where we need to work.

We've done internal and external engagements.

We're looking at having more of those types of sessions.

We're looking at generating solutions to some of the ideas that we want to move forward on and meeting the challenges that we have.

Today, we're up to policy reform.

This is where we're starting to look at how to change the directives that we have to actually implement some of these ideas out in the field and give the authority of the field to do things.

So, right now we're starting phase 3, where we're developing the comprehensive strategy for long-term actions.

This is the way that we're going to monitor the long-term action plans that we're doing.

This is not going to be a one-shot-type project and effort.

This is going to be a continuous thing.

And so, we need to develop a strategy of how we're going to monitor this into the future.

So, some of the progress to date.

We've delivered, updated, expanded training courses.

We've launched Sale Administrator Academy.

This is a way that we can train folks that want to be in timber-sale administration to have a structured path from start to completion, where they will become a qualified sale administrator.

It's a way to help them get the training that they need if we need to detail them somewhere to get some experience.

We can do that and so forth.

So, these academies are starting to develop, and we'll talk more about that.

Purchase and distribute new equipment, technical equipment, if you will.

Develop new computer applications to be used in the forest products' measurement.

We're pushing hard to have 100% use of digital equipment on all our sale administration projects out there.

We didn't just wait until we could get all the directives in place.

We drew a letter from the chief in February 2018.

We sent out some instructions to the field as to some of the changes in policies that we're going to have to try and make things more efficient for them.

We're looking at other computer technology, like bar-code readers, for tracking log trucks.

We're initiating virtual boundaries.

We're doing some pilot studies on ways that we can use the electronic equipment to develop virtual boundaries for our sale areas.

Initiating pilots of market-based appraisals.

We're testing different appraisal systems, tools to help one, give us better appraisals of our timber sales, as we put them out for bid, but ways that we can be more efficient at doing it.

We don't need to spend a lot of time on our appraisals.

We have the technology in place to help assist getting through that process.

And we just lost connection.

>> Dave, this is Ben.

While you're rejoining, we've got the last -- you're just talking about initiating handbook and manual updates.

Is that right?

>> Yep, yep.

>> Okay, well, I can click on to the next slide there.

It's "Innovations Underway" as you rejoin.

>> Okay.

So, some of the innovations that are under way right now -- we're sharing the ideas that we discover across the country.

We're creating one-page summaries of some of the ideas that people have developed, putting in place so we can share with everybody nationally.

This way, the word gets out on ways to do things efficient, and so it's not just everybody for themselves.

We're able to do a lot more in communications.

We're developing several -- a lot of these ideas, some of these ideas are on our public website that we can share with the public.

Fifteen have been drafted.

Many more have been planned.

Some of these ideas, these papers are coming out.

We're doing some demo projects and learning journeys.

So, we're putting out some publications on what we're trying to do, what we're studying out there for ways of doing things different, whether it's ways of doing weight scales different, truck loads, or other types of demos.

We're sharing these ideas.

Working on better ways to share and spread these ideas to other units.

While we have a website, we're always trying to come up with new ways of getting the word out to the field.

Everybody's quite busy.

We're trying to find ways to make it easy for them to see what other people are doing.

Okay.

The planned next steps for our effort is gathering feedback from our employees and our partners.

That's what we're doing today is we want to get some feedback from you folks as to what we're doing.

Continuing the implementation of actions already under way.

Actions have been studied, and we agree that we want to go forward.

We're implementing them as quickly as we can.

We're immediately implementing other high-leverage and -priority actions.

We're not just focusing in on just a certain number, which we'll talk about in a bit.

But any high-leverage action that comes along that can help the effort, we will look at implementing that as quickly as possible.

And then we're strategizing on the best approaches for long-term actions.

What we're trying to do is get the strategies in place so how we can do some of these long-term actions so we don't lose focus on what we're trying to accomplish.

We'll move on to section two, talking about some key issues.

Turn over to Dave Cawrse.

>> All right.

Ben, can you hear me?

>> Yeah, I can hear you just fine, Dave.

Let me interrupt you just briefly and encourage folks, if they haven't already done so, to go ahead and introduce yourself in that chat box there.

Let us know who you are, who you are with and where you're calling in from.

And if people are joining in an on-site location, and we haven't already gotten those names entered in our chat box, please take a moment to do that during Dave's upcoming talk.

Thanks, Dave.

Take it away.

>> Okay, yeah, and I appreciate you signing in on the chat box and pleased with the breadth of experiences that I'm seeing there.

As a reminder, today, this is not just a one-way session.

It is a partner-feedback session, and we want to hear your ideas.

These are preliminary ideas that we're working on right now.

But we want to hear if we're on target or the things that we're missing or how we could improve our delivery of forest products.

So, anyway, again, my name is Dave Cawrse.

I was at the bottom of that organization chart there for forest products modernization.

I have been working on the implementation team for about a year now to start moving forward on some of these ideas.

And we have a collection of various detailers.

Right now, one is working with me.

It's Jerry Binardzik.

He's on the phone call today, too.

And I'm located in Fort Collins, Colorado, and I'm part of the Washington office detach unit here.

So, I'm going to cover these 12 issues very quickly, and then 4 of them I'm going to cover in a little more detail.

And I'm going to talk about how we got some solution ideas for these and step through how we ended up with 10 recommendations from our director that Dave Wilson will discuss here in a few minutes.

So, a little bit on our process here.

We've been going at this for about a year and a half.

I'll just mention a meeting with Leslie Weldon, then our deputy chief, National Forest Systems.

We met in Washington, D.C.

And that's where she stood up and said, "We want to be the best at forest products delivery."

And that kind of -- I would have been happy with "excellent," but she said, "We want to be the best."

So, that kind of set an identity and a tone for us, and I can tell you we appreciate this.

We took a shot at changing some of our -- at least our sale-prep activities five years ago, and we were only moderately successful in doing that.

We do have a guiding team in place.

Dave covered that a little bit earlier.

And we met in June, a little over a year ago, and these were the 12 issues that the guiding team highlighted that we should work on.

And they are in order.

And I'll go through them real quick.

And the reason the top six are highlighted or bolded is that we did develop solution teams on those top six issues.

And I'll talk a little bit about solution teams in the next slide.

But I'm just going to go through each of these ones, just to give you an idea of what they're about, and then four of them I'll go in more depth.

So, personnel, recruitment, staffing, and training -- you already heard.

We don't have nearly the workforce we had, say, in 20 years ago.

This past year, we did 3 billion board foot.

We sold that much, a little over that.

The last time we did that was 1997.

We had probably 40% fewer folks this year to do what we did in 1997.

So, when we talk about being able to offer products, we do have to look and be innovative, be creative, look at new authorities and policies to get there.

With that, training and staffing are really important aspects of that.

How do we increase capacity?

Those of you who were at the SAF convention know we have about 150 jobs we're moving forward on for students, both recent grads and pathways.

And then on training, we're looking at new authorities.

I have almost 40 years with the Forest Service.

Things like the 2014 Farm Bill that have designation by prescription or Good Neighbor Authority are new ways to do business that we need to train folks up on.

The second issue is sale layout.

Are there more efficient ways to do our sale layouts?

Do we have to use tracer paint?

Are there more efficient ways to do boundaries?

The third one, timber sale accounting, scaling, accountability.

We used to count for every tree the same way.

Can we do some changes in that?

Issue number four is certification.

And that one refers to certification for sales administration, some timber-sale accounting, resource assistance, and silviculturists.

So, there's certification programs for each of those.

Sometimes it's cumbersome to get through.

It's not timely.

And in some places it's very difficult.

And we don't honor certification from states.

Is there a way to change that?

Point number five is appraisals.

There are stories where our appraisal method, it may take three days to come up with appraisal, and then you know the appraisal came in too high.

If it's our starting point when we start to offer a timber sale, is there more efficient ways to do our appraisals?

Number six, contracting and permitting.

Allen mentioned that we have heard purchasers will no longer bid on some of our sales, particularly on service contracts.

They're too complex.

Is there a way to streamline our contracts?

And then the bottom 12, I'll go through those real quick.

Project and program management refers to a couple things.

One is on program management.

Are we being strategic in where we're operating the landscape?

Are we getting the biggest bang for the buck as to where we do our harvesting?

And project management -- a timber sale's complex.

You have to go through six different gates to get there.

There's a lot of coordination with other resources.

Project manager skills are an important aspect to getting this done correctly.

Permanent and trust funds -- that refers to the K-V and salvage funds that we collect.

Are there more efficient ways to use those funds and track those funds?

Information management is number nine.

We know we have reporting that needs to be done when a sale is started.

We use a program or database called "TIM," timber-information manager.

Some of those programs are written 18, 20 years ago and are not as efficient and don't talk to each other as well as they could.

There's room for improvement in how we handle our information.

Forest products utilization and markets -- quite frankly, I'll mention this one.

On September 11th, we had feedback in that.

Why isn't this a top-six one?

In the National Forest System side, we appraise and sale timber.

What happens after that is up to the purchaser.

Yes, there may be an opportunity for us to influence markets.

Have we considered certification of national forests, such as SFI or FSG?

Have we been looking at more innovative ways that we can encourage, from a federal perspective, the use of CLT products or biochar, ethanol, things like that.

There may be an opportunity to have grants in that area.

Number 11 is silviculture.

People always ask me, "Well, why is that up there?"

And what we heard from the guiding team is that silviculture issues related -- a couple things.

I mentioned certification already.

It's quite an expensive course to go through.

It's called NAS.

The other part is that we're seeing very complex prescriptions.

Is there way to have more of a business approach to writing their silviculture prescriptions, especially when we use new authorities like designation by prescription where you can't have a lot of different marking guidelines in it.

And, finally, our reviews and audits.

Are we getting out of them what we need to get out of them?

Washington office review sometimes triggers a lot of work.

Is there a way to make those more efficient?

So, with that, I'll try and advance my next slide, and yay, that just made my day.

Okay.

I mentioned solution team.

So, we had those top six issues that were bolded.

We wanted to reach out to our field employees.

Those of you who are familiar with the hierarchy in the Forest Services -- have regional offices, forest supervisor officers, and district offices.

And our district office is kind of where the rubber meets the road.

With our meetings, management, and travel budgets, it wasn't efficient to meet face-to-face.

So, last April and May, we conducted four meetings around those six different topics, and these were composed of two to three people from each region, but usually they were district and forest-level folks.

They met virtually two to three hours per week.

And they kind of -- say, take, for example, sale layout was an issue.

There's a background-issue paper written on it.

They then, from their perspective, brought forth ideas how to streamline sale layout, things we could consider at the national level and at the regional level, too.

And so that -- we did have a professional facilitator for those sessions, and it resulted in about 300 solution ideas.

And some things came out across several teams.

An example was WiFi and Internet connectivity.

Came out that hey, we can't do online learning, or we can't use some of this technology until we increase our Internet bandwidth, improve our WiFi connectivity.

There's other ideas that were specific to those issues, and we kind of distilled them down to about 170 individual ideas.

And we did sorting of them, and then we did a scoring of them on their ease of implementation and how timely it was, how much it would cost, and then kind of a scale of benefits.

If it generated, say, over, \$1 million in savings nationally, you would get a high score.

Some things, like changing a certification, would have a lower score.

Things like -- I mentioned WiFi got a perfect 10.

It could be done quickly, fairly cheaply, and could have huge benefit.

Things like moving certification to every other year would help bids but not have nearly the scale of benefits.

So, that would have a lower score.

So, we scored all those out, and we met again with our director in July, and we also met with the guiding team and timber directors.

And we went over the different, the top issues, the top-scored issues.

Allen Rowley reviewed and ended up with his ten recommendations that actually Dave Wilson will share with you shortly.

But at this point, I'd like to go through and talk about four of the issues in a little more detail.

And that's the sale layout, timber-sale accounting, appraisals, and contracting and permitting.

And as far as sale layout, we want to determine which sale-layout policies and procedures can be altered or eliminated to increase efficient, effective timber-sale layout and streamline those policies and procedures for our logging system of transportation analysis.

What we do know is that paint is expensive.

Unfortunately, we don't have good cost data nationally.

There was one group on the 4FRI that hired a consultant to look at different costs.

Cost of paint runs around \$30 an acre.

When you have a crew out there to market, it doubles it to \$50 to \$60 an acre.

So, we know painting trees is expensive.

There's also a whole host of requirements that go along with tracer paint, too.

Designation by prescription -- you don't have to paint trees.

So, it's a new authority.

We used it on stewardship contracting before 2014.

With the January 2014 Farm Bill, it gave us authority to use it on all sales.

So, it seems ideal for particularly low-value timber.

It doesn't make sense to mark all that.

If you have a simple prescription, you should be able to implement it.

And there's other opportunities to embrace new technologies and sale layout.

Five years ago, half our cruising was done in pencil and paper.

When we contact private industry, they said, "We've been digital for over a decade."

And so, there's been a huge opportunity to improve the technology.

It's hand-held data recorders, the WOs bought.

Recently bought 60 hand-held data recorders to distribute to the field.

I know there's lasers to estimate height.

So, that's proved to be quite efficient, particularly when you are in fairly dangerous stands with a lot of snags.

It helps with the safety of crews.

And let's see what else I have on that.

So, yeah, all right, I'll end on that.

So, timber-sale layout, there is some big opportunities for savings in that one.

Timber-sale accounting is another one I want to do because it's where it does affect our purchasers.

It includes sales administration, scaling, and financial accountability.

We want to increase flexibility and efficiency in our financial system, our accountability standards, and timber-measurement policy and procedures.

Determine which ones can be eliminated, changed, or streamlined.

And concerns are particularly with low-value material -- how that's appraised, how we account for it.

We have timber-sale administrators that say if they see a tree that's inappropriately cut, they have to report it to law enforcement.

And maybe in the area of old growth or dealing with large trees, it make sense.

Should we have that?

Be able to handle that in a contract rather than reporting to law enforcement?

There's an opportunity to use technology in sales administration.

I mentioned hand-held data recorders in cruising.

We can use tablets for sale administrators.

And by next year, we could be situated to go totally paperless and paintless.

Our sales boundaries could be virtual boundaries, either discernible or geo-fenced.

The prescription could be a DXP that doesn't require paint, and then a sales administrator has a geo reference map on a tablet, so they know exactly where they are in the field.

If data and volume is needed, there's an app to do that.

If sale administrator notes need to be added, they can record those notes and then upload that to the district office when they get back, provided they have WiFi.

The other thing I'll mention is our forest products' financial system that was started last August.

And I don't know a whole lot about that, but we hope that will streamline our accounting.

We heard from the field, "Why do we have to do monthly reconciliation reports?"

They're often not balanced.

They have to sometimes change those results, anyway.

We're hoping the FPFs will resolve some of those problems.

Appraisals, I mentioned earlier that sometimes we have really lengthy appraisals.

We want to determine whether to eliminate, change, or streamline appraisal policies and procedures to increase efficiency and effectiveness.

The current system is called "transactional evidence system."

It works well when you have a lot of sales.

When you don't have a lot of sales, not so well.

So, there's some improvement opportunities for that.

That group did meet already.

I think Dave will cover that.

But they met in July for a week and are looking at a simple spreadsheet approach to that.

And the last one's contracting and permitting.

We want to examine our policies and procedures for timber sale, contracting and non-commercial forest products, and determine if they can be eliminated, changed, or streamlined.

And, again, I keep mentioning the low-value markets.

Small amounts of soft timber west of the 100th dominion are difficult to sell.

We heard from that our folks.

Is there an easy way to do that?

We also want to look at Good Neighbor Authority.

With the March Congressional bill that was passed, Good Neighbor Authority was modified to allow states to look at road reconstruction and road maintenance.

Have we taken full advantage of Good Neighbor Authority in our contracts?

And for those of you not familiar with it, we would do the NEPA and silvicultural prescriptions, and then, through an agreement with that state, they would do sale layout, sell it, administer it, and account for it.

And it varies from state to state.

I think we have around 35 agreements in place.

And I think that wraps that up.

And we're going to go back to director recommendations.

Dave Wilson is going to cover those.

>> Well, thanks, Dave.

As Dave was mentioning, the process of identifying the issues that we want to tackle, there was the 300 separate items that came up from our solutions team.

And we prioritized those.

We presented them all to the director.

Allen Rowley was the director at the time.

So, we shared with him all the work did at sorting and sifting and prioritizing, ranking of those projects.

And from that, Allen came up with some 10 recommendations that he wanted us to start moving forward even more on.

And so, we're taking these recommendations and going forward.

So, this is our emphasis at the time being.

Continued training, new tools, authorities, and methods.

Develop sale administration position descriptions and standardize nationally.

Improve strategies for recruitment and retention of employees to meet staffing demands for delivery of forest products.

You can see these first three deal with our employees.

And so improving the training, the opportunities for the employees to continue their careers through the Forest Service, meet the needs of the agency as we deliver our forest products.

We are looking at ways to make positions fairly consistent across the country.

We realize there is different expertise needed in different regions.

But we still want to try and make sure we are making paths forward for everybody.

So, we have these standardized positions.

Number four is continue working on certifications, determining the return on investment and if changes are needed.

As Dave was mentioning, some of those certification process are lengthy and expensive.

So, are there things that we can do to better suit the needs for our certified employees?

Form a TIM team.

This was the Timber Information Management team.

That's the application that manages all our forest product sales.

And so, it's an antiquated system that has a lot of need for improvement to keep up with our changes in our methods these days.

So, we're going to form a team.

We have started forming a team and looking at the business requirements for modernizing that TIM system.

That's going to be one of the long-term processes, but we're at least getting started on it, get going on it.

Continue application of new technologies and the infrastructure support needed.

We're looking at getting more tablets, more data recorders.

Whatever technologies are available to us, figure out ways to integrate them into our program and have the infrastructure available to support them.

Come on, mouse.

Come on, mouse.

Ah, okay.

Recommendation number 7 is to form a national team to streamline and simplify the contracting process.

We're just now getting into developing the team and figuring out where we want to go with that.

And so, that one is beginning to move along, as to looking at the different contracting processes.

Number 8 is engage appraisals team and develop a simple appraisal process to test.

Continue the new base price system being piloted and consider short-term and long-term system needs.

As Dave mentioned, we have put together an appraisal team to look at what's being used currently across the country.

Every region has slightly different process to it.

So, we're looking at ways of streamlining it and making it a lot easier to use.

This way, we hope that we can cut the time involved in developing an appraisal, better delaying what goes into our decision process as we do our appraisals, and hopefully come up with something that will benefit the bidders out there.

Number 9 is form a national team to look into FPFS and consider desk-guide/task-book concepts.

FPFS was just coming out the door, just being rolled out when we put these recommendations together.

We realized that there's a lot of need for training, support, and further expansion of the FPFS system.

So, he didn't want us to say, "Well, FPFS is up and running.

Let's just move on to something else."

Let's keep pushing at getting all the support that is needed for the FPFS out the door and working on bettering the system down the road.

The last one is probably the biggest challenge on the plate.

It's defining the low value and developing new processes or policies on identifying management and disposal of low-value material in conjunction with land-management objectives.

This is where we have challenges, where we're not just looking at high-value timber anymore.

We're looking at managing land that may include low-value products, low- or no-value products.

And so how do we want to package these into the appraisals, into the contracts, how to administer those types of activities.

So, where we're starting there is looking at defining what low value means and then being able to look at how we can adapt our policies and processes to meet that.

And we're at the point of questions.

>> Great.

Thanks for that, Dave.

That was a lot of information.

Yeah.

So, now we're going to just take a little bit of time here, about 10 minutes, to just allow folks to ask any clarifying questions that they have on what you've just heard.

I changed the look here just a little bit so you can see both who's attending and the chat box in a larger format here.

If folks have questions for Dave Cawrse or Dave Wilson or for myself, whomever, regarding the material you just heard, you can either enter that into the chat box there, or if you want to use this hand-raise function up on the top toolbar, click on that, and I'll see that you have your hand raised and be able to call on you.

And then, if you haven't already done so, you'll need to hit *# to unmute your phone.

I also want to encourage folks, if you joined us late, to please take a moment to introduce yourself in the chat box.

Let us know who you are, where you're calling in from, and who you're affiliated with.

I see Region 6, Fort Vancouver, Washington, has their hand up.

Go ahead, Region 6.

I think we still have you on mute.

You might have to hit *# if you haven't already done.

There we go.

>> Can you hear me now?

>> Yep.

>> Okay.

Andy Geissler with AFRC.

Yeah, thanks for the opportunity to ask some questions here.

I'm a little curious.

I saw the term "low value" show up in two different parts of this presentation, and I'm a little concerned and confused with how -- obviously, you guys are trying to figure out how to define it.

On the last section there, it seemed like you were alluding to the fact that low value is kind of borderline commercial product that you don't know how to dispose of.

And in the DxP section, Dave talked about low value as kind of a trigger for an appropriate condition for using DxP.

And I'm curious why you guys are attaching the term "low value" with an appropriate use of designation by prescription.

I would just offer up that here in Region 6, the one forest that's been using DxP for the longest is the Siuslaw.

They've been doing it for over a decade through their stewardship contracting, and they get some of the highest dumpage values in the state.

And I would recommend, and I'm curious why you guys aren't giving direction out to the forest to consider stand conditions as a trigger for using DxP as opposed to value of timber.

>> This is Dave Cawrse.

Can I take a shot at answering that?

>> Sure, thanks.

>> All right.

I think the point was DxP is appropriate for low value.

And you're right.

We took a shot at trying to define low value five years ago and gave up.

What's low value in one region is high value in another, and it's just difficult to do.

However, we know there's areas where restoration is being emphasized.

Dave Wilson covered the 80 million acres that is in need of restoration, and a lot of it is thinning or smaller-diameter material that often -- we called it low value, but it doesn't carry its weight out of the forest.

So, I'm in Fort Collins, Colorado, and I can tell you some of the forests on the front range, where your fuel-hazard reduction in the wildland urban interface is a huge concern, and they're paid anywhere from \$800 to a couple thousand an acre to have these treated.

So, anyway, so when we are treating that, how can we do that efficiently?

And we do see DxP is one of the ways, what we should be using.

And, as I said, you save about \$70 per acre if you don't have to go out and paint those.

What goes along with that is it has to be a fairly simple prescription.

In areas where they initially started using DxP, this is a farm-to-table approach.

We want to look at it from the sale layout and all the way to the delivery of the forest product.

And there's cases where DxP was -- the prescription was complicated.

Even though it reduced our sale layout, it doubled our sales administration time, and it doubled the purchaser's time trying to implement that prescription in the field, where they have to -- and you're right.

It's a condition of a stand you want to have afterwards.

Either it's leaving 40 square feet of basal area or some sort of canopy density, and these things you have to track very closely.

So, simple prescriptions and/or simple ways to allow for purchasers.

There's a digital prescription guide that's come into play in 4FRI, where these small openings that came from the restoration prescription, the GTR-310 report that called for this groupy-clumpy approach.

There are ways to simplify that and use a GPS coverage that shows somebody in a harvester where the openings will be, where he's hitting from below, where the leave areas are.

So, there's a lot of ways to reduce that.

So, I guess to say DxP is a huge authority we need to use more of, and we think it's very suitable for areas that don't have a high value.

And you're right.

Siuslaw -- I was out there, and yeah, they've been using that stewardship sales for a long time, and they are leaders in the use of that.

>> Great.

Thanks for the question, Andy, and thanks for the response there, Dave.

I don't see anybody else with their hand raised and haven't seen any new questions being entered into the chat box.

Oh, there we go.

Got another question from R6, Vancouver.

Go ahead, R6.

>> Hey, I'm moving a little closer to the phone here.

This is Tony Riggs of Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition.

So, kind of related to Andy's question about low value.

I'm just wondering where specifically do you have guidance on the appraisal process, minimum bids, low value?

Is that essentially at your discretion, is that within directives, or is it more discretionary?

Thank you.

>> I was having trouble hearing that question, if somebody could repeat that again?

>> We're going to give that a shot.

>> Great.

Let me try this again.

So, just wondering where specifically -- do you have the flexibility to change minimum bids and appraisals?

Is that within directives, or is that something that you have to go to Congress for?

>> Well, we're -- I have Carl Maass here.

Carl Maass is our national contracting specialist.

We can change the minimum stumpage, right?

>> We have the ability to determine our appraisal system by policy except in Alaska.

And the primary objective is always just to establish the fair market value.

So, I don't think we have to go to Congress to do it.

If we were going to do a radical change in the way we appraise our timber or to change the fair-market-value standard, we would have to go through rulemaking to do that.

>> And I'd like to go back to DxP real quick.

Carl reminded me DxP is not limited to low value.

It's written as an authority we can use for all sales, no matter the value.

>> Exactly.

>> And Dave Wilson mentioned the chief's letter.

That was February of last year.

We used that to jump-start some of the modernization things.

And in that letter, it did direct regency, increased use to DxP and Good Neighbor Authority.

DxP we already covered.

There's a lot of savings in not using paint.

And then Good Neighbor Authority is the way to expand capacity to a partnership with the state.

But we didn't say use it only on low-value sales.

It's just that we know this is a good tool.

Please look up ways to increase the use of this tool.

>> And our primary directive is that the regions establish appropriate use of for DxP.

>> Right.

>> The type of stands, the type of prescriptions where DxP is appropriate.

>> But we're encouraging it, just to try and reduce our expenses, the overall cost of doing those projects.

>> Okay, great.

I see John Exline has his hand up.

John, why don't you go ahead and unmute your phone if you haven't already done so, and ask the question or have somebody in your room ask the question.

>> Can you hear me?

>> We can hear you.

>> Yeah.

My name is Carl Wilmsen.

I'm with the Northwest Forest Workers Center, based in Albany, California, and also Medford, Oregon.

My question is, How will compliance with labor law be assured through all of these changes?

I've read through a lot of the documents, and there's actually nothing in there about workers.

So, I'm concerned that these changes will make sure that workers are protected.

As you know, forest workers have some of the highest rates of job-related injury, illness, and fatalities.

And so, I'm very concerned to see that and related to that with the changes, possible changes, in appraisals, how will those changes assure that you are not letting contracts, either timber contracts or service contracts, go below cost, which we believe is one of the driving forces of noncompliance with labor laws.

A lot of contractors bid so low that they can't possibly train their workers in safety and health.

We see a lot of wage theft, and I'm wondering what consideration you've given to those kind of issues and how these changes will affect them.

>> Great.

Thanks for that.

Go ahead.

>> This is Dave Wilson.

First thought that comes to my mind for worker safety is, if we can use more technologies to make it more efficient out in the woods, something like digital boundaries -- if there's ways to doing it without having somebody crawl around the forest painting a boundary, that in itself would be a way of trying to increase the safety of our employees.

We look at things, appraisals, when we have salvage sales or blow-downs, whatever it was.

We try to do comparison appraisals.

So, from that standpoint, as we look at doing efficiencies, we're not looking at maybe making people work harder.

We're looking to do it smarter, using the tools that we now have that will keep us from having to push our way through something out in the woods.

I hope that helps with the idea of worker safety.

>> I think -- this is Dave Cawrse.

I think we need to capture this one, and we need to think about it.

I'm on the implementation team, and, truly, I don't think we thought about it that much.

And these are good points.

And maybe we could circle back with you and do some research with our procurement folks on this.

>> And as we do the contracting and appraisals, we'll make sure that we've covered that.

But we can enlist your help on identifying that we have those things covered in our contracting.

>> Okay, great.

Well, let's make sure we circle back on this one after this session.

Thanks for that great question.

And let's see.

I think next in the queue was R6, and then we'll get to Pam's question in the chat box, and John Exline there will be after that.

So, R6?

>> Hi.

This is Marcus Stern with the Nature Conservancy in the Vancouver gathering this morning and just two observations or questions.

I guess one is you mentioned there are 300 solutions and 170 ideas, and obviously you drilled down on what seemed like the highest priorities.

But it might also be helpful to share those other ideas and thoughts outward, because I bet some of them are small ideas that could filter in and might streamline or aid some efficiencies along the way.

And then the other thought I had is sort of thinking about how do you adopt and implement and bring everybody on board with these opportunities for efficiencies and the different approaches.

And one idea might be to identify a district within regions, where you have the, you know, specifically go after some of these things because my observation is where I've seen some of these successes, there's usually two or three Forest Service staff within a district, working on these kinds of projects, where they come together, and they're able to push it along.

So, in terms of trying to test some of these or expedite their use, it might be one way to think about how to deliver it to the staff in the field and try and push it out further.

So, just welcome any thoughts you have on that.

Thank you.

>> Well, this is Dave Cawrse.

So, I have a couple thoughts.

One is that the 160 or so that were distilled down, yeah, we have a core team.

I think I'd like to talk to the core team how we could put some of these public-face teams.

They're on our internal site right now.

Some are regional in scope, like, "Why don't you use weight-scale anymore in Region 8?"

And we've passed those ideas on to the regions.

But there's other ones that are small but could have impact.

Here's an example.

Why can't we have better peer-to-peer learning?

We have those 50 innovations written up.

We have trouble sharing ideas across a 30,000-person workforce.

So, better ways to do that would be really helpful.

The other point you make on having demonstration pilots, you're absolutely correct.

And that's how we're approaching a few of these new things.

The digital prescription guide and virtual boundaries are all being tested in Region 3 and 4FRI.

We're looking for unmanned aerial systems.

If you were at the SAF convention last week and walked by forestry suppliers, you saw they now have drones for sale for 800 bucks.

Yeah, we're behind in the use of that technology.

We're going to be looking for ways to pilot that new -- I guess that was a pretty good pun.

But, anyway, pilot the UAS technology with the district.

That's the way we'll start with some of these ideas.

Look for product champions where we can find them.

>> Okay, great.

Let's see, moving on through the queue here.

Looks like up next would be Pam Hardy.

Pam entered a question in the chat box, and she said, "I'm thrilled that you are doing so much to improve the use of technology, including DxP, to lower the cost of timber sales.

However, the lion's share of the work that needs to get done, to actually restore our forests, is non-commercial, which includes getting sufficient prescribed fire on the land.

Is improving that a priority in this process?"

And then, she entered an amendment to her question.

"How will this be applied to non-commercial contracts?"

Will there be a process looking specifically at this very expensive part of forest restoration?" you know, to be within the forest products' modernization efforts.

>> This is Dave Wilson, and my first thoughts coming to mind are, as we lower the cost of our commercial timber sales, that is allowing us to, in essence, capture more of the receipts that come from the sales.

They're not going out as expenses.

It's money that comes in.

We have policies in place, procedures that we've implemented from the trust-fund side to allow us to capture as much of the surplus receipts as possible.

So, by lowering our expenses, gives us more money to work with in our K-V program.

And so, with the implementation the past year of the expanded K-2 program, where it's a regional-based K-V process, we can look at doing projects outside the sale area.

So, giving us a chance to look at more of the non-commercial areas and being able to integrate into the restoration activities.

So, that's just one example of how we're looking at dealing with the low-value or non-commercial areas and being able to integrate them into timber sales or be able to use receipts from the timber sales to expand out into areas that need more restoration work and working closely with prescribed fire program to make sure that we're as integrated as possible.

So, that is a priority.

To answer your question, is improving that a priority?

Yes, it is.

That 80 million acres that we need to restore is the highest priority.

>> Great.

Thanks, Dave Wilson.

Next up in the queue is John Exline.

John, you got a question there in your room?

>> Well, this is Steve Brink with California Forestry Association.

John doesn't have any questions, but I do.

I have six questions, actually.

I'll take them one at a time.

Early on, you talked about 80 million acres of need for restoration, which was just mentioned.

And in that discussion, you said the current rate is 5 million acres a year.

I'm very curious where that number comes from.

I thought it was more like 2 million acres, and I remind you that in fiscal year '18, the agency has agreed not to count so-called "wildfire, low-intensity burned acres" as accomplishment.

So, where does the 5 million acres rate come from?

>> That's a good question.

>> That's okay.

>> I believe that's including the fire acres.

>> Yeah, I think it is.

I think it is.

All right, question number two.

You mentioned the Sale Administrator Academy.

That's great news.

Is that a national academy or by region?

>> It's national.

We have put together a task book so the regions can maybe adapt a bit to their specific needs, but there is a national task book that's now in place for that academy.

We're looking at three other academies, as well, but speaking just on that one, it's national, and that it only can be done in certain regions.

From the national level, we're supporting these academies by helping pay the travel for the employee to go to a host forest to work on that task.

So, it's got a mixture of both national and regional priorities in it.

>> Okay, great.

Thank you.

Third question, related to that, is you made no mention of certified contracting officers.

Maybe that's only a Region 5 problem, but I seriously doubt it.

I imagine it's a nationwide problem, that we don't have nearly enough people in the pipeline to be certified contracting officers, as our current ones retire.

There's a gap.

>> And that gap has been recognized, and that's why the first academy off the chute is the Sale Administration Academy.

What this is going to do, it's going to put some structure to that process of going from beginning forester all the way through going through all the harvest-inspector levels and such, getting ready to do that final certification as a contracting officer.

So, the hope is that by having this focus, by supporting the students who get the training done as quickly as possible that we can push people through the system not too fast but fast enough that they're learning things and being ready for that final leap into certified contracting officer.

So, we'll see how this works out in the next year or so, but we feel that that's a good start as to getting people moving along on it.

In the past, what you had was people had a task that needed to be done could finish one of their levels of qualification, and they couldn't get it done for two years because their forest didn't do it.

Now what we can do is, we can say, "Go to this forest.

They will host you.

They will mentor you and train you on that activity or multiple activities, so you can sign off in your task book."

So, hopefully, that's going to help the process.

>> We hope so, too, and we hope it comes quickly because the retirements are coming quickly and leaving huge holes, which is not a good thing for improving efficiency and cost effectiveness.

Number 4 -- and this is more of a comment.

So, I don't expect a response.

It has been ongoing discussion between Fort Collins and Federal Timber Purchasers Committee about market-based appraisals.

You mentioned there is a pilot in place for testing, which as far as I know, Federal Timber Purchasers Committees is unaware of.

So, there is an ongoing issue, which Fort Collins is well aware of, so I just bring that to your attention.

I want to mention as a sidebar, as you continue this thrust towards a more nationalized, so-called "simplified" appraisal process, no bids continue at the forest level, at least in Region 5.

And the reason, in my opinion for the no bids in large part is because of a lack of attention to appraisals.

They are just wasting their time putting together projects that are ill-conceived, not intelligent, and absolutely impossible for anybody to bid on within the realm of what the agency is willing to pay.

Now, that is a local problem.

It is not going to be solved by a national appraisal system.

So, again, that is a comment.

Fort Collins is well aware.

Number 5 --

>> Hey, wait, wait.

We got to talk a little bit on that one.

This is Dave Cawrse.

Next meeting we're in Fort Collins.

So, the latter part of that one, you've got John Exline in the room with you, right, Steve?

>> Yes.

>> All right.

So, you can talk about that, how projects are designed, and that's the sort of thing that we're hoping -- these feedback sessions are designed to have a national discussion, and then hang up the phone, and later on you can talk about some of the more local issues.

But as far as the appraisal system, Rich Aubuchon has worked on a national-appraisal system.

There's a general technical report on it.

We have shared it with FTPC.

You have commented on it.

It is being tested on the Salmon-Challis.

And then this other, more -- the spreadsheet one, that is fairly new.

I'm not sure where that's being tested right now.

Bill Imbergamo, Tom Troxel are well aware of where we're going on the appraisal system.

And there's also an appraisal briefing paper attached in the lower right-hand part of that.

You can see it on your Adobe Connect there.

Issue, summary, appraisals -- the very first one, 248 kilobytes.

>> Okay.

>> One last comment on that.

I'm pretty sure.

If it isn't, we'll make sure it is on the agenda for the November 1st meeting up in Rapid City.

>> Right.

Yeah, we'll cover that.

I think we're planning to do updates at that meeting up there in the Black Hills.

>> It's a standing-agenda item for FTPC.

>> Yeah.

>> Okay, number 5.

I was a little frankly disappointed that you didn't have more specificity in some of the information you provided, and what clicked in my brain is when you talked about demos.

And I am curious if somewhere on the website or somewhere, is there a list of demos and what is the progress on them, the ones that are under way?

And the one that really caught my attention was, is the number of truckloads versus weight-scaling every single truck as being one of the demos.

That is great.

I am unaware that that is going on.

So, is there someplace where we can track these demos and how they are going?

>> This is Dave Cawrse again.

It's a great idea.

I can talk with our project manager, Debbie McLaughlin, and see if there's a way.

We can have a public-facing way to track these innovations under way and absolutely.

That's a great idea.

Okay.

Thank you.

And last -- and, again, I was hoping for more specificity.

You mentioned recruitment as one of the important items to continue making progress on, and so if I remember right, it was about a year ago the department allotted 2,000 positions that could be filled in the agency.

So, I am curious how many hires of those 2,000 have actually occurred in the past year and how many are in the queue that are advertised right now?

So, where are you at in making actual progress on getting 2,000 people on board?

>> Dave Wilson, you got any summaries on that?

I think the first round of hiring, we couldn't go outside the agency.

So, it doesn't help to increase capacity when it's all merit promotions within the agency.

The last round of hiring, I think we're allowed to go outside the agency.

I don't know.

Dave, do you have any?

>> Yeah, I don't have any specific numbers handy, but I can easily ask for them and see where we're at.

We're going into a round now of hiring a couple hundred, I think.

So, there's an effort on up in HR to find ways to hire more people quickly, work more with technical schools and job-corps-type places to get people into the pipeline.

>> I can provide some info for you.

One is you are going to direct-hire 100 to 150 as a result of the national convention, which is great news, and that is a program you have been doing successfully for several years.

But I can also tell you the problem -- you have a barrier internally with hiring, and that is you are separating hiring internally versus hiring externally.

Those are separate processes.

You advertise first government-wide to see if there is any interest.

There is none, and then you advertise outside.

That takes a lot of time, a lot of energy by HR, but I understand it takes them a lot of time to do those and apparently it is not conducive to do them concurrently.

And part of the reason is, they go to the effort of hiring government-wide and external at the same time, and you get interested, qualified candidates internal.

That is where you are going to go first.

So, the effort of going outside that might have generated a hundred applicants for you to screen was, in essence, wasted.

So, that is a problem, and I understand that, but I just hope you recognize you have an internal barrier in terms of being able to fill positions quickly, and we all know that.

And it is just unfortunate, but it is nothing that I don't think anybody has found an easy solution to.

It is just a barrier, and that is all there is to it.

>> This is Dave Cawrse.

That came up on one of our solution teams, and yes, we used to be able to do concurrently.

It's called "demo" when you look outside the agency and "merit" within the agency, and you could do that at the same time.

But over the years, it was a lot for HR to do, and so the hiring manager had to make a decision whether they stayed internal or were they external.

Lately, for some of these positions, we're getting very few applicants internally.

We have to turn around, advertise externally.

Why can't we advertise those jobs?

And you mentioned contracting officer.

That's a great example there.

Just advertise that both externally and internally.

And so that is one of the ideas from the solution team and one we'd like to move forward and work with HR on.

>> That's good to hear.

I don't know the answer to this question, but I suspect unfortunately that attrition and retirements, the rate of people leaving or retiring still exceeds the rate that you are hiring.

And so, the size of the workforce continues to decrease.

I don't have any hard numbers, but I think that is still the case.

>> Yeah, and we do have data by, it's our forester series and forester text series.

It's called "A Mission Critical Occupation," and we do have some recommendations on that.

Another aspect -- it's not just recruitment but retention of those skills.

And even though somebody retires, there's a new authority for us -- it's been around for a while -- called ACES, the Agricultural Conservation Experience Service program.

And its ability to bring on somebody 55 years and older -- it doesn't necessarily have to be a Forest Service retiree -- and have them in some aspect of our forest products.

So, we have been doing that in silviculture, sales administration, and I expect we'll be expanding that program this year.

>> Yeah, and I think, too, it -- we have to look at the indirect way of getting work done in the agency, and that's not necessarily having employees to do the work.

Master stewardship agreements is an example.

If we can greatly increase the use of master stewardship agreement, and at least in Region 5, those cooperators have and want to do more projects.

In that process, they will hire the skills needed to do the prep, the layout, the marking crews, if needed -- preparation of the contract, advertisement, awards and administration, which greatly facilitates getting the work done without having to deal directly with the employment issue within the agency and the skill-set within the agency.

I'm done.

>> Okay, thank you so much, Steve, for all of those great questions.

That was some great dialogue there.

We are about 15 minutes over our schedule here, but we're just going to take a 10-minute break and then return and dive deeper into this questions-and-feedback session for another hour.

So, let's go ahead and take a break.

It's 11:45 Mountain time right now.

Let's get back together at 11:55, and we'll continue this discussion.

But before I leave it, I will just add on what Erin Smith Mateja said there in the chat box -- "160 positions.

We are hiring through the SAF event.

We are advertising concurrently internally and externally."

So, that goes to Steve's comment there.

So, thanks for that great discussion.

We'll return to it at 11:55.

Thanks, all.

>> Okay, welcome back, everybody.

And welcome to this hour-long feedback-and-discussion section.

As a reminder, we'll enter into this feedback-and-discussion section for one hour and then get some leadership close-out from Dave Wilson for 15 minutes, and then I'll give a brief set of reminders before we close and adjourn.

So, the first question we have to prompt this discussion section is to have folks answer the question, "How do the priorities we've shared today resonate with you?"

So, I just want you to keep that in mind.

I know we have some outstanding questions from the last, more clarifying Q&A section, so let's go to R6.

I think they were next.

And then possibly over to R5 with John Exline.

But let's start with R6.

Did you have a question remaining from the last section there at R6?

>> Yes, this is Rex Storm with Associated Oregon Loggers.

And I just wanted to say that we certainly appreciate and strongly support the Forest Service initiative on forest products modernization, and we look forward to continuing to work with the agency on finding new and better ways of being more efficient and providing more value to the forest products and to the management activities of the Forest Service.

And that being said, we provided comments, our organization and other organizations in the forest products sector in Region 6 but also nationwide several months ago.

All through the summer we've provided comments, and I have a couple observations and concerns about where you are right now and what you are telling us, and so maybe you want to respond to those, my observations, and maybe not.

But, anyway, here are my observations and concerns.

I am not convinced that your priorities and the activities of improvements that you're talking about to date are responsive to the marketplace.

Existing and growing future markets for forest products are very important to the business of the Forest Service, but also to your forest products partners, so I am not convinced that what you're providing adds additional value to the marketplace and to the forest products sector.

And in particular, what I'm not hearing very much of in your priorities is that these modernizations are moving the agencies, forest products program, to be more compatible with several aspects of forest products.

So, we are looking for the forest products program to be more compatible with local business standards -- the business standards of the forest sector to be both local and standard.

The Forest Service is not there.

We also look towards accurate values of net measure, measures that accurately articulate value, contemporary.

Many of the methods and procedures and practices of the Forest Service forest products program are not contemporary.

They are antiquated.

Economic valuation and the economic contribution to a project, the forest products program, we believe could do a better job at providing economic value and measuring that economic value.

And, lastly, the forest product sector are your partners, and the forest products sector is ever important in the success of the Forest Service accomplishing its desired future conditions, and, therefore, the health and the viability of the infrastructure of the forest product sector should be very important to the success of the desired future condition of the national forest, and we see that there are not necessarily any emphasis or measure of your modernization of the program contributing to improve value to your forest sector partners.

I'll close with that I am concerned that this initiative seems to be aiming towards being a one-size-fits-all, cookie-cutter national sort of initiative that is not unlike many of the past Forest Service initiatives that have withered into the wind and not really resulted in meaningful change for the agency's programs or efficiencies.

So, thank you for listening and I look forward to continue to work with you on improving forest products.

>> This is Dave Wilson.

I'll try and tackle at least -- the last one's probably the easier of them all.

The idea here is that we're really not trying to make one size fits all, but reduce the restrictions that we put on from the WO down to the regions, trying to make sure that we're not in the way of regions getting their work done within the limits that we have, of course.

So, what we're trying to do is build in that flexibility that is needed so that the regions can do what's necessary to help move the products out.

So, hopefully from that standpoint we're making some progress as to providing the guidance that's needed but then trying to stay out of the way of the regions.

I think it works out.

Backing up, there's -- it's important that we have you folks as partners in this endeavor, and we listen to what you have to say as to where we go, what we're doing, what we're looking at.

So, if there's suggestions as to how to bring some of these ideas, these contemporary ideas, into our processes that we may have overlooked, that's what we're hoping that we can do from this is identify who can bring some ideas forward for us, and we can see if and how they can fit into our process.

Dave, you want to add any more to that?

>> I had a comment on the one size fits all.

We are trying to develop national direction that is a minimal approach.

Carl mentioned designation by prescription.

The national direction is just a brief description of what DxP is, and then it goes to the regions to provide the framework and the guidelines for how DxP will use in their regions.

Another example -- sampling error, we changed that in the chief's letter in February.

Scale sales all now have a 30% sampling error.

It used to be 20%.

If a region feels it still needs to be more restrictive, they can do so that way.

So, we're trying to develop a national direction that still allows some flexibility for the regions, as streamline is needed.

>> Okay, great.

Thanks for the question, Rex, and thanks for the replies, Dave Cawrse and Dave Wilson.

Sandra ask that I pull up the priorities, and correct me if I'm wrong, but these are the priorities that we should be discussing.

Is that right, that I have up here on the screen, Dave Cawrse?

>> Yeah.

These are what we saw from our guiding team.

The top six are the ones that we've worked well on.

But, again, this is a feedback session.

September 11th, when we met, they said number 10, forest productions utilization and markets, that should be one of the top issues we should be looking at.

And we had some feedback, the contract and permitting.

Yeah, your contracts are a little bit complex, but they work.

And we can work with them.

We did have some feedback in that first national session, some different ordering of our priorities, and I wouldn't mind hearing some more on that today.

And have we missed any issues, too?

>> Okay, great.

So, some more questions there for attendees from Dave Cawrse.

I see Region 6 has their hand up.

Go ahead, Region 6.

>> Yeah, this is George McFadden with the BLM.

I'm looking at your priorities, and I see silviculture is eleventh.

The silviculturists we work with, we tell them that their silviculture is "silly-culture" and "stupid-culture."

You lay out a stupid-culture timber sale, it's not going to sell.

So, it's not an afterthought.

It has to be incorporated pretty much at the beginning, and people have to know how to integrate silviculture into an economic sale, just not design whatever they want and not worry about the economics.

So, that's one.

But the other question is, I don't see anything on transportation management -- rod easements, maintenance, cooperative agreements on that, working-circle agreements, potentially.

In fact, sometimes we used to be a very big cost on some of these sales, and it's not well-praised or valued.

Do you have any thoughts on transportation management?

>> Yeah, this is Dave Cawrse.

The number-two issue there, sale layout, including transportation and logging systems, we recognize there's concerns on that.

We have seen sales not appropriately laid out.

I'll just talk about the training related to that is that we want to make sure our courses such as SALHI, the Sale Area Layout Area and Harvesting Institute -- we continue with that.

And then we have a series of short courses, at least through the Intermountain Region with Bob Rich in Region 3, are being taught where SALHI is, like, a 5 1/2-week course.

But there's a need for wildlife biologists and others, even silviculturists, to have a better understanding of the logging systems available in their region, and so there's a short course now.

So, we know when we have prescriptions that have a snag requirement or stream-side harvesting or adverse skids that we get the appropriate system in there.

And the other thing I was going to mention, we do have an extended team, and we do have a transportation engineer that we're working with, and we're coordinated with them on some ideas on transportation management.

But that's -- anybody else have any comments on that?

Dave Wilson?

>> I think you covered it pretty good, I think.

Just to say that we aren't just limiting ourselves to the top six.

We are looking at all of them.

So, there are some studies beginning on silviculture, the burns and trust funds we've been looking at on the side as the project progresses.

So, there's all sorts of -- everyone of these has got some activities going on at maybe different levels, but we're trying to tackle as much as we can.

>> Okay, let's see.

We got a question coming in from Samantha Wolf.

Samantha asks, "Will there be new funding opportunities to support partners with innovative design?"

>> We probably haven't thought about that, but we are supporting projects within the Forest Service that are being done, so whether we can -- and that's going to be limited due to funding, but we'll try and do as many of those projects as possible.

That's something we can look at doing is letting our partners, you folks, know what demo projects are coming up, or if you have ways of proposing some ideas and maybe can integrate in with the forest to work on demo projects.

That's where I could see it going, just my thoughts off the top of my head.

>> Yeah, this is Dave Cawrse.

It's difficult to talk about new funding.

Our fiscal year started October 1st, and we're not quite sure where our budget will be.

But if there's ideas that are there, I would like to hear about them.

We did fund one project last year with Northern Arizona University to look at LIDAR and the ability to use that technology to do cruising, and it would be different.

It would be basically a whole-tree census, a whole-stand census of the volume there.

It could conceivably be a very easy way to cruise an area, especially if it's an area that has a lot of downfall or maybe had salvage activities.

It may not be safe to send crews in there.

So, if there's some innovative technology or approach, I would like to hear about it.

And I can't say there's any funding right now, but as the year goes on, sometimes we're able to secure funding.

>> Okay, great.

Thanks for the question, Samantha, and thanks for the responses.

Yeah, go ahead.

>> I'd like to expand a little bit on that.

This is Dave Wilson again.

Would folks like to see a way on our out-facing website, ways of proposing ideas to help us or know -- well, we talked earlier about posting what demo projects we have upcoming.

Maybe even have some sort of chat board or something where we can have that out there for people to try and pair up on partnering on projects.

What do you think of that idea?

>> Does that sound good, folks?

"Sounds great," says Samantha.

Okay.

Great.

Have that solution.

Okay, thanks, Dave, for that interjection.

Now let's go to R6.

I think R6 has their hand up.

>> No more questions at this time.

>> Okay.

Okay, so, any other feedback out there from folks attending the call on these priorities and how these priorities up on the screen resonate with you?

Any other lingering responses to that?

Again, you can enter your response in the chat box, and I can relay it to the speakers, or you can click the hand-raise function at the top of the toolbar, and I can call on you, and you can unmute your phone and ask over the phone line.

I see something coming in from Jay Keaty.

Sandra.

Okay, Jay asks -- thanks, Jay -- "When I look at number 1 on the list, I think about how federal agencies hire.

We fly a tech position, we should hire a tech."

Hold on a second.

Make sure I've got this.

"When we hire a tech position, we should hire a tech.

Seems like we wind up hiring professionals in tech-series positions, and they don't stick around.

If we would hire a tech and train them, they're more likely to stay."

Are there any responses to Jay Keaty's comment there about number 1 and just hiring -- sounds like hiring people into positions that fit their qualifications?

>> Yeah, this is Dave Cawrse, and yeah, I've got some comments on that.

So, I have been involved with a student-recruitment event at the Society of American Foresters.

I mentioned earlier.

It was 150 -- it was actually 160 jobs we had at the convention here recently, just last week.

And, by the way, those jobs close October 12th.

If you're interested in applying, go on usajobs.

But, yeah, when we look at retention for new hires, when we do have a professional hired into a tech series, you're absolutely right.

They don't hang around as long.

So, part of us, when we make decisions on this upcoming batch of jobs is to make sure we match the skill set with the job that they're doing.

And we know with this generation of workers, we'll lose 15% the first year.

We have enough data that a lot of folks leave for various reasons.

At least we want to be able to match the skills with that job and do a better job of that.

We also recognize that mentoring is an important part of our pathways hires, and we're trying to link up our new hire with a mentor to talk about career path and what's available to them.

But yeah, your comment is right on.

It's difficult.

We'll have 3,000 students probably applying for 150 jobs, and oftentimes the person with a 4-year degree outcompetes the person with a 2-year degree.

Nonetheless, I think we could look through the referral list and maybe do a better job of matching those skills.

>> Okay, great.

Thanks, Dave Cawrse.

Let's see.

From Sandra -- "Can you talk a little bit more about the dialogue that's been happening around certification?"

And Dave Wilson, I see that you've typed in there, asking Sandra what type of certification she's speaking about.

So, Sandra, if you can clarify that certification question for us, it'd be great.

>> Well, while they're typing -- this is Dave Cawrse.

I could talk a little bit on the one certification that we're looking at a little more carefully is sales administration certification.

There is a task book associated with it now.

In fact, Carl Maass, who's here with me, he's worked with Steve Orr on perhaps streamlining that certification.

Right now, there is an 8-hour written test and an 8-hour field test, I believe.

I don't know if you have any updates on that, Carl.

>> I could.

We do have -- our solution team for timber sale administration certification is still up and running.

And we're working on the subject from several different angles, including the task book and training and also just how it's all delivered.

We've got a new website in the works that eventually should be a one-stop shop for supervisors, contracting officers, and candidates for certification to get information and hook up with training opportunities.

So, if that's in the works, I would expect to see a version of that online within six months.

>> Yeah, and now I'm looking at -- it would be another type of certification.

So, Sandra, I'll take a shot at that one.

FSC is Forest Stewardship Council.

SFI is Sustainable Forestry Initiative.

We have looked at that.

A couple years ago, we looked at piloting it on the Chequamegon National Forest in Wisconsin.

There was discussions that it would be good to have a demonstration or a pilot there because all land by the state of Wisconsin, they're certified.

The county lands, they're certified.

Wouldn't it be nice to have National Forest System land certified?

That way, any product that came off, at least at those three levels off the state of Wisconsin would be certified.

It gives you access to larger markets, such as IKEA furniture, which requires their products to be certified.

So, we are still looking at it.

The argument against it is that over 170 laws guide the management of National Forest system lands.

Do we really need to add another layer of certification requirements that maybe come down from those two organizations?

So, there's pros and cons to that.

We looked at maybe some sort of branding for national forests.

For example, we've talked to USDA and the folks that do Grade-A beef, they may be able to do Grade-A timber because all our practices -- we have the reforestation requirement, for example, through the Knutson-Vandenberg Act.

We're required to follow best-management practices for water and soil protection.

So, we do most of the things required of a certified forest, but there is an additional cost to have those certifications, and there could be some additional requirements.

And so we've proceeded very carefully on that.

>> Let me just add, because this really is related to the certification of the people that are out there administering our contracts because if we're not doing the things that we say we're going to do in our NEPA documents and our forest plans, then we're not going to ever to be looked at as leaders in the forest-certification process.

So, anyway, for our objective, for our personnel-certification process is to get people certified as quickly as they're capable of getting certified.

And so, hopefully, we'll have a system set up where we can fill the pipeline of where there's a need for additional contracting officers and sales administrators out there because we know that we're really lacking, and do that faster.

Try to get that done in a year or so.

So, that's all.

>> Okay, great.

We got a few more questions and comments here in the chat box.

And I know that Region 5 there on the phone has their hand up, as well.

So, let me just read this comment from Dan Porter.

Dan says, "Back to that list," and I can click back to the list of priorities here shortly, but that "It's priorities 2, 3, 5, and 6 should help make small log supplies more predictable, which could help with priority 10."

Dan's question is, "Can the USFS evaluate local and regional manufacturing capacity to determine to what degree more predictable small-log supplies can be absorbed by listing capacities?"

>> Thought we were doing market analysis that's research.

Whoops.

I thought I was on mute.

>> One response I could make to that from just the modernization effort is that, as we mentioned before, we have these cross-deputy teams that are participating in the effort now.

And so, they're seeing more and more our needs to address things like this, with markets and capabilities of local communities and such that we're hoping that through that exposure to our needs for these things that they can address that through research or studies with their experts.

So, that's just a general answer to your question as to where we're going to go with this.

One of the focuses of these cross-deputy teams is to get the whole agency to look at how to modernize the forest products industry.

It's not just the forest management staff doing it.

It's everyone in the agency.

So, we'll see.

They're seeing more and more of our needs for these types of analysis.

Hopefully, we can get more research behind that.

Hopefully, that helps answer the question of where we're going in the future.

>> Yeah, great, okay.

And then John in R5?

>> Ah, hello.

This is Carl Wilmsen with the Northwest Forest Workers Center.

Regarding the first thing on the list, the training, I would say that the CORs need training in inspecting for compliance with labor law.

The Forest Service already includes provisions in all their contracts that the contractors will comply with all relevant labor laws and the CORs are out there inspecting to make sure that the work is being done according to the specifications of the contract and at the same time, they could be inspecting for compliance with those labor-law provisions in the contract.

And some of the material mentioned using digital tools for doing inspections and those could easily be programmed to have questions about labor-law compliance and also entering things like the number of hours that the workers are at the site and that sort of thing that can help with guarding against wage theft.

On the contracting and permitting, the issue paper recommends exploring using vendors, other agencies, local state, and county economic-development personnel for improving knowledge for review of integrated resource service contracts.

And I would also add to that list that you consider contracting with worker centers for review of certified payroll, interviewing workers, and reviewing other documents relevant to labor-law compliance.

And there are precedents for using worker centers in this way.

Janitors in Los Angeles have been doing it and so has the L.A.

Unified School District to some degree, and it's also been done in the state of New York.

>> This is Dave Wilson.

I'll just respond to that a little bit.

This may be a good example of our training programs and our need to look at them holistically now to make sure we're contemporary with the business world of today.

Not saying that they aren't.

Carl could probably answer that question specifically, but what we're doing now, and Allen Rowley was talking to me about this the other day.

Now that he can see the whole package of training for our employees, it's more of an as-is package now, and now we have to look at it from what does it need to be?

And so, these types of questions we need to raise up and make sure that we're staying as contemporary as possible in training our employees on things.

So, it's a good idea to bring forward and make sure we're covering things like that.

These are things that we need to be looking at.

Or adding to courses, if need be.

So, to generally answer that question, it's time to look at the whole package of training and make sure we have things covered.

>> Okay, now I want to see if we can move forward a little bit.

We only have about 12 minutes on this section before we move into leadership close-out.

So, just want to get onto a couple more of these feedback-and-discussion questions.

Number 2 there, "If you could do one thing to improve the Forest Service's business practices in the delivery of forest products, what would you do?"

So, again, if you've got a response to that question, if you could type it there in the chat box, or raise your hand, and I will call on you.

I see the hand is still raised for there in R5.

John Exline, let me know if you still have a question, or if you do, go ahead.

Okay, great.

Thanks, John.

And I do see that R6 has their hand up.

So, go ahead, R6.

>> Thanks.

This is Andy Geissler with AFRC again.

Just my knee-jerk response to number 2, improving the Forest Service's delivery of forest products -- I mean, the one thing I would do, and this has been kind of our, AFRC's major issue for a decade, and it seems to still be an issue for us, and that's improving the Forest Service's ability to create operating seasons that are flexible enough to allow purchasers and operators to implement these contracts.

We are still dealing with situations where we're only looking at maybe a month and a half or so at the end of the summer where we can realistically implement these timber-sale contracts.

There might be some possible flexibility throughout the rest of the season, but for purchasers, they have to assume the worst.

It just seems to be getting tighter and tighter and tighter.

So, the one thing I would do if I could is prioritize ways to expand the operating season into the -- at least here in Region 6 -- into the winter months.

The best way to do that is to invest in the road system that we have and find ways to create funding sources to rock roads, to improve bridges, to fix pipes.

Basically to set the Forest Service up so that these timber sales have got an infrastructure available so that purchasers can actually keep their people working throughout the year and realistically be able to move wood off the hill throughout the year.

I think it's all tied to the infrastructure and quality of roads.

And more often than not, I see the prioritization of road decommissioning at the top of the list, as opposed to road rehabilitation.

So, that would be the one thing I would do that I think would improve in general the delivery of forest products to the industry here.

>> Okay, great.

Thanks for that.

Any feedback on that from Dave Cawrse or Dave Wilson?

I know we're taking notes on all that stuff, so I appreciate that comment.

Okay.

>> This is Carl Maass.

I'm sorry.

Am I talking over somebody?

From a contract point of view, we implement the restrictions that are found that are generated from forest plans and NEPA documents.

But we are very sensitive to that, and Region 5 has just done a new contract provision that provides a whole lot more flexibility -- potentially, anyway -- for their operating seasons that maybe they didn't have before.

But it's where it's possible, because the restrictions are in there for various wildlife and other resource-protection reasons.

But I appreciate hearing those comments, and we'll continue to provide that feedback to our sale partners.

>> Great.

Okay, let's see.

Next up, we had a response to question 2 there from Samantha Wolf.

Samantha says that "Utilized force collaboratives in your region would be something that would improve the delivery of Forest Service business practices and the deliver of forest products."

She says, "Our Clackamas Stewardship Partnership here in Oregon has been instrumental in collecting public comments and reducing litigation on Mt.

Hood National Forest."

Thanks for that, Samantha.

Any comments in response, Dave Cawrse or Dave Wilson or Carl?

>> This is Dave Wilson.

We do a lot of collaboratives through the CFRP program.

There are other types of collaboration projects that are going on out there.

We definitely see the benefits of having those collaboratives.

More and more we see these being implemented across the country.

So, hopefully, that's one modernization effort that precedes this effort going on, that it's gaining traction and becoming commonplace.

And just my thoughts are that we're hoping a lot of these ideas like that, that have come along over the years that we bring them in, we get them to work, and then share them between ourselves and our partners so that they can be mimicked other places across the country.

So, I'm hoping that a lot of things that come out of the forest products modernization effort, both short term and long term, follow the path of things like collaboratives, where we're able to work as partners, come up with solutions, and implement them and then have them become mainstream within the program.

>> Great.

And Sandra asked -- go ahead.

>> This is Dave Cawrse.

This is just on process here.

If we're getting close to the end of the time, I'd love to see people's responses to question number 2 and either write it down on paper.

If you're in a regional office with a Forest Service representative, give it to them.

Or if you want to just type in the chat box here.

But I'd love to hear -- if you do one thing, I'd love to hear your perspectives.

That's all.

>> Okay, great.

Thanks for that, Dave.

And, yeah, I'll follow along on Dave's cue there with a process check.

Dave Wilson, do you mind if we maybe take another five minutes?

We're supposed to move into leadership close-out at 40 minutes past the hour.

Would you mind if we took it to 45 and then picked up on the leadership comments?

>> I'm enjoying this conversation.

>> Okay.

Okay, great.

So, I'm going to go to just a follow-up on Samantha's question.

Sandra asked Samantha if she'd be willing to speak on the call a little bit more specifically about collaboratives that were just in litigation.

Samantha, if you wouldn't mind going ahead and unmuting your phone.

You can hit *# if you haven't already done so to unmute your phone.

And you can go ahead and respond to Sandra there.

I think we still have you on mute there, Samantha.

*# -- you might have to hit it once and then -- there you go.

We got you.

We had you there.

Oh, okay.

So, Samantha's not joining us by phone.

>> Ben, let me see if I can offer something up maybe.

Is there a need to have the collaborative forest-restoration program leaders have a separate call someday on this?

It's totally outside of what we're doing to modernization, but I can pass the word along that there's interest in having something like that.

Is that something people are wanting?

>> Okay, great question there, Dave.

So, we'll wait as responses come in to your question, and then I think we're going to move on here to Region 6 and then Region 5 on this question.

And then, if you wouldn't mind, we'll move on.

After we hear from Region 6, then Region 5, we'll move on to question 3 here.

So, thanks for all the great comments so far.

Region 6, go ahead and unmute.

>> Hi.

This is Region 6.

Rex Storm, Associated Oregon Loggers.

Item number 2 -- the one thing that we would recommend the Forest Service do is rebalance its mix of forest products and economic expertise within the agency.

Right now, there appears to be a diminished number of not only staff people but staff people with the expertise in aspects of economic and forest products and operational expertise to deliver forest products and viable forest-management projects.

So, we're looking for things like logging systems, transportation systems, economic analysis, operational viability because, ultimately, if a project is not operationally viable or economically viable, that project has a small chance of advancing and being implemented.

Thank you.

>> Thanks for that, Rex.

Any feedback from Dave Cawrse, Dave Wilson, or Carl?

>> Carl is unable to comment.

>> Okay, I'm hearing silent agreement -- great.

Okay, moving on -- oh, go ahead.

>> No, I was just going to support that suggestion that we're looking at all our training, and that's not saying not to bring in more qualified people, but the people we do have, make sure they're current and trained up.

Training is becoming one of the focal points of this whole effort, making sure if we have our folks trained to current procedures and technologies and such, that's a big step forward towards modernizing the whole process.

>> Okay.

And Lindsay Warness just typed in the chat box there that she'd also suggest that "You look at partnering with entities that have the expertise while you're bringing people up in training."

Thanks for that, Lindsay.

Okay.

Moving on to Region 5.

>> Yeah, John Quidachay with the Associated California Loggers, addressing feedback and discussion item number 2 there.

I think one of the biggest impediments we see here in Region 5, at least, is the spinning of the wheels with the National Environmental Policy Act.

And I think that's where it all begins, where NEPA -- we need reform there.

And I was curious.

I know it was earlier in your slides.

It was one of the two slides that I focused on was the Environmental Analysis Decision-Making Process that is going on nationally.

So, I would like to ask, where is that and where are some of the new rules and guidelines that were supposed to be out months ago, I think?

So, I'll leave it there.

>> To answer where they're at, I can't say.

Maybe somebody on the phone can help out there.

But one reason why we show these side by side is that we're working together to try and increase efficiencies.

There's a lot of overlap in our project planning and the Environmental Assessment Decision-Making process, analysis and decision-making process.

And so what we're trying to do is figure out how to get that whole process into one focal, one lane, if you will, of being accomplished, where we're looking at larger projects and then the actual sales or timber sales or whatever coming out from that.

So, it's not just putting these two together side by side to show a comparison, but it's to show that we're trying to work -- we're working together.

I shouldn't say we're trying.

We are working together at finding the efficiencies we can share with each other.

So, we're not overlapping efforts and redoing things.

So, from that standpoint, I can answer that question as to where they are in their deliverables.

If somebody out there can help answer that one, I'd appreciate it.

>> Great.

Yeah, is there anybody out there that wants to join the conversation and can fill in the gaps, answer this question as to where the agency is currently with the EADM process, which is more focused on the NEPA end of things.

Anybody else?

You'll have to hit *# to unmute your phone if you haven't already.

Okay.

If somebody wants to chime in later, we'll make sure to get that.

But it's a good question, and we'll try and get that answered for folks.

So, Amanda asks, "When it comes to the implementation of sales related to tracer paint, tagging boundaries, et cetera, are timber-stat prevention plans being revised?"

>> I would say yes.

I know when I was in Region 9 as we started looking more to scale sales, which would come from DxP-type projects and such, we had to update our regional and then the forest-level theft-prevention plans.

So, they will have to be updated along the way.

>> Okay, great.

And then I see R6's hand up.

Do you have another question there in R6?

Or a comment?

Okay.

Yeah, go ahead.

Something coming out of R6?

We lost you.

Okay, got the hand down.

Thank you.

So, let's move on to this last question.

We'll just give it a few more minutes, if that's okay, Dave Wilson, to --

>> Keep going.

>> Yeah, great, okay.

"What practice, process, or implementation tool from state and private timber operations would you recommend the Forest Service consider in order to achieve forest-restoration objectives?"

And while people are thinking of responses to question 3 there, I see that Debbie from the Washington office said that she knows the EADM is about one year into their effort.

They're pulling from accomplishments and next steps together to share with folks soon.

"I think we should follow up with a better staff update on EADM after the call."

Thank you for that, Debbie.

Anybody out there have a response to Question 3?

"What practice, process, or implementation tool from state and private timber operations would you recommend the Forest Service consider in order to achieve forest-restoration objective?"

R6 has their hand up.

Go ahead, R6.

>> I just have a simple question in terms of sale layout.

Do you use cutting-line agreements?

Are you allowed to use them?

Silence.

>> Couldn't quite understand the question.

>> Yeah, what kind of agreements?

>> Cutting-line agreements.

If you don't know exactly where the boundary is, can you get an agreement between your neighbors?

Wherever you find that sale, you can then balance it out after it's cut instead of having to survey it?

>> That's pretty difficult for us, but I'm sure they've been attempted in some places.

>> Well, that is one of the questions from private forestry that you can maybe try.

>> Yeah, appreciate that.

>> Sir, could you restate the name of that agreement?

I missed that.

>> It's just a cutting-line agreement.

>> Got it.

Thank you.

Okay.

>> Sorry.

Just to go a little bit out there.

One of the things that popped up a couple weeks ago, we presented this presentation to the land folks, who are responsible for land boundaries and such between the dialogue that we have with trying to find ways to help streamline their processes of doing survey lines, things that we can try out.

So, there's cross-pollination in the office here of ideas gaining momentum.

And so, there may be more things coming down the line where they understand our issues as much as we understand theirs.

And we may have some solutions that we can work on together.

So, just a side note on that.

>> Great.

Okay, Region 5.

>> John Quidachay again with Associated California Loggers.

And I think Steve Brink mentioned it earlier.

Two things come to my mind -- one is the use of master stewardship agreements.

And the other is pushing for more of the Good Neighbor Authority.

At least in California, it hasn't worked so well thus far, but we could push more of that Good Neighbor Authority.

I know it's working in other states.

I've talked to other logging associations and other foresters, especially up in the upper Midwest there.

The Good Neighbor Authority is working very well.

And one of the problems I think we have in California with the state is they're more geared toward fighting fire, Cal Fire, and they really don't have a lot or many skill sets to do actual forestry kind of work.

So, I think the Good Neighbor Authority is out there.

It's not being used very much, at least in California.

And so I'll leave it there.

>> Great.

Thanks for that.

Any response?

Dave, Dave, or Carl?

>> I can just agree with that.

The Good Neighbor Authority, along with the other authorities that we've been given lately that we're trying to utilize them as much as possible -- the chief has asked us to look hard at using these authorities more and more as we do our programs.

So, Good Neighbor Authority is a good tool to use to help us achieve our goal.

>> Great.

Okay, and I see, John, your note that you all still have your hand up.

R6, I see you still have your hand up.

Do you have another question?

Before I get to R5 and/or R6, I see Lindsay Warness has a comment here, and then I think we're going to need to move on once we get to R5.

Thank you all for such a productive discussion.

Lindsay says, "One thing that we struggle with is the NEPA decision that includes everything under the kitchen sink but underdelivers during implementation.

Seeing realistic or prioritized implementation of projects may help in building public trust."

Thanks for that, Lindsay.

Any feedback from Dave, Dave, or Carl there?

>> I don't have anything, maybe one comment on NEPA.

Your NEPA, they have to have everything in it, especially if it's a connected or similar action.

So, I know some watershed analysis may have a lot of projects scheduled.

Some may be appropriate to do a categorical exclusion, keep them separate from a timber sale and keep the NEPA for the timber sale a little simpler.

>> Okay.

Let's move on to R5.

R5, I see you still have your hand up.

>> Yes.

This is Carl Wilmsen with the Northwest Forest Workers Center again.

I mentioned this earlier, but I think it bears repeating in direct response to question 3, and what I would recommend is doing accurate presale appraisals that take into consideration payment of prevailing wages and providing crews with safety training, personal protective equipment, rest breaks, and all other requirements to assure worker safety and protection from wage theft.

Then use those appraisals to award contracts to bidders who are taking all those things into account in their bids.

And I know that there are high-road employers who do that.

>> Make sure that that's part of the discussion as appraisals are reviewed and approved before going out or bids come in.

So, I'll pass that on to the contracting folks to look into, making sure there's a way we can look at that.

>> Okay, great.

And then, last question, from Dan Porter, and then we'll move on to leadership close-out.

Thanks for all the great comments and questions, folks.

Dan said, on question 3, more of a question than a recommendation.

"Wasn't there an effort 5 or 10 years go to map the U.S.

Forest Service planning and permitting process in an effort to highlight steps most directly tied to forest-health outcomes?

If so, is that evaluation being integrated into this effort?"

>> I will take Lindsay's answer on the screen there.

>> Dave, I think Lindsay might be responding to the previous question that Lindsay asked about NEPA and everything and the kitchen sink.

Yeah.

Any response to this effort 5 or 10 years ago in planning and permitting that Dan suggests?

>> I'm not sure.

Dave, do you have any response to that?

>> Yeah, I'm looking at "permitting process and effort to highlight forest outcomes."

Not sure if there was a previous effort.

I'd like to know about it so we aren't retreading some of the same ideas.

But five years ago, we had the Self-Prep Task-Force Report.

We brought that into consideration.

If there's another effort we should do, I'd like to do that.

>> That just brings out that there's things in the past that we may have overlooked or are not even knowing about.

So, knowing things like this, we can go back and see what people have learned in the past and build off of that.

So, Dan, thanks for the question, just from the fact that it raises that there was something done in the past that may help us out.

So, thanks.

>> Great.

And thanks to everybody else for their participation today.

I think we'll get to them here momentarily.

There will be an optional session for further dialogue after a break.

So, let's go ahead and hear from Dave Wilson, with the quick leadership close-out.

>> Well, first, I want to say thank you to everybody.

Thank you not only for myself and Dave Cawrse and Debbie McLaughlin and Ben from NFF for hosting this today.

I'm sure I'm passing on thank-yous from Allen Rowley and John Crockett, who's the acting director for forest management, range management, and veg ecology.

So, it was a good session.

I learned a lot.

I was challenged on a few questions, which is good.

Hopefully, we gave you the answers that you were looking for.

It's going to be a long path, and it's not going to be just a one-shot deal here.

We're looking at making this part of the program from here on out to always keep in contact, keep the dialogue going on, on ways to improve our process.

We've learned that if you don't keep looking at your program and looking at how to better it, it does get to be a bigger effort down the road when you have to catch up again.

So, we're working hard on catching up, and we're going to be reaching out to everyone that has been on this call, and we got two more this week.

If we need to ask questions and more information on what your ideas are, we can reach out to you.

The next steps are coming up.

This week, it's quite a busy week.

Today, tomorrow, and Friday, we have these regional feedback sessions.

Tomorrow's Intermountain and then the East Coast will be on Friday.

October 24th and November 8th, we're going to have the same type of session with our employees just to go back through what we heard over the past year from them and how we are moving forward with the suggestions and ideas and so forth.

In November, we will analyze the feedback that we've received.

We have people lined up to help us with that.

And then we will be adjusting our path forward as needed.

Then, November and December, we start preparing our comprehensive strategy for long-term actions, getting that in place, sharing that out with folks.

We can get your input on that, as well.

December 2019 -- well, this December through January, we'll be looking at reviewing the strategies that we have in place.

And then January to March, we'll finalize the strategy and have it in place for the future.

How to stay engaged -- this was just the first step.

You're going to have regional sessions afterwards.

Some of the issues you may have brought up -- it could be focused on just your region.

So, feel free to go back to them again and talk about them some more.

If you want, you can submit suggestions, request a session or presentation on this.

We'll be glad to do it.

You can send me any suggestions you have or requests, and we will find a way to help you out there.

Or if you have ideas, feel free to put them up there.

Stay informed on our progress, and from today, I think we've learned just a few more things we should put up there to share, things, namely like the demos that we have going on or ways of proposed demos that people might have.

Just stay at that website and keep up with it.

And lastly, contacts.

There is the leadership of this effort.

Chris French is the acting deputy chief.

Greg Smith, who's leading all the reform efforts, and Allen Rowley, who is the acting associate deputy chief, and John Crockett, who is the acting director for forest management, range management, veg ecology.

Additional sessions.

>> I can cover this one, Dave, if you'd like.

>> All right.

>> Thank you so much, Dave.

Just to wrap things up here, folks.

As you probably saw on the agenda or heard when you arrived, there are going to be follow-up discussions that we're going to start at on December...

...sessions, or we can dive a little bit more deeply into more local issues.

Okay, and I'll leave those up there while I just give a couple closing comments.

Thanks to everybody for putting this session together, and especially thank you to the folks who joined us and gave us such great feedback and comments.

Really appreciate you taking the time out of your day to help the Forest Service in this forest products modernization effort.

As I said at the outset of this, this session is being recorded.

We will send out a link to the recording of this session, along with the PowerPoint of this session and notes from the session.

So, everybody that registered, in a week or so, and I will also be posting all of those same items on National Forest Foundation's website.

We have a special web page for forest products modernization.

You probably saw that in the agenda or in the registration information.

So, you can go there.

Thanks to everybody for joining us today, and please join us for an additional dialogue session at 12:30 Eastern time if you can.

And with that, I'll end the meeting.

Thanks to all for joining.

>> Thank you, everyone.

Thank you.