

Forest Products Modernization Intermountain Partner Feedback Session
October 11, 2018 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. MT

Transcript

Good morning, everybody.

This is Ben Irey with the National Forest Foundation.

I'm going to be facilitating the online portion of this Forest Products Modernization partner feedback session.

If you could please -- If somebody could please let me know that you can hear me okay, in the chat box there, I would appreciate it.

Okay.

Thanks, Debbie.

So, yes, welcome, everybody.

If you haven't already done so, please take a moment to introduce yourself in the chat box there.

Let us know who you are, where you're calling in from, and who you're affiliated with, just so we can kind of take attendance that way for today's session.

I see some things rolling in there.

And, also, please let me know if you're having any trouble seeing the slides up on the screen.

We can run a text fix on that if it's a problem.

So, a few basic things about this Adobe Connect chat room.

You may -- If you're just joining us, you may be on mute right now.

So if at any time you try and speak up and you are on mute and we don't hear you, please hit *# to unmute yourself and to join the discussion.

Also, when we get into some later discussion-oriented parts of the agenda, we're gonna need to kind of go person by person, in organized fashion.

So if you could use this hand-raise function on the top toolbar to ask questions or to give feedback, if you want to speak, and I'll call on you.

So, up on the top toolbar, you'll see an image of a person with his hand raised.

You can try that out now, if you want.

Click on it to raise your hand.

Click on it again to lower your hand.

That will produce a cue for me over in the attendees pod, and I'll be able to see you there.

As a reminder, this session is being recorded.

After this session, once we've got the notes compiled and the transcript from the session all put together, we will send out all of those materials, plus a PDF of this PowerPoint

presentation, along with a link to a recording so you can share that information or have it for yourselves to review, if you would like.

For today's agenda, we are going to hear some opening remarks from David Wilson here in just a moment.

And then we are going to move into a series of presentations from both Dave Wilson and Dave Cawrse on forest-productions modernization, just an overview, a national perspective.

And then we'll get into some questions and answers on the national perspective that was shared, just to clarify any questions.

And we'll have about 10 minutes to do that.

And then we'll move into a short 10-minute break so everybody can get a chance to stretch their legs.

Then we'll get into the meat of our feedback-and-discussion section an hour-40 after start time.

And that will last for another hour.

We've got a series of prompting questions there.

Then we'll hear some leadership closeout remarks from David Wilson and then a quick reminder from me.

And then we'll adjourn three hours after our start time.

Then there will be a half-hour break for folks that want to join for the optional session for further dialogue.

We will have -- So, those sessions are basically for the folks that are on-site, to continue a dialogue and have more of a local discussion of the issues there in the room.

But there will be some lines available at least for, I believe, those joining in regions 2 and 4.

There will be a call-in number.

And I'll type that call-in number into the box here shortly so that you have that ready, if you need to leave this portion of the session early.

So, that will be an optional session.

It will, once again, start a half-hour after we conclude this session, this virtual session.

It will be primarily on-site-based and it will last for about an hour and a half.

Just furthering the dialogue there.

Okay.

And, right now, I would like to take a moment to encourage those folks running the on-site location -- if you could enter in the folks that have joined you in the room, put up those sign-in sheets that you've been passing around the room, and enter those people's names into the chat box, just so we have that information, that would be great.

And then, again, if you haven't already taken a moment to introduce yourself in the chat box, please do so now.

And I'm going to go on mute here, and let's just take 2 or 3 minutes for each on-site facilitator to mute their phone and take 2 or 3 minutes to do a brief on-site logistics review, safety review, including letting people know where the handouts are, refreshments, restrooms, any other important housekeeping items.

So, let's reconvene here at 9 minutes after the hour.

That's 3 minutes from now.

And if the on-site facilitators could just let me know, in the chat box, that you've rejoined us, that would be great.

And before we do that, though, just want to point out to folks joining us online that there is a file-sharing window open right now, down in the lower right.

You can click on those briefing materials there and scroll through.

There's quite a few there.

And those are all the briefing materials that we've been providing for today's session.

So, anyways, let's go on mute and reconvene in 3 minutes, once the on-site locations have had a moment to go over logistics for their room.

Okay, folks.

Let's try and reconvene.

And if those on-site locations could let me know that they are able to reconvene, and that'd be great.

>> Missoula on-site's ready.

>> Making the door.

R-2, thank you.

Austin logged in.

Ready.

Okay.

Thanks, gang.

Albuquerque -- they're ready.

Great.

Okay.

Well, let's go ahead, and I'll pass it off here to Dave Wilson to give some welcome and opening remarks and go over session objectives, et cetera.

Dave?

>> Okay.

Well, thank you, Ben.

And welcome, everyone, to the Forest Products Modernization Midwestern, or Intermountain, partner feedback session.

I'm the acting assistant director for forest products here in the Washington office, part of the Forest Management, Range Management, Veg Ecology directorate.

And I send along a welcome from Allen Rowley, who's the acting associate deputy chief, and John Crockett, the acting director of Forest Management, Range Management, and Veg Ecology.

They send their apologies along that they were unable to make it today and turned it over to us to put on the presentation.

To start at the beginning, we talk about forest products modernization, we're really talking about forest products delivery modernization.

We want to make sure people don't think we're trying to come up with new forest products on our own here.

This is more talking about the delivery of the resource from the National Forest to the purchasers, the communities, and local economies.

The Forest Service is committed to improving the condition of the forest and grasslands, being good neighbors, and creating jobs and economic benefits for all Americans.

Part of this commitment is a review and refinement of our forest-products-delivery processes.

This will ensure that we meet our obligations of caring for the land, to a responsible, science-based environmental stewardship.

So, today, what we're going to do -- Our objectives will be to create awareness, bring you a presentation on what we are doing with the modernization so that you're aware of all the different activities that are going on.

Important from this session is to collect feedback on the preliminary-solution ideas, and actions under way are planned.

We haven't just been gathering ideas and creating a report.

We've already implemented some things and want to get your ideas on the actions that are under way and the ideas that we have planned for the future.

We really need to have your feedback on this.

We want to gather ideas on how to streamline our business practices for delivering forest products.

We've looked internal.

We've talked to some external partners.

But this is a chance for us to gather more ideas on ways to streamline our business.

Strengthen existing and develop new relationships with our partners.

You are our partners.

We need to work together on this.

We can't do it alone.

But, together, we should be able to do the best we can at delivering the resources from the forest.

So, today, what we want to do is share why changes are important.

There's lots of reasons why we are making these changes.

Support an honest dialogue.

We'd like to have some dialogue later in the feedback session today as to your thoughts on where we're going and where you think we ought to be going.

Discuss perceived barriers and solutions.

We've tried to identify the barriers that we see, but here's a chance to talk about barriers and, more importantly, the solutions that could come from it.

Identify opportunities for continued engagement.

This is not a one-and-done-type session.

We are looking at continuing this into the future and making this part of our program, as to always looking for ways to do things better.

And we want to discuss your feedback, how we'll use your feedback.

We'll talk about how we want to collect more feedback from this session and then how we'll integrate it into our programs, and then present it back to you.

So, what we're hoping to come away with from this session -- a better understanding of specific actions it will take to increase the pace and scale of forest restoration through an improved for forest-products delivery.

We wanted to be able to come up with actions that we can implement as we increase the pace and scale of our restoration activities.

And better understanding of improved communication methods and continued partner engagement.

We want to have a good understanding of how you would like to participate in the communication of these projects, future projects, and other ways that we can all stay engaged in this.

So, moving on, we'll talk about an overview of the Forest Products Modernization.

If we start at the top, we start talking about the department's strategic goals.

There are six goals in place.

And the Forest Products Modernization touches on two of these goals.

Goal number one is programs delivery efficiently, with a focus on customer service.

You are our customers that receive the products from the forest.

So we need to be able to be as efficient as we can in delivering those products to you.

Goal number six is ensure productive and sustainable use of our National Forest System lands.

We're looking at ways that we can continue to provide to the economic and health of the rural communities.

We want to ensure that the lands and watersheds are sustainable, healthy, and productive, and we want to mitigate fire risk as much as we can.

Tied to the USDA goals are the Forest Service priorities.

And of the five priorities, we feel that the modernization effort touches on three of them.

Uplift and empower employees.

You'll see, as we discuss the effort that's going on, we're relying a lot on our employees out in the field, at the regional offices, and here in the Washington office to give us ideas and solution to the -- ideas on how to be more efficient and solutions to the issues that are at hand.

So we're working hard to make sure that we have that communication with our employees and empower them to come up with ways to help.

We want to be good neighbors and excel at customer service, much like the USDA goals.

And, again, improve the condition of forests and grasslands.

That's our mission, is to work at improving those conditions, and we do that at an increased pace and scale these days.

Okay.

Within the Forest Service itself, we have six different change efforts going on.

You've probably heard of one or two of these.

The Environmental Analysis and Decision Making.

I'll touch on that here in a minute.

The Forest Products Modernization.

There's Oil and Gas Leasing modernization going on, trying to make that efficient.

Same with Land Exchange, Special Uses Modernization.

This gets into the e-permitting and such.

And then Efficient Infrastructure Delivery.

So, when you tie them all together, you have this type of vision of working up from our change efforts, through the priorities, to the strategic goals, trying to keep everything in mind as we go forward.

I mentioned the EADM.

And just wanted to show, side by side, that the EADM goals and the Forest Products Modernization goals.

There's a lot of overlap here.

And we're working together, in tandem, to try and make things efficient from start to finish in the whole management of the forest.

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

There are six components to their goal -- training our employees, examining and reforming Forest Service policies, improving efficiency through technology, developing new performance standards, improving consultation with other agencies, and, basically, changing the way we do business.

The goal of the Forest Products Modernization -- it's a strategic effort designed to better align our culture, 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-product delivery.

We need to look at all aspects of the delivery system in Forest Products Modernization -- the culture, the policies, the procedures.

And you'll see this over the next few slides, as we talk about it, on how we're looking at all these different perspectives.

Okay, to dig deeper into the Forest Products Modernization goals, we're looking to align with practices, policies, and guidance to be more agile, flexible, and adaptable to meet current and future forest-improvement goals.

We've realized that some of our policies and guidances are becoming dated, and we need to be able to modernize them, make them more flexible as we try new things on the floors.

We have ways to do that with little need to go back and change our directives.

To improve the forest conditions, meet forest-restoration needs, create sustainable landscapes, and increase the amount of forest products coming from National Forest System lands.

We've talked about increasing the pace and scale of our restoration activities.

So what we need is to be able to adapt our delivery of products from these restoration activities to meet the challenges of the way we're doing business these days.

Why change now?

We're looking at changing forest conditions.

As we all know, the forests are changing from various reasons, and so we need to be able to adapt to these changes.

Right now, we've identified about 80 million acres of forest and grasslands that are in need of restoration.

And then, at the current rate of restoration, at just over 5 million acres per year, that includes all parts of different treatments, including the use of the wildfire.

We've got a long ways to go, so we need to look at ways to improve our -- increase our pace in doing these restoration activities.

And, in doing so, we wanted to make sure that our current processes that may be slowing us down now are reviewed and modified so that we can make these increases.

The other reason for change to our systems is the staffing that we have.

Our non-fire workforce is the lowest capacity in years.

Okay, our forest-products delivery workforce is nearly 40% larger in 1980 than it was in 2016.

So with the reduction in staff, we have to be more efficient.

We have to rely more on technology as we do all the restoration activities in the field.

How are we going to achieve these goals?

This change effort we're talking about today is relying on ideas and support from our employees in the field and also you, our partners.

We can't do this without having ideas from our partners, as well as our employees as to what they see as better ways to do things.

We want to learn what is working well in the forest-product delivery and share what we've learned, nationally.

We're looking at ways of distributing ideas or pilots that have been done, demonstrations, and share the ideas across the agency so that others can try them out on their forests, as well.

This way, we see a lot of ideas going on, but they're being done locally.

And if we could start sharing those nationally, that would help make things more efficient.

We want to strengthen existing and develop new relationships.

As we embark on new types of activities out on the forests, we need to develop new relationships as we work to try to find ways to best restore our forests.

We're identifying short-term, mid-term, and long-term actions.

When we got started, about a year, year and a half ago, we saw a lot of short-term actions, things we could do immediately that we were able to implement right off to make some instant changes to the policies that we have.

So, we've identified a lot of these actions.

We're looking to keep identifying more as we go on.

And we'll prioritize them and work at them as we can.

Some of the things that we're doing.

Like I mentioned before, we're not just gathering ideas and putting them into a report and calling it good.

We're actually implementing them.

So, what's some of the things that we are doing right now?

We're updating training for our employees.

We're looking at developing academies for training processes for our staff.

We're looking at expanding course work and refining the course work we have to make sure it's current and contemporary for our needs.

We're looking at examining and reforming our policies.

As we work on these projects, we identify things that are directives in our policies that maybe inhibiting something.

So we're examining and reforming those as we go forward.

We're improving efficiency through better use of technology.

We're working hard at making sure that the field has the technological tools that are available out there for them to use as they work on their projects.

Changing project-management and delivery-systems processes.

We're looking at the way we organize our -- way we do our restoration activities, our timber-sale programs so that we have better project management in place so that we're not getting caught in delays and such.

Just changing the way we go business to get more work done on the ground.

There are ways that we can be more efficient out there, and we're exploring all of them and finding ways that we can change the way we do our business.

Exploring opportunities for change in all the aspects of the forest-products-delivery system.

We're just looking at any opportunity we can see to improve the way we deliver our products and be able to look forward in the future as best as we can.

Excuse me.

Just looking at the structure of the Forest Products Modernization effort, which you have at the top half of this diagram here, is the Core Team and the Executive Team.

This team meets weekly, sometimes many times in the week, you know, working on the programs, you know, evaluating priorities, evaluating the results that are coming in, and so forth.

Excuse me again.

From the Core Team, our primary contact with the field is through a Guiding Team.

This is where we have some regional experts that are kept informed on all the processes or programs that we're doing within the modernization effort.

Get their input as to what the priorities should be and help filter out ideas and then disseminate that down to the regional level to get it out to the field.

We found that, as we got going, we needed to have an Implementation Team.

This was a team that is focused solely on implementing ideas that come into the effort.

They're evaluated and tested, in some cases, and then we put out papers to the field, giving them instructions on how to try some new processes out there.

This is where we bring people in on details, and their job is to be focused on it.

And, that way, we're able to make progress on implementing some of these ideas.

One of the more important teams that we have is the solution teams.

The solution teams -- And we'll talk more about the priorities that they worked on, but there was six teams of field-level people -- district, forest, regional office folks -- that took challenges from the different ideas that came up.

And they provided solutions back to us from the field level.

We'll talk more about that as we get going.

The Systems Mapping Team.

This team is looking at every business process point in the delivery of forest products, identifying all the interactions that go on at that process point, in an effort to try and identify where our pinch points are, and how can we best streamline that process?

Again, we can't do this all on our own, so we have developed a Cross-Deputy Team.

This is between directors within the NFS and the other deputy areas within the Forest Service, bringing in experts between the different areas to help us as we tackle our issues that have arisen.

And off the Cross-Deputy Team would then be the Extended Team.

This was their staff that are able to work on specific issues.

This is a basic timeline of the effort, where we've been and where we're going.

We're just now moving into Phase 3, where we're developing the comprehensive strategy for the long-term actions.

But the effort started back in April of 2017, where we identified potential issues and designed short-term actions, things that we can do right off the bat.

Well, this got us started and thinking about, "What are the issues that -- What are the bottlenecks, the pinch points, if you will, within our delivery system?

Where can we really look at focusing in on making some changes that will improve efficiencies?" So, throughout 2017 and 2018, we've looked at identifying addressing these issues and being able to implement as many short- and mid-term actions as we could.

So, now we're at the point of looking at building a comprehensive strategy, where we can look at where we want to go in the next year or so and build that strategy, share that, again, with you folks, as our partners, and make sure we're looking at going in the right direction.

Some of the progress to date.

We've developed new and extending training courses.

I mentioned the academies.

We launched a sale-administrator academy.

We realize that we have a shortage of certified contracting officers and trying to identify how can we best move people through the training process to get them to the point where they can become certified contracting officers?

We've identified a task book of what needs to be done.

Washington office is supporting the training folks as they work on their task books.

We've identified forests that can be host forests, that if somebody's working on a task and they need to go somewhere for training, we'll support them to go to a host forest for mentoring and training and moving through their career ladders.

We're looking at purchasing and distributing more new equipment and developing new applications for use of forest-products measurements.

We're trying to make sure that everybody that needs digital equipment has it and that we have the applications in place to support that equipment.

Implemented interim directions to achieve 2018 letter.

This is a lot of the short-term actions that I was mentioning.

Instead of going through the process of just modifying handbooks, we put them out as directives through the chief and giving the people the authority to work on some of these streamlined policies that we have.

We're now working on a second letter to do the same thing.

New actions that have come along in the last six months or so -- we'll go and put them into a letter again and get the word out and get the authority out to the folks to implement them.

We're looking at technology like barcode readers for tracking log loads.

Initiating virtual boundaries.

We're doing pilot studies on that, to make sure we have a proper method for using digital technology for boundaries.

We're looking at the appraisal process and piloting some market-based appraisals and testing different tools for doing appraisals.

And then, as we're doing this and we're going back and getting the handbooks and the manuals updated, and so the changes we want to make become more permanent.

Innovations that are under way, ways that we're sharing information amongst the agency is -- we're developing a lot of one-page summaries of innovative ideas, and this is across the country.

As we find out what people are doing at the local level, ideas and improvements to the process, we're writing up these summaries and sharing them through the Internet and putting them on the web page so other people can look at them and see what the other folks are doing out there, hopefully starting a dialogue of sharing the ideas.

And we just lost our connection.

Just a second.

I'll be right back here.

>> Dave, we can still hear you online here, so you haven't lost your phone connection.

So we'll wait for you to rejoin on Adobe Connect.

>> Okay.

There we are.

A lot of these -- Several of these summaries are on our public website, so we can share with our partners, as well.

15 have been drafted.

More are being planned.

And more ideas -- If you have ideas, we're always open to working on those.

We're looking at some demo projects and learning journeys, ideas that people think might be a good idea that we need to test and make sure that we can fine-tune the processes before they go out.

So demo projects and learning journeys are being encouraged out in the field.

Working on better ways to share and spread these ideas to other units, using SharePoint or the website to post these ideas out there, on other communication technologies that are available now.

We're trying to integrate those into the process.

So we are sharing ideas across and trying to build that communication between people in the field, that they can work together on projects.

Our planned next steps.

We're continuing to gather feedback from our employees and our partners.

Today's partner session, feedback session, is the second of three this week that we're having with our partners.

And then we have two plans for the employees, that they can hear what we're up to and the ideas that are being gelled and be able to get feedback from them to see how they're feeling about the way the modernization is going.

We're continuing to implement actions as quickly as we can.

We'll implement actions that have been identified, and teams being put together to look at the actions.

And Dave Cawrse will talk about this here in a minute, what we're doing and how that's all being done.

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

There are things outside of the modernization that we are identifying that we can implement immediately, and we're taking action now.

We're not waiting until we have it all in place.

We're trying to move it out as quickly as we can.

But we're strategizing on the approaches for the long-term actions.

Some of these are going to take a while, as you'll see.

It may take a year or two or more for us to implement.

So we're making sure we have a strategy in place to keep those actions moving along, as well as implementing as quickly as we can.

So, I'm gonna turn over to Dave Cawrse.

He's gonna talk about some of the key issues and go from there.

>> Okay.

Good morning.

Ben, can you hear me?

>> I can hear you just fine, Dave.

And let me interrupt you for just a second and invite anybody that's joined us that hasn't taken a moment to introduce themselves in the chat box to please let us know who you are, where you're calling in from, and who your associates are.

Thanks, Dave.

Take it away.

>> Okay.

So, a little bit -- Yeah, my name's Dave Cawrse.

I'm in the Washington office, detached, in Fort Collins, Colorado, with the Forest Management group.

Normally, I'm the Biometrics group leader, but in the past year, I've been on detail as the Implementation Team leader.

You saw the Implementation Team -- not a very large team -- at the bottom of that organizational chart a couple slides ago.

So, let's see if I can advance this okay.

Success.

All right.

So, I'm gonna give a little bit of background.

I'm gonna cover the issues that we're working on, talk about some of the ideas, solution ideas, that we're working on, and then take it to the top-10 recommendations that we're working on.

So, just a little bit of background.

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

It was March of last year.

Leslie Weldon, then-deputy chief, met with us, a small group of us, in Washington, D.C., and stood up and said, "We want to be the best at forest-products delivery." And, I mean, that was a pretty good statement coming from Leslie.

You know, I would have been happy with excellent, but she wants to be the best, which is good to hear that from leadership, 'cause it kind of sets an identity and tone of where we want to go.

And, from there, we met in June with our Guiding Team.

Dave Wilson had mentioned the Guiding Team.

It's a mixture of about a dozen people from across the United States, regional foresters, timber director, forest supervisor, and district ranger.

And we met there in Portland and we put our gate system up around the wall.

You know, Gate 1 is where we do our feasibility analysis.

Gate 2 is NEPA, on through Gate 6, award of a contract.

And we looked at what we thought, then, were our pinch points, areas where we could streamline our processes.

And we came up with the 12 issues that you see up on the screen here.

I'm gonna run through them really quickly, and the top six, I'll go into a little more depth.

And these are in order.

We did a voting process, what we thought were the most important ones to go after.

And number 1 was personnel, recruitment, our staffing, and training.

And part of that, when you saw that slide earlier that Dave had, that our workforce was 40% larger 20 years ago, we've become a firefighting agency, quite frankly.

And if you flip that number around, we have like 55% less foresters, less folks in the field doing active forest management that we did, say, in 1997, '98.

And just to let you know, this past year, we did sell 3.2 billion board feet.

That's the most we have sold since 1997, yet we did it with considerably less folks.

So, I mean, there has been some streamlining going on.

But we are kind of a bimodal organization.

It's old guys, like myself, close to retirement.

We didn't hire in the '90s.

And then, recently, we've been hiring a lot more folks.

So the training is also an important aspect.

There's a lot more authorities -- I'll cover those a little bit -- that we've had in the last four years than what we had previously.

Number-2 issue is sale layout.

How can we be more efficient in sale layout?

Do we have to use all the paint that we use?

Can we look at our transportation and logging systems and be more efficient with those?

The third issue is timber sale accounting, scaling, and accountability.

Our accounting out in the field, when you administer a sale, if somebody accidentally cuts a 5-inch ponderosa or a 30-inch Doug fir, we have to go report it to law enforcement.

We track truckloads.

There's a lot of modernization ideas around that.

And, you know, better use of weight scaling and things like that.

That's all in Issue 3.

Number 4 is certification.

That refers to certification of sale administrators, our civil culturists, our cruisers.

Most of our certification processes came about through different audits, but it's fine to go back and look at them.

They're fairly costly and time-consuming.

Can we be more efficient with that?

Number 5 is appraisals.

There were stories that came in that it might take three days to appraise timber.

It is required, under National Forest Management Act, to determine best value.

Yes, we do have a cumbersome process in that.

I'll cover that in a little bit more.

The sixth issue is contracting and permitting.

We've had folks say that they no longer will bid on forest-service contracts.

They're lengthy or complex.

And that's not good for the taxpayer when it's not competitive.

Number-7 issue is project and program management.

That one's kind of twofold.

On the program management, when you look at, you know, 193 million acres for the agency, how do we spend our budget dollars?

How do we align ourselves, strategically, in the landscape to get the biggest bang for the buck when you have a limited resource, to address that 80 million acres of restoration?

And then, on the project management, to do a timber sale is complex.

You have to coordinate with archaeology, with wildlife, and many different folks.

But project-management skills are important to have at the districts.

Number 8 is permanent and trust funds.

It refers to the KV fund, salvage funds.

Can we make better use of those?

Can we expand those for use outside the sale areas?

And how can we do better accounting on those?

Number 9 is information management.

A lot of our information systems, such as TIM -- that's the Timber Information Manager -- we developed around 18 years ago.

There's a lot better ways that we can streamline TIM.

The other one is FACT, the Forest Activity Tracking System.

In some cases, we have redundant reporting that our folks have to do.

We felt we could streamline that.

Number 10 is forest-products utilization and markets.

Quite frankly, we did this session September 11, nationally, and I suspect, even with today's session, "Why isn't that in your top 6 or top 3?" Forest-products utilization refers to, "Can we do a better job of utilizing our products?

What role can the federal agency have in that one?" The other type of certifications, such as forester, stewardship council, things that might enhance the marketability of products coming off the national forest -- those ideas fall in there.

Number 11 is silviculture.

That came in front of the Guiding Team because of the concerns on the complexity of silviculture prescriptions, numerous marking guides -- Oops.

We need to -- All right.

So, Ben, we've lost the screen here.

I'm just gonna talk from memory real quick.

So, silviculture was related, again, to the complexity -- "Can we do a better job of getting our silviculture a little more simple?" And this would better allow us to use other authorities, like designated prescription.

And the last one is washing off those reviews and audits.

Can we make those more efficient for our folks in the field and have more of those as a learning experience?

So, if you could advance to the next screen, I'm gonna follow from a paper copy.

I'm not sure what folks are seeing right now.

Ben, what are folks seeing?

>> Yeah, everybody's got a blank screen.

I'm gonna reload it.

It should take just a moment here.

>> Okay.

Good.

>> Okay.

There you go.

>> I was back there making coffee, Ben.

>> All right.

>> Okay.

>> All right.

So, let me just flip back, make sure.

Okay, reviews and audits.

And then I'm on Solution Team summary.

Okay.

Okay.

I should hopefully -- Solution Team summary.

I'm gonna go back.

I'm on that slide.

>> Oh, okay.

>> All right.

So, what we did a little bit...

So, we had these top-12 issues.

The top six were highlighted there.

And, so, we want to be able to reach out our district- and forest-level folks.

So, one idea that we kicked around was solution teams.

And Dave Wilson mentioned this a little bit earlier.

And, so, we formed six teams around those top-six issues.

And there is about a dozen people in each team and about two people from each region across the United States.

And they're all virtual.

They met over a four-week period, 2 to 3 hours per week.

They were professionally facilitated.

And they started with their issue they were assigned.

Let's say you're on the sale-layout issue.

You had all the concerns that the Guiding Team had brought up, plus some other concerns.

Then they stepped through with ideas how, for example, you improve sale layout or appraisals or contracts.

And it's a little bit of a throwback to the quality circles from the '80s.

You remember, Ford Motor Company had quality circles for people working on the assembly line that might see ideas that, sometimes, management will hear about.

It's a little bit of the same idea.

We felt there are ideas that could be talked about in the district or forest level but would not percolate up to the national level.

So, they met through April and May and came up with about 300 ideas.

And some of these ideas were the same ideas across teams, and so we distilled those down to about 170 individual ideas that we could score out that looked like they're viable to bring in front of our national Core Team and our Executive Team.

And we sorted them by their change category and the change needed and also by the gate system.

And, so, when we scored them out, we looked at the ease of implementation or whether it was difficult.

The time limits was another factor.

Could they be done quickly, in less than a year?

Would it take more than a year?

And, finally, the scale of benefits.

Would it be a minor benefit or worth, you know, from a national -- It could appear to be small, but when it goes national or when you're doing 3 billion board feet, it could have large impact.

And one example came up across the teams is -- a lot of our districts did not have Wi-Fi.

And for us to use new technologies, 60% of the districts needed to add Wi-Fi, something that could be done fairly quickly, really not a huge cost, but could have huge benefits.

So that one got a perfect 10.

Another one was designated prescription.

I'll cover that in a little bit.

But that one could have huge benefits if we don't use paint.

And, so, that one we scored at an 8.

Another one would be, like, do cruiser certification every other year.

That had a lot.

I mean, it helps, but not a huge benefit.

That would have a lower score.

So, we scored all the ideas out and met there in June and July with our director.

And from that, Allen Rowley kind of brought forth the 10 highest things to work on.

And Dave Wilson will cover those in a second.

But before we get on, I want to go through a couple of these issues in a little more depth.

I mentioned personnel recruitment, staffing, and training.

Right now, I'll do a little call-out that we are looking at a recruitment effort right now with ties to the Society of American Foresters convention, which was last week in Portland.

Our jobs are open through tomorrow.

And it's recent graduates and Pathways Internships.

And we have about 160 jobs we're offering.

If any of you on the phone are interested or want to get that word out, go to USAJobs.

You can Google that.

It will show up there.

Also on training, I'm also gonna mention that -- Dave had mentioned earlier the chief's letter.

And with that chief's letter, we wanted to jump-start some of our training.

There's two authorities I want to highlight right now.

They came out of the 2014 Farm Bill.

One is Good Neighbor Authority.

And I'm sitting in a room here with Colorado folks.

And Colorado was a leader in implementation of the Good Neighbor Authority.

And there is some training in how to do that.

Good Neighbor Authority allows us to do a prescription and do the NEPA on a timber sale.

And then the state takes it over.

There's the sale layout.

Sells it and administers it.

And it's been quite successful, but we do want to offer some training in that.

The other one is designation by prescription.

Before the Farm Bill, it was just applied to stewardship contracts.

It was expanded in the Farm Bill to all timber sales.

That's been a huge savings.

And, so, we did develop a new training course on that.

I'm gonna go to sale layout right now.

We wanted to determine which sale-layout policies, procedures can be altered or eliminated to increase efficient and effective timber sale layout and streamline those policies.

What we learned -- paint is expensive.

We have to use tracer paints, and it has a special formulation, due to health concerns.

It's a water-based paint.

We have data in Region 3 that paint alone costs about \$30 an acre.

When you pay for the crew to mark, it runs \$50, \$60, or \$70 an acre.

So we know, if we use designation by prescription, that there's a huge cost savings there.

And I mentioned the training that goes along with that.

One thing I want to mention that -- You know, forest-products delivery -- it is a farm-to-table-type approach.

We do not want to just look at, "Okay, we save on the cost of sale layout through not painting, but we have to beware of actions that may push that cost to other cost centers." And a good example was "D" by "P." And this is all anecdotal.

When I've talked to sale administrators, if they have to go out on a sale that's marked with -- a tree-measurement sale that's marked with paint, either cut-tree or leaf-tree mark, they go out there one day a week.

When it's "D" by "P," our sale administrators go out there two days a week to make sure they're complying with the desired stand conditions, 'cause, usually, you're operating off a residual basal area, a target, or maybe a crown-canopy closure.

So that just doubled your sale-administrator time.

The other thing, when I talk to purchasers, because, you know, if they see a tree marked or not marked, it's very clear what needs to be cut or not cut.

If they have to stop, get out of the cab to peruse them, determine where they are for meeting stand conditions, some purchasers have told me that it has doubled their logging time.

So we have to be careful how we implement all these authorities, that we don't pass on cost in a different area.

And then the last one.

There are many opportunities to embrace new technologies in sale layout.

The best example I can think of is timber cruising, doing our volume estimates.

Five years ago, I participated in a sale-prep-task-force report.

And a half-hour of cruising was done with pencil and paper.

And I can see Tom Troxel is on this call.

And I went to Tom there and I go, "What does industry do for cruising?" And he got back to me and said, "Dave, we've been virtually 100% handheld digital recorders for a decade now, unless it's a mom-and-pop organization, and I didn't want to be a mom-and-pop organization." So, anyway, we -- So we've made a strong push to put digital handheld recorders, have those available to our crews.

We have done some purchases, I think over 60 out of our Washington office.

Another tool is lasers.

So, we're simply doing tree height.

It allows you, in stands where there's a lot of beetle kill -- It could be fairly hazardous.

And minimize -- Or you get to the stand a lot quicker using lasers.

The other area that we're looking at is tablets with our sale administrators.

We have purchased tablets.

You can do sale-administrator notes on them.

You can do add-on volume.

You get back to the office, provided you have Wi-Fi connectivity, download all your information.

And it is possible, next year, we could have a paperless and paint-less timber sale, where the sale administrator has a geo-reference map on a tablet.

They know exactly where they are on the stand.

The boundary is a virtual boundary, determined by GPS, geo-fence.

And the prescription is designation by prescription that didn't require paint.

So, we can get there.

And we feel, particularly for units that don't have a lot of high value, it's important to get the stand treated.

This is the desired outcome.

It may be more important than exactly what tree is removed.

So, we're headed there, and I know, in Region 2 here, it's been a -- The outcome is more important, sometimes, than the output for some of these stands here that are in the interface.

The other one is timber-sale accounting.

This includes sale-administration scaling and financial accountability.

We want to increase flexibility and efficiency in our financial system, our accountability standards in timber-management policies and procedures by determining which ones can be eliminated, changed or streamlined.

With that, there's a concern that -- it was kind of a thread that crossed all the solution teams -- is, "How do we treat low-value material?" And just to let you know, we don't have a good definition for low-value material." We tried to define it five years ago, and what's low value in one region could be high value in another or vice versa.

But there is how we account for it, how we measure it, how we appraise it came out as a concern.

Can we do those quicker and be more efficient than that?

I will mention that we do have a new forest-products financial system that just started up mid-August.

And things that came out -- one example was monthly reconciliation reports that our district folks had to do.

"Why do we have to do those?

Oftentimes, they're not correct anyways." And they would have to do a factor to adjust it.

And I'm not totally familiar with all the benefits, but that looks like a good area that we're currently offering some streamlining in.

In the area of appraisals, I mentioned that, sometimes, it took three days to do it.

We were operating with the transactional-evidence appraisal system.

That system works very well when you have a lot of sales.

It works not so well if you have very few sales, because it's based on a statistical population.

So, our group met last July to look at streamlining that and come up with a simple spreadsheet approach.

And so we're testing that.

We've also done some other -- a general technical report at the national level to look at a market-based appraisal system.

It's being tested in Salmon-Challis.

And then the simpler approach, with the spreadsheet, will be tested, too.

In contracting and permitting, we want to examine our policies and procedures for timber-sale contracting in non-commercial forest products, determine if any can be eliminated, changed, or streamlined.

As I mentioned, we do have people that have not bid on our contracts.

I think that example came from -- It's called our IRSCs, Integrated Resource Stewardship Contracts.

That's more of a procurement contract.

And, truthfully, the IRTCs and IRSCs -- those are both our stewardship contracts.

Those have been the interim contracts ever since they were started.

So there's certainly an opportunity to streamline those.

As for our other contracts, our provision numbering -- it could be the same thing you do in the landscape, but it would have a different provision number.

Can we streamline that?

And I have to mention another story.

I got Mark Borgen sitting behind me here.

We met with him -- I met with him in the past year.

He handed me a two-page contract from the state of Colorado.

"Here, why can't you guys do something like that?" And, Mark, we are considering that idea.

So, anyway, it's there.

And that team -- we're just getting under way right now and have -- We think some of those things we can fix pretty quickly.

But if any of you have worked with the contracting, you usually have to go through our attorneys and OGC.

It will take a little more time to fix that.

So, that takes us to director recommendations, so back to you, Dave.

And I'm gonna go on mute.

>> Well, thanks, Dave, for going through that and all the programs and projects you've been working on here and how we came up with the solutions, the tasks that we were going to work on.

As Dave mentioned, we went through and sifted through and combined the recommendations from the Solution Team and came up with some ideas for the director to go forward, to work from.

So, after all that was compiled, Allen Rowley, the director of Forest Management at the time, came up with a set of recommendations, where he wanted us to focus on next.

I'll just go through the list here, give a brief update on where we're at on it and what we're trying to accomplish.

New tools.

Gonna continue the training on new tools, authorities, and methods.

This is getting out as much training as we can to the field.

It's not only just training of individuals to do their jobs better, but the new tools, like "D" by "P," as mentioned, new authorities, some of the things with GNA or categorical exclusions, and methodologies that we've come up with from the modernization effort, things that we've identified.

We need to continue the training of our employees on these things so everybody is aware of what is available for use out there.

And we don't need to keep doing things the same old way, in some cases, where these new tools and authorities will allow us to do things a little easier.

The second one is develop a sale-administration position descriptions and standardize them nationally.

This is an effort to try and make it so that the different levels of the sale-administration positions are on an equal basis across the country and that the qualifications to move from step to step are aligned.

We know there's regional differences.

We're building that into this.

But we're trying to make sure that we're developing position descriptions that best fit the needs out there.

We'll improve strategies for recruitment and retention of employees to meet staffing demands.

You know, as I mentioned earlier, the demand that we're facing for certified contracting officers.

We need to develop these strategies along the lines of the academies of recruiting people into these programs, and then give them a clear vision of how to get through the process of getting trained and certified.

This will help people realize that if they set a career goal, that there's ways that they can actually move through that process.

Hopefully, with that, those type of things, we'll increase retention of our employees.

We don't want to keep losing people to outside agencies or private corporations.

We need as many people as we can within the agency.

Improve strategies for recruit...

I just mentioned that one.

Number 4 is continue staff work on certifications and determine return on investment on changes, as we look at the certification process that we have in place with our employees.

Take, for example, to become the certified cruiser.

Let's look at how that process is in place, and are there things that we can do to improve the time and the investment that goes into having those people certified?

Number 5 is form a TIM Team.

This is the Timber Information Management system.

We need to develop a team to develop new business requirements so we can modernize that application.

As Dave mentioned, it's 18 years old.

It worked well in the days of Big Timber, but it may need some modernization as we look at doing things differently in our restoration activities.

Number 6 is continue application of new technologies and infrastructure support needed.

We don't want to just buy new technology and have it become a doorstop out in the field.

That we continue to develop applications that can be used on these technologies and try to make the job more efficient out there.

New technologies, using digital-type equipment for virtual boundaries.

Whatever it is.

Make sure that we continue going forward with those applications and technologies and develop the support infrastructure behind it so that people can have a way to get help when needed.

We're looking at developing a national team to streamline and simplify the contracting process.

We've heard some feedback that our contracting process is so complicated, some people won't even bid on National Forest timber.

Figure out the reasons and try to simplify, if we can, where we can, and streamline that process so that we can best meet the needs of both the Forest Service, in putting out these projects, as well as the purchasers.

We want to make sure that we're developing contracts that work with the new types of activities going on out there, where we're mixing in non-commercial or low-value products into the mix.

Are there things that we can do to help make that much more efficient?

We're looking at -- Already engaged an Appraisal Team and looking at simplifying the appraisal process.

We're working to continue to test the new base-price system that's being piloted out in Region 4 there, as an example.

So, we're looking at short term and long term.

Some of the short-term needs is just making sure people understand there's more ways to do an appraisal than just using the same system over and over again that they're used to.

We're looking at developing a national team to look into the new forest-products financial system, the FPFS system that will do all the financial accounting for the timber sales.

As that's been rolled out in the past few months, we need to continue looking at how we can tap its potential.

Looking at more desk guides, task books.

We're looking at an academy for the resource assistance that are walled with the FPFS system, that they get the training they need so that they can utilize the system to its full potential.

The last one on the list is "define low value." There's a lot of things tied to this.

And when we talk about low value, we're talking about integrating, you know, commercial/non-commercial or products that have very little value with other products.

So, we're looking at developing new processes or policies on how to identify these types of project, how best to manage them, and how to dispose of the low-value material so we can meet our land-management objectives.

Okay.

That brings us to questions about the presentation.

>> Yeah.

Thanks, Dave.

This is Ben with the National Forest Foundation.

I can take over from here.

Thanks to Dave Wilson and to Dave Cawrse for those presentations.

Now we just want to take about 10 minutes to answer any mainly clarifying questions people have on what you just heard.

You can use the chat box to enter a question, and I can relay it to Dave Cawrse and Dave Wilson, or you can use the hand-raise function on the top toolbar and ask -- and then you'll be queued up.

And I can call on you, and you can ask your question that way.

I just want to mention that some folks are just joining us from Pinetop, Arizona.

Sorry for the miscommunication, folks, on start time there, on Arizona time.

But thank you so much for joining us here today.

And, so, let's go ahead and take about 10 minutes to go through some questions that people have.

And, as a reminder, we'll use these 10 minutes, then go for a 10-minute break, stretch our legs, and then come back, and we'll get into the meat of the feedback and discussion.

I see a few people typing.

Especially for on-site locations, if you have questions there in the room, it might be best to just use that hand-raise function, and I will call on that on-site location.

And we will get you unmuted and get your question to the group.

Okay.

I see a question coming in from Buck Sanchez.

"What is the time frame for re-evaluation of low-value material?" I think that probably goes to you, Dave Cawrse.

Dave, I think we might have you on mute.

There we go.

Hello?

>> I can take this.

>> Okay.

>> This is Dave Wilson.

We're working on that right now.

We have a small team that are evaluating the definition and where we want to go with the policies on it.

So once we have a clear idea what we're talking about, we can then, you know, integrate that into all our other policies, as well.

So, the team has already been meeting and putting things together.

And I would assume, in the near future here, we would have an idea of what our definition is and how we're going to implement and then get that out to everybody.

This will be a big topic of discussion, I'm sure.

So it's not just gonna be, "Oh, here it is, folks.

Let's move forward." It will be opened up for discussion at that time.

>> Okay.

Great.

>> This is Dave Cawrse.

So, yeah, just to -- So, the timeline would be, I would hope, in the next couple months.

Those of you who know Dick Fitzgerald in our Washington office, he's the one heading up the Low-Value Team.

And so we need to check in with him.

They have had a couple meetings.

And, again, when you look, say March/April, they have a comprehensive strategy in place.

We want to have some of these contracts, Low-Value Team, some of these things, the short-term actions, develop before then, and then longer-term actions identified here by January/February.

Thanks.

>> Thank you both.

I think next in the queue is Region 3, the Albuquerque site.

Go ahead, Region 3.

We might have you on mute still.

There we go.

>> Okay.

The question's coming.

Hold just a sec, please.

>> Okay.

>> This is Scott Lerich from the National Wild Turkey Federation.

I was curious if the new strategy will include the ability to facilitate change in the future when new technology and ideas present themselves so this long process may not have to be repeated.

>> The answer would be "yes." Go ahead, Dave.

>> So, yeah, just some thoughts on that.

So, I know we talk about a modernization, have a comprehensive strategy next March.

But, truthfully, some of the discussion with our Core Team and our Guiding Team is more along the continuous-improvement process.

So, how can we keep folks, you know, state of the art and, you know, keep abreast of some of the innovative technologies coming on.

So, I mean, we don't have a good answer to that.

We've talked about better alignment with the Society of American Foresters to have continuing forester-education credits, more encouragement to, you know, be state of the art.

I'll just cite a small example.

At the SAF conference last week, I was walking around, and Forestry Suppliers has drones for sale for \$800.

And, so, in our agency, we don't even have permission to even purchase them yet.

And we're about a decade behind other agencies.

So we know there's a lot of emerging technologies out there.

We need to have a framework in place to be a little more nimble and flexible on adapting to these new technologies.

I mean, it's a great question.

I don't have a great answer for that.

But we do -- It's not a one-time thing, you stop, and then you fall behind again.

We do want to be dynamic.

And I think, even in our elevator speech, we talked the word -- The words were "nimble" and "flexible" and "agile" in doing this.

>> Okay, great.

I see Debbie McLaughlin, there in Pinetop, has her hand raised.

R-3, if you don't have any more questions, would you mind lowering your hand there, digitally.

And I see one of our hosts, I believe, is expanding the chat box.

So I'm just gonna restore that and just encourage everybody at the on-site locations, if you can't read the chat box, if it's too small, please, you can click on the toolbar up in the upper right of the chat box and you can change the text size.

I'm gonna try that now.

I don't think it's gonna change it for everybody, but I'll try that now just on my end.

Okay, Debbie.

>> Okay, we've got two folks here in the room that have a question.

Is it okay to do both?

>> Yes, please.

>> Sure.

>> Okay.

All right.

Introduce yourself and your question.

>> Okay.

I'm Jerry Smith with Forest Energy in Show Low.

And, of course, we got the wrong time.

We missed 3/4 of the presentation, so I don't know what you've been talking about.

But we did catch the last part, about low value.

That caught my eye.

In our area, you know, our timber sales are set up like everybody else's, I guess.

They use WWPA figures and a lot of other things that we don't even really participate in.

The last 15, 20 years, most of our lumber has gone to Mexico.

But you don't have to deal with these high-priced timber sales, and if you noticed probably the last 5, 6 sales haven't even been bid on because we can't afford it.

So then we have to go in and buy it at minimum.

My company makes pellets.

And pellets aren't near worth what lumber is, and, yet, we have to compete on the market to get wood.

We don't have enough waste material to make pellets, so we have to go buy timber and make pellets out of logs, like sawmills makes lumber.

But, at any rate, it's hard to compete in the market when you're having to pay these prices for timber sales, and we just can't afford to buy them.

And some of the sawmills can't, either.

So that low-value thing you had there -- that hits us right on top of the head.

So I don't know what you do about it.

We've got one timber sale we haven't even opened up this year because we can't afford to pay the price.

And these escalating timber sales that we have -- For instance, we bought one that we paid -- I don't know -- \$25 on.

And, so, the first quarter, they said, "Well, you've got to pay the maximum." So we had to pay \$49 or whatever it was the first quarter.

I mean, all these things industry can't handle.

They're also putting big road packages on these sales.

We can't handle those, either.

I know one sale was \$100,000 road package.

You just hand them the money for, supposedly, roadwork that's been done.

But our little industry here in Arizona just doesn't make enough to pay for all these things.

I'll tell you what we need here is another White Mountain Stewardship Project.

I worked on that for 10 years.

And we were successful.

Everybody made money.

Unfortunately, there were some mistakes made, and there's still problems with that.

Anyway, that's what I got to say.

I don't know.

I guess other people have things, so I'll get off.

Thank you.

>> Thank you, sir.

Could I have you -- I might have missed it, but could you introduce yourself?

>> Yes, I did.

I'm Jerry Smith.

>> Thank you, Jerry.

>> And I'm with Forest Energy in Show Low.

>> Thank you, Jerry.

>> This is Dave Wilson here in the Washington office.

First of all, if you want to hear the first half of the show, we're going to be doing it again tomorrow.

We can get you the information, if you want to join in with the Eastern Region.

>> It will also be recorded.

>> It's also recorded and available afterwards.

So if there's something we can do to help bring you up -- introduce all this to you, let us know.

Dick Fitzgerald, I.E.

"Fitz," just wandered into the room here.

And I think you've got a couple things to say on low value.

So, we'll see if this will answer your questions or provide you with some idea of where we're going with it.

>> Yeah, Jerry, I've been listening in, but I wasn't on the phone session.

Dave Cawrse, you know, explained a little bit about where we are with the group.

We're taking a look at this low-cost value.

I might mention that, at the moment, a couple of folks we're working with -- they're taking a look at the type of materials you're talking about.

And one of the discussions we've been having, we're trying to break that out separately from the other materials, such as not being sold as logs, at the log values tied to the end-of-season things you were talking about.

So we recognize that problem.

That's also not only for pellets, but it's decreasing the opportunities to remove other small-diameter material that could be used for some product that doesn't have the same values.

And, as we found out and as you probably know, some of this material has different values, depending which market you're in around the country.

The other thing is we are having some discussions on roads with a few people.

There are opportunities for small businesses to be able to use an option, under the National Forest Management Act, to have the government build the roads.

Although the industry has to pay for it, the value is taken away, like it is with any other sale.

But for the material you're talking about, if that was a package of only that material, some of those road costs are prohibited to be able to remove that material, and we recognize that.

So we're also trying to address that and provide people with some suggestions on how to take a look at that alternatively.

Hopefully that helps you a little bit.

>> Thanks, Fitz.

>> Thanks for joining.

Yeah, thanks, Fitz.

Okay.

Moving on in these questions here.

I see -- Oh, Debbie, you had another question there in Pinetop.

Why don't you go ahead.

>> Yeah, one other question.

Thank you.

>> Good morning.

This is Jay Smith with Coconino County.

Kind of piggybacking on that, what I was wondering was -- if this becomes a national policy, will there be enough flexibility to look at regions as we look at these low-value products?

Just like Mr. Smith said earlier, you know, we're at a different market, in the Southwest, and if we don't have the flexibility to make those adjustments at a regional level, then I think we're gonna be right back in the same position.

So, just kind of a question/recommendation that we make sure we can be flexible enough to adjust those low values by region.

Thank you.

>> That was part of the plan is to -- Like everything else we're doing here, we're trying to minimize the national scope of things and leave more things to the regions.

So that would be an example of that.

So yep.

>> Yeah.

Another way to phrase that is to try and suggest the people who take a look at local markets, 'cause they are different.

The market that you have there is different than the market over in 4FRI.

>> This is Dave Cawrse.

And just to follow up on national direction, Dave also mentioned that letter from the chief.

We did that last February.

That was letter by direction.

That's good for one year.

It will give an opportunity for us to update our manuals and handbooks.

But when we do update our manuals, at a national level, we're trying to do it with enough flexibility for the regions to streamline and do the things they need to do.

An example of that designation by prescription.

We did have to write a national policy.

There was interim direction in place for a couple years, and now we're finalizing it.

But, basically, it says -- You know, it defines designation by prescription, but then it looks to the region to define the framework and type of prescriptions that they want to use for designation by prescription.

Same thing for our sampling there.

We changed our sampling there, for scaled sales, to 30% for all sales.

But if a region wants to be more restrictive, they can.

An example would be Region 6 doing helicopter-scaled sales as going to 20% because you need a more accurate estimate because of the type of equipment being used, and the purchasers need that.

So, the approach is -- national direction will be written at the -- You know, what would be the minimum to do with a little more flexibility allowed to the regions?

>> Great.

Thank you, Dave.

Okay.

Moving along, I see Lewis.

I think the next question was from Lewis Mendive here in the chat box.

And Lewis asked, "Will the low-value determination be a region-specific decision?" And my understanding is -- that question has just been addressed.

Lewis, let me know if I didn't get to it, or, Dave or Fitz -- Dave, if you guys want to chime in on that?

Okay.

Go ahead, Dave.

>> Just to wrap up.

I think more to come on that as we keep pushing forward on it.

>> Excellent.

Thank you.

Next question, from Dennis Murphy.

Thanks, Dennis.

"Potential efficiency between EADM and FPM.

Appraisals depend on volume and value estimates.

Are any forests managing vegetation inventories at a resolution sufficient for use both in NEPA analysis of landscape-scale restoration projects and timber-sale appraisals for a contract that will implement actions within that landscape?"

>> Well, this is Dave Wilson.

My answer is "yes." A good example would be Region 1 does that type of inventory.

>> But it's an idea of some of the efficiencies we're looking at between EADM and Forest Products Modernization.

A lot of the initial project planning and decision-making needs to be done, integrated between timber-sale projects and other assessments that have to be done.

>> Okay.

All right.

Thanks for that question, Dennis.

Moving on.

Ben Wuttke asked, "With the final strategy expected early next year, what is the expected timeline for completing handbook and manual revisions out of that strategy?" Oops.

"And will those revisions be national, regional, or both?"

>> Again, this is Dave Wilson.

To answer that one, we're working on these.

We have divvied them up into three batches, with the first batch about to be submitted to the regulatory management group that manages them.

We're looking at doing over the next few months, of getting in as many changes as we've identified now and then having a mechanism for, I believe, regular updates to the handbooks as new things happen.

So, again, not only are we modernizing the forest-product-delivery systems, but we're looking at modernizing the way that we work on getting manual revisions out.

So we've kept up to date as quickly as possible.

>> Okay, great.

>> Great.

>> And this is Dave Cawrse.

Just to add on, they are national.

We're not gonna be doing regional revisions, at least with the different batches we're working on right now.

At least we're gonna get the national changes in place for handbook and manuals.

>> Okay.

So, I see some more questions rolling in here on the chat box.

I'm gonna get to Region 2 here for some questions in the room that they've had for a while, and then I think we're gonna need to go ahead and take our 10-minute break.

And then I'll come back, and we'll get to the questions from Eric after that.

So, Bill, go ahead, in Region 2.

>> Hello.

This is Mark Morgan.

And I see that your number-1 priority, according to your presentation, on a national basis, is recruitment and training and retention of employees.

And you also want to make a lot of changes.

And I guess my question is -- out of Washington, is there an atmosphere there where people can be aggressive?

Are you accepting of failure?

Because not all things are gonna be successful.

And when you try to make a lot of changes, you're gonna have to have some failures.

The industry is going to have to accept that.

And your agency is gonna have to accept that.

In the past, I spoke to a lot of your people, and they were reluctant to propose things because they felt that their careers were at risk to do so or to make some radical changes.

So when these changes that you're gonna propose and these new changes that you're looking for, is there an attitude, out of the Washington office, that you will accept an atmosphere where you're gonna have occasional failures, you can learn from it, and move ahead?

>> Well, this is Dave Wilson.

And I'll -- Yes.

I mean, there's definitely the atmosphere now.

It was starting with Deputy Chief Weldon at the time and continues to this day, as new leadership changes, that we are willing to look at doing things differently.

We have to look at things different.

Our agency is not the way it was built 30 years ago, 40 years ago.

So, we have to look at staying contemporary.

And if people have ideas and we vet the idea and, you know, make sure that there's parameters in place, I guess.

It's not everything-goes type of attitude, but it's, "Let's study it, to a point, and then we're gonna try it if it does look like it's feasible."

>> Yeah, this is Fitz again.

I would note that, you know, the chief was sworn in this morning by the secretary, and I think he's re-emphasized that.

I think you have to take into consideration that there will be failures, but that we have to recognize what is legal, to start in with, and that we recognize that we need to learn from failures and we need to learn from past failures, overall, and not just to try something because we don't like what is going on at this precise point in time.

>> This is Dave Cawrse.

And just to follow up on the amount of risk our employees can take.

Just a real simple example here.

I was talking to a sale administrator in Region 2, and we were talking about designation by prescription, you know, everything that's gonna be taken off.

It's gonna be weight-scaled, and so what if there's an extra tree cut?

She goes, "I still have to report that to law enforcement, even if it's a tree that's cut that wasn't supposed to be cut." And I said, "Well, if you're still meeting stand conditions --" She said, "It's the way I've been trained.

It's part of my position description.

And I don't have the authority to do otherwise, and there's no contract provisions for that." So, things like that, I don't know if we can ask our employees to take a risk.

And you're absolutely right, Mark.

Until we can get the framework in place, the regulations in place, people are very careful how they're gonna implement and take any risks.

So, it's something we need to recognize.

There are other things, though, we've seen, and I'll go back to the cruising.

It's taken a while to get technology -- You know, the group we're with, you know, the Forest Measurements group there in Fort Collins.

It's taken a while to get handheld data recorders and that new technology in place.

And we have had the green light to do that.

And, sometimes, it's just, "Well, this is the way we've always done that." So, in that area, I feel we can make improvements and move forward.

But in other areas where there's a framework of laws on it, we do have to get those changed for our folks to take those risks.

>> Okay.

Bill, did you have other questions there in Region 2, before we take our break?

>> The other one was on those down there in the southeast corner of what we're looking at here, those FPM issue summary files, all of those.

We've got a request that folks want to see them.

They're on the public website?

>> Yeah.

>> Yeah.

We'll talk about that in a bit, but those are on -- The ones that are ready for release are on the public website for sharing.

>> Okay.

>> So, we'll talk about that after a bit.

Debbie, correct me if I'm wrong.

Those will be available off that site.

>> Yeah.

And those are all on the National Forest Foundation Forest Products Modernization partner feedback session website.

And I'll add that web link into the chat box here shortly.

Okay.

So, was that it from R-2 there, Bill?

>> Yes.

Thank you.

>> Okay.

Great.

And thanks for the questions in the chat box there.

Eric and David, we'll get to those just right after the break.

Those are great questions.

We'll launch off with that.

So, I've got 11:39 here on Mountain Time.

So, let's return at -- Well, 11:40.

Let's return at 11:50.

So 10 minutes till the hour.

Go ahead and put your phones on mute, and we'll reconvene at 10 minutes till the hour.

Okay, folks.

Let's go ahead and rejoin the call, wrap the break up here, and we'll move into catching up on a couple questions from the previous questions.

And then we'll move into this feedback-and-discussion section and address these four questions you see up here on the screen.

So, the next question on our list here was from -- or in the chat box -- was from David Neu.

David asked, "The financial sustainability of America's wood-products industry relies on maximizing net returns per acre harvested.

Is the USFS committed to providing the resource characterization and a geographic resolution to make this possible?" Dave Cawrse or Dave Wilson, if you've rejoined, if you could address David Neu's question there.

>> Yeah.

This is Dave Cawrse.

I'm reading it.

Dave Wilson, you're welcome to go first to answer that one.

>> My first thoughts on reading that is that, yes, we realize that the wood-products industry needs to maximize their returns from the harvest.

And one way we can outdo that is to minimize our costs that are associate with putting the sales up.

And the best way to do that is to be as efficient as possible, try to remove barriers that are in the way that don't need to be there to get the wood out as cost-effective as possible.

I hope that answers the second part of the question here.

>> Great.

Thank you both.

>> Yeah, so, I'm still digesting the question a little bit.

"The financial sustainability of America's wood-products industry lies on maximizing net returns." I'm gonna switch that around a little bit.

I'd say the sustainability, not necessarily the financial sustainability, of America's forests.

Because we have a restoration objective of 80 million acres, that relies on maximizing net returns, too.

So the sustainability of our forests.

And when the chief -- I heard the chief talk Saturday at Society of American Foresters.

And we've got to be able to have the markets available so that we're not paying -- And I'm sitting here in Region 2, on the front range, where we're paying \$2,000 per acre to have acres treated, to meet the resiliency and sustainability we need in a fire regime that, you know, to be where we are for all of that is here along the front range, with water and recreation being very important there.

So, yeah, we're looking at -- We're committed to that resource characterization.

We're looking at ways that we can get a better return.

The chief said, "We can't depend on taxpayer dollars paying these out."

We have to be able to, you know, turn a profit or at least break even in order to restore America's forests." So she was making that point.

Thanks.

>> Okay.

Thank you, guys.

And I need to back up here to Eric Jacoby's question here, back to the low-value subject.

Eric asks, "Can I invoke B6.4, 'gross economic impracticability,' when the Forest Service makes me send unsalable-but-meets-contract clause AQ logs to our lumber mill or will this issue be rectified in the new process?"

>> I don't know if Carl Moss is on to help answer that question, but we can take that thought and go forward with it, see if we can get you an answer.

>> Well, we'll see if we can get you an answer on that one.

You know, we're not sure of where to start on that one.

Okay?

Great.

And then I think David Neu had another question, and then we'll move to R-3.

I see R-3 has their hand up.

David asked, "The financial sustainability --" Oh, no, wait.

We already went through that one.

So, yeah, Missoula on-site had the following question.

"Following up on comments from Dennis Murphy, on vegetation inventories and timber-sale appraisals.

Yes, Region 1 does have comprehensive inventory process, but it is not a resolution that can be used for appraisals." Okay.

Thanks for that feedback.

>> Thanks for clarifying that.

>> And let's move to our R-3.

I see you've got your hand up, R-3?

>> Yep.

Go ahead, Scott.

>> This is Scott Lerich again with the National Wild Turkey Federation.

And I have a question about appraisals, in the form of the product of our projects, at least in Region 3, are often the improved forest conditions and improved watersheds and not the trees.

How will appraisals work in these areas where the trees basically have no value at all or at least much less value than the time, equipment, and fuel required to haul the material out of the forest?

>> Dave, you want to answer that?

Or I could -- This same idea came up -- It came up on our solution teams.

Should we appraise for the value, you know, say, of watershed improvement or the resiliency to fire?

That may be more valuable than the actual product.

And, so, we recognize that.

You know, Congressionally, we have to look at the product that's there, but we are kicking around the idea of, like, an end-value approach.

And I would say that's a little bit that's being used here in the state of Colorado, where they're selling timber by the acre.

And it's not really a concern what the volume is, because they're after an end result of that acre on the ground.

So, good comment, and we'll take that under advisement.

>> Okay.

And I just realized I skipped over another question from David Neu.

So, let me just give you guys this one, and then we'll move on to these questions you see up here on the screen.

David asked, "Has this initiative considered completing an on-the-ground study tour of large forests, TIMO, forest inventory, forest marketing, and forest timber-sale administration?" Any thoughts there?

>> Yeah, I'm pausing.

We are undertaking a timber-marketing study.

We just funded that this past year.

I'm not sure that answers that question, though.

This is Dave Cawrse.

>> And my response would be -- we may not have considered something like that, but if there is a potential of putting something like that together that, you know, folks could benefit from, maybe we need to look into that.

That's one reason why we have everybody on the phone today is to come up with these types of ideas of things we can do to help our effort out.

So, I'd like to explore that some more.

>> Excellent.

>> Ben, this is Dave Cawrse again.

So, that one above it, on that invoke the B6.4 gross economic impracticability, we haven't answered that one.

Is there a way for us to record questions that we can circle back and get a good answer to some of these?

>> Yes.

>> Okay, Eric or to the group --

>> We'll capture that, yep.

>> Okay.

>> Okay.

Let's see.

Moving on to -- Let's see.

R-3, I see you still have your hand up.

Do you have another question?

>> No.

I'm lowering my hand.

>> Okay.

Thanks.

I know it's kind of a confusing process there.

Let's see.

Moving on to these feedback-and-discussion questions that I have here to generate some feedback for the Forest Service on this Forest Products Modernization change effort.

Let's start with the first one here.

How do the priorities that have been shared here today resonate with you?

You who are joining us.

And I want to encourage folks who are joining us remotely to -- You can raise your hand to ask questions, and I'll call on you in order which your hands are raised.

Or enter your question in the chat box, as we've been doing.

Again, same for the on-site locations.

So, how do the priorities that have been shared here today resonate with you?

And I'm just gonna flip back through the screen here to get back to these earlier priorities, just so we have them, that Dave Cawrse detailed.

Right there.

Okay.

I see R-3 with their hand up.

Thanks, R-3.

Go ahead.

>> Hello.

This is Matt Allen with Mt.

Taylor Manufacturing.

I want to kind of go back to the -- I'm not responding to your question exactly, but I'd like to go back to the question that Scott Lerich asked, in looking at the value of what we're doing in saving habitat and watersheds, et cetera, et cetera, making the forest more resilient.

It would seem to me that it would behoove the feds to, as well, look at the -- And, perchance, through the insurance industries, you could find the data that you need for this.

But the risk that catastrophic wildfires pose to firefighters.

And there's data out there, I know, on what it costs the government when a firefighter dies, et cetera.

And that also, when we're looking at the outcomes of what we're doing, should be taken into consideration.

If you end up looking at it from the end value of not what we're harvesting, not what we're sawmilling, but, rather, the end value to our forests, our state, and to federal land, saving or potentially even saving firefighters's lives.

There ought to be a way to put a number to it, a monetary value, and add that to that equation, as well.

>> Okay, great.

Thanks for that comment.

Go ahead.

>> Yeah, this is Dave Cawrse.

Yeah, thanks for that comment.

That's a good -- Risk to firefighters.

That's a great comment.

The other one we've heard about is avoided suppression costs, if we have a treated stand, and that was another way to measure a benefit, too.

>> Okay.

I see a question here from the folks joining us in Ogden, Utah.

An idea came up out of their site of putting up GPS locations on the sale prospectus in order for purchasers to look at Google Earth for a quick review of access and to assess expenses.

Has that been thought about?

>> Dave, do you want to handle that one?

>> I know what we can look part of, if it's not part of the prospectus now.

I know that we're looking at ways of having, you know, the information all digital so that we can share with the purchasers the digital boundaries, the digital contracting specs, and so forth.

So, that's another idea -- if we don't have it, it's something easy to add.

It's one of those easy ones.

>> Yeah, this is Dave Cawrse.

I'm sorry, Dave.

Go ahead.

>> No, I was just saying that if it's not in the process now, we can easily add it.

>> Yeah, so, I'm working with the Contracts group.

That's a great idea.

I'll pass it on.

We've had requests for color maps, for the maps to be able to go on tablets.

And, right now, you know, we make paper copies.

We send it out.

There's a lot of ways to modernize that.

I'll include that idea.

Thanks so much.

>> Great.

Great.

Yeah, thanks for that, Intermountain Region.

Okay.

Up next, we'll go to Region 2.

Bill, go ahead.

>> Hi.

This is Patrick Gayner with Markit! Forestry.

And, you know, I like hearing, "We want to increase pace and scale of the work we're doing, the contracting work." And I look at one of the main goals up here, what the Forest Service is examining -- personnel, recruitment, staffing, and training.

And that takes time and money.

And you've got private industry that's capable and willing to take on more work, more work from whether it be NEPA to project layout.

There's a lot more things we can be doing in the forest for Forest Service.

And I'd like to know what the Forest Service is doing, how they're looking at increasing the work with project preparation.

And I'll just take it to, say, the Colville A to Z Project.

And is there more of that planned by Forest Service?

Thank you.

>> This is Dave Wilson to respond to that.

Not only do we want to look at how many Forest Service forestry techs, Forest Service employees we have on the ground preparing these projects, we also have to look at the support staff within the agency.

A good example is the contracting folks, the AQM folks, that can help set up IDIQs for allowing us to have quicker access to outside consultants that can come in and help us do projects.

We're looking at expanding the GNA authorities that we have, utilizing our ability to work with states to come in and assist with the projects.

So, we're exploring all avenues to try and expand the capability of the Forest Service by using anybody external, if we can.

So there's -- It's not just looking at, you know, the presale- and the sale-administration staff.

It's looking agency-wide as to we need an H.R.

staff.

We need more H.R.

folks to help bring people on.

So it's a larger effort than just our staff itself.

>> Okay, great.

Thanks for that.

And, so, Bill, yeah, I see you have another question from Mark Morgan.

>> Here you go.

>> Hello.

This is Mark Morgan.

Timber-harvesting costs, right now, are approaching almost 50% for transportation, and we're transporting them on a forest road network that was built primarily to accomplish timber harvesting.

And we're now sharing that with a huge recreational component.

Is there any way to capture or find additional funding?

Because your roads are falling apart, and it's really increasing your cost of harvesting your timber sales and making them uneconomical.

And need to come up with -- Is there any way to come up with a funding source to repair or improve these roads?

Thank you.

>> One thing we're doing here at the Washington level is trying to become more integrated with the other programs.

A good example is the roads-and-engineering staff so that they can -- If they work with us, then it peers off to the regions in the forest where the road folks are understanding forests, timber productions, what kind of roads we need for that, and vice versa.

So looking at ways that we can be more integrated and work from that, ways to share some of the, you know, receipts that come in.

There's ways that we can do work outside the sale-area boundaries, for example, that can influence the road system.

So, there's a lot of opportunities now that we haven't had in the past.

Another good example would be the GNA.

We can work with states to manage the roads.

So if our road is connected, somehow, with the state roads, we can work with the states to manage that and then spread some of the work around.

So, we're looking at all opportunities of better integrated.

We know that we have a long ways to go, and there's a big backlog on road maintenance.

So we'll just keep chipping away at it.

>> Okay.

Great.

So, got a couple more questions here.

And, right now, we're kind of working on this idea of what do the priorities that have been shared here today -- how do they resonate with you?

But we're kind of on some other topics here, but I think they're great topics.

So if it's okay with you-all, we'll just keep cruising on these questions here.

So, another question from David Neu.

David asked -- or states, "Ultimately, increasing wood-products manufacturing depends on reducing investment risk.

This starts with world-class resource characterization.

Resource characterization is the utilization of new LIDAR and timber-inventory processes should have a higher priority." So, thank you for that, David, and addressing that idea of priorities.

Any response there to that comment from David?

>> This is Dave Wilson again.

We're looking at ways that we can bring some of these modern technologies in.

We're using more and more LIDAR.

Gradually, forests are doing individual projects, which, you know, up to now, the word doesn't spread as to the results of those types of demonstration projects.

So we're sharing that across the agency.

And we see these technologies as part of our priority of new ways to do business and be able to reduce our costs and hopefully reduce the risk for the investors in these projects.

>> Yeah, this is Dave Cawrse.

So, yeah, I didn't mention LIDAR when I was covering technology, but we did fund a project with the University of Northern Arizona to look at volume estimates from LIDAR.

You know, LIDAR will give you the structure of a landscape and, you know, the structure of the trees, but then it's another jump to take that and get a volume estimate.

So, both Region 3 and our Washington office combined to send funding to do volume estimates, which then, you know, you would need cruising, 'cause, you know, LIDAR would

give you a whole census for the stand and hopefully could be used particularly in cases of maybe, you know, salvage logging or unsafe places.

We think LIDAR is a very promising technology in there.

So we did fund a project on that.

>> Okay.

Question coming in from the Intermountain Region, the on-site location there in Ogden, Utah.

"Is there a mechanism in place or how can we more effectively match loggers with timber buyers?" So, is there a mechanism in place for matching loggers with timber buyers or, if not, how can we do a better job of that?

>> You know, just a broad answer.

Go ahead.

>> Dave Cawrse.

I got Molly Phipps here with an idea on that, using a trade association.

>> I just recommend that a trade association helps take care of that.

That's what we do here in Colorado is match loggers and mills, and it helps fill that gap.

>> You know, and from the national office, a higher-level answer would be that I think ideas like this, we can share with some of the other deputy areas -- state and private, as an example, Woody Biomass Utilization group or the Forest Products Lab, where we can throw ideas like this out to them and let them come up with ideas or solutions to the issue.

So, it's things like this, ideas like this that we'll gather up and share with the other staff areas and find somebody that's able to take it on.

So, keep the ideas coming, and something like this, we'll make sure that the state and private gets involved.

Maybe they can help solve -- or come up with some ideas for this.

>> Great.

Next, we'll move on to the Missoula on-site location there for R-1.

Bill, there in R-2, I don't know if your hand is up, potentially, of it's still just left up.

But type a note in the box if you still have a question.

So, yeah, we'll move on to Missoula.

And then let's go ahead and move on this second question after we hear from Missoula.

"If you could do one thing to improve the Forest Service's business practices in the delivery of forest products, what would you do?" But go ahead, Missoula.

>> This is Willy Peck with Idaho Forest Group.

I want to go back to your question on your priorities.

It was mentioned earlier -- and I certainly agree -- that the markets and product utilization should be further up that list, quite a ways further up.

And the other thing -- the silviculture has a huge effect on the end product and how viable they are and just the way those folks do business out there.

We see a huge difference between districts and forests and regions with regard to silviculture and how they treat the forest out there.

So, I just think both those things should be higher on the list.

>> Great feedback there, Willy.

Thank you for that.

Okay.

Moving on to -- And just to chime in there, Willy, I think Dave Cawrse mentioned earlier we heard a similar comment to that, I think, in our September 11 national session.

So, thank you for that.

Moving on in the feedback-and-discussion questions.

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

>> We have another question here in Missoula -- or an answer, actually, to that question.

>> Okay.

Go ahead, Missoula.

>> Well, I have about 10 one things that I'd like to see done, but I'll go with one.

I guess my focus is certainly here on the Lolo National Forest.

And I would -- If we really want to increase the pace and scale, we should look at adding a minimum of two additional NEPA teams to the forest here.

And I think that should be done very, very quickly.

You guys talked about short-term fixes.

That's the quickest short-term fix that I can imagine.

>> Thanks, Willy.

>> Staffing is definitely an issue these days, and we're working hard to rebuild the workforce within the Forest Service and looking, strategically, as to, "What do we need to do that increase in pace and scale?" So that's definitely up on the list, because we have to have that decision-making process in place before we can actually do the treatments.

>> I'd like to add one thing, if I can.

I get around on a lot of forests and I hear the same story, you know, that it seems like, within the organization, it's very, very cumbersome just to hire a person, even if there's funding for it.

And I just think that that's something that should be a pretty easy fix for the agency to address.

>> Yeah.

It gets difficult when, you know, we have to abide by department policies and such and, you know, get the hiring that's out when we can.

So we're trying hard to have events like we did at the SAF, have more of those during the year, where we can bring in larger numbers of people at one time.

So we're exploring all sorts of avenues of doing that.

>> Okay.

Thanks for the comment there, Willy.

And let's move to Debbie in Pinetop.

Debbie, I think you've got a question there in your room.

And then we'll move on to these other comments coming in.

Thanks for these comments coming in on the chat box.

>> Thanks, Ben.

Yep, we've got two folks here.

Introduce yourselves.

>> Yeah, my name's Rick Holliday with Holliday Timber.

I'd kind of like to address that whenever we get bad weather or something, we're always shut down pretty quick or we've got to wait on paperwork.

We've got to wait on stuff.

If their money quit coming like our money quits coming when we get shut down, I think it would speed the whole process up.

And I just think that we need to have better relationships with what's going on, and not on government time, but on industry time.

>> Sure.

>> I hope that, you know, you can have a discussion later on this afternoon, in your face-to-face conversations, on those types of issues.

From the modernization effort, we're trying to make sure that we're doing the paperwork part, the bureaucracy part of this whole thing as efficiently as possible.

And if there are things that are causing bottlenecks in that bureaucracy part that we look at ways of making it as quick and as efficient as possible.

So, there's a lot of -- There are a lot of pieces that need to be looked at.

And, so, if you see things that we should be looking at, make sure you share them with us.

>> Thank you.

>> All right, Ben.

>> Okay.

>> Two more here -- is that all right?

>> Go ahead.

>> Go ahead, Debbie.

>> This is Jay Smith again, with Coconino County.

So, I've spoke with Leslie Weldon about this and regional folks about this, but I figure I'll be the greasy wheel and just keep talking about it.

But, you know, continuity within the Forest Service, as far as who we're dealing with, seems to be an issue, you know, between details and fires, and we never know who's coming out to jobsites.

We never know who to talk to.

Contracting officers that don't show up for, like, bid openings -- or not the openings, but the show-me dates.

We had four helicopter logging crews show up to look at a Forest Service sale with lots of questions and lots of money spent coming down here, and no contracting officer, 'cause they're on a fire.

And, you know, that's just bad business.

When they spend good money to come look at purchasing timber or at least doing the work and the questions can't be answered, it just, you know, becomes an issue.

And we've dealt with that within 4FRI.

You know, just the leadership -- it just changes all the time.

And, you know, just finding that continuity, where the industry makes us feel better, if anything, that we know who's gonna be out there, who we're gonna be talking with.

We don't have a new contracting officer representative showing up with a new idea of how we should be logging.

You know, those things always affect the cost of doing business.

So just wanted to bring that point up.

>> Okay.

That's duly noted and understood.

A lot of people are moving around these days, so...

>> Yeah, thanks for that there out of Pinetop.

Debbie, did you have another one, another comment in Pinetop?

>> Nope.

I think -- Yep.

>> Great.

>> Oh, yep.

We're all set.

Thank you.

>> Okay.

Okay, I'm gonna move on to catch up with some comments that have come in to the chat box.

And then I see that R-3 has their hand up.

We'll go to R-3 and then we'll go to Bill there in R-2.

Oh, sorry.

Thanks for the comments, Paul and Chris, in the chat box.

Let me address these, and we'll move on to R-3 and R-2.

Paul Mackenzie says, "Treat the industry and purchasers as partners and not entities looking to take advantage of the agency."

This definitely applies to the contract-administration process, where the culture of purchasers being enemies still exists." Any feedback there, Dave Cawrse?

>> Yeah.

I mean, as we got into this with the solution teams, a lot of our accountability came about from, you know, quite frankly, the timber staff that, you know, when we were audited, and so regulations were developed on that.

But we need more -- I mean, I absolutely agree with what Paul's saying.

So I hear what you're saying.

And we need to look at this as a partnership.

>> Great.

Thanks, Paul.

And then Chris Farley, regarding question 2.

Thanks, Chris.

"If I could do anything, it would be real cultural-shift framing from top down to make it easier to meet targets and, at bottom up, provide tools to the local fields to accomplish work.

Some of that is reflected in the priorities, but I still worry about a clash between what the politicians and W.O.

are pushing down versus what is realistically accomplished and should be accomplished to steward the resource in the field.

The legal and local barriers that constrain local decision-making both hurt the local accomplishment of work.

We also create societal worries about why certain actions are being taken." So, thanks for that, Chris.

Chris just responding to question 2 there -- one thing to improve the Forest Service's business practices in the delivery of forest products.

A cultural shift to deal with the top-down versus bottom-up efforts.

So, any response there from Dave Cawrse or Dave Wilson.

>> Well, the first thought that comes to mind is -- Yeah, thanks for the thoughts.

And, yeah, the system is being stretched quite a bit these days.

So, you know, we're looking at ways to look at project management and program management that may help alleviate some of this work.

We're trying to do some things that need to be re-evaluated.

So, thanks for the thought.

And, yes, that's on our mind there.

>> Okay.

Thanks, Dave.

And thanks to Chris for the comment in addressing number 2 there, question number 2.

So, let's move on to R-3.

R-3, you've had your hand up for a while, patiently waiting.

Go ahead.

>> Hi.

This is Matt Allen again.

So, we also have had our restoration efforts hung up when somebody who's critical disappears because of a fire.

And so I wanted to reiterate the other gentleman's point.

But the other thing that could be done -- and it could be done post haste to improve things -- would be to quit painting trees and train our harvesters in what I believe the term is designation by prescription and turn them loose and eliminate some of the punitive stuff, particularly at the beginning, so that if they make a mistake, they're not, you know, completely walking on eggshells trying to get it done.

But that would make a tremendous difference, and it would save Forest Service a heck of a lot of money not only in paint but in labor.

And that would be one that I think ought to be a top priority.

>> It is.

And last year -- Dave, you can probably give a specific number, but we had many designation-by-prescription training sessions put on across the country.

Many more planned for this year, where we see that as one tool, one authority that we've been given that really will help us be able to keep up with the pace and keep costs down.

So, if we need more training on those, that's one of our priorities, and we'll make sure that, where it's needed, we will be putting that training on.

>> This is Dave Cawrse.

Yeah, we absolutely agree.

You know, that \$70-per-acre cost for painting -- that's a real cost.

Designation by prescription is helpful in that.

I will mention some areas, though, for restoration.

And you're in Region 3.

I'll mention an area north of Flagstaff there.

They are implementing fairly complex prescriptions for restoration.

Probably some of you are familiar with the prescriptions that came out from our research folks.

But they're popular with the public.

You know, there are skips and gaps in the stand.

And so what Region 3 did to simplify it for purchasers -- it's called the Digital Prescription Guide, where somebody lays out on a tablet -- And they can do about 40 acres a day.

When you paint, it's only about 5 acres a day.

And get that digitized.

And then the logger has that tablet up in the cab.

And, "Okay, this is where a group or small clear-cut goes.

This is where there's a leave area." So you can get the complexity, but with the Digital Prescription Guide, it's been a lot more efficient for loggers to use that.

So, there's areas there where we are using more complex prescription.

You can still use "D" by "P" with this.

>> Great.

Okay.

Moving on.

R-3, I see you still have your hand up.

Unless you have another question, if you wouldn't mind lowering your hand.

And let's move on to R-2, Bill Yemma.

And then we'll move on to question 3 over here.

Bill?

>> We got two questions here.

The first one from Mark Morgan, and the next one from Pat Gayner.

And I will lower my hand now.

>> I think we lost you there, Mark.

There you go.

>> Okay, one thing on your number-2 one there, about the one thing that you could do.

If you could streamline your NEPA to the absolute maximum possible, once your contract C-clauses are put in there to address things that were brought up in the NEPA document or over-address them, oftentimes, and many of the times, the contracts get very cumbersome and the practices get very cumbersome to meet an excessive NEPA document to begin with.

And if you could reduce that to begin with, and then, I guess the way I'm gonna put this is -- I would die a happy man if, sometime, in one of these prep packages, one of the specialists is, "My specialty is really not needed here, and I'm not gonna contribute to this contract package." At that point, I think I'd die a happy man, because as soon as you bring it up in NEPA, then somebody feels they have to respond to it to do their job, and then it gets included in the contract.

>> Well, thanks for that, Mark.

Any responses to Mark from -- Let's start with Dave Cawrse.

>> You know, I'm thinking some of these -- There's a breakout session after this.

I'm looking at Steve Moore right now.

And some of the -- We could continue that conversation about what we can do, I would think.

So, okay, on a national level, yeah, it affects that EADM and some of the processes there, but it gets down into the local level.

>> Dave Wilson, anything you need to chime in?

>> Not really.

>> Okay.

>> I was just going to mention the EADM.

And, you know, I mean, we're working closely together on both efforts, trying to identify things that are barriers both ways.

So we understand.

>> And just to -- It sounds like this NEPA is a common thread, going back to -- I think it was a comment out of Region 2, talking about the Colville A to Z Project and just ways of innovating NEPA to make things more efficient for industry.

So, thanks for those comments.

Dave Cawrse said maybe we can follow up with this after the session and get some more dialogue going on NEPA and its role in contracting.

Okay.

And then, Bill, I think you had a question from Pat Gayner.

>> All right, it's not so much a question as more of some input from the industry on "D" by "P," because I'm hearing people suggest, "Run with the ball with 'D' by 'P.'" An "D" by "P" is a double-edged sword.

I appreciate what Dave was saying about the digital prescription.

I haven't seen that yet.

But we have a lot of experience with "D" by "P," and you have to understand that the Forest Service is passing on cost to the contractor.

So, you say \$30 for paint per acre, and \$70 to mark it.

And what I will tell you is -- with "D" by "P," for every 1/2 an acre of production that you slow me down, it's costing me, as a contractor, \$95 to \$125 an acre.

Slow me down by 2 1/2 acres per day production over a 500-acre project, and you've got a quarter-million-dollar increase in contractor costs.

Those are serious numbers.

And all I'm gonna be doing is -- I bid "D" by "P" -- is passing those costs back on to the Forest Service with higher bids.

So we need to have some balance.

And it might have been Steve who I heard say, in Denver last year, you know, we understand the issues with "D" by "P," but collapses under layers.

You know, you layer on layers of complexity, and it starts to collapse.

And that has been our experience with it.

I'd love to see the digital prescriptions for the more complex "D" by "P," but we definitely have to understand its limitations and that it is a transfer -- a potential transfer of cost to the contractor.

>> Yeah, this is Dave Cawrse.

Yeah, thanks, Pat.

And I'd like to capture those costs, 'cause up to this point, that's just an anecdotal, where a purchaser told me his time doubles in implementing "D"-by-"P" prescription.

So, those are some good figures to use, it sounds like.

And good comment.

Thanks.

And I guess, to follow up, we have been emphasizing the silvicultural prescriptions that accompany a "D" by "P" needs to have that business aspect brought in to how it's written.

Very simple marking guides, no more than 3 or 4 guides, and those are some of the things we're teaching in our class right now.

>> Dave, if I could just interrupt you over the cost.

I just mentioned --

>> Okay.

>> Pat has a follow-up.

>> Another cost I didn't mention with that is -- there is an increased cost to the Forest Service, because as that "D" by "P" gets more complex, the C.O.R.

is gonna spend more time on the project working with the contractor to make sure that prescription's getting hit right.

So what you're saving in paint and marking, you're spending that money elsewhere.

There is multiple layers of costs that are going up with it.

Thank you.

>> Yes, thank you.

Okay.

Got a couple other comments here on -- or questions in the chat box.

And then let's try and move towards question 3 here after we address these.

Question 3 on the feedback-and-discussion slide, you see there is, "What practice, process, or implementation tool from state or private timber operations would you recommend the Forest Service consider in order to achieve forest-restoration objectives?" Okay, Debbie, out of Pinetop, at the on-site location, typed in this question.

"Is Forest Service using any non-Forest Service partners to test or implement modernization efforts?

And, if so, who are the partners?" This is a question from Steve Horner at Campbell Global.

Thanks, Steve.

Dave, you want to take that one or...

>> Well, what's being tested?

I know Digital Prescription Guide was first tested on state lands and not on, you know, National Forest System lands.

And that's a nature conservancy that's been testing down there.

So, that's for Digital Prescription Guide.

There's an example there.

Virtual boundaries -- I think the industry has used those for a while now.

And this is just stories I've heard, where there's an application called TimberNavi on John Deere tractors that they'll use, and that's been in use for a while now.

That's all I can think of right now.

>> Okay.

>> And they --

>> Go ahead.

>> Dave Wilson, just to throw out there, you know, the future.

If there are projects that partners would like to do in the forest or forest work with the partners, we're willing to discuss those projects and see if we can't put something in place to give it a try.

We're getting to the point where if forest wants to try some innovative ideas, you know, we'll let them work it up and compose it and then go forward.

So partners working with the local forest or regions should be welcomed as ways to try new, innovative ideas.

Another example of partnership is -- we've talked with timber producers about our sale administrators, going on ride-alongs with their foresters to see how things are done on private lands, and vice versa.

So, everybody can learn from each other.

So, we're open to any type of ideas, projects, whatever people might have.

>> Okay.

Moving on.

Dan Buehler has a comment here on the chat box.

Dan said, "The Forest Service needs to extend just as much effort to maximize outputs and work towards finding avenues to make projects work as they do towards finding excuses to throw areas out to make projects falter.

A lot of this has to do with personnel across the agency.

A cultural shift is necessary to make this strategy move forward." Thanks for that, Dan.

I know cultural shift was part of the EADM process.

I think it comes over here, as well.

Any feedback for Dan's comment there, starting with Dave Wilson?

>> We agree that we need to be looking at our decision-making process, have better information so we're not spending time on areas that we would throw out or being able to find ways to keep as much area within a project, you know, as part of a project.

So we're heartily behind that, trying to make that decision part as efficient as possible.

So it doesn't do us any good to go out and do an analysis on an area and have it go all the way through the process to be thrown out at the end.

So if we can make decisions better up front, the more we can get done.

>> Dave Cawrse, anything to add to that?

>> I'd just add, yeah, when you talk about culture, you talk about the identity, how we see ourselves, the tone that goes with that that comes from our leadership, the framework of our regulations, and, finally, actions that individuals do.

And, right now, you know, our tone and our identity is that, you know, we're looking at sustainability of National Forest System lands and, with that, the restoration.

And so, yeah, our timber sale has been increasing, but we're trying to do that in the context of sustainability and restoration.

So we should be looking at how we include those areas in projects that are in need of restoration.

So, I guess, in short, I agree with Dan's comment.

How can we make this work so we are restoring our landscapes?

Thank you.

>> Thank you.

Okay.

And then let me get on to David Neu's comment here, and then I think we're gonna need to just about wrap this up and move on to some closing comments from Dave Wilson.

But if anybody has any last-minute feedback they want to give, in the direction of question 3 here -- "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?" -- go ahead and answer those in the chat box, and we'll get to those before we shift to Dave Wilson.

David Neu, in the chat box, said, "Increasing the pace and scale of restoration strategies is reliant on an increasing investment in wood-products manufacturing in the parts of the Western Region.

What can we in industry do to help the Forest Service staff better understand that investment recruitment is much more than simply offering timber sales?" And maybe we'll start with you, Dave Cawrse, on this one.

>> Yeah, so, the first thing -- what can industry do on investment recruitment?

I'll mention in, I believe, October, coming up here shortly -- I may have the month of, maybe, November, but you'll have National Forest Wood Products Week coming up, and along with that will be a call for innovative grants for both biomass in terms of energy and biomass in terms of utilization.

So I would encourage industry to apply for those grants.

They're about a quarter-million dollars each.

And there's gonna be several million dollars involved in that.

So, we know for us to be successful in restoration, we need to have a market.

And things like cross-laminated timbers, there's been huge advances in that and building materials, instead of using concrete and steel.

Some of the other ways we can utilize biomass is really important for us to be successful.

So, I would say, you know, look at these grants that are -- And it's not our branch.

I'm in National Forest Systems.

But state and private will be offering those grants here shortly.

So, there's one answer there.

Dave Wilson?

>> I can't really add much more to that.

That was well-said.

>> Okay.

Great.

Well, I don't see anything else coming in right now.

So, Dave Wilson, why don't we move on to your leadership remarks here.

Let me expand that window back to normal size.

There we go.

And, yeah, take it away, Dave.

>> Okay.

Well, first and foremost, I would like to say thank you for everyone that came on the call today and for sharing your ideas, your thoughts, your concerns.

We are taking these all down, and we will be looking at how to respond to them and go forward.

So, there were some new things that popped up today, much like yesterday, that we need to consider as we go forward with our projects.

And we want to make sure that this is -- Everybody understands this is not the end of the effort.

The effort is, in some ways, just beginning.

We may be a year into it, but we've got a long ways to go.

And we want to start thinking of continuous evaluation of our program and not just doing this periodically, that it's something that we need to always be looking for ways to improve the ways we do our business, especially as times change, as the needs change as we go forward.

So, on behalf of Allen and John and the rest of Forest Management staff and the Forest Service as a whole, thank you for participating today.

Just to go on and give you an idea of what our next steps are, we're going to continue the regional feedback sessions tomorrow, get that last one under our belt.

And then towards the end of October, first part of November, we're going to have employee webinars, much like this one, where we can share our processes and our vision and where we're going and get feedback from them to solicit more ideas of where we should be going and looking at.

So, November, we'll be analyzing the feedback we got from this session and the others, the national and the other two regional sessions, and the employee webinars, as well, to figure out if we need to -- and it sounds like we will -- be adjusting our paths forward as we keep marching on this effort here.

So, it's going to be busy.

From that feedback, we'll be looking, in November and December, working on preparing the comprehensive strategy for our long-term actions.

We'll be preparing it, sharing it, and continuing working on that.

I would think that that would be a live document that we'll always be looking at keeping it current and so forth.

And in 2019, well be looking at review periods as to what we're going to evaluate where we're going on our process and be sharing this information with everybody through the website or newsletters or whatnot.

So, there will be a lot more communications coming out on this effort, as well as other things going on within the Forest Service.

January through March, we'll be finalizing that strategy, making sure it's in place.

And we'll have, going March, July, and October, our anticipated policy-reform comment periods.

So we'll have more dialogues as we're going.

How can you stay engaged?

Your input is always welcome.

And on any of the materials we've shared, on any ideas that you may have, if you would like an additional session or presentation on the modernization, feel free to let us know.

You can look for the opportunities to participate in the policy-reform comments as we get our priorities up there.

The website address is there.

I believe it's been sent out some other ways, I think in the e-mail for this session.

So, there's the e-mail -- Oh, there it is now.

And if you have any comments that you wanted to send right now, send them to me, and I will make sure that we address them as we come in.

So it's gonna be a lot of e-mails coming in, I think, to my mailbox.

But other contacts.

Chris French, the acting deputy chief.

Greg Smith, who's the national policy-reform lead.

He's leading the leadership of all six of the change efforts that are going on.

Allen Rowley, who's now acting associate deputy chief.

He's open for discussion, as well.

And John Crockett, who's the acting director for Forest Management, Range Management, and Veg Ecology.

So any of those four or myself -- we're more than willing to have a discussion or further dialogue, as needed.

We can't do this by ourselves, and we're always wanting to get new input.

So feel free to let us know.

>> Thank you for those closing comments, Dave.

I put up -- Let's see.

When Dave was speaking earlier, you can follow along here on this slide.

There's the website for following the progress of Forest Products Modernization.

That's the Forest Service website.

Earlier, we had a question about where the resources that are in this file-share pod down in the lower-right corner of your screen -- where are those resources located?

You can find those on the National Forest Foundation website we put together specifically for these partner feedback sessions.

So, that's that link in the chat box there, as well.

Thanks for those comments, Dave.

We had another question come in.

And, so, let's see if we can squeeze this in real quickly before we wrap things up.

Debbie -- Or there in Pinetop, somebody asked, "Is Forest Service looking at why GNA is working?

What can Forest Service do to make contracts easier?" These are two questions from Jeff there on-site in Pinetop.

Dave Cawrse?

>> Okay.

Is Forest Service looking at why GNA is working?

There's been encouragement from the chief to do more Good Neighbor Authority.

We have at least, I think, agreements with 35 different states.

I'm not sure why all the reasons why it's working.

I think it allows us to increase capacity.

In some cases, states are more nimble than we are, and contracts are simpler to do.

But it's a good thing, probably, to look at.

The second question is on contracts.

And, so, just real quickly, we've covered a few of these ideas.

I think you saw one just come up on our sale maps.

They have those geo-reference.

Easier prospectuses that could be e-mailed out.

>> Oh.

We either got you on mute, Dave Cawrse, or --

>> Oh, shoot.

I wonder where you cut off.

>> We got you.

>> All right.

Where did I cut off?

>> You were talking about contracts.

>> Rewind me here.

>> Somebody else hit the button.

>> Oh.

Okay.

Thank God.

>> All right.

>> I got to rewind and think where I was at.

Did I cover GNA?

All right.

They were the leaders, GNA, too.

So, anyway, yeah, we should look at why it is successful.

I mentioned some states -- At my top of the column would be that some of the contracts are a little more flexible than what we have.

And the other thing -- what are we doing on contracts?

Everything from combining contracts, better numbering of provisions, to go to digital maps.

All that's being considered.

And then I mentioned stewardship.

Those have been interim contracts from the law, when it was first done.

Both IRTC and IRSC need to be looked at more closely and particularly the procurement aspects.

Our feedback is extremely complex, and people won't even bid on IRSCs.

So, those are some things that we'll be looking at.

>> Okay.

Great.

Bill, go ahead.

>> Yeah, Dave, this is Rich Edwards from the Colorado State Forest Service.

I was just asked to kind of comment on that also.

We've been doing the GNA for 20 years now, 'cause we pretty much started the pilot program back in '98.

That was kind of the birth of the Good Neighbor program.

And, you know, we've used our own contracting procedures.

Presently, I think we have 12 supplemental project agreements going on right now in the state.

And, yeah, we just have a little more -- a briefer contract format.

And we're more than willing to share that, you know, with that group, if that would help, you know, at any point.

I mean, that would be something we're more than happy to help with.

And any of our documents that we have, it might help this group.

Just let us know how we can help, 'cause, you know, we're seeing this -- Obviously, our program has probably quadrupled since we got the nationwide authority.

So, yeah, any reinforces, just let us know.

>> All right.

Thanks, Rich.

>> Okay.

So, Bill, did you have an additional question there in R-2?

>> No.

We're good.

Thank you.

>> Okay.

Great, great.

Thank you.

So, up on the screen, folks, you'll see the phone numbers for dialing in, where they exist, for these additional dialogue sessions.

I believe the sessions are scheduled to start about a half-hour from now.

I think it was R-2 -- Let me double-check.

Well, it's starting in an hour from now.

Let me see here.

>> We're gonna go at 1:00, Mountain Time, for Region 2.

So we'll hang up out of here, and then anybody in Region 2 that wants to call in, dial that 888-844-9904 number and then hit the Region 2 pass code, and we'll crank it up from here as soon as this call is over with.

>> Okay.

Just checking in with R-4.

R-4, are you scheduled to start the additional dialogue session at 1:30 Mountain Time?

>> No.

We're starting at 2:00 p.m.

>> Okay.

Okay.

For regions 1 and 3, those will be in-person dialogue sessions only.

And so you can just speak with your folks there about scheduling when those are gonna begin.

So, those are the additional dialogue sessions.

But I just wanted to thank everybody for all of their input today on the session so far.

I think we've had some great exchanges, and we'll be -- As I said earlier, we are recording this session, and we'll be able to send out a link to you of the recording of this session.

We'll also be putting together some notes and have a transcript of the session, as well.

So, yeah, thanks for all the feedback.

The Washington office will be getting that feedback and reviewing that feedback.

So, appreciate your efforts today.

Thank you for taking time out of your day to join us.

And we do have a session tomorrow.

If folks want to join that, I believe it starts at 7:00 a.m.

Mountain Time.

It's the East Coast session.

So if you missed the earlier part, like I know folks in Arizona did, you can join that session.

It's the same sign-in information as the sign-in for doing this online.

So, thank you all for joining us here today.

Appreciate your time.

And look forward to interacting with you in the future.

With that, I'll go ahead and end the meeting.

Thank you.