



Ecosystem  
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# COLLABORATION AND THE MALHEUR TEN-YEAR STEWARDSHIP CONTRACT

FACT SHEET 8 • SUMMER 2015

**F**orest collaborative groups in Oregon integrate ecological, economic, and social objectives in their missions. However, those groups often focus, in practice, on biophysical natural resource issues and have less direct experience with dialogue and data about social and economic issues. This fact sheet illustrates how collaboratives and stakeholders have engaged in innovative contracting to increase social and economic outcomes such as local jobs, business health, and community wildfire risk reduction.

## CONTEXT

In September of 2013, the US Forest Service awarded a 10-year stewardship contract for forest restoration on the Malheur National Forest (NF) in eastern Oregon. This contract was intended to promote ecological restoration, wildfire risk reduction, and economic vitality in Grant and Harney counties. This contract has received significant attention because of its duration and the anticipated local benefits. It has been supported by the work of two forest collaborative groups: Blue Mountains Forest Partners (BMFP) and Harney County Restoration Collaborative (HCRC).

## COLLABORATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS

**Sustaining supply of work:** The Malheur NF and Forest Service Region 6 chose to invest in a 10-year stewardship contract and raise timber targets in part because of the presence of the two active, mature collaborative groups working on the Malheur NF. The early work of BMFP and HCRC led to implementation and planning of several projects, creating an adequate supply of restoration service contracts and timber sales for a larger task order. Collaboratives can help create conditions for long-term stewardship contracts by coordinating with the Forest Service to identify a stream of future planning areas, which the Forest Service may build into a strategic workplan. Collaborative groups that actively seek and document their agreements help the Forest Service clearly understand collaborative priorities. Keeping the collaborative healthy

### Anatomy of the Malheur 10-year Stewardship Contract:

**Type:** Integrated Resource Service Contract (IRSC); cost of service work equal to product value of goods removed.

**Structure:** Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ). Malheur NF will offer at least one task order each year for 10 years, and allow two years for completion of each. The stewardship contract will implement at least 70% of the annual timber target and restoration work for the Malheur NF. Specific work will vary with available funding.

**Evaluation criteria:** Benefit to local community (Grant and Harney counties) significantly more important than price.

**Awarded to:** Iron Triangle, LLC, in September 2013.

through facilitation, integrity of collaborative processes, and extensive engagement/coordination with each other and the Forest Service is also important. If timber and restoration targets are increasing substantially, a collaborative group will need to be careful to address member concerns and find a scale and pace of work that fits their mission.



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### **Economic impacts to date:**

Because of the 10-year contract, the BMFP and HCRC are able to show tangible economic outcomes from their work, which can be challenging for many collaboratives. In the first year, the contract supported 101 private sector jobs in Grant County. It generated \$2.16 million in economic activity as a result of the 15.5 million board feet of timber harvested, and the \$1.5 million invested in restoration and fuels reduction contracts. A little over half of the harvested timber was processed in Grant County, and 12 businesses in eastern Oregon served as subcontractors for thinning, piling, logging, and trucking. Businesses completing the restoration work indicated the contract increased their sustainability and improved their business outlook.

### **Suggesting evaluation criteria, including definition of local:**

Prior to establishment of the contract, BMFP, with Sustainable Northwest's assistance, wrote a letter to the Forest Supervisor that articulated what it viewed as the most important evaluation criteria for the 10-year stewardship contract. They proposed that local benefit should be the primary criteria for awarding the contract, including awarding to a local contractor and delivery of material to a local mill. The BMFP also defined local in their letter as Grant and Harney counties. This was important because contracting officer's proposed definition of "local" may be broader than those of collaborative groups. Other collaboratives can follow this example by drafting input to the Forest Service regarding stewardship contracting criteria. Discussions about definitions of "local" and crucial evaluation criteria can help a group refine its economic mission and goals. The collaborative should ensure their letter is consistent with the mission and operating principles of the group, and follows its decision-making procedures. It may also wish to engage a contracting officer or other agency personnel who can help them understand contracting basics, and set realistic expectations.

**Multiparty monitoring:** BMFP and HCRC have yet to engage in extensive monitoring of the contract. Monitoring, and especially taking field trips with the contractors and recipients of products, can help a group and its agency partners learn more about the realities of implementing collaborative prescriptions. Collaborative groups may find that some of their desired approaches do not translate readily to desired outcomes, and that there is a need to learn and adapt. Groups may wish to make monitoring a deliverable in future grant proposals, and seek support for field tours and documentation of learning and rationales for new adaptive approaches.

### **COLLABORATIVE CHALLENGES: APPROPRIATE ROLES AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

Contracting engages the agency with the private sector and there are rules and regulations for this process. Collaborative groups should not expect to be privy to confidential information such as sealed bids, or final contract negotiations. Representatives of contractors/mills who participate in the collaborative may wish to share progress or other information if they have a trusting relationship with the group. Further, attitudes towards stewardship contracting may vary within the group membership. Some members may feel it is appropriate to write a letter in support of a stewardship contract, while others may feel it is a conflict of interest, given the possibility that they could benefit from it. Some stakeholders may not view a stewardship contract as a desirable action, and may not wish to support it for their own reasons. Again, skilled facilitation, good process, and transparency in collaborative actions relative to the contract will be necessary as engaging on this issue may heighten concerns, emotions, and differences between members.

### **For more information about collaboration and stewardship contracting:**

<http://ewp.uoregon.edu/economy>