Business capacity for accomplishing Forest Service work

Companies engaging in timber sales, restoration, fire management services, and biomass utilization offer key business capacity for national forest management and contribute an important economic engine in rural communities. Here we present data that show business capacity in the region, including restoration-related service contracts and timber sales.

The Forest Service and communities alike depend on timber sales: the agency depends on contractors to purchase timber sales on national forest lands, and local communities have historically benefited from those sales through mill supply and related direct and secondary jobs. The map below shows timber purchasers who have purchased timber from a national forest in Oregon or Washington from FY 2011–15. In those five years, timber sales on forests in the region went to contractors primarily within the region (comprising 97 percent of sale value).
Restoration-related service contractors are the businesses that have contracted with the Forest Service for restoration services and forest-related management activities, such as reforestation, thinning, road and stream restoration, and other practices aimed at improving or restoring the health of the forest. These activities can support a variety of purposes, from forest and watershed restoration to timber management and wildfire mitigation. Contractors receiving restoration service contracts from forests in the region (FY 2011-2015) were located primarily in the region (68 percent), with 32 percent outside Oregon and Washington (see map, below).
Mills and highway access in Washington and Oregon

This map represents relative transport costs from forests to mills with two different layers. The background layer displays the hauling cost based on slope and distance from any point in Washington and Oregon to a major highway. The lighter areas on the map are higher cost because they are farther from a highway, are more steeply sloped, or are both. The darker areas are lower cost because they are closer to a highway, less steeply sloped, or are both. The colored lines represent highway distance to the nearest sawmill.
Mill access for ranger districts in Washington and Oregon

Access to mills can vary across national forests and even within ranger districts. The chart below shows the relative availability of milling infrastructure to every national forest ranger district in Washington and Oregon. The majority of ranger districts have access to some sort of mill within 40 highway miles, but the number and types of processing of the mills differs. Some ranger districts have relatively more mills nearby while others have relatively fewer mills nearby.

Greater mill access: Closer to a mill and more mills nearby

Lower mill access: Farther to a mill and fewer mills nearby

Average distance from district (highway miles) to the nearest mill