

# Siuslaw Basin Restoration Jobs

## Action Plan

March 21, 2007

Numerous organizations in the Siuslaw Basin seek to create local economic benefits as byproducts of forest and watershed restoration. During 2006, the Ecosystem Workforce Program, in collaboration with the Siuslaw Institute, Soil and Watershed District (SWCD), Watershed Council, and National Forest, conducted a workforce assessment to identify opportunities to increase local economic benefits from restoration activities. The workforce assessment considered how much restoration work was being conducted locally, the extent to which the local contractors and workers were capturing these work opportunities, and the local contracting capacity.

The workforce assessment found that, although a number of different organizations are undertaking restoration, work in restoration is not limitless. Attention needs to be paid to the support of existing contracting businesses while not creating excess capacity. The action plan has three major components: federal lands strategy, nonprofit strategy, and capacity-building strategy.

The assessment also found that contractor capacity exists for much of the restoration work being done in the Siuslaw Basin. Most of the contractors interviewed said that they wanted more local work and were willing to try new things, within reason. The basin has strong local contracting capacity but captures only a limited number of federal contracts. Thus, the strategy for increasing local employment should focus on how local contractors could capture more of the work being offered by the federal agencies. The strategy should also ensure that the supply of federal work remains at the current level or increases over time.

With respect to the federal land management agencies, the strategy contains three elements:

1. maintaining or increasing the long-term supply of federal service, construction, and stewardship contracts in the basin;
2. redesigning a small portion of federal service, stewardship, and timber sale contracts so that they are more appealing to the local contracting capacity;
3. increasing the capacity (equipment, skills, knowledge, subcontracting relationships, licenses and permits, etc.) of local contractors to participate in federal contracts, especially stewardship contracts.

Contractors from the Siuslaw Basin already capture a large percentage of the work the restoration work on private land that involves the watershed's nonprofit organizations. There are more contractors who work on private land than on federal land, and the size and type of projects seem to be a better fit with local contracting capacity. If more work were made available from local nonprofit organizations to work on private land, it appears that it would result in more direct employment of local contractors. However, there are some gaps between contractor skills and restoration needs of the watershed council and the SWCD. In addition, improving the timing and structure of work activities might improve local benefit opportunities for local businesses and workers.

The strategy for the nonprofit organizations focuses on:

1. increasing the amount of work available in the basin;
2. providing more multi-year and out-of-season work;
3. building contractor capacity to continually enhance the competitiveness of local contractors.

It should be noted that this action plan does *not* propose: (1) creating a new restoration business or (2) developing an in-house crew at one of the nonprofit organizations. Although there are some small gaps in capacity, local contracting capacity is adequate to undertake most restoration activities, given the amount of money likely to be spent in the basin on forest and watershed restoration over the next few years.

To build on the existing contracting capacity, this action plan proposes:

1. to identify opportunities to expand capacity of existing contractors so that they can increase their competitiveness in federal contracts;
2. to fill the needs of the nonprofit restoration organizations.

## ***I. FEDERAL LANDS STRATEGY***

**Goal:** To increase local capture of federal service, construction, architecture and engineering, stewardship, and timber sale contracts.

### **Issues:**

- The standard Forest Service timber sales and stewardship contracts are too large for local contractors to purchase; local contractors lack the capital, bonding capacity and, likely, project management expertise.
- The supply of NEPA-ready Forest Service thinning projects available for stewardship contracts will be exhausted in the next two years. There are currently no new NEPA planning projects for the work.
- The Eugene District Bureau of Land Management currently makes little use of stewardship contracting. The supply of NEPA-ready projects in the District is not known.
- Stewardship contracting is the Forest Service's contracting tool that most directly incorporates local economic benefit. However, limitations of the Forest Service's workforce and the complexity of the stewardship contracting instrument do not readily lend themselves to the creation of numerous small-scale stewardship contracts.

### **Strategies:<sup>1</sup>**

- Make more extensive use of the local benefit criterion in best-value-for-stewardship contracts, retained-receipts contracts, and watershed-restoration and other service contracts.
- Offer more small thinning timber sales and stewardship contracts (< 1 mbf). Consider an integrated resource contract-timber with a small amount of timber volume. Prioritize the implementation of NEPA-ready special salvage timber sales, which are, by definition, small.
- Ensure that federal land management agency staff members who have micro-purchasing authority are familiar with local contractors and their skills, equipment, and interests.
- Structure retained-receipts contracts to fit local contracting capacity—multitask, but not too many tasks.
- Bonding—take advantage of flexibility in bonding requirements in stewardship and service contracting to allow smaller contractors to compete. Emphasize shared risk rather than placing risk completely on contractors. There is bonding capacity in the basin.
- Inform and educate contractors about stewardship and other federal opportunities. Raise awareness about opportunities.
- Train contractors in the basics of stewardship contracting.
- Strengthen links between existing stewardship contracting purchasers and subcontractors. Ensure that prime contractors are aware of the capacity and skills of local contractors.
- Encourage NEPA planning efforts in Siuslaw Basin to maintain a pipeline of stewardship and service contracts over time (Forest Service and BLM).
- Identify contractors who would like to undertake fish crew work. Structure contract(s) to appeal to local contractors.

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1 Table 1 summarizes all of the strategies in this action plan and identifies lead organizations.

- Assist local contractors in signing up for the federal Emergency Equipment Rental Agreements (EERA) and fire equipment contracts.

## **Strategy Implementation**

### *Key Groups*

- Siuslaw Stewardship Group (SSG) participants
- Resource Innovations
- Forest Service
- Bureau of Land Management

### *Approach*

The ideas and strategies developed through this planning process will be presented to the Siuslaw Stewardship Group for discussion and integration into their work plan.

## II. NONPROFIT RESTORATION CONTRACTING STRATEGY

**Goal:** Increase the number of local contracting opportunities in private-land restoration projects.

### **Issues:**

- Local nonprofit organizations make good use of local contractors, but the seasonal, inconsistent nature of offerings creates difficulties for some contractors.
- Local contractors are not available for all activities, especially for technical activities.
- Local businesses often do not know about contracting opportunities with the restoration nonprofits in the Basin.
- Local nonprofit organizations may lack the staffing and funds to undertake a significant increase in their restoration efforts.

### **Strategies:**

- Increase the number of restoration projects undertaken. Increase fundraising efforts, particularly for projects that have high ecological priority and high local contractor interest in implementation and/or can build skills for local contractors.
- Increase networking, social agreement building, landowner outreach efforts to expand the number of landowners willing to undertake restoration on their lands.
- Identify projects and seek funding for projects that can be completed during slow periods (e.g., winter).
- Increase the consistency of program of work: structure contracting opportunities to provide a longer season of work for core contractors.
- Create a list of contractors interested in contracting with local nonprofit organizations including skills, interests, and equipment. Distribute to restoration nonprofits and local landowners
- Send notices regularly to local contractors with upcoming contracting opportunities
- Coordinate among local organizations and with near-by watershed councils and soil and water conservation districts to ensure that those districts know about the skills, equipment, and interests of Siuslaw Basin contractors.
- Create training opportunities for existing council and district contractors to expand their skill base.
- Identify contractors who would like to increase their skills for project planning and development and engineering. Use nonprofit restoration projects to develop skills or create incentives to hire such staff.

### **Strategy Implementation**

#### *Key Groups*

- Siuslaw Basin Partnership
- Ecotrust
- Siuslaw Institute
- Siuslaw Soil and Water Conservation District
- Siuslaw Watershed Council

#### *Approach*

As part of the implementation of their grant from the Environmental Protection Agency and the River Prize, the Siuslaw Basin Partnership (and its constituent organizations) plans to incorporate implementation of some of these strategies into the restoration planning and implementation of the Basin's restoration nonprofit organizations.

## III. CONTRACTOR TRAINING AND ASSISTANCE

**Goal:** To strengthen local contracting capacity

## **Issues:**

- Some of the nonprofit and federal restoration managers identified gaps in local contracting capacity, particularly with heavy equipment restoration skills and technical skills, such as assessment and monitoring.
- Local contractors identified some areas where they would like to expand their expertise.
- Local workforce development efforts may be seen as beyond the scope of the watershed council and the conservation district. New partnerships may be needed to implement recommendations of this type.

## **Strategies:**

- Identify business development organizations, probably from outside of the Siuslaw Basin, that could assist with contractor capacity development.
- Sponsor training for heavy equipment contractors to train with road decommissioning and stream restoration skills.
- Help contractors get bonding.
- Assist a contractor to obtain pesticide/herbicide applicator's license to assist with noxious weed control.
- Make contractors aware of training opportunities, e.g., Spanish, and geographic information systems (GIS).
- Assist local contractors in signing up for federal Emergency Equipment Rental Agreements and other fire equipment contracts.
- Identify space where contractors may access contracting solicitations and high-speed Internet connections, perhaps as part of the watershed council move.

## **Strategy Implementation**

### *Key Groups*

- Siuslaw Basin Partnership (SBP)
- Ecotrust
- ShoreBank Pacific
- Siuslaw Institute
- Siuslaw Soil and Water Conservation District
- Siuslaw Watershed Council

### *Approach*

No organizations in the watershed currently have the capacity to undertake many of these activities, especially those associated with contractor training. Perhaps, as part of the activities of the Siuslaw Basin Partnership, a business development organization could be identified to pursue some of these activities. Ecotrust has agreed to take the lead in further developing this strategy.

**Table 1. Summary of Proposed Actions and Lead Partners**

<b>Federal Lands Strategy</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>
Local benefit	Increase use of local benefit criteria in best value in stewardship contracts, retained-receipts contracts, watershed restoration and other service contracts.	SSG
Contract size	Structure stewardship, timber sales, small thinning timber sales, and stewardship contracts to fit local capacity.	SSG
Bonding	Take advantage of flexibility in bonding requirements in stewardship and service contracting to allow smaller contractors to compete.	SSG
Link purchasers and local subcontractors	Ensure that stewardship contract purchasers are aware of the capacity of local contractors.	SSG
Fish crew contractor	Identify local contractor(s) who would like to undertake fish crew work. Structure contract(s) to appeal to local contractors.	SSG
Stewardship contracting training	Train contractors in the basics of stewardship contracting and opportunities	SSG
Planning future projects	Undertake planning in Siuslaw Basin to maintain a pipeline of stewardship contracts (FS & BLM).	SSG

<b>Nonprofit Contracting Strategy</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>
Increasing work available	Increase amount of restoration undertaken, particularly projects that have high ecological priority and high local contractor interest and/or can build skills for local contractors.	SBP
Consistent program of work	Structure contracting opportunities to provide longer season of work for core contractors. Identify projects and seek funding for projects that can be completed during slow periods (e.g., winter).	SBP
Contractor list	Create a list of contractors interested in contracting with local nonprofits and private landowners, including skills, interests, and equipment.	SBP
Contractor notification	Send notice regularly to contractors with bidding information.	SBP
Restoration as training	Identify contractors who would like to increase their skills in project planning, development, and engineering. Use nonprofit restoration projects to build skills or create incentives to hire new staff.	SBP
Nonprofit coordination	Coordinate with local and near-by councils/districts to increase use of local contractors.	SBP
Restoration as training	Use restoration projects as training opportunities to expand the skill base of existing council and district contractors.	SBP

**Contractor Capacity Strategy**

Business development assistance	Identify organization that can assist the restoration non-profit organization with contractor capacity development	Ecotrust
Bonding	Help contractors get bonding	Ecotrust/Shore Bank Pacific
Heavy-equipment training	Sponsor training for heavy-equipment contractors to train with road decommissioning and stream restoration skills	None identified
Herbicide license	Help a contractor to obtain pesticide/herbicide applicator's license to assist with noxious weeds	None identified
Course availability	Make contractors aware of training opportunities, e.g., Spanish, computer, business assistance	None identified
Fire-fighting and other emergency contracting opportunities	Get local contractors on EERA or other fire equipment contracts	None identified
Incubator space/computer	Identify a place where contractors may access contracting solicitations, high-speed Internet connections, and federal and nonprofit contract solicitation. Incorporated into the planning for the watershed council move?	Watershed Council

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