

**Lemhi County
Ecosystem Workforce Assessment**

**An analysis of local contractor interest
and capability in stewardship contracting**

**Conducted for
Salmon Valley Stewardship
and
Sustainable Northwest**

Spring/Summer 2006

Background

Sustainable Northwest, based in Portland, Oregon, and Salmon Valley Stewardship, based in Salmon, Idaho, sought to gauge the existing level of interest and skills for stewardship contracting in Lemhi County, Idaho through an ecosystem workforce assessment. Stewardship contracting is a tool used by federal agencies to hire local contractors to complete a combination of timber sales and service work. Most contracts include some combination of the following management activities: timber sales, fuels treatments, wildlife habitat restoration and enhancement, road and trail maintenance, noxious weed control, and watershed restoration. Both non-governmental organizations and federal agencies are interested to know what skills exist within the county so that they can tailor the work and potential trainings to fit the needs of the contractors and workers. The US Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) have utilized stewardship contracts in Lemhi County and both have plans to continue using the contracts as a mechanism to accomplish tasks that they do not have the money or manpower to complete.

A survey was administered to known contractors in Lemhi County (including a few in Custer County). The survey assessed the amount of interest potential contractors had in future stewardship contracts as well as gathered information on their past experience with similar projects, knowledge level and accessible equipment (the list of contractors and the survey can be found in Annex A and B respectively).

Survey Findings

Local contractors are interested in working with the USFS and BLM on stewardship contracts. They have collective experience working on federal, private non-industrialized and private industrialized forests within the surrounding Counties, including Lemhi County.

Contracts in the past demonstrate a capacity for contractors in Lemhi County to successfully implement road maintenance and excavation projects but the agencies feel that the real desire of contractors is to continue with just post and pole work. The survey shows that local contractors have the capacity and interest to complete all of the mentioned tasks (see the survey for a complete list) including non-commercial tree removal, fuels reduction activities, wildlife habitat improvement, stream and river restoration, road construction and decommission, and road maintenance. Despite concerns of the agencies that local contractors would not be interested in collaborating with other contractors the survey demonstrated that they are in fact overwhelmingly interested in cooperating with others.

When asked how they learn about upcoming USFS and BLM contracts the responses varied greatly with an equal amount stating that they relied on proposals via the mail, Federal Business Opportunities Online, and word-of-mouth. This reflects differing levels of reliance on computers and knowledge of the federal proposal process. The majority of

contractors is comfortable enough with a computer to access the federal contracting websites and is registered in the Central Contractor Registration.

Local contractors seemed fairly confident that they could rent or subcontract all of the equipment listed in the survey. However, most contractors only own chainsaws and hand-tools and some can add a dozer or truck into the mix. Crew sizes are fairly small, with few exceeding twenty members. None of those surveyed would be comfortable managing a crew larger than fifty while most responded that a crew half that size is their limit.

The maximum bonding capacity varied from \$100,000 to \$2,000,000 and approximately half of the survey respondents are currently bonded through a private company or bonding agency. Most contractors did not specify a contract duration stating that all projects appeal to them. Some stated a more modest timeframe of eight weeks or six months.

Of those that responded to the question as to how they would market or dispose of small diameter material the replies were contained to: small diameter logs; peeled (poles or posts); firewood; and chip and spread (on site).

The impediments or challenges that contractors stated in the survey include: lack of information about when a job comes up for a bid; lack of contracts in the area; the cost of assigned risk or workmen's compensation; and bonding. One respondent discussed how he and others were discouraged from bidding on stewardship contracts after an open house discussion a few years ago that relayed to them that bidding was done on a site unseen basis and far in advance (up to two years) which meant that they couldn't inspect or decline work. Many potential contractors chose not to enter the system at that time because of this and preferred to stay with fuels reduction grant jobs.

When asked what types of service activities the contractors are interested in working on they responded with: thinning and logging; fish and big game rehabilitation; free-stand thinning; fuels reduction; insect infected stand removal; habitat improvement projects; and anything they can get. The types of projects that they are not interested in include: noxious weed control; tree planting; road construction; insecticide application; and tree thinning. When asked if the service portion of stewardship contracting discouraged them from bidding on stewardship contracts all but one stated no. The lone dissenter stated that there was "bigger and better things for money to do." Despite the dissent all of the respondents expressed an interest in receiving information on stewardship projects in the future.

Respondents demonstrated general support for all three of the training sessions mentioned (stewardship contracting, assistance in preparing and submitting responses to RFPs, and computer use). One additional suggestion for training is how to carry out stand exams and inventory work.

Recommendations

Solutions to the problems encountered by the USFS, BLM, local contractors, and the community in regards to stewardship contracting are centered on better communication. If there were a venue for an open dialogue between the agencies and the potential contractors the work would potentially go more smoothly. BLM and USFS could tailor the service aspect of contracts to match the capabilities of contractors in the area who are willing and able to do the work. The survey suggests that contractors are interested in the service side of the contract; for example, fish, big game, and habitat rehabilitation, road construction, and tree thinning.

Getting the word out about stewardship contracts would benefit the contracting process by allowing more contractors to be aware of and therefore bid on contracts which in turn would increase the level of competition and theoretically quality of the bids. The agencies could email contractors directing them to a website or location where they could access the proposal. For those contractors not in the habit of checking email or without an email account a notice could be placed in a central location alerting them to the proposal timeline. In addition it would be useful to talk up the proposals well in advance at the many local meetings that occur in the county.

The agencies may want to utilize “best-value” contracting criteria in the stewardship contracting bids that emphasizes the use of local contractors and local community benefit. This would give qualified local contractors a leg-up on outside competition. If local contractors know of this advantage they may feel more encouraged submitting a proposal.

Local contractors would benefit from a training that would walk them through the entire proposal process – from registering to completing the proposal to implementing the project once the bid is awarded. Even those who are comfortable with the process can learn new tricks and any updates to the system. This would help put all contractors on equal footing. The knowledge that there is some one to contact when they have questions regarding the process may put their minds at ease.

Conclusion

The USFS expects that on average they will let two stewardship contracts every year in Lemhi County. The BLM projects that they will release six contracts per year for all of Idaho with perhaps an average of one per year in Lemhi County. Challenges remain within the agencies as the process for stewardship contracting is still evolving. Contractual rules change frequently, which in turn alters the mindset of agency staff and creates more uncertainty on legal issues.

The USFS and BLM can engage local contractors through local community organizations and individuals when assistance is required. Lemhi County has a proven network that can reach out to contractors when necessary. Local contractors are capable and willing to become involved in stewardship contracting so it is just a matter of creating stronger links

between agency and bidder. Once everyone involved becomes more comfortable with the system and as long as competition is encouraged local contractors will continue to involve themselves in the process.

Annex A

List of Forest Contractors in Lemhi and Custer Counties

Name	Phone	Address	
	208		
Allan Probst	756-2194	1813 Lemhi Road	Salmon, Idaho 83467
Allen Ledbetter	756-4571		Salmon, Idaho 83467
Billy Stranger	879-5592		Challis, Idaho 83226
Centennial Post and Pole	756-7238		
Charlie Campbell	838-2954		Clayton, Idaho 83227
Dahle's Excavating and Construction (Kent)	756-3240/1	90 Highway 93 North	Salmon, Idaho 83467
Dan Wayne	756-6598	401 9th Street	Salmon, Idaho 83467
Danny Cockrell	756-3010	32 Cockrell Rd	Salmon, Idaho 83467
Dave Kramer	756-8262		Carmen, ID 83462
Dave Oerke	879-2738		Challis, Idaho 83226
Down to Earth Excavation	756-6459	28 Wagon Wheel Road	Salmon, Idaho 83467
Either Orr Excavating	766-2341	South Saint Charles St	Salmon, Idaho 83467
England Sawmills (Gary England)	756-2727	2051 Hwy 93 N	Carmen, ID 83462
Gordon Hammond	756-2580		
Jafco Construction Inc.	768-2670	PO Box 46	Leadore, ID 83464
James Riggan	865-2669		
Johnny Bragg (Steve)	879-2489		Challis, Idaho 83226
Ken Armstrong (Jordan Construction)	756-3730	4 W Bannock Rd	Salmon, Idaho 83467
Gary Funck	879-5397		Challis, Idaho 83226
Lemhi Lumber Co	756-3322	Shoup & St Charles	Salmon, ID 83467
Lemhi Log and Construction	950-0650		Salmon, Idaho 83467
Lemhi Post and Poles (Quentin Snook Sr.)	756-2787	14 Quinton Lane	Salmon, ID 83467
Mickey Roskelley/ Precision Log Homes	879-6176/ 879-2243		Challis, Idaho 83226
Peach Creek Construction (Baird)	756-3866		Salmon, Idaho 83467
Perry Logging			
Ranch Construction	756-4265	1191 Highway 28	Salmon, Idaho 83467
Scott Tyler	768-2404	616 Lee Creek Rd	Leadore, ID 83464
Stoddard Excavating & Construction	756-2956	6 Kirtley Lane	Salmon, Idaho 83467
Tim Kemery	879-2148	PO Box 621	Challis, Idaho 83226
Vern England (England Construction)	756-4359, 865-2321	HC10 Box 44-A North Fork, ID 83466	Salmon, Idaho 83467
Wellard Constructors (Rulon)	756-3471	9 Three Mile Lane	Salmon, Idaho 83467
Western Mechanical Pipe Supplies (Fred Wach)	756-4753	9 Coles Lane	Salmon, Idaho 83467
Westfall Logging, Inc. (Doug Westfall)	756-4554/64	217 North Daisy	Salmon, Idaho 83467
Will Naillon	879-4799		Challis, Idaho 83226

Annex B

Survey Questions for Lemhi County Contractors

1.) Are you interested in working in the woods? (Please check **Yes** or **No** ✓)

_____ **No**, you need not complete the rest of the survey. Simply return in the provided stamped and addressed envelope.

_____ **Yes**

2.) What kinds of forest ownerships have you worked on? (Please check ✓ all that apply)

_____ Federal (Forest Service, BLM)

_____ Industrial Private Forest Land

_____ Non-industrial Private Forest Land

3.) What geographic area (Please specify county, region, etc.) do you work in?

4.) Please check all applicable categories of operations that you have performed in the past, as well as those that you would be capable of and/or interested in performing in the future.

Please check all that apply. ✓

Type of Operation	In the <u>PAST</u> I have bid as a primary contractor for this work.	In the <u>PAST</u> I have performed this work as a subcontractor or employee.	I would perform or bid on this work in the <u>FUTURE.</u>
Commercial Timber Sales	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Non-commercial Tree Removal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fuels Reductions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
-Prescribed Burning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
-Lopping & Scattering	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
-Brushing & Piling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
-Mastication	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
-Chipping	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
-Pruning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Burned Area Restoration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tree Planting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seedling Protection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wildlife Habitat Improvement (bat habitat, woody debris, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stream/River Restoration (rip-rap, in-stream structures, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Noxious Weed Removal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Surveying/Inventory	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
-Archeological/Cultural	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
-Biological (birds, amphibians, snails, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
-Botanical (stand exams, understory, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Road Construction/Decommission	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Road Maintenance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trail Construction/Maintenance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other-	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5-a.) Have you ever been a primary contractor for a federal agency?

Yes _____ No _____

5-b.) Have you ever been a subcontractor to a contractor for a federal agency?

Yes _____ No _____ (see below for follow-up question)

Would you be interested in working on a stewardship contract in cooperation with other local contractors?

Yes _____ No _____

6.) The following table looks into how you learn about upcoming Forest Service and BLM contracts.

Please check how often you use each. ✓

	Frequently	Occasionally	Never
Proposals Via Mail	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Federal Business Opportunities On-line (www.fedbizopps.gov)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Word of Mouth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other?? Please list.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7.) Roughly how many bid solicitations or timber sale notifications have you received **via mail** in the past six months?

8.) Have you ever prepared a proposal in response to a federally issued Request for Proposal (RFP)?

Yes _____ No _____

9-a.) Do you have a computer in your home or office with internet connection?

Yes _____ Please circle your connection type → **Dial-up** or **High-speed (Cable/DSL)**

No _____

9-b.) Do you know how to use a computer well enough to access the federal contracting websites?

Yes _____ No _____

10-a.) Are you or your company signed up as a HUBzone* contractor?

Yes _____ No _____

* The Historically Underutilized Business Zone program provides businesses in federally designated HUB regions with increased access to Federal contracting opportunities. See www.sba.gov/hubzone or call 202-205-8885 for more information.

10-b.) Are you or your company registered in the Central Contractor Registration (www.CCR.gov) required for all federal contractors?

Yes _____ No _____

11.) Some Stewardship Projects require special equipment. We are interested in both what equipment you own and/or are able to obtain given particular project requirements.

Type of Equipment	I own this	Size or Model? (for large machinery)	I could obtain (rent/subcontract) if needed
Chain Saw(s)			
Hand Tools (lopper, pruning saw, hoe dad etc.)			
Feller Buncher			
Cut-to-length Harvester/Single-grip Processor			
Skidder			
Tractor (w/ skidding capacity)			
Dozer			
Brush Rake			
Excavator			
Masticator			
Yarder			
Stroke Delimber			
Debarking Equipment/Machine			
Self-loading Log Truck			
Loader			
Log Truck			
Helicopter			
Dump Truck			
Water Truck			
Grader/Blade			
Other-			
Other-			

12.) The size of your crew can be an important factor in determining the scale of projects that you will be willing and able to work on.

What is the average number of workers on your typical crew? _____

What is the largest crew you would feel comfortable employing on a single job?

13.) Please provide an estimate of your maximum bonding capacity for securing contracts.

\$ _____

14.) Are you bonded through a private company/bonding agency?

Yes _____ No _____

15.) What duration of contract is most appealing to you (# of weeks/months/years)?

16.) Stewardship Projects often require the treatment of small diameter material (meaning diameters less than typical merchantable log standards). How do you (or your company) attempt to market or dispose of small diameter material?

Please check all that apply ✓

Hog Chips (mulch, bio-generation)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clean Chips (pulp mill)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Small Diameter Logs (<10' DBH)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Peeled (poles or posts)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Firewood	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chip and Spread (on site)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Masticate	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other-	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other-	<input type="checkbox"/>

17.) What are the most significant challenges/barriers to you or your company securing Federal contracts for forest work?

18.) What service contract activities are you interested in working on?

What service contract activities are you absolutely not interested in?

19.) Does the service portion of stewardship contracting discourage you from bidding on stewardship contracts?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, please explain: _____

20.) Would you or your company be interested in receiving announcements regarding proposed Stewardship Projects in the future?

Yes _____ No _____

21.) Are you interested in participating in training sessions covering the following topics?

Stewardship Contracting (authorities, regulations, logistics etc.)

Yes _____ No _____

Assistance in preparing and submitting responses to Requests for Proposal (RFP's)

Yes _____ No _____

Computer use (accessing the electronic bidding process, etc.)

Yes _____ No _____

Other? (Please provide details) _____

22.) Are there any specific areas of training that you would be interested in participating in if they were made available?

Please feel free to provide us with any additional comments or questions:

Your Name: _____

Name of Company: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ **Email:** _____

Age: _____

Years of forest work experience: _____